



## Penn State Better Kid Care Distance Education Lesson

# • Parents: Friends or Foes?

Professional Development Code K3C1  
Child Development Associate CDA 4

# Parents: Friends or Foes?

## Contents

- 1 Lesson Instructions
- 2 Important Information about This Lesson
- 3 Distance Education Lesson  
Overview and Objectives
- 4 Feelings about Parents
- 5 Exploring Your Feelings about Parents
- 6 The Challenge of Working with Parents
- 7 Understanding Parent Development
- 9 Parents Count
- 11 Discussion Questions

### **Assignments & Required Forms**

# Lesson Instructions

1. Watch the educational video.
2. Read the workbook.
  - Plan time each day to work on the lesson.
  - Set a goal to complete the lesson in about two weeks.
3. Complete all assignment pages and forms written in ink. Save a copy of all completed work for your files in case there is a need to refer to your saved copy. We will no longer return incomplete lessons. You will be notified if lessons are incomplete.
4. We encourage the use of distance education lessons in staff meetings; however, all assignments need to be completed independently. Copied answers, “does not apply” answers, or incomplete assignments are considered not complete.
5. **To avoid delays in processing your registration for this professional development, be sure to go over the check list on the Registration Form, include all items, and mail to :**

Penn State Better Kid Care  
 Distance Education Program  
 341 North Science Park Road, Suite 208  
 State College, PA 16803

## Please note:

- Two professional development hours will be given for successful completion of this lesson.
- Completed assignments will be checked and returned to you with a certificate of completion.
- Training developed by Penn State University Better Kid Care Distance Education provides:
  - Continuing Education Units (CEUs)
  - Keystone STARS professional development
  - PA Dept. of Public Welfare required hours
  - Act 48 hours for certified educators
  - Child Development Associate (CDA) credential hours
- Completed assignments must arrive at the Penn State Better Kid Care office for processing at least **6 weeks** before your certification or registration renewal due date.
- The video portion of this lesson was a previous satellite broadcast. Discussion questions are included in most lessons. They can be used by a group of staff members in a child care center or group home. They can also be used in planning a family night to help spark discussion among families.
- If you are completing this as a Web-based lesson, please refer to the online instructions at <http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu/AngelUnits/GeneralDirections.html>

## Parents: Friends or Foes?



### Important Information about This Lesson

Better Kid Care continually strives to improve the distance education materials we develop. The format of this distance education lesson is different from previous lessons. Be sure to have the handouts in the workbook ready to use with the video portion of the lesson. You will find that you are more actively involved as you complete three exercises that explore caregivers' feelings, attitudes, and biases. You will be encouraged to discuss your results in a group setting. If that is not possible, be thinking of how to apply what you are learning in your child care program.

After you have viewed the video and gone through the exercise handouts, you are ready to begin your assignments. The assignments will involve your active participation as you apply the goals learned in the lesson.

Mail **only** your completed assignments (**not the handouts**) and required forms to the Better Kid Care office for review. See Registration Form for a check list of all items.

# Parents: Friends or Foes?

## Distance Education Lesson Overview

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Think about the families of the children in your care. What do you think about them? What do you think about the way you raise their children? Be sure to think about positive things about each family.

"Caring for young children would be a great job, if you didn't have to work with parents," This is a common statement that is frequently heard in caregiver discussions. What is it about caregivers-parent communication that makes it so difficult? Following our new format, there will be three exercises to complete along with the video portion of this lesson as a guided exploration of your feelings, attitudes, and biases. Take time to reflect on your responses to the exercises and learn from the parent-caregiver scenarios presented.

If you are completing this lesson with a group of caregivers, please remember that confidentiality is important. Change the names of the children and families as you talk about them in your discussions.

## Distance Education Lesson Objectives

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- Participants in this distance education lesson will be able to identify their own feelings about working with parents.
- Participants in this distance education lesson will be able to talk about common feelings of parents who have children at difficult development stages.
- Participants in this distance education lesson will be able to describe their own feelings and what parents may be feeling in a problem situation.



