



THE HOPE FOR PARENTING

WORKBOOK

HOPE COUPLES CLINIC

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NOTE: Pay attention for when the parenting worksheet is in **ADDITION** to the couples worksheet and when it is a **REPLACEMENT** for the couples worksheet

Parents Intake Form Additions

Intakes with parents should involve asking the parents open ended questions about their parenting during dyadic intake.

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN IN THE HOME:

I want to make sure that I also understand you as a family as you parent your children together. I see from your questionnaires that (mention ages and number of kids, discuss the general idea of the Parenting Alliance Measure/ Parenting Sense of Competency results. Did I understand that right?

(if they haven't spontaneously talked about their co-parenting then ask) How are things with the two of you working together to parent your children?

If concerns then follow up with.. What is your main concern about parenting together as a team?

What is something you do well together parenting as a team?

Invest in Your Family Love Bank

Three days this week write down three positive things that your partner did & three things your child/children did. You can think of positives in your family in five categories (taken from Gary Chapman's bestselling book "The Five Love Languages"). They are words of love and encouragement, physical touch and closeness, acts of service, quality time, and gifts. These categories may help you notice some positives that you haven't been noticing before.

Day One

<i>My Partner</i>	<i>My Child/Children</i>
1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.

Day Two

<i>My Partner</i>	<i>My Child/Children</i>
1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.

Day Three

<i>My Partner</i>	<i>My Child/Children</i>
1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.

Family Blessings

The God-lesson this week is to become more like God by counting our blessings. Three days this week write down three blessings you received because of your family. Think about how your life blessed, even in a small way, because of your spouse and children being in it. Scripture Reflection: I Peter 3:8-9 "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."

Day One

My Partner

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

My Child/Children

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Day Two

My Partner

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

My Child/Children

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Day Three

My Partner

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

My Child/Children

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Family Vision

Picture your family 10 years from now. Let's talk about what you would like to be like in ten years and where your marriage would be and what your children will be like.

12 Possible Positive Things to use in a Family Vision.

Choose two and discuss what that would look like 10 years from now.

1. intentional commitment, persistence
2. positive values
3. lead by serving & giving first
4. humor and fun
5. being overcomers of difficulties
6. meeting each others needs
7. being a team
8. giving enough love, affection and support
9. networking in the community
10. open communication
11. investing in the next generation
12. quality time

What obstacles to those goals might you encounter?

What could you do to hurdle those obstacles?

The Family Vision Project: Hopes and Dreams

This week's Family Work is focused on bringing your family closer together.

You have a choice three of projects, one designed for older children (generally over age 12), one for younger children, and one for parents of infants.

If you have children in multiple categories use your judgment which project would work best for your family.

The main goal of this Family Work is to help your family develop a sense of "us" or a family "culture" that bonds the family together.

This Family Work will help accomplish this by encouraging everyone to share his or her hopes and dreams for the future.

Sharing like this can be a powerful event if everyone will allow it to be, so don't hold back or withdraw from this project as parents.

Fully invest as role-models to your children.

Your children are watching you as you say you will be going to counseling and improving your relationship.

They want to know that you mean what you say.

The Family Vision Project: Hopes and Dreams

Project Options

1. If you have older children (generally over age 12:

Hold a family meeting to share hopes and dreams for the future. The teens/tweens children should know this isn't a "we're all in trouble" kind of family meeting, but one of openness, togetherness, and sharing. A good way to set this tone is selecting a happy, open environment, such as going for ice cream, going to a local park, or having a family game night as a part of your family meeting time.

During the family meeting start a conversation with your children asking them what they hope your family will be like in five and 10 years. A fun way to ease into sharing is trying a "free association" kind of exercise. You can do this exercise by having your children write down words that describe what they think of when they think of your family or as they hear what other family members are sharing. The kinds of things older children often talk about are family activities (camping, cook outs, sports, music). Encourage them to also talk about the kinds of relationships everyone in the family will have with each other. The parents should spend more than half the time listening to their children's vision of the family's hopes and dreams, but also share some of their own ideas too. The family can use the piece of paper from the "free association" exercise as an important symbol in the growth of family by doing something memorable with it like framing it and putting it on the wall, or putting it in a scrap book or photo album. Let your counselor get a glimpse at it too, it's a fun thing to share. Lastly, it is important to remember that this meeting is a time to share hopes and dreams, not a time to air grievances or relive past disappointments.

