

What is Your Parenting Education Approach?

Think about yourself as a parenting educator. For each item below determine which of the three statements best fits your beliefs.

1. Parents

- a. need information from experts to be good parents.
- b. need information but they also can contribute with their experiences to the learning process.
- c. already know a lot about parenting and will do a good job if they believe in themselves. They can benefit from exchanging their experiences with other parents.

2. A parenting educator should

- a. have a prepared agenda including lessons, handouts, and a schedule and should follow it.
- b. have part of the agenda prepared, but be willing to let participants contribute their interests and concerns.
- c. not have an agenda prepared, but instead let participants decide which topics they want to discuss.

3. When an unexpected topic comes up during a session the parenting educator should

- a. try to focus the discussion on the agenda for the day without being rude.
- b. negotiate with the participants whether they want to discuss that topic then, later, or at all.
- c. let the group decide what direction to take, because they set the agenda.

4. The parenting educator

- a. should have a college degree and/or enough training in child development and parenting to be able to answer all questions that participants have.
- b. doesn't need a degree, but should have training in child development and parenting and have enough resources to find information if participants request it.
- c. needs training only in working with groups. The parenting educator doesn't need to know too much about child development and parenting because parents have the information that they need.

5. *The focus of parenting education programs should be*

- a. child development issues and specific parenting skills, such as discipline, teaching children basic skills, caring for children's health, etc.
- b. child development issues and specific skills, but also parent feelings and concerns.
- c. on parent concerns mostly, basically discussing whichever issues parents want to discuss.

6. *The goal of a parenting education program is*

- a. to give information to parents and teach them effective ways to care for children.
- b. to enhance parent-child relationships through giving parents information and an opportunity to discuss new information with other concerned parents.
- c. to give parents the opportunity to discuss their concerns and empower themselves to change the conditions in their lives that get in the way of their effective parenting.

7. *A parenting educator is primarily*

- a. a teacher giving facts, offering suggestions, and building skills in parents.
- b. a collaborator, exchanging ideas and information with parents.
- c. a non-directive leader guiding parents to their own answers and strengths.

Count the number of times you circled each letter.

a _____ b _____ c _____

Interpretation of “What is Your Parent Education Approach?”

The answers associated with each letter represent specific educational approaches. These are described below.

A. Directive or Expert Approach. According to this approach education should be a structured experience; the educator should be an expert who knows more than participants. The content of the program is a series of topics to be covered by the educator. The educator believes participants need knowledge and skills and that, by obtaining information, they will change and improve their lives. Following prepared educational packages goes along with this strategy.

B. Facilitator or Collaborator Approach. In this approach the educator functions as a collaborator with participants. The educator is flexible about the focus of the program but also has in mind some topics to be discussed. The educator believes that participants have a lot to contribute and highlights strengths and promotes the exchange of ideas. These educators may use materials from packages or books to start discussions, but do not necessarily follow them completely.

C. Non-directive Approach. This approach to education believes that the participants need to decide what they want to discuss and what is relevant for them. The educator helps to facilitate the process but does not influence the content of the discussions nor give much information. The educator believes participants know all that they need already. To be empowered, they need to discover that the answers are within them, not in an expert. This approach doesn't have an agenda; the focus depends on the needs of participants. Materials, handouts and so on are used when the participants decide that they want to find out information about a topic.

For approach **A**, there are many prepared curricula that can be followed, or educators can design their own curriculum based on the research literature.

For approach **B**, literature can be used but in a more flexible manner. To stimulate discussion, the agenda can be elaborated by the educator and modified by the participants.

One model that follows approach **C** is liberation pedagogy. You can read the following to learn more about it:

Shor, Ira & Freire, P. (1987). *A Pedagogy for Liberation*. New York, N.Y.: Bergin and Garvey Publishers.

Reference describing all approaches:

Campbell, D., & Palm, G. (2004). *Group parent education: Promoting parent learning and support*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (Pp. 63-67)