## Feelings about Parents

It's normal for child care providers to have mixed feelings about parents. The checklist below has a number of common feelings experienced by child care providers. Check off the feelings you've experienced.

|   |  |                          |
|---|--|--------------------------|
| Do you feel really valued and appreciated by families?                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you feel that parents look down on you?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you feel that you do a good job at meeting the needs of children and their families? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you feel that parents are rude to you?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you feel that parents learn from you?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you dislike the way some parents handle their children?                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you feel respected by parents?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you feel frustrated by parents?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you feel that you can work like a team with parents?                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you dread seeing or talking with parents?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you feel that parents really listen to you?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you feel that parents take advantage of you?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you make friends with parents?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you get angry with parents?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you have fun with parents?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> |



# Exploring Your Feelings about Parents

Answer these questions to explore your feelings about parents.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Do you feel really valued and appreciated by families?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Do you feel that parents should stay at home with their child(ren) or work fewer hours?               | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Do you ever dislike the way a parent handles her child?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have you ever felt concern for the long-term well-being of a child because of problems in his family? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is it hard for you to form a relationship with a parent whose choices you don't agree with?           | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Can you put aside your feelings and accept families as they are and not how you want them to be?      | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

## The Challenge of Working with Parents

Learn more about yourself and what you already know about working with parents. Use these questions to identify areas you might want to learn more about to help you with your work.

|  | Needs<br>work  | What needs to be done? |
|--|--|------------------------|
| Do you find it easier to work with the children than to work with the parents?   | <input type="checkbox"/>                             |                        |
| Do you know the stages of parent development?  | <input type="checkbox"/>                             |                        |
| Have you compared the stages of parent development with the stages of development for children in your care?   | <input type="checkbox"/>                             |                        |
| Can you put aside judgmental feelings when working or talking with parents?  | <input type="checkbox"/>                             |                        |
| Can you be assertive and stand up for yourself in a positive way?  | <input type="checkbox"/>                             |                        |
| Do you expect conflict to happen with parents?<br>Are you afraid of conflict?  | <input type="checkbox"/>                             |                        |
| Do you accept that parents are the most important adults in the lives of their children?   | <input type="checkbox"/>                             |                        |
| Have you learned about the cultures of the children and the families in your program?<br>Are there differences in the ways that children are raised in those cultures vs. the way you were raised? | <input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/> |                        |
| Do you have some skills for handling conflict?   | <input type="checkbox"/>                             |                        |
| What do you do on a daily basis to build relationships with parents?   | <input type="checkbox"/>                             |                        |
| What have you learned about working with parents in the time you have worked with children?  | <input type="checkbox"/>                             |                        |

# Understanding Parent Development

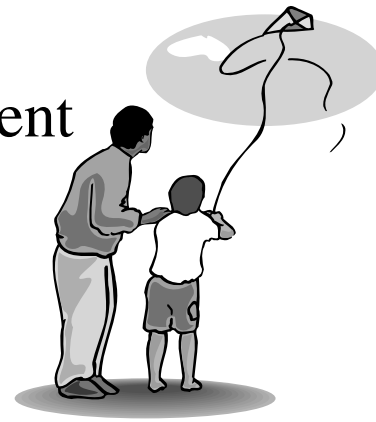
Did you know that parents grow in stages, just like children? Most child care providers have learned about stages of child development, but few have learned about parent development. When you understand the ways that parents develop, you can better understand the special concerns of a parent with a child at a particular age, and can use this understanding to form better relationships with them. When you have a good relationship with a parent you can work together with them to meet the needs of their child.

## Image-Making Stage

The first stage of parent development actually happens before the child is born or adopted. The major task of this stage is preparing for parenthood. This is when parents imagine themselves and their new child — taking the baby out in the stroller, or playing baseball. Through these images parents prepare themselves for their new role and for the changes in their relationships with other family members. They begin to attach to the unborn baby and to ready themselves for the baby's entry into their lives.

## Issues in the Image-Making Stage

Most people have little practical experience with babies before they become parents, and few people have memories of their own childhoods before the age of 5. So during the early months of a child's life the parent is coming to terms with a reality that might not match the image. You may meet parents in this stage, looking for child care when they are expecting. One wise child care center director says that she patiently answers them questions of expecting parents but then warns them that she expects them to have many new questions when they come back after their baby is home. She said that many of them remember and laugh and say, "Yes, you were right!"



## Building a Strong Relationship with Parents in the Image-Making Stage

Help parents connect with other families already in the program with young babies. You might invite them to a family fun day or another time when other parents might be around. Building supportive friendships can help ease this period, and most people are eager to find new friends for themselves and their children at this time. Share articles on child development to help parents gain a more realistic understanding of caring for young children.

## The Nurturing Stage

This stage begins once the child has arrived. Often the reality of parenting doesn't match the images that the parent had earlier, and this becomes a time of adjusting to the reality of the child and the work of caring for a young child. During this stage parents are answering the question, "What type of nurturer am I?" Accepting their new role, parents have to enlarge their relationships to include the baby.

