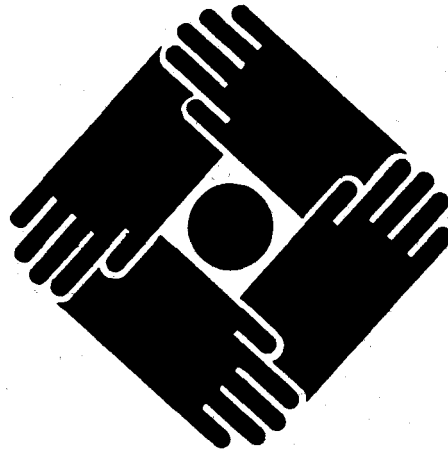


**WORKING TOGETHER:  
THE PARENT/PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIP**



**Families As Allies Project  
Research and Training Center on Family Support  
and Children's Mental Health  
Regional Research Institute for Human Services  
Portland State University**

**WORKING TOGETHER:  
THE PARENT/PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIP**

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## INTRODUCTION

Almost every article or book about the treatment of children with emotional handicaps mentions the need for professionals and parents to work together to help the children. Unfortunately, there are a number of obstacles to developing an effective collaborative relationship between parents and professionals. Many professionals have trouble setting aside their training and background to take a fresh look at the contributions parents can make. Because of the widespread acceptance of psychoanalytic theory, which emphasized the parents' (particularly the mother's) influence on the development of emotional problems, many professionals view parents as the source of the problem and as a barrier to the solution. Family systems theory, which gained popularity in the 1950's and 1960's, also targeted the family and its interactions as the cause of the family member's mental illness. Further, many mental health professionals, because of their professional experience working with abusive and neglectful families, have a tendency to look at parents as the cause of problems in their children. These negative experiences with families, coupled with academic training that stressed family interactions as a cause of mental illness, have made it difficult for many professionals to suspend judgment and view parents of children with emotional handicaps as potentially helpful resources in solving their children's problems.

Parents, for their part, have frequently developed negative attitudes toward professionals. Some parents, because they are highly stressed by the situation created by their emotionally disturbed child, are touchy and defensive. Their own feelings are confused and sometimes their understandably heightened emotional state stands in the way of cool judgment. Other parents experience such a feeling of shame and guilt that their self-esteem is demolished. They have trouble facing professionals, let alone working with them. Other parents are angry and frustrated because the services they need for their children are not available. Sometimes this anger and frustration spills over into their relationships with professionals.

There are good reasons why a working relationship between parents and professionals is difficult to establish, but there are also compelling arguments for confronting the obstacles to such a relationship. Parents have strong needs for information, effective treatment plans, and supportive services. Professionals can use information from parents to get a sense of the history and complexity of the child's severe emotional problems. Most importantly, parents live with the daily impact of their child's difficulties. No amount of professional knowledge and experience can duplicate the parents' personal involvement with their child. The potential for effective treatment for the child is greatly enhanced if parents and professionals recognize each other's value and view each other as allies with significant contributions to make in helping the child.

This workshop -- *Working Together: The Parent/Professional Partnership* -- is specifically designed for a combined audience of parents of children with emotional handicaps and professionals in the mental health and special education fields. It moves rather quickly from confronting the tensions between parents and professionals to working together as teams. This format has been

developed through trial and error and evolved after some dismal failures. Duplication of the successes this format has elicited requires that future presenters keep in mind the following prerequisites and assumptions:

1. The participants in the workshop should be there because they want to be. The workshop will not be successful if either the parents or the professionals feel they have been forced to participate.

2. The participants, by electing to join in workshop activities, should have some personal commitment to the idea that there is value in parents and professionals working together as equally valuable members of a planning team. The workshop should be advertised as an experience for those who are interested in making parent/professional partnerships work.

Individuals with extremely negative attitudes are not going to change their attitudes as the result of a one-day workshop. However, individuals with some preliminary commitment to the concept of a partnership are more likely to be open to the changes which the workshop activities can foster.

3. The presenter/facilitator for the workshop must be an individual who:
- (a) Has established stature with both parents and professionals;
  - (b) Has strong knowledge of the local service system and local conditions in the mental health field;
  - (c) Has empathy for the needs and desires of parents and a realistic understanding of the roles of professionals;
  - (d) Has experience with drawing out and dealing with group responses;
  - (e) Has a personal concept of emotional disorders that does not lay blame on parents.

## WORKSHOP FORMAT

The workshop has been carefully designed to provide quality interactions between parents and professionals that may affect their attitudes toward each other in a relatively short period of time. For this format to be effective, presenters must adhere rigidly to the following requirements:

1. Participants in the workshop must be equally divided between parents and professionals;
2. The number of participants must be no fewer than 12 and no more than 40 (in multiples of 4);
3. The suggested configurations of the group must be followed for each activity (e.g. team, individual, whole group, etc.).