The Family Vision Project: Hopes and Dreams

Project Options

2. If you have younger children:

Work together as a family to create a poster that represents everyone's hopes and dreams. Before the family gets together for the activity, get a poster board, scissors, glue and some magazines with various pictures in it such as pictures of families doing things together, family events or holidays for the kids to cut pictures out of. Children can also draw things if they are difficult to find in magazines. Once you have all the materials, then hold a family meeting, or a family activity time. The children should know this isn't a "we're all in trouble" kind of family meeting, but one of openness, togetherness, and sharing. A good way to set this tone is selecting a happy, open environment, such as going for ice cream, going to a local park, or having a family game night as a part of your family meeting time.

During the family meeting start a conversation with your children asking them what they think your family will be like in five and 10 years. Encourage them to share their hopes and dreams about the future of their family. Have them cut out pictures, or draw pictures of the kinds of things they think will represent what your family will do and be like in five and 10 years. Help them understand how old they will be then, and how long that is. Their ideas may be simple, or they may be profound. Encourage them to draw or write words that characterize how people in the family will behave towards each other. Keep the family poster in the house, somewhere where everyone can see it, perhaps in the kitchen or bedroom hallway. Let your counselor get a glimpse at it too, it's a fun thing to share. Lastly, it is important to remember that this meeting is a time to share hopes and dreams, not a time to air grievances or relive past disappointments.

The Family Vision Project: Hopes and Dreams

Project Options

3. If you have infants or toddlers:

As you complete your couple's homework for this week, take some time to think about your future as a couple in terms of how your child or children will impact your life.

Discuss what kind of family you would like to be in 10 years

TANGO with Partner and Your Children

Just like a parent might teach their child a family dance, parents can also teach their children good communication principles. You learned the TANGO with your partner in your session this week, now extend those principles to your child or children. If you have more than one child, you and your partner can each take a child and teach them the principles. The goal is that the entire family uses good communication principles (even if you don't use the TANGO technique once you get the principles used regularly).

For couples:

At least once this week pick a topic to discuss and practice the TANGO at home with your children (as well as your partner). Make sure you have a quiet time with just the two of you and pull out the dance card and floor steps. It may feel strange to stand up and use the technique, but most new things feel strange at first. We encourage couples and families to use the TANGO steps until they can incorporate them into their own style. If you can, videotape the TANGO practice and then watch yourselves that would help you. The goal is to significantly change the patterns of communication to help overcome any old patterns. After learning the technique, use these questions to discuss communication as a couple.

TANGO with Partner and Your Children

For children:

Teach them the TANGO steps and principles, and then practice communicating as a family. Children as young as 4-5 should be able to participate in this if kept simple.

If you have multiple children consider discussing these things as a family, or one parent can discuss these principles with the child individually.

After learning the technique, use these questions to discuss communication as a family.

- 1. How did the communication work out?**

- 2. Discuss how the technique is helping you learn the PRINCIPLES of good communication, which are:**
 - o Take turns talking**
 - o Really listen to your partner/parent/child, not just think of the next thing to say**
 - o Slow down the conversation**
 - o Infuse difficult conversations with loving statements**
 - o Don't make assumptions, make sure you understand each other**

- 3. What obstacles get in the way of implementing these principles in your family communication?**

- 4. What ideas do you have to do in order to hurdle those obstacles?**

Parents Tip Sheet: Marital Conflicts when You have a Family

Having children drastically changes everything in a couple's relationship, including how conflicts are handled.

Learning how to handle conflicts in a family environment is important to the success and satisfaction of both the couple and the family.