## Issues in the Nurturing Stage

Most commonly, women go back to work and place their children in child care while they are in the nurturing stage. It may not fit their sense of themselves as nurturers to be away from their child during the day. Many women feel so unsure about this they may wait until the last minute to arrange child care before returning to work —unrealistically expecting to be able to arrange child care in one day. Many women find themselves thinking about their child all day long while at work. At this stage women can be very sensitive to criticisms. When a parent's sense of self is just developing it may seem like a criticism if you do things differently

# Understanding Parent Development (continued)

than they do. You may be able to soothe, comfort, or feed a baby more effectively than a parent can. This is common because the child often spends more waking hours with you than with their parents, so you have more of a chance to learn to read the child's signals. But this can be a source of pain to a parent, who is wondering if they are good at taking care of their child.

## Building a Strong Relationship with Parents in the Nurturing Stage

It can help during this stage if you talk with the parent as the expert on their child and share anything you notice about the way the child communicates with you so that the parent can benefit from these insights. Share information about the child's day. Parents are especially interested in the "big three": sleeping, eating, and diapering. Allow parents to share with you developmental milestones, even if you might have noticed them first.

## The Authority Stage

As their baby grows into a toddler, the parent needs to take on a new role: that of disciplinarian. Parents have to determine what type of limits they are going to set and how they are going to enforce them. They often think about the ways their parents disciplined them during their youth and how friends and family members are handling their children. This is a stage when parents are very interested in comparing themselves to others. They can sometimes be judgmental during this time of discovering what style of discipline feels right to them.

## Issues in the Authority State

Parents may feel that you are asking too much or too little of their child and that your discipline is not appropriate. They could become angry quickly, feeling sensitive about the "right" way to treat their child. This can be a stage that leads to conflict —

often it flares up over small incidents. One family became angry at their caregiver for asking their child to put his coat in his cubby before playing, feeling that this was too much for a toddler to be expected to do.

## Building a Strong Relationship with Parents in the Authority Stage

You can help during this stage by sharing child development information and articles about discipline and guidance. Consider hosting an evening to talk about disciplining toddlers. Share with parents your goals for the toddlers in your care. This can help them learn to see the small steps of progress that their child is making and to feel more confident that their child is thriving in your care.

## The Interpretive Stage

As their child leaves the early childhood years and moves on to kindergarten, parents evaluate their own theories of child rearing and parenthood. They begin to form images of the future when their child enters elementary school. During this stage they are more willing to consider that there are many successful ways to raise children.

## Issues in the Interpretive Stage

As children develop a wider world of friends during the preschool period, parents need help navigating the wider world. They may need help with transitioning their child to elementary school.

## Building a Strong Relationship with Parents in the Interpretive stage

Help parents get to know their child even better. Share stories that show parents the strengths of their child and what draws out the best in their child.

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Developed by the Penn State Better Kid Care Program

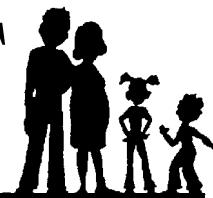
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Dr. James E. Van Horn, Better Kid Care Program Director, Lyn Horning, Assistant Director of Programs



# PARENTS COUNT

## PRACTICAL TIPS FOR PARENTS



### Things Child Care Providers Want to Hear from Parents

Young children are just learning to communicate and are not yet able to tell us things that are important for their care. They often can't tell us directly that they have a tummy ache or that they are feeling stressed. For many children, problems come out in indirect ways. Stress can come out as misbehaviors or withdrawal, and it can be hard to figure out exactly what's going on. To complicate things, children are changing rapidly during the early years, and it can be difficult to determine if the behaviors are simply a new stage or are a sign of troubles.

This is one reason why communication is so important. It helps if your child care provider knows about changes in family life: a new job, extra overtime, a move, family visiting. Both positive and negative stresses affect your child's behavior. If your child care provider knows about this, she can respond more wisely to behavior changes. You don't need to share any information that is private, but knowing that the family is facing special circumstances can help your child care provider better meet the needs of your child.

Let your provider know about any changes in your child's behavior—from increased misbehavior to changes in eating. Sometimes the same behaviors are seen at child care and sometimes not; either way, knowing about these changes can help a child care provider better understand your child.

It also helps to know about changes in sleeping or health. If your child is more tired than usual or had a poor night of

sleep, let your child care provider know. She can adjust her expectations when she knows your child is tired or not feeling well.

There are many other things that can be helpful to know. One child care provider had many conversations with a child about her special friend "Momo." She was quite surprised and a little embarrassed when she discovered that "Momo" was an imaginary friend.

Sharing information about your child's life can help your child care provider understand your child better and can help ensure that your child's true needs are being met. Most of all, it can improve the quality of care for your child.



