Supporting Children Through Co-Parenting Strategies

Presenters:

Carla Smith Stover, Associate Professor
Yale University Child Study Center,
New Haven, Connecticut

Alicia E. La Hoz, Psy.D, Family Bridges,
Wheaton, Illinois
CoParenting Personas

• **Coparenting is:** an enterprise undertaken by one or more adults who together take on the care and upbringing of children for whom they share responsibility (McHale 2011).

• **Coparents can be:**
  - Divorced parents
  - Foster parents
  - Grand parents
  - Extended family member
  - Any other caregivers
In order to foster healthy emotional growth very young children coparenting adults must collaborate to create a steadfast framework

McaHale and Irace (2011)
Co-Parenting Focus

• Co-parenting is more associated with outcomes than marital/relationship satisfaction.

• Co-parenting relationships are distinct from intimate relationships!

• Parents will be co-parents no matter what happens to their intimate relationship.
Benefits of Positive Coparenting

• Coparenting influences relationship satisfaction (McHale, 1995; Van Egeren, 2004).

• Better psychosocial and behavioral outcomes for children (Lamela & Figueiredo, 2016; Martin et al., 2017).

• Improves outcomes for children even in families with a history of IPV/conflict (Fainsilber Katz & Low, 2004).

• Coparenting and IPV are modestly correlated with higher coparenting conflict and less support in families with IPV (Fainsilber Katz and Low, 2004).
CoParenting Interventions & Resources

- **Common Vision**
- **Communication**
- **Collaboration**

- **Story**
- **Resources:**
  - Podcasts
  - Apps
  - Books
  - Rule poster(s)
- **Workshops & Event(s)**
- **Coaching, Mentoring**
- **Journaling & Reflection**
Decisions About Raising Children

- Teaching children
  - Morals
  - Good behavior

- Decisions & Approach
  - Ways to respond to children's emotional needs
  - Discipline decisions
  - Educational decisions
  - Safety
  - Division of Labor
  - Family Management
Common Vision
Family Management

How do you help Parents in:

• Managing the household
• Finances
• Transportation
Communication
Ex: Division of Labor

Case Study: RUBY
- 6 year old diagnosed with ADHD
- Dad is reluctant to give her meds
- Dad is an artist
- Mom is an alcoholic who left the family and shows up erratically
- Dad still has feelings for her
- Ruby has a younger brother enrolled in head start program
- Ruby is unruly in the classroom
- Ruby’s behavior deteriorates after mom “visits” and leaves

If you are the Head Start Provider for Ruby’s brother, or the after school mentoring program for Ruby . . .
- How do you help Ruby’s parents manage the division of labor? How do they communicate these differences?

- Who does what when it comes to parenting the kids? How do you help them explain the differences in expectations?

- How does each coparent contribute to caring for and parenting the child?
Collaboration
How do You Help Parents Be Supportive?

How do you Help Parents be supportive of one another?

• Personal Responsibility
  • Ask: How you support the parenting of your child’s other coparent?

• Appreciate the Others Contribution
  • Ask: How does your child’s other coparent support you?

• Collaboration
  • Prescribe: When one coparent falls behind, does the other pick up the slack?
Focused Coparenting Consultation (FCC)

Stage 1: Heighten consciousness
Stage 2: Selective skill building
Stage 3: Guided enactments
Coparenting Consultation Topics

Consciousness Building
- Psychoeducation:
  - What is coparenting?
  - Why is coparenting important?
  - Where did we learn to coparent?
  - Why are fathers important? (Show your Love Video)

Skill Building:
- Focusing on Positive Communication
  - Giving compliments
- Communication Skills
  - Making “I” Statements
  - Active Listening
Coparenting Guided Enactment

• Coparenting Problem Solving

  • Examining a 24 hour day or area of coparenting difficulty (e.g. child exchange)
  • Problem solving difficulties in:
    • Support
    • Family Management
    • Division of Labor
    • Opinions about how to raise your children
Can Focused Coparenting Consultation work with:

- Fathers with history of domestic violence?
- Fathers with substance use problems?
- Fathers who are incarcerated?
Summary of Key Points about Coparenting

- Important for child development
- Possible in all family types
- Agencies and programs can provide information and skill building
- Remember the 3 C’s
  - Common Vision
  - Communication
  - Collaboration
Fanning the Fatherhood FIRE:
A National Fatherhood Summit
June 4-6, 2019 | Nashville, Tennessee

Stay in touch with us!

Contact Information:

Carla Smith Stover, Ph.D.
Carla.stover@yale.edu
@CsmithStover

Alicia La Hoz, Founder and CEO
alicia@familybridgesusa.org
Familybridgesusa.org