You can read more about how to handle couples conflict when you have children at:

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/parent_teamwork_skills_managing_conflict.html

<http://family.go.com/parenting/article-62782-the-dangers-of-arguing-in-front-of-your-kids-t/>

<http://www.gottman.com/48995/Parenting.html>

Parents Tip Sheet: Marital Conflicts when You have a Family

Consider the following tips in deciding how you would like to see conflicts handled in your household.

o Even infants witnessing their parents in an emotional argument have increased heart rate, blood pressure and electrical responses on their skin for some hours after the conflict. Repeated witnessing of intensive arguments may even predispose the child's brain to long-term problems with irritability or being high strung/unable to calm themselves.

o Children, on average, witness 45% of their parents arguments.

o If parents can work out their disagreement in a healthy way in front of their children then it is helpful for the children to see a healthy disagreement where people still respect and care for each other. If the parents are not able to resolve the issues repeatedly then children have trouble regulating their own emotions, tend to be more irritable, at risk for depression, struggle with interpersonal relationships with peers and family members.

o If children witness their parents argue, it is important that the parents tell the children that they resolved the argument even if the child isn't able to witness the resolution. It can be a good opportunity to teach your child HOW to resolve conflicts in a more healthy way, even to teach them the LOVE concepts learned in Hope-focused couples counseling.

o Children should never be use as a subject of a conflict. Parents should not fight over their children. This can be threatening to children as they love and are attached to both parents.

o Children should never be asked, pressured, or expected to take sides with one parent or the other. Adults need to work out their conflicts with each other, keeping their children out of the conflict. This teaches children good boundaries in relationships.

LOVE Family Intervention

The skills needed for successful conflict resolutions are learned over time and parents can play a major role in helping children develop these skills early in their lives. Teach your children (if old enough) the LOVE principles of conflict resolution and talk about how to use the principles when there is conflict between any family members. You can take out the laminated LOVE card to help everyone learn the concepts together.

As a family write down, on the “Rules For Family Conflict” worksheet (on the next page), rules for what is “not OK” during conflict. Examples might be yelling or being critical of family members, refusing to talk, or lying. Then on the other half of the paper write what valuing each other would look like in conflict. Examples might be listening well, letting people feel whatever they feel while not making fun or ignoring it, or saying something about how important the other person is or how much you love them.

Very young children will not be likely to understand the “E= Evaluate common interests” principle, so parents may need to assist very young children with finding solutions or resolutions to conflict. By the age of 9 or 10 most children should be able to understand the “E=Evaluate common interests” concept in a basic way. Teenagers will have an even better understanding.

Discuss as a family why it is important to keep common interests in mind during conflicts. Also, as a family, discuss the four most basic human needs and how the family can best meet everyone’s needs overall.

There tend to be 4 basic needs that may be the interest behind a position. The most powerful interests are basic human needs (Fisher & Ury, 1991):

- Security (economic and psychological well being)
- Belonging (bonds, guidance)
- Recognition (attention, valuing)
- Control (freedom to make decisions).

Family Rules for Conflict

“Not OK” During Conflict:

Ways to Value Each Other During Conflict:

Parents Tip Sheet: Staying Close and “Bonded” to Your Child Throughout Development

Children that are strongly bonded to their parents are happier, healthier, better behaved, have fewer problems in school, and have better relationships in adulthood. Teaching your child to have a close relationship with family members is the first experiences in learning how to have trusting, warm, and supportive relationships for life.

Tips for Development in Children

Infancy: The key is responsiveness. Building a strong bond in infancy involves being aware and responsive to the needs of your baby. It's not necessary to be perfectly responsive but you can be aware and responsive to your child's needs for attention, affection, clean diaper, food or drink. Find things to do with your child to interact with him or her so the baby learns your voice, manners and face every day. Talk to her while shopping. Look her in the eyes while playing. Play baby games with him.

Toddlers: The key is being a steady base. As the toddler begins to explore the world and move out on her own, you need to be available. Plenty of hugs and cuddling is needed. A toddler should have time playing with parents each day, and also some time playing independently.