Overall, the format of the workshop allows a venting of the feelings parents and professionals may have about each other, and then moves beyond feelings to demonstrate the ways that parents and professionals can work together as a team. The workshop makes a full circle, starting with self-analysis, moving through group and team work and back to self-analysis.

The workshop is designed to be led by one individual, rather than a representative from the parents and one from the professionals. The role of the presenter throughout the workshop is to continue to emphasize the commonalities between the groups and the gains to be had from cooperation.

## WORKING TOGETHER: THE PARENT/PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIP

**GOAL:** To identify the basis for understanding and cooperation between professionals and parents of emotionally handicapped children.

### OBJECTIVES:

- 1.1 To identify perceptions that parents and professionals have of each other;
- 1.2 To identify stresses on parents and professionals;
- 1.3 To identify the basis for cooperation between parents and professionals;
- 1.4 To discover obstacles to cooperation;
- 1.5 To demonstrate and practice effective listening techniques;
- 1.6 To practice team decision-making;
- 1.7 To discover the match between parent needs and professional roles;
- 1.8 To examine attitudes of parents and professionals toward each other;

### ACTIVITY AGENDA:

8:30 - 8:45	Coffee/Informal Gathering	WHOLE GROUP
8:45 - 9:00	Introduction/Agenda Overview	WHOLE GROUP
9:00 - 9:15	Self-Analysis Questionnaire	INDIVIDUAL
9:15 - 10:15	Sources of Feelings	TWO GROUPS
10:15 - 10:30	BREAK	
10:30 - 11:30	Approaches to Cooperation	TEAMS/WHOLE GROUP
11:30 - 12:00	Techniques of Listening	PARTNERS
12:00 - 1:15	LUNCH	
1:00 - 1:15	Video: Parent/Professional Interview	WHOLE GROUP
1:15 - 2:00	Messages to Avoid	TEAMS/WHOLE GROUP
2:00 - 2:15	BREAK	
2:15 - 2:30	Self-Analysis	INDIVIDUAL
2:30 - 3:00	Roles of Professionals/ Needs of Parents	TWO GROUPS/WHOLE GROUP
3:00 - 3:30	Changes of Heart	WHOLE GROUP
3:30 - 4:00	Conclusions/Resources Evaluation	WHOLE GROUP

## INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

### Materials Needed

Coffee, tea, juice  
Cream, sugar  
Paper cups, napkins, coffee spoons

Name Tags

Agendas

VCR, video tape

### Time Needed to Complete Introductory Activities

(15 min.) Activity A: Coffee/Informal Gathering

(15 min.) Activity B: Introduction/Agenda Overview

### Activity A: Coffee/Informal Gathering

**WHOLE GROUP**

**Purpose:** To establish a friendly atmosphere

**Preparation:** Have name tags made in advance for all participants with some blank ones as spares. Distinguish between name tags for parents and professionals in some inconspicuous fashion (eg. placing colored stickers on the tags). Try to find out a little information about each participant so you can greet them personally.

Well in advance of the workshop, assemble all the handouts for the workshop into participant packets. Folders with pockets are helpful for keeping the papers straight.

Have available one large newsprint tablet and set of markers for each 4-person team. Also, be prepared with a roll of masking tape to mount newsprint sheets on the wall.

Arrive at least one hour early to prepare coffee and make other arrangements for refreshments. Be sure that the video machine needed for the afternoon session is ready for operation and that the video is rewound.

Fifteen minutes before the workshop is to begin, make sure you are finished with your preparations and ready to greet participants as they arrive.

**Activity:** Participants register, receive their name tags and packets, and have the opportunity to enjoy refreshments and meet each other.

**Facilitator's Role:** Make a point of circulating among the new arrivals, introducing yourself and greeting those individuals whom you know. Try to make sure that no participant is left standing alone.

**Activity B: Introduction/Agenda Overview**

**WHOLE GROUP**

**Purpose:** To explain the nature and format of the workshop

**Preparation:** Make an outline of remarks to be made to the whole group.

**Activity:** The facilitator introduces himself/herself and reviews the workshop agenda, highlighting such housekeeping details as location of bathrooms, breaks, luncheon opportunities, nearest telephone, etc.

**Facilitator's Role:** Establish from the beginning your credentials for leading this group. Let the audience know about your experience and background. Indicate in every way you can your personal interest in them and your respect for them, whether they are parents or professionals.

Emphasize that the day's schedule is full and that activities will move quickly. At the close of your introduction reiterate the overall goal for the workshop.

