



Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation

The Institute for Family Violence Studies

Florida State University

APRIL EPRESS

QUESTIONS FROM DIRECTORS

When the court order directs a family to my program, can the parents mutually agree to change the visitation from on-site to off-site?

No, it's not a good idea to allow parents to make such a substantial change to a formal, written, court order. The judge who signed that court order clearly envisions that the supervised visitation will take place at a program. I would encourage you to go back to court and have the court order changed if the judge agrees to the change the parents want. This is probably different than minor changes that are consistent with the judge's order. For example, if the order says the visit should be from 2:00 to 4:00, but the parent can't deliver the child until 2:15, the court may not require a new or amended court order. However, the court should promptly be informed of *any* changes that either you or the parties make to the visitation schedule. And the general rule is, stick to the court order.

What is the definition of therapeutic visitation?

Therapeutic supervision is when mental health professionals provide therapy/counseling to the family during the visit. During regular non-therapeutic visitation, program staff facilitate and support the parent and the child relationship. Such interaction should not be construed to mean therapeutic intervention -- which rises to the level of a therapist-client relationship.

Therapeutic Supervision is the provision of therapeutic evaluation or therapeutic intervention to help improve the parent-child interactions. Therapeutic supervision may only be provided by order of the court and only by licensed mental health professionals who are also specifically trained to provide supervised visitation. (*Report to the FL. Legislature*)



It's that time again: if you have made any changes to your program address, contact information, or services, please email Morgan mlodes@fsu.edu

The Importance of Parent Empathy in Parent-Child Relationship

By Jaime Clark

Introduction

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person. The ability of a parent to empathize with their child has significant positive effects on a child's well-being. Children with empathetic parents are able to learn the skill of empathizing with others while feeling supported and understood by their parents. Parents can build on their ability to empathize in order to connect with and strengthen their relationship with their child. This E press article helps families build Protective Factor Number 1 and 6.

Objectives

This article will help parents and social service providers to understand:

- What empathy is and why it is important
- How parents can effectively empathize with their children
- The role of supervised visitation monitors in helping parents to be empathetic with their children

The Role of Empathy in the Parent-Child Relationship

Young children have many emotions that they feel intensely, though they may not understand them. They may scream, cry, kick, hit, or act out in a number of other ways to express these strong feelings. It is important that they feel heard, understood, supported, and loved through their outbursts. Parents have a greater understanding of emotions than children do, and must teach their children that their emotions are acceptable and normal. They also need to help their children work through their feelings so that their child feels validated and supported.

Empathetic Parents

Parents have an important role in developing a child's empathy. As the adult, parents should have the skills to navigate the interactions with their children with patience and understanding. These skills may not be developed in their children yet, so parents play an essential role in helping their child understand his or her emotions with sympathy and understanding in order to validate their feelings. This will also teach the child how to empathize with others. Here are a few ways parents can show empathy to their children:

- **Say, “I understand.”** Those key words will tell your child that they are not alone in their frustration and confusion.
- **Show empathy towards others.** They will copy your actions, so always be aware of how you are treating others.
- **Encourage communication** about your child’s thoughts and emotions. Ask them how they’re feeling and help them to identify other children’s feelings.
- **Engage in role play** with puppets or dolls to help your child understand a situation and how the other person might be feeling.
- **Be patient** with your child as they learn this new skill. It will likely take time and practice for your child to act with empathy.



Ways Parents Can Build on Their Empathy Skills



Parents are often exhausted and overwhelmed, just trying to make it through the day. Teaching a child to be empathetic may be the last thing on a parent’s mind. While there may be more immediate things to worry about, building on a child’s ability to empathize is an invaluable lesson that they will take with them forever. Being patient with a child and validating their feelings will teach the child to do the same for others. But many parents find it challenging to be

patient and calm when their child has a tantrum in combination with other life stressors. Empathy may be difficult to show at times, but it is a necessary skill for a healthy parent-child relationship.

Here are a few steps for parents to build on their empathy skills:

1. **Take a deep breath.** The world is not ending, and you are doing the best you can.
2. **Look inward.** You have the maturity and ability to control your emotions much easier than your child does. Remember that their anger or sadness is important and that you are in a role to comfort them.

- 3. Go to your child.** Get down to their level, look them in the eyes, and hold them. You will be able to better relate to their feelings and they will feel supported by you.
- 4. Focus on one thing at a time.** Be fully invested in your child during a meltdown. Stay with them and show them you care by not giving up on them.
- 5. Remember that your child's actions are not an attack on you.** They are just trying to understand their thoughts and feelings and are responding to the intense emotions they feel in the best way they know at this time in their lives.
- 6. Take care of yourself.** You need to be in control of your life and focus on self-care in order to effectively care for your child.
- 7. Learn to control your own emotions.** Practice positive self-talk and have patience with yourself. This will help you to feel better about your parenting and your ability to teach your child empathy.
- 8. Ask for help.** There is no shame in asking for help. If you have people in your life that you can turn to for support, let them help you.