School age: Maintaining bonds with school age children usually includes involvement in things they are doing and developing interests in. As they learn sports, music and hobbies parents involvement and encouragement is important. Reading and doing homework with school age children is important bonding time. School age children can also work along side parents in chores or home activities like cooking

Parents Tip Sheet: Staying Close and “Bonded” to Your Child Throughout Development

Tips for Development in Children

Tweens: Tweens focus on friends, but parents are still central in their development. As tweens begin to pull away and want more independence than their age warrants, having a warm bonded relationship becomes even more important. If you’ve been working on it all-along you should reap the benefits of their assurance that you love and care for them. But it’s never too late. Try to enter into their world and understand it. Sometimes playing video games or listening to music they love is important because it sends the message that you are interested in understanding your tween. Being warm and available to your tween is a central job of parenting during this stage of development.

Teens: Your role during teen years is to increasingly become a coach alongside them. If you have invested in developing a warm relationship, your child will be more likely to listen and take your insights and coaching as a positive resource. Mistakes and immature missteps are an opportunity to come alongside and help make sense of mistakes. Focus more on how your child responds to mistakes than the mistake itself. Look for opportunities to do family activities that involve time for talking. Often simple talking about current events or sports can open the door for the important issues and decisions facing your teen.

HW: Spend some “fun time” bonding with your child this week, appropriate for his or her developmental level.

Tips for Emotions in Children

Noted family psychologist John Gottman wrote a book about emotion-coaching your children when they have things that upset them. The goal is to help them understand and respond better to their emotions, so that they will become masters of their emotions. As you have learned about your emotions this week in counseling by exploring your childhood, your family homework this week is to learn about emotion-coaching your children with similar principles from the counseling you experienced. If this is of interest to you we suggest reading the self-help book: 5 Steps to Emotion-coaching your children (from Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child by Gottman).

1. Be aware of your child's emotions. You can be aware of your, and your child's emotions, which helps with coaching your child in emotions. If this isn't something you've learned before talk to your counselor about ways to improve, or try reading the book mentioned here.

2. Recognize that emotions are an opportunity for intimacy and teaching. While some parents try to ignore feelings in their children hoping they'll go away, emotions don't generally work that way. If a child can understand, label feelings, and feel understood then emotions tend to dissipate. If you can talk about feelings with your child while they are still low in intensity, and use that as a teaching moment, it makes it easier to handle the bigger crises.

Tips for Emotions in Children

3. Listen with empathy, and validate the child's feelings. The goal here is not to fix the problem for the child or try and make them feel better. The next step is just to think about what it feels like from the child's perspective and communicate your understanding. In couples counseling you are learning to communicate understanding through exercises like the TANGO or LOVE interventions. A close relationship, whether with partner or child, requires people to communicate understanding before trying to find solutions. You might say something like "You sound upset that you didn't get a toy like your friend" or "You look angry because you can't go to the store now." You don't have to agree with the logic of the feeling, but just communicate you understand the feeling. If you can communicate by matching with similar emotions of your own, that's the goal of empathy.

4. Help the child label the emotions. Experts in relationships and interpersonal skills have the ability to recognize and put words to their emotions. If your child can learn to put words to their feelings they will be better able to manage their own emotions- the long-term goal of emotion-coaching. It's not just about expressing emotions, although that's not bad. The goal is to label and understand emotions so they can be expressed in appropriate ways and at the appropriate time. Keep in mind that people usually feel mixed emotions, which can be confusing for children. It's OK to feel many emotions at once, and labeling them will help your child have a sense of competency with their emotions.