## SELF-ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE

### Materials Needed

Questionnaires (located in participant packets)

Pencils

### Time Needed to Complete the Activity

(5 min.) Explanation

(10 min.) Completion Time

### INDIVIDUAL

**Purpose:** To allow each participant a chance to think about his or her needs and roles in a parent/professional partnership.

**Preparation:** Copies of the Self-Analysis Questionnaire are in participant packets. There are two versions of the questionnaire -- one for parents and one for professionals.

**Activity:** Participants fill out questionnaires and save them in their own packets.

**Facilitator's Role:** In a low key manner, explain the directions for filling out the questionnaire. Suggest that individuals respond from their own experience and with the views they hold now. Reassure participants that they need not share their answers with anyone else.

Fill out a questionnaire yourself, but be available for questions if there are any.

## PROFESSIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

1. As a professional working with parents of children with emotional handicaps, my primary roles are (choose 3)

- \_\_\_\_\_ providing information about emotional handicaps;
- \_\_\_\_\_ making referrals to appropriate services;
- \_\_\_\_\_ providing direct service to the child;
- \_\_\_\_\_ providing emotional support to families;
- \_\_\_\_\_ analyzing the family's needs;
- \_\_\_\_\_ teaching parenting skills;
- \_\_\_\_\_ teaching behavior modification skills;
- \_\_\_\_\_ providing crisis counseling to family members;
- \_\_\_\_\_ providing personal counseling to parents;
- \_\_\_\_\_ providing information about financial resources.

2. Agree or disagree with the following statements.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Parents' behavior is often one of the causes of a child's emotional or behavioral problems.
- \_\_\_\_\_ When giving advice to parents, it is as important for professionals to be supportive as it is for them to be clinically correct.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Experiences in early childhood are a critical factor in the later development of emotional handicaps.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Help for children with emotional handicaps must be considered a long-term effort.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A major professional responsibility is insuring that parents are decision-makers in planning their child's treatment program.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Children's behavior and individual personality characteristics strongly affect the way their parents treat them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The greatest need of parents of emotionally disturbed children is for training from professional experts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Youth with emotional handicaps are often pathologically dependent on their families.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Parents need to read the same materials on mental illness that professionals read.

\_\_\_\_\_ It is critical that parents learn to be advocates for themselves and their children in the service system.

\_\_\_\_\_ With current knowledge, a lasting cure for most mental illnesses is an unlikely possibility.

\_\_\_\_\_ It is okay for parents and professionals to disagree as long as they demonstrate respect for each other.

\_\_\_\_\_ Parent participation in therapy should be a requirement if their child is going to receive treatment.

\_\_\_\_\_ Families of emotionally disturbed children have a responsibility to provide an environment that will create less stress for the child and will provide more support.

\_\_\_\_\_ It is not surprising that some families of children with emotional problems become dysfunctional due to the multiple stresses family members experience.

## PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. As a parent of a child with emotional handicaps, my strongest needs are for (choose 3):

- \_\_\_\_\_ direct services to my child;
- \_\_\_\_\_ information about emotional handicaps;
- \_\_\_\_\_ personal counseling for myself;
- \_\_\_\_\_ emotional support;
- \_\_\_\_\_ respite care for my child with an emotional disturbance;
- \_\_\_\_\_ referral to services for my child;
- \_\_\_\_\_ information about parenting skills;
- \_\_\_\_\_ information about behavior modification;
- \_\_\_\_\_ crisis counseling for family members;
- \_\_\_\_\_ information about financial resources to pay for services.

2. Agree or disagree with the following statements.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Parents' behavior is often one of the causes of a child's emotional or behavior problems.
- \_\_\_\_\_ When giving advice to parents, it is as important for professionals to be supportive as it is for them to be clinically correct.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Experiences in early childhood are a critical factor in the later development of emotional handicaps.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Help for children with emotional handicaps must be considered a long-term effort.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A major professional responsibility is insuring that parents are decision-makers in planning their child's treatment program.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Children's behavior and individual personality characteristics strongly affect the way their parents treat them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The greatest need of parents of emotionally disturbed children is for training from professional experts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Youth with emotional handicaps are often pathologically dependent on their families.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Parents need to read the same materials on mental illness that professionals read.

- \_\_\_\_\_ It is critical that parents learn to be advocates for themselves and their children in the service system.
- \_\_\_\_\_ With current knowledge, a lasting cure for most mental illnesses is an unlikely possibility.
- \_\_\_\_\_ It is okay for parents and professionals to disagree as long as they demonstrate respect for each other.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Parent participation in therapy should be a requirement if their child is going to receive treatment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Families of emotionally disturbed children have a responsibility to provide an environment that will create less stress for the child and will provide more support.
- \_\_\_\_\_ It is not surprising that some families of children with emotional handicaps become dysfunctional due to the multiple stresses family members experience.

