

BOOK REVIEWS

From strength to strength

A manual for professionals who facilitate diverse parent groups

Pat Jewell and Prue Blackmore

ACER Press, Camberwell, Vic. July 2004 (ISBN 0 86431 5317)

From strength to strength is a manual which is designed as a practical resource to assist in the facilitation and development of parenting groups in the context of social change. The reader is introduced to a broad range of information and theory that builds an overview of key issues in relation to parenting education, group process and specific content material.

Informed by their practice experiences, Jewell and Blackmore are able to identify key issues that may be helpful to include in generalist or mainstream parenting groups. These are child development, behaviour and discipline, communication and emotional well being. The authors suggest targeting parents who are likely to have children of the same age. They also identify the topics which parents most commonly request, including:

- bullying;
- homework;
- loss and grief;
- siblings; and
- transition stages.

The manual provides a resource bibliography after each section. Strategies to facilitate learning in each topic area are identified, with multiple options provided at times. Flexibility exists, however, for users to incorporate their own material at any point or to tailor the material to the group's needs.

In addition to generalist parenting groups, there is a section devoted to the planning and development of parent groups that focus on parents with particular needs. Parenting of grandchildren is one such area. Taking a strengths-based approach, the authors highlight the advantages of this parenting model such as identifying the value of connecting children to their roots. Content suggestions in this case include the opportunity to connect grandparents with other grandparents, increasing knowledge of developmental needs associated with developmental stages, identifying pressures and issues for children in current times, an introduction to strengths-based parenting, and how to have fun.

Further topics are highlighted as possible content for grandparent groups. These are consistent with issues arising from the experience of Oz Child's Kith and Kin program, eg, 'Grieving for the "child-free" lifestyle you were hoping for at this time in your life' and 'Communicating with your child about his or her child'.

From Strength to Strength appears to be a valuable resource for newcomers to parenting group facilitation given its overview of key issues and program structuring information. It is easy to read and provides users with flexible, practical tools for planning and implementation. It draws from the extensive experience of the authors, providing users with many insights that should work to enhance positive outcomes for parents/carers.

Reviewed by:

Vicki Clarke
Manager, Family Services
Oz Child: Children Australia

Protecting children from abuse and neglect in primary care

Michael J. Bannon & Yvonne H. Carter (eds)

Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003 (ISBN 0 19 263276 0)

The confusion experienced by professionals when faced with a child who has been, or is at risk of being, abused and/or neglected, is no secret. In fact, it is the subject of many studies performed in Emergency Departments

worldwide (for example, Jenny, Hymel, Ritzen, Reinert & Hay, 1999; Taitz, Moran & O'Meara, 2004). Recently, this issue has been the subject of a report released by Monash University and the Australian Childhood Foundation