Tips for Emotions in Children

5. Set limits while helping the child problem solve. It's good for parents to set limits on appropriate behaviors, especially with younger children. "It's OK to be upset, but you cannot hit" or "I see that you are angry but you may not yell at your sister" What is important is to communicate that the feelings are not wrong, but misbehavior is not accepted. Setting limits involves an effective discipline pattern for the family which is not the main goal of these parenting tips. If you are having trouble with discipline and setting limits with your children, talk with your counselor about effective behavior management strategies for your children. The second part of step 5 is to help your child solve their own problems. Matching your child's development and abilities, allow your child to have choices if they are young in what will solve their problems. For older children, ask them to come up with solutions to the problem themselves and then have them evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of their ideas. The goal is to help them learn HOW to problem solve even when you are not there, not to just solve the immediate problem of the day.

Couples Discussion Questions:

- 1. In what ways are you trying to change the way you handle emotions in your family now compared to how emotions were handled when you were growing up?**
- 2. Without laying blame or criticizing each other, what about the way you've been managing your children's emotions has been going well and what has been a struggle?**
- 3. Discuss ways you can use the tips from this homework tip sheet in parenting your children. What common emotions does your child express that you could help coach them in those emotions? Can you label those emotions yourself and then together walk through ideas on how to help your child through the 5 steps?**

Family Meeting on Confessions

While it's important to teach your child the behavior of confessing or apologizing, your goal is to help your child be internally motivated to apologize when he or she has done something wrong or hurtful. This Family Worksheet is aimed at helping parents develop that motivation in their children. Parents should do their own homework for the week (created with their counselor) within a day or two before working through this sheet as a family .

Hold a family meeting to discuss confessions. The first thing that should happen in that family meeting is the parents should role model a good confession by thinking of something they've done in the past that was difficult or hurtful towards each child (i.e., you were impatient, yelled, didn't notice when they needed something, or misunderstood the child). Make a confession to each child of something in the past you've done against the child. Use your good confession principles learned in counseling. Let each child respond to the apology; no response is wrong.

After these confessions have been made teach the children what you've learned in counseling about good confessions. The whole family can create some "family rules" for hurts and apologies. Tailor the rules to the ages of your children, allowing older children more input into the rule making and more complex rules. Write the rules down, especially as everyone is learning them. Afterwards, post the rules in a common place in the house so that everyone will be reminded of them.

Go over the tips for apologies on the next page with your children, as appropriate to their age and understanding level.

Also, especially in the coming week or two look for opportunity to be a role model in confessing or apologizing to your partner or your children. Role modeling is the best way to show your children you are serious about these new family rules. If the child breaks the "rules" of apologies then remind the child about the rules and ask them to redo the confession using the principles of a good confession.

Parents Tip Sheet: Learning About and Discussing Apologies as a Family

Emotional forgiveness and Decisional Forgiveness:

“What if I don’t feel like apologizing?” Sometimes children will resist apologizing or forgiving family members because their feelings are still wrapped up in the offense. They may feel hurt, angry, confused, disappointed, or afraid. As you are creating the family rules teach your children that there is a difference between **DECIDING** to apologize or forgive and **FEELING** like apologizing and forgiving. This is normal. Adults have to work to replace the negative feelings after an offense so they can feel emotional forgiveness. Emotional forgiveness can be different than deciding to forgive.

o Discuss whether or not your family like to create a rule that everyone will decide to apologize and offer forgiveness for offenses in the family, even if though do not feel like it. A family can ask that everyone in the family say something like “I’m really angry/hurt/disappointed right now with what happened, but you are my family so I want to apologize for my part of ” what I did”

Dealing with Emotions:

A “cool off” period is often a good idea in families so that apologies can be more heart-felt and sincere. The offended person may need to cool off too before being ready to hear an apology. This can be difficult as often family member don’t come back to each other after cooling off and actually apologize and forgive. Parents may need to be diligent to set a timer or some other reminder to help busy parents reinforce a cooling off period appropriately.

o Discuss whether or not your family would like to allow a “cool off” period if someone is flooded with emotions after an offense.

Parents Tip Sheet: Learning About and Discussing Apologies as a Family

Justice is important:

Remember that some kind of punishment or justice is needed when there has been an injustice/hurt in the family. There is a kind of imbalance in justice when there has been an offense in a relationship that needs to be restored for the relationship to continue to grow and be healthy.