## SOURCES OF FEELINGS

### Materials Needed

2 strips of paper per participant

Newsprint tablets for each group

Sets of markers

Clear tape

### Time Needed to complete the Activity

(10 min.)      Sharing

(20 min.)      Group Discussion

### Activity A: Sharing

### TWO GROUPS

**Purpose:** To give group members an opportunity to get to know one another.

**Preparation:** Divide the large group into 2 subgroups: parents and professionals. (If the subgroups have more than 12 members, divide them again into smaller groups, but keep parents separate from professionals.)

**Activity:** In the parent group(s), ask members to sit in a circle and go around the circle once giving their names and the name and age of their child with emotional handicaps. Then ask members to share a strength or accomplishment of their emotionally disturbed child. If anyone doesn't wish to participate, saying "pass" is an option.

In the professional group, ask members to sit in a circle and go around the circle once giving their names and telling a little about their jobs. Then ask members to share what they find most satisfying about their jobs. Anyone who doesn't wish to participate may "pass."

**Facilitator's Role:** Give directions for the sharing activity, explaining particularly the "pass" option. Observe each group's progress.

## **Activity B: Sentence Completion**

## **TWO GROUPS**

**Purpose:** To express feelings and the origins of feelings that parents and professionals have about each other.

**Preparation:** Prepare newsprint poster for each group that includes these sentences to complete:

**Parent Group:**

Professionals make me angry when. . .

I appreciate professionals who. . .

**Professional Group:**

Parents make me angry when. . .

I appreciate parents who. . .

**Activity:**

**Parent Group:**

Parents supply endings to the statement: "Professionals make me angry when (e.g. ". . . they talk down to me" or "they blame me for my child's problems"). After making whatever comments the parent wishes to make, he or she writes the ending on a paper strip and tapes it to the poster. Another parent volunteers a different ending and the process continues until all parents who wish to participate have spoken and contributed their ending.

Turning to the second poster, parents provide endings to the statement, "I appreciate professionals who. . ."

**Professional Group:**

Professionals supply endings to the statement: "Parents make me angry when. . ." using the same procedure as described for the parent group.

Professionals provide endings to the statement, "I appreciate parents who. . ."

**Facilitator's Role:** Suggest that tensions between parents and professionals are often the result of underlying feelings. This exercise provides an opportunity to express feelings in a group whose members may have similar feelings. Explain the procedures, emphasizing that each person is to contribute a unique response.

While the groups do the sentence completion, circulate between them to observe:

- (a) if some participant is dominating the conversation, or
- (b) if the conversation has bogged down or turned unnecessarily negative.

Intervene only to stimulate participation or to curb dominance by one or two individuals. Notify the groups when it is time to go on to the second statement. Warn groups when time is running out for the activity.

**Activity C: Sharing**

**WHOLE GROUP**

**Purpose:** To share information from both groups in a non-threatening way.

**Preparation:** None

**Activity:** One member from each of the groups goes to the other group and displays the sentence completion posters from his/her group. The spokesperson reads the poster aloud. No comments on the statements are permitted, but members may ask questions of clarification.

**Facilitator's Role:** Explain sharing of the sentence completion posters. Monitor sharing to limit comments that may be argumentative or defensive. Questions of clarification are acceptable. Praise efforts and announce break. The break allows time for feelings to dissipate.

## APPROACHES TO COOPERATION

### Materials Needed

Large newsprint tablets for each team

Sets of markers for each team

### Time Needed to Complete the Activity

(30 min.) Team Discussion

(15 min.) Whole Group Sharing

### Activity A: Winners' Circle

### TEAMS OF FOUR

**Purpose:** To identify successful strategies for collaboration between parents of emotionally disturbed children and professionals.

**Preparation:** For each of the newsprint tablets prepare four sheets with questions and topics as appear below:

**WINNERS' CIRCLE**  
What would an effective collaboration model look like?

What is working for us?

What are the greatest obstacles to collaboration?

What steps need to be taken to put us in the Winners' Circle?

**Activity:** The whole group is divided into teams of four, with two parents and two professionals on each team. Each team is given 45 minutes to explore the following issues:

What would an effective collaborative model for parents and professionals look like?

What is working for effective collaboration?

What obstacles are there to collaboration?

What steps need to be taken to implement effective collaboration?

The team discussion is to follow a particular pattern. Each member of the team must present at least one idea that is recorded as part of the team's response to the discussion questions. In other words, the team's response is not to be the work of one person or of just the professionals or just the parents. There must be a team response with identifiable input from each member of the team.

Each team should choose a recorder to write the agreed upon team responses to each of the discussion questions.

