



Book Reviews

PACE: Parenting Adolescents, a Creative Experience

by Constance Jenkin & Dr DI Bretherton

Melbourne: ACER, 1994. Total kit \$98.00; Parents H/b \$12.50 each.

PACE is a parent program that group leaders can use with groups of parents with adolescents. Difficulties associated with parenting adolescents have become more focused in recent times, with open discussion on homelessness, youth suicide, pressures of school exams, unemployment, sexually transmitted diseases and stress in the community. It can be very confusing for some parents choosing the most appropriate strategy for some of these problems. This program provides a forum for discussion that allows parents to make sense of, and to choose appropriate strategies to meet their individual family needs.

To use this kit with confidence, leaders need to:

- have some knowledge of adolescent behaviour, group process and development;
- have a sensibility to parents, their fears and worries, their hopes and dreams;
- acknowledge parents' skills and believe in empowering them;
- believe in the power of the group process;
- agree with the authors' beliefs.

This parent program is offered by the authors in the belief that:

- better relationship and parenting skills can be learned;
- groups are empowering for participants;
- parents need to respect and be respected by their adolescent children;
- adults learn by experience, and groups provide an atmosphere where parents can learn from each other;
- the foundation of parenting programs is to teach better communication;

- groups should not just have a problem-solving orientation but be fun and develop the creativity of parents;
- that parents should not feel guilty about any aspect of their parenting;
- that it is important to take time to reflect and integrate new information and experience.

This parenting kit is divided into a Leader's Manual and a Parents' Handbook.

Leader's Manual

The introduction deals with the practicalities of setting up a parent group, such as advertising the group, group size and process. There is an evaluation form and a certificate of completion for the course participants. The rest of the kit is then divided into ten sessions.

The first two sessions *Setting the Scene* and *Listening (Communication Skills)*, need to run in sequence and begin the parent group. Setting the scene is important for the bonding of the group to start, and for creating an atmosphere of trust and safety for the participants. The session on listening forms the basis for the rest of the program.

The other eight sessions look at issues such as: being assertive with adolescents; adolescent development; family values; resolving conflict within the family and other matters. These sessions can whatever order meets the needs of the individual group.

Format of the sessions

Warm up:

To help everyone get to know each other and to energise the group.

Homework Review:

A chance for participants to share how their week has been and report on any tasks they were going to try during the week.

Pressing Issues:

An opportunity for parents to share problems with the group; all participants can be involved in providing creative strategies. The choice of strategy is made by the parent concerned.

Content/Topic:

A range of activities are provided that enable parents to explore the topic.

Wind Down:

A drawing together of thoughts/ideas from the session.

Homework:

Tasks can be set for the parents from the Content/Topic or Pressing Issues sections.

Within the parameters of each session, the kits provides a large range of activities to choose from that can be adapted to the varying skill levels of the participants, and according to the confidence and comfort of the leaders.

Parents' Handbook

Copies of this small book can be given to the parents in a group as an additional resource. It follows the same table of contents as the manual and for each session, there is some useful information on the topic being discussed. The section *Points to Remember* includes additional information for parents.

Summary

The layout of the kit is attractive, clear and simple to use. The sessions are separate and easy to follow. The structure of each session hold it together, but there is sufficient flexibility for leaders to be creative and meet the needs of each group and of individual participants.

The content of this very user-friendly kit is very relevant to the more challenging issues that many

parents face with their adolescent children in contemporary Australian culture. Issues such as stress related to study, depression, and suicide are dealt with in a realistic yet hopeful way that releases the parents from guilt and replaces it with hope and support.

The authors

The authors of this Parent Program are Constance Jenkin and Dr Di Bretherton. Constance is the Director

of Kidcare, a community program designed to address the needs of families with adolescents in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. She is a teacher and family therapist and established some of the first community-based parenting groups in Victoria.

Di Bretherton is the Director of the International Conflict Resolution Centre in the Department of Psychology at the University of Melbourne. She is the Convenor of the Task Force

for the Prevention of Violence against Women and a member of the Victorian Community Council Against Violence. Di teaches in the Graduate Diploma of Adolescent and Child Psychology and has, for many years been training child psychologists and teachers of young children.

*Reviewer: Pat Jewell
Parent Resource Co-ordinator
Parent Help, Northern Region.*

The Australian baby and child care handbook

by Carol Fallows

Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 1994, 394pp, RRP \$24.95.

It was a pleasure to read this book. Carol Fallows has produced a mini-encyclopaedia for parents and carers of pre-school aged children, which portrays her extensive knowledge of the many facets of those early child rearing years. As a mother of three children and editor of a magazine for Australian parents for fifteen years, she is uniquely placed to glean this knowledge. She has spoken to hundreds of doctors, nurses and other health professionals, and most significantly to hundreds of parents. She has also read a vast amount of medical and psychological literature, as well as material written specifically for parents, and in writing this book she has called on a wide range of experts to check much of the information presented. Most importantly, the book reflects the author's sensitivity to both children's and parents' emotional needs which has obviously influenced her selection of material and her approach to the discussion of such material.

The Australian Baby and Child Care Handbook will be a most valuable asset to have lying around and readily available, not only to consult for easily accessible, much needed information and help as different needs and crises arise, but also as a preventive measure. Prior reading of the sections on the different stages of parenting will hopefully help parents recognise and cope better with situations as they do arise.

The chapters follow the sequence of childrearing from some introductory remarks about parenting and preparation for parenthood to a consideration of the birth and caring for the newborn, those first few weeks at home, the first six months, the second six months, the toddler and, finally, the preschooler. There is a chapter about parents' changing roles and relationships, interspersed between those about the first and second six months of the baby's life, and a very comprehensive chapter on children's health which includes and A-Z of children's injuries, illnesses and conditions. The last three sections entitled Resources (for each state of Australia), End Notes and Further Reading together comprise an excellent overall resource of both practical help and extended reading.

There are several topics which are common to the chapters about the different age stages, this structure providing a sense of continuity. The common headings are Growth, Feeding/Eating, Sleep, Development and Learning, and Play. Caring for Your Baby and Crying are covered in the early age stages, and Behaviour, Toilet Training, Preschool and Readiness for School in the later.

A further feature of the structure of the book is the use of inserts which are often vignettes from parents' experiences. They illustrate the text, and in many instances, add some

balance and reality to it. There are also excellent charts related to normal development and it is reassuring to be reminded of the wide age range at which a particular milestone can be expected to be reached. The diagrams and their explanations give clear messages, the many photographs throughout the chapters are engaging, and the coloured plates are quite delightful.

The author writes:

You may not always agree with what I suggest; it may not always correspond with your own experiences of child rearing. However, I hope it will stimulate discussion and help you find the approach that suits you best.

This is an example of the respectful attitude to parents that she adopts throughout the book; she continually affirms parents' ability and right to determine their own courses of action. It is very important that parents' own confidence should not be undermined, particularly in the early stages when they tend to receive a wealth of often conflicting advice.

This reviewer find herself agreeing with almost everything that is written and applauds the fact that developmental, emotional and relationship aspects are taken into account when in particular, issues such as crying, sleeping, separation difficulties, discipline and spoiling, sibling rivalry and indeed much more are discussed.