Parents can help prepare their children for the future by enforcing rules and justice by using their authority as the parents in the family. Parents shouldn't hold back from appropriate justice by punishing or removing privileges from the offender in the family. Things like time outs, or losing allowance or privileges are important in maintaining family justice. These should happen even if the child is apologetic, although justice is generally harsher when the offender is not apologetic. This is true even in school, the workplace or the legal system.

□ Discuss the issue of justice as a family. If someone hurts you and receives fair punishment does that help keep the peace in the family? When you are the one who receives a punishment, does it feel like justice?

What if the adult is the offender?

If an adult is the offender then acts of kindness and service to the person who was offended (whether spouse or child) are often a good way of re-balancing the relationship. A parent can give a heart-felt apology, can offer to spend some special time with the child/spouse, or do something kind for the person to help balance the injustice scales.

REACH for forgiveness with Children

Teach children the principles of REACH for forgiveness. By this point in counseling hopefully your children have “caught on” to the family meeting concept and understand it as a positive experience that helps bond the family together better. Family meetings should help the family function together better and be a chance to show love. This week, call a family meeting to discuss forgiveness and the role it plays in your family. Apologies and forgiveness should be used to re-glue or re-bond after there has been an offense or “tear” in the relationship. These principles, if learned well in the family in childhood or adolescence, will help your child navigate difficult aspects of relationships as they move on into adulthood, and be better able to create and sustain meaningful relationships for life. Go over these principles for forgiveness as a family and discuss them together.

Note on severe offenses in a family:

It is unfortunate but sometimes there are severe offenses in a family. These can include things like abuse, belligerent intimidation, or something that has caused psychological or physical harm. The principles taught through this homework are intended for less severe offenses than these types of offenses. If there have been severe offenses within your family, work with your counselor to make wise decisions for your family what should be done to make a healthy family now.

REACH for forgiveness with Children

R- Remember the hurt. Especially young children may forget offenses very quickly and need help with their memory. At other times the offense may be small and forgotten easily, but still it is good to forgive and repair offenses as a principle of good relationships.

E- Empathize with the offender. The family member who offended is still a family member. Empathy is internally responding with emotions to another person by feeling their feelings and how sorry the offender is for the offense. Empathy is an important principle in a family that helps a family stay attached, loving and bonded with each other. Parents can encourage family members to empathize with each other by asking them to think about how the other person feels, and remember when they have felt similar feelings to their sibling or parent.

A- Altruistic gift. Forgiving is an altruistic gift. The offender doesn't necessarily deserve to be forgiven. Forgiving someone is a gift to that person, not something earned. This requires a humble attitude and trains children not to be entitled or self-centered.

C- Commit to forgive. The offended can make a decision to forgive and tell the family member that they have decided to forgive. The forgiveness can be a public one if the offense is a larger one. Within a family this can be easily done by telling a parent, or the family, that they have decided to forgive someone in the family for something that happened.

H- Hold onto forgiveness. Parents shouldn't require that children emotionally forgive. They can decide to forgive, and then work on **FEELING** forgiving over time thus holding onto the forgiveness. The offender can offer to do acts of kindness or willingly receive a punishment to help equal the justice scales in the family. Family members can hold onto forgiveness by remembering that they have forgiven each other in the past. They can remember how important the relationship with their family member is to them. They can intentionally try to have some positive time with that family member to help return the relationship to a positive one.

REACH for forgiveness with Children

Family Discussion Questions

1. What about the REACH principles for forgiving is easiest and hardest?

2. If your family were to use the REACH principles when there's been an offense, what would change in your family?

3. Think of a common family offense that goes on in your family- from both parents and children. This should be something everyone agrees is common in the family. Practice the REACH principles. It's recommended that a parent be the first example to be a role model and show children everyone follows the principles, not just children. This shouldn't be a negative experience but a chance to practice the REACH principles so everyone can understand.

For families with toddlers and preschoolers, discuss these principles as a couple and regularly look for opportunities to encourage empathy and the giving of forgiveness among young children.