**Facilitator's Role:**

1. Divide the group into teams of four -- two parents and two professionals;
2. Point out that the groups have 45 minutes to answer all four questions and that they will have to move quickly from one topic to another. They can go back to questions at the end if they have extra time, but should be sure to cover all four questions before the time runs out. The time for this exercise is purposely short, which should focus the discussion and make the teams intolerant of discussion that is not to the point.
3. Explain each of the discussion questions, making the following points:
  - (a) We are here because we believe collaboration between parents of emotionally disturbed children and professionals is potentially valuable. What would constitute an effective collaboration model?
  - (b) There are things about us as parents and professionals that will make collaboration possible. What strengths do we have? How will working together be beneficial?
  - (c) What obstacles to collaboration are there? Try to emphasize system-wide kinds of problems rather than specific problems of particular parents or professionals. For example, one obstacle might be the Freudian training of many mental health professionals. Another obstacle might be the "shopping behavior" of parents.
  - (d) What steps need to be taken to put us in the Winners' Circle (help us to develop effective models of collaboration)? Emphasize coming up with specific, realistic, practical steps rather than global solutions. For example, the possibility of more effective collaboration might be enhanced by a professional being willing to suspend judgment about a parent and concentrate on the needs of

the child as a primary consideration. Suggestions in this discussion should address doing something about the obstacles mentioned in the previous discussion.

4. Circulate among the teams as they discuss the issues. Give them feedback about the time frame for this exercise. Do not let any team spend too much time on one question. Ask teams to go on to the next question, even if they have not fully exhausted their discussion of an earlier question. Be aware of groups that do not seem to be following the discussion rules. Intervene quietly if one person is dominating the discussion.

### **Activity B: Team Sharing**

### **WHOLE GROUP**

**Purpose:** To allow teams to share the answers to the discussion questions.

**Preparation:** Tape the sheets from each of the teams in groups on the wall. All of the answers to Question One should be hung side by side, all of Question Two together and so forth.

**Activity:** The group should continue to sit together as teams but focus its attention on the written answers to each of the discussion questions. The facilitator asks the groups to point out common answers or themes in the responses to each question. Based on the common answers the facilitator helps the group to develop a total group response to each question.

**Facilitator's Role:** This exercise is the most important in the workshop and will require the most skill on the part of the facilitator. It is your job to take each question in turn and try to elicit from the total group a group response to each question. If the group struggles with this effort, you will have to point out some common themes and do your best to stimulate thinking. Groups vary a great deal in their ability to draw conclusions in this exercise.

Fifteen minutes is allotted to this exercise. This amount of time is much too short if the group is functioning well and supplying good answers. If the discussion goes well continue it as long as it appears useful. Be sure to cover all four questions and draw conclusions on each one. Whatever time is left before noon can then be spent on the listening activity. If there is no time for the listening activity that is okay. The workshop is actually more effective if there is good discussion of the Winner's Circle topic.

The listening activity is available as a backup to be used with those groups that do not develop good discussion. In such groups, the listening activity is particularly valuable.

## TECHNIQUES OF LISTENING

### Materials Needed

Sets of 3 x 5 cards for every two participants

### Time Needed to Complete this Activity

(30 min.) Role Playing Activity.

The amount of time for this exercise can vary according to the time available.

### Activity: What is the Problem? What is the Solution?

**PARTNERS**

**Purpose:** To practice effective listening skills.

**Preparation:** Duplicate sample, "What is the Problem? What is the Solution?" cards to make enough sets for the group when it is divided into partners.

**Activity:** The group is divided into partners composed of one parent and one professional. The partners take turns reading from cards. The listener is to do the following things:

1. Not comment when the problem is read;
2. Ask for one repetition, if necessary;
3. State succinctly the problem the speaker is expressing;
4. Identify any feelings the speaker has conveyed;
5. Without using judgmental language, suggest a solution to the problem.

When the listener has done all 5 things, the speaker can respond to the solution or make comments. The speaker should comment on the following aspects of the listener's response:

1. Did the listener accurately restate the problem?
2. Did the listener display empathy for the feelings expressed?
3. Did the listener offer a solution (or simply a response) which is responsive to the problem?

Then the listener and speaker switch roles and continue with the next problem.

**Facilitator's Role:** Give the directions for the exercise. Ask for a volunteers from the group and model the responses that the listener is supposed to make. As the partners work on the exercise, circulate among the couples, making sure that the ground rules are followed. If a group is having a hard time, model the process for them.

Do not let this activity go more than one-half hour. The activity can be cut short, if necessary.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?/WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

EXAMPLE:

PRINCIPAL: We've had a lot of problems with your son. I get reports from his teacher all the time that he can't sit still and is very disruptive.

PROBLEM: The boy is disruptive in class. Both the teacher and the principal are frustrated.