# What Is the Simplest Way to Improve Your Child's Behavior?



What can you do to improve your child's behavior that is free, easy, and good for the health of everyone in your family? Going for a family walk! Children benefit from the exercise and the stress release. This tends to improve their behavior because when children have pent-up energy and feel stressed they often misbehave. Studies have found that walking can be a great way for adults to get exercise and to manage their stress. So put on your sneakers and head out the door to a better way of life.

## Bedtime Routines

Do you dread bedtimes? Many parents of young children do. Often tired young children become wild and silly and misbehave at this time of day. Sometimes they become so worked up it is hard for them to calm down and sleep. In many households, bedtime is a very stressful time of day. The secret to a successful bedtime is *routine*.

Here's a routine that not only works well with most children, but is also great for them. The best bedtime routine has four important parts:

**1** A warm, relaxing bath. Warm baths calm children down and relax them. Supervise young children in the bath at all times.

**2** The caregiving routine: time to put on jammies and brush teeth. This is a time for some extra love and attention. A special cuddle or hug can make this time warm and loving.

**3** Then it is time to read. Reading aloud to your child is the most important part of the day. As well as being a calming activity, it's the best way you can prepare your child for success in school and in life. After all:

*The more you read,  
The more you know.  
The more you know,  
The smarter you grow.  
The smarter you grow,  
The stronger your voice  
When speaking your mind  
Or making your choice.*

**4** Then dim the lights, put on a nightlight, and settle your child for sleep.

This routine has it all: something to calm and relax your child, something for her mind, and plenty of love. These are all the things children really need.



## Discussion Questions

1. When you work with children you need to build partnership with parent. Discuss why you might do this.
2. How do you work to create a feelings of partnership rather than a judgemental relationship?
3. Talk about parents of infants and some of the feelings that are common among these families.
4. Talk about parents of toddlers and some of the common feelings among these families.
5. Talk about parents of school-age children and the common feelings among families.
6. Talk about the value of daily communication about little things.
7. Talk about how you can be prepared for conflict with parents.
8. Parents can sometimes be afraid that a caregiver will turn their anger at them against their child. When these feelings are unrecognized, how can this affect the relationship between the caregiver and the parent?
9. Why does it help to expect conflict?
10. Talk about the importance of mutual respect and agreeing to disagree.



# Assignments

|                |
|----------------|
| Name           |
| Address        |
| City/State/ZIP |
| County         |
| Phone Number   |

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**Think about families of the children in your care. What do you think about them? What do you think about the way they raise their children? Do the feelings and judgements you have about these families work to help you create barriers or build bonds in the relationship?**

1. Do you think there is more you can do to build a better relationship with the families of the children in your care?

Yes – How will you do this? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

No – please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Describe a time when understanding the feelings and thoughts of a parent helped you turn conflict into understanding.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What do you do to help yourself see things from the parent's perspective?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# Assignments (continued)

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Name

4. How do you make yourself available to parents when they need to talk?

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5. Tyler has been biting; it has happened five times in the last month. You have invited Tyler's parent in to meet with you and to discuss this problem. What are these parents thinking and feeling on their way to this meeting?

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6. Why is understanding parent development helpful to you as a caregiver?

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7. Describe a concern or a problem that you need to discuss with a parent.

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How do you feel about the problem and discussing it with the parent(s)?

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# Assignments (continued)

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Name

Where do you think this parent is in the Stages of Parent Development?  
(See workbook page #8 – Understanding Parent Development)

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How could the stage of parent development affect this parent's feelings about the problem?

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Discuss the problem with the parent and describe what happened and what was said.

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Would you do anything differently if you could do it over again?

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Describe what you would do differently.

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# Tell Us More About You...

Since we can't meet face to face, we are interested in knowing more about you. This information is very helpful to the early education specialists who review your assignments. Please return this sheet with your assignment pages.

1. Which of the following best describes you?

- I provide child care in my own home
- I provide child care in someone else's home
- I work in a child care center
- I'm thinking about becoming a child care provider
- Other, please describe

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2. How long have you been a child care professional? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What are the ages of the children in your care? Check all that apply.

- Birth to 12 months
- 13-24 months
- 25-36 months
- 3 years
- 4-5 years
- 6-8 years
- 9 years and over
- Special needs

4. Please feel free to tell us a little about yourself and/or the work you do with children.

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5. Other comments (please use the back of this page if necessary).

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**Thank you for taking the time to help us make a connection to you  
and for being part of our program!**



**Penn State  
Better Kid Care Program**

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Web site: [www.betterkidcare.psu.edu](http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu)

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