Communicating with Parents About Empathy

Parents will often feel helpless when it comes to controlling their child's behavior. In supervised visitation sessions, monitors can empower parents to navigate their relationships with their children in a healthy and productive manner. Supervised visitation monitors should find out what specific problems the parents are facing and encourage them to take the

situation one step at a time. Review the above steps for showing empathy with parents and assess specific ways that they can apply those steps to their situation. Reassure parents that they are trying their best and explain to them that their child's emotions and outbursts are normal. Remind them to take care of themselves so that they can effectively take care of their children.

Case Scenario

A single mom of three expresses that she is exhausted and fed up with her kid's temper tantrums. She says that she does not feel like she is able to control them and ends up ignoring them completely. She feels like she has tried everything. The mom explains specifically how her youngest daughter never wants to take a bath and how it turns into a huge argument every night.

The visitation monitor discusses with the mother some steps she can take in such situations. He discusses the role of the parent in teaching and showing empathy and

also the role of the child and how children act out because they do not understand their emotions. He also explains to the mother how ignoring her children can send a message that their feelings do not matter. The monitor encourages the mother to take a deep breath, specifically during the bath situation, and to tell her daughter that she understands. He also suggests that the mom tell her daughter how sometimes she doesn't feel like taking a bath either. This will help the mother and daughter connect and it will show the daughter that her mom is listening and cares.

Conclusion

The interactions between parents and children have a significant impact on how children view the world and interact with others. Parents need to show their children empathy in order to allow them space to explore their feelings and discover their identity. By showing children empathy, they will in turn be able to identify emotions in others and show them empathy. Empathy is a vital component of healthy relationships and should be worked on and developed with the help of working professionals.

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Age Appropriate Expectations for Children: Videos

By Brittney Clemons

Introduction

When parents do not have age appropriate expectations for their child, it can create low-self-esteem in the child. Understanding what to expect from a child at each developmental stage will foster parental understanding and create an environment for children to grow into healthy, caring, and responsible adults. Below are videos that identify the developmental milestones of different age groups and what parents can expect during those specific developmental stages.

Toddlers



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZSjm0drIGM>

Run Time: 7:18

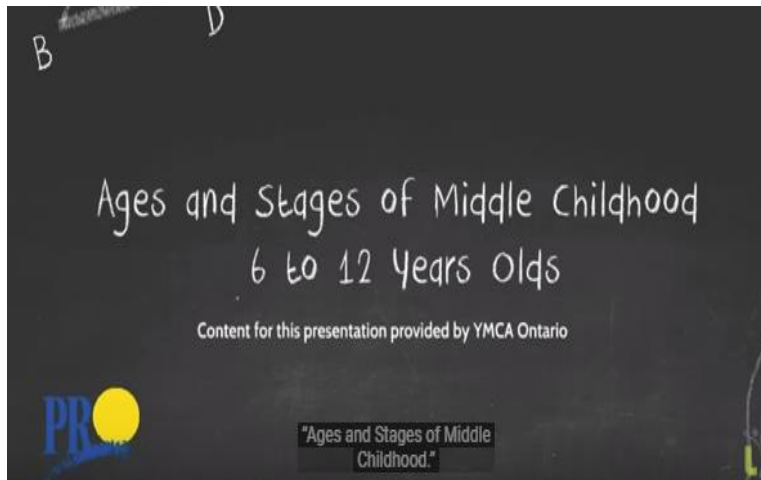
Lisa Shulman uses video of babies and toddlers to show the communication milestones expected in typically developing children. She also discusses what parents should do if they suspect their child is developmentally delayed.

Questions for Parents:

1. *Describe a typical 2-year-old's social engagement and attention to language:*
A: Two year olds demand attention and want to engage you constantly. In terms of attention to language, they understand the environment, complex directives, and other people's conversations.
2. *Describe what a typical 2-year-olds' communicative ability should look like?*

A: In terms of their communicative ability, they should have a vocabulary of two hundred words or more, should demonstrate many two-word (or longer) combinations, and should be able to use language for a wider range of purposes such as, to direct the activities of others or to comment. Their pretend play should also become more complex as their knowledge of concepts and ability to communicate grows.

Elementary School (6-12) Children



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtpiBtL_7zc

Run Time: 10:30

This video addresses the following: what middle childhood is, impacts on middle childhood, Maslow's theory of children's basic needs, and seven domains of development.

Questions for Parents:

1. *What is middle childhood?*
A: Middle childhood include children between 6-12 years old.
2. *What are some impacts of middle childhood?*
A: Some children have strong support systems and others have weak support systems. Some children are allowed to explore and others are not. All of these affect a child's development.
3. *What is Maslow's theory of children's basic needs?*
A: Maslow's theory is that a child's most basic needs must be met in order for him/her to achieve the higher needs and progress up the hierarchy.

Middle School Youth (13-14)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S05PBOldSeE>

Run Time: 29:02

In this video Charisse Nixon talks about the commonality of depressive episodes experienced by adolescents and how meaningful connections serve as protective factors in the lives of our youth. Nixon also shares her ideas on how we can help our youth build those meaningful connections.