SOLUTION: Have the boy observed by a school psychologist or behavior management specialist. Define what "disruptive" means. Is the boy talking, making noises, out-of-seat? Devise a behavior management program that addresses specific disruptive behaviors.

\*\*\*\*\*

TEACHER: Your child is way behind in his work. He doesn't have a chance of catching up.

PROBLEM:

SOLUTION:

\*\*\*\*\*

TEACHER: Your child has emotional problems. Don't you think you should do something about it?

PROBLEM:

SOLUTION:

\*\*\*\*\*

**PRINCIPAL:** There's nothing that can be done for your child. We've tried everything and nothing works.

**PROBLEM:**

**SOLUTION:**

\*\*\*\*\*

**SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR:** Your child's name has been placed on a waiting list for an ED classroom, and you will be notified when his turn comes up.

**PROBLEM:**

**SOLUTION:**

\*\*\*\*\*

**PARENT:** I'm at my wit's end. If we don't get some help for Mike, I don't know what I will do.

**PROBLEM:**

**SOLUTION:**

\*\*\*\*\*

PARENT: I would rather put Marilyn in a private treatment center. We just can't handle her at home anymore. Unfortunately, we don't have enough money to pay for private treatment.

PROBLEM:

SOLUTION:

\*\*\*\*\*

PARENT: I don't think Fred's problems have anything to do with the divorce. His behavior is worse now, but he has always been strange and withdrawn, even as a preschooler.

PROBLEM:

SOLUTION:

\*\*\*\*\*

PARENT: I'm confused about what's the matter with Sara. Each of the "experts" who examine her comes up with a different label, and none seem to help her. I don't know where to turn next.

PROBLEM:

SOLUTION:

\*\*\*\*\*

PARENT: We have spent over \$20,000 on a diagnosis of Sean. Now we know what the problems are, but we have no money left for treatment. We can't seem to face sending him to the state institution. Yet we know he can't live at home -- at least not the way he is now.

PROBLEM:

SOLUTION:

\*\*\*\*\*

## VIDEO: PARENT/PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEW

### Materials Needed

VCR

TV monitor

Extension cord

VHS tape included

### Time Needed to Complete the Activity

(10-20 min.) Time depends on whether the video is shown once or twice.

### WHOLE GROUP

**Purpose:** To provide the group with a common experience of a parent/professional interaction.

**Preparation:** Be sure that the VCR and TV monitor are operational and the video tape is rewound and ready for viewing. The tape is VHS and should be run at standard play (SP) speed. The volume needs to be as loud as possible because the speakers are not professional actors and speak in normal, conversational tones.

**Activity:** The whole group views the video.

**Facilitator's Role:** Introduce the video in the following way:

"This video depicts an interaction between a parent of a teenage son with a serious emotional handicap and a social worker in a mental health center. The individuals in the video really are a parent and social worker, but the details of the case have been fictionalized to protect privacy. You will be asked to respond to questions about the video, so carefully watch the interactions."

The video lasts only 10 minutes. If the group would like to see the video again before going on to the next activity, show the video again.

VIDEO SCRIPT  
WORKING TOGETHER

Fastest Speed SP

Paula: Now, Kathy, I understand that you've come to the Center here because you have some real concerns about your son.

Kathy: Yes, I'm just at the end of my rope with Jason. I've tried everything, and I can't seem to get anywhere with him.

Paula: When you called in, my secretary said you sounded really upset. Has something happened recently that brought things to a crisis?

Kathy: I guess I was pretty upset when I called, but that was right after Jason threw the chair through the dining room window. The neighbors called the police.

Paula: Oh, so this was a police matter.

Kathy: Well, yes, the police came, but I was able to talk them out of doing anything to Jason. I explained that he was in special ed and he had a problem.

Paula: So you kind of made excuses for him.

Kathy: Not exactly. It's just that I didn't see any reason to get the police involved. What he really needs is counseling or some kind of help. Punishing him just doesn't do any good.

Paula: So you've tried punishing him.

Kathy: When his father was living with us, his father tried to make him behave.

Paula: Your husband punished him.

Kathy: My former husband. He was strict with Jason, but it didn't do any good.

Paula: How long have you been divorced?

Kathy: Three years now.

Paula: Do you and Jason live alone? Are there other children in the family?

Kathy: I have another son, but he is in the Army. We don't see him anymore.

Paula: So, would you say that Jason is out of control now?

Kathy: He is sometimes. I do the best I can with him, but he is so strange and unpredictable. I know he needs help. I was hoping that the Center might have some program to help him.

Paula: Kathy, have you had any counseling yourself since the divorce?

Kathy: No. There hasn't been time for that. Taking care of Jason, keeping track of him is about all I can handle. I really need some help for him.

Paula: Teenagers can be exasperating! We have a great evening course in parenting skills here at the Center. You might find that helpful.

Kathy: I don't think you understand. Jason's problems are more serious. It is not just the usual adolescent stuff that he's going through.

Paula: What makes you say it's not just the "usual adolescent stuff?"

Kathy: He is really violent sometimes. And he talks to himself. Sometimes he is totally unresponsive when I talk to him -- like he's in another world. When he flies into a rage I am afraid he will hurt himself or someone else.

Paula: So you are really having trouble coping with Jason's adolescent rebellions. I still think a parenting course would help. Do you resent having to raise Jason alone?

Kathy: It would be easier if he had a father around. But I don't think things were much better when I was married. My husband used to get mad and hit Jason. That only made matters worse.

Paula: Was your husband abusive, then?

Kathy: No, he wasn't abusive. Jason just pushed him too far. It's hard not to lose your temper with him. He's the one who needs help.

Paula: I sense some real resentment on your part toward Jason. Would it help if you could talk to someone about your feelings?

Kathy: I suppose it might help but that's not really why I came. I want something for Jason. Doesn't this Center have any programs for kids who are mentally ill?

Paula: Yes, we have some groups for kids, but usually we like to work with the whole family. We can't do much for Jason unless you are willing to cooperate.

Kathy: Look, I've cooperated with everybody down the line -- with the school psychologist, the special education teacher, the doctors, the probation officer. But we don't seem to be getting anywhere. Something's got to be done now for Jason. I'm afraid of what he might do!

Paula: So Jason's been in trouble with the law before. You didn't tell me that. Are you covering up for Jason? I can't help unless I know the whole story.

Kathy: I don't want to tell you the whole story. I want to know about what help is available for Jason. I feel like we're wasting time.

Paula: If you're not willing to spend time on Jason how can we help?

Kathy: Spend time on Jason! I've done nothing but spend time on Jason for the past five years. I've had it. If you won't help me, I'm not going to waste my time any further.

## MESSAGES TO AVOID

### Materials Needed

Newsprint tablets for each team

Copies of discussion questions for each team

Sets of markers

### Time Needed to Complete the Activity

(30 min.) Team Discussion

(15 min.) Whole Group Sharing

### Activity A: Team Discussion

### TEAMS OF FOUR

**Purpose:** To analyze the communication between the parent and professional depicted on the video.

**Preparation:** Prepare enough sheets for all the teams with the following questions:

1. What was the parent's problem?
2. What did the social worker perceive to be the problem?
3. What solution was the parent seeking? What needs did she express?
4. What solution(s) did the social worker suggest?
5. Was there a match between the parent's needs and the services offered by the social worker?
6. What ideas or concepts were successfully communicated? What feelings were successfully communicated?
7. What obstacles to communication were there?
8. What changes would you make in this interview to make it more effective?

**Activity:** The group is divided into teams of four with two parents and two professionals on each team. The team answers the discussion questions, again using the rule that every member of the team contributes at least one idea that is written down as part of the team's response. Answers to the questions are recorded by someone on each team on the newsprint tablets provided.

**Facilitator's Role:** Introduce the discussion questions and explain the process. Divide the group into teams. The same teams from the morning exercise could work together or you may want to form new teams.

Circulate among the teams, noting their progress and reminding them of time limits. This activity is scheduled for thirty minutes. If you feel more time would be valuable, adjust the schedule accordingly. Forty-five minutes for this activity is probably a good outside limit. However, the teams should feel some pressure to stay on task and come up with answers to all the questions. The last question is the most important one, so each team must be urged to devote sufficient time to it.

**Activity B: Sharing**

**WHOLE GROUP**

**Purpose:** To draw conclusions for the whole group about messages to avoid and ways to identify problems and communicate effectively.

**Preparation:** Have teams tape their answers to the eight questions to the wall.

**Activity:** The whole group looks for commonalities among the answers and with the facilitator's help comes up with composite answers to each of the eight questions.

**Facilitator's Role:** Your role is to help the group synthesize answers to each of the eight questions. Try to spend as much time as possible on the last question. Only fifteen minutes is allotted to this exercise, but you can extend the time by moving the break ahead. Later activities can be shortened.

## SELF-ANALYSIS

### Materials Needed

The Self-Analysis Questionnaires filled out at the beginning of the workshop and saved in the participant packets.

### Time Needed to Complete this Activity

(15 min.) Self-Analysis

Fifteen minutes is the outside limit for this activity. It may be shortened to five or ten minutes if more time is needed for other activities.

## INDIVIDUAL

**Purpose:** To reflect on participants' attitude toward parent/professional collaboration.

**Preparation:** None

**Activity:** Participants read through their questionnaires and circle any items they might mark differently as a result of this workshop.