Questions for Parents:

1. *What are contributing factors to depressive episodes experienced by adolescents?*
A: Adolescents struggle with perspective-taking, are consumed with self, feel more isolated and alone, are consumed with negativity, experience a time of loss, and struggle with identity.
2. *What is going on with adolescents biologically?*
A: Their brain is restructured during adolescence and will not be fully develop until 25. Due to an over active limbic system, which is responsible for controlling mood and basic emotions, adolescents have trouble controlling impulses, struggle with outbursts, and misread facial expressions.
3. *What are the 4 gems that promote and help adolescents maintain positive connections?*
A: Empathy, gratitude, forgiveness, and humility.

High School Youth (14-17)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxQj72d-0kE>

Run Time: 10:46

Amber Letcher talks with youth across South Dakota about developmental change.

Questions for Parents:

1. *What are some changes youth go through during adolescence?*
A: Their internal clock changes, they need more sleep (8-10 hours), they change the way they dress, some develop poor eating habits, some integrate their peer groups (boys and girls are friends), girls will reach their adult height by age 16, boys continue to grow until 18, some adolescents may change their hobbies and interests, and some may start dating.
2. *What may lead to increased adolescent/adult conflict?*
A: Due to the increase in their cognitive ability, adolescents may question the legitimacy of rules. Although this can be frustrating, it is helpful to think that the reason they are disagreeing is because their thinking abilities are advancing and developing at the correct pace.
3. *When conflict arise what should you do?*
A: When conflict arises its best to avoid lecturing, instead have a conversation and about his/her reasons for disagreeing. Youth respond best when they feel they have a voice.

Parenting Apps

By Elena Simonsen

Introduction

Need help with organizing your family's schedule? There's an app for that- and also for getting advice, having your children do their chores, managing your children's health, and many more parenting needs! Check out some of these free apps that you can download on a mobile device or tablet next time you need some quick outside resources for raising children!

Parentune



This app allows parents to get advice from experts as well as other parents on a variety of topics. Parents can search for information by filtering based on the child's age and the topic of interest. It is available for free on both iPhone and Android.

Cozi



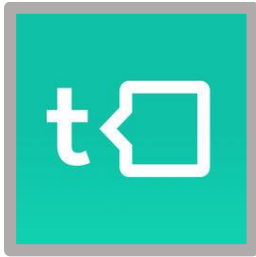
Need help keeping track of everything your family has going on? Download Cozi, an app that allows you to put all family members' schedules into a calendar, create grocery and to do lists, and even start a family journal! Each family member will have to sign up via email in order to use the app. It is available for free on both iPhone and Android.

PBS Play and Learn



This app isn't just games for your child- it tells parents how each activity benefits their children, and each game comes with an age-appropriate version! The app is also available in Spanish and is free to download on both iPhone and Android.

Talkspace



Parenting can be stressful. Sometimes parents can benefit from talking to a professional. Talkspace allows users to easily connect with a therapist, and allows users to communicate via text, audio, or video from any location. Users are connected to a therapist by the app and communicate any time; therapists typically respond once or twice per day. The app is free to download on both iPhone and Android, but there is a cost associated with using the service (starting at \$49/week).

Life360



Parents with older children may need assistance in keeping up with their children's locations. Life360 allows parents to track members of their family on a map. The app also allows family members to communicate with one another and sends out alerts

when members arrive at home, work, or school. It is available for free on both iPhone and Android.

Baby Tracker



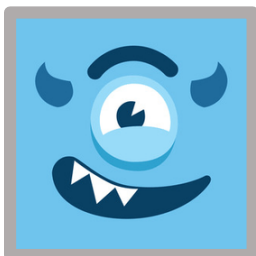
This app lets new moms track numerous aspects of their babies' health, including feeding, sleeping, and diaper-changing. Parents can create a chart for each of these aspects, and can create their own categories of things to keep track of. It is available for free on both iPhone and Android.

WebMD Baby



WebMD baby provides parents with access to the majority of the information on the WebMD site specifically for babies. Parents have access to videos from WebMD's pediatrician. It also allows parents to track things such as babies' sleep, eating, and growth. It is available for free on both iPhone and Android.

ChoreMonster and Mothership



Parents can make chores more enjoyable for their children using the app ChoreMonster! Parents can download the companion app Mothership to create chores for each of their children with point values and rewards for completing the chores.

Children will download the ChoreMonster app to see what chores they need to do now and in the near future, tell their parents they have done their chores, and view potential rewards for their chores. This app is available for free on both iPhone and Android.

Happy Kids Timer



Need help getting your child ready in the morning? This app allows you to do that-hands-free! Your child will carry the phone with him or her from room to room to complete a number of tasks that typically have to be done in the morning, such as making the bed and brushing his or her teeth. A timer is set for each activity, with a minimum and maximum time to complete the activity. After the child is done, he or she is rewarded with stars and a certificate! This app is available for free on both iPhone and Android.