**Facilitator's Role:** Explain the directions for the activity and leave participants alone for quiet reflection.

## ROLES OF PROFESSIONALS/NEEDS OF PARENTS

### Materials Needed

Self-Analysis Questionnaires

### Time Needed for this Activity

(15 min.) Parent and Professional Discussion

(15 min.) Whole Group Discussion

### Activity A: Parent and Professional Discussion

**TWO GROUPS**

**Purpose:** To identify major roles of professionals and needs of parents.

**Preparation:** None.

**Activity:** The group is divided into parents and professionals. The parents agree as a group on their three greatest needs from professionals. The professionals as a group agree on their three key roles.

**Facilitator's Role:** Explain the task. Ask each group to choose a spokesperson. Allow the groups to function without interference.

### Activity B: Group Sharing

**WHOLE GROUP**

**Purpose:** To determine whether there is a match between parents' needs and professionals' roles.

**Preparation:** Have a writing surface (chalkboard, tablet and easel) available on which can be written the three needs and three roles decided upon by the groups.

**Activity:** The parent and professional groups present their conclusions, and a group discussion follows about whether there is a match between parents' needs and professionals' roles.

**Facilitator's Role:** Groups will vary in their responses. Your job is to point out whether there seems to be a match and why a match is important. You might make some concluding remarks about the need for expectations of parents to be realistic and for expectations to be heard by professionals and met if at all possible. Try to end this segment on as positive a note as possible.

## CHANGES OF HEART

### Materials Needed

None

### Time Needed to Complete this Activity

(30 min.)      Group Discussion

Time for this activity can be shortened if more time is needed earlier in the afternoon.

### WHOLE GROUP

**Purpose:** To identify changes in attitudes toward parent/professional collaboration.

**Preparation:** None

**Activity:** Participants volunteer to share items on their Self-Analysis Questionnaire which they would answer differently as a result of the workshop.

**Facilitator's Role:** This activity is risky since it is possible that no one would want to change an answer. It is also possible that someone will dispute the validity of the activity. You will need to be ready for every eventuality.

If the group has several answers they would change, all you need to do is facilitate this discussion and be sure there is a balance between parent and professional responses. Usually, the workshop does result in changes in attitude and the group has a great deal to share in an open discussion.

If no one will volunteer, share your own views (have some ready) briefly. Then ask again for responses from the group.

If someone disputes the activity, share some of this information:

1. It is true that professionals have roles that are sometimes dictated by the missions of the organizations that employ them.
2. Suggest, however, that parents and children are the clients of these organizations. Sometimes the missions of human service organizations do not match very well with the needs of the available clients.

**Again, share your own views (attitudes of yours which have changed), and ask for group responses.**

**If appropriate responses are not forthcoming, move immediately to evaluation of the workshop. Save conclusions and resources as a final activity.**

## CONCLUSIONS/RESOURCES

### EVALUATION

#### Materials Needed

A display table containing brochures from human service organizations, fliers, articles.

Evaluation forms in participant packets

#### Time Needed to Complete this Activity

(15 min.)      Conclusions/Resources

(15 min.)      Evaluation

#### Activity A: Conclusions/Resources

**WHOLE GROUP**

**Purpose:** To suggest resources for additional information.

**Preparation:** Make materials available that describe local mental health and special education services, books for parents and professionals, etc.

**Activity:** The facilitator concludes the activities and highlights the materials available for browsing.

**Facilitator's Role:** Recapitulate what you think has taken place during the workshop. Be sure to praise the cooperation, flexibility and sincerity of the group. Inquire about follow up steps that they would suggest.

Point out the materials table and offer time for browsing.

#### Activity B: Evaluation

**INDIVIDUAL**

**Purpose:** To evaluate the format and quality of the workshop.

**Preparation:** Evaluation forms are in the participant packets

**Activity:** Participants fill out forms.

**Facilitator's Role:** Don't let anyone out of the room without filling out an evaluation. Sit down yourself immediately after the workshop and fill out your own evaluation form with suggestions for improvements that come to mind.



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**WORKING TOGETHER: THE PARENT/PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIP  
EVALUATION FORM**

1. Who used *Working Together*? (Check all that apply.)

Parent       Educator       Child Welfare Worker  
 Juvenile Justice Worker       Mental Health Professional  
Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Please describe the purpose(s) for which you used the trainers' guide:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Would you recommend use of *Working Together* to others? (Circle one)

Definitely      Maybe      Conditionally      Under No Circumstances

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Overall, I thought *Working Together* was (Circle one)

Excellent      Average      Poor

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Please offer suggestions for the improvement of subsequent editions of this trainers' guide:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

We appreciate your comments and suggestions. Your feedback will assist us in our effort to provide relevant and helpful materials. Thank you.

Please fold, staple and return this self-mailer to the address listed on the reverse side.