

Introduction: Getting Started On Creating A Healthy Future For Your Family

OBJECTIVES:

1. Learn about the topics and activities that will be a part of the program.
2. Become aware of the importance of keeping a record of your personal and your children's growth, and your family life.
3. Reflect on personal goals to achieve in the program.

HANDOUTS:

1. *Tell Me About You*
2. *My Goals*
3. *Take Home Message for This Session*

ITEMS NEEDED FOR THIS EDUCATIONAL SESSION:

- Pre-program questionnaire (if it was not completed in a pre-program home visit)
- Materials for the **Yarn Network** activity: you will need a ball of yarn, a beach ball or a balloon that is inflated and scissors sharp enough to cut yarn.
- A three-ring binder with clear cover for each participant to prepare their **Memory Book** (couples can share one notebook). See the information sheet titled **Ideas for Creating a Memory Book**.
- Handout materials for participant workbooks—be sure to make extra copies of the **Tell me About You** handout for participants to take home to their partner or other family members to complete.
- Magnet frame for take-home message and goal statement
- Digital camera and photo printer
- Flip chart and markers
- Pencils and pens
- Scrapbook materials



GETTING ACQUAINTED: The Yarn Network

Welcome and thank you for coming to this program for parents on how to work together to raise your children. We are going to start today's session with a fun activity that will help you get to know each other and also understand the importance of creating a strong family for your children.

First, form a circle. I am going to throw the ball of yarn to one of you. As I throw the ball, I am going to say my name. When you catch the ball, say your name and throw the ball to another person in the circle. We'll continue doing this until everyone has had a chance to introduce him or herself.

In the next round, I want you to tell the number of children you have as you toss the ball of yarn to another participant. Again, we'll do this until everyone has told the number of children he or she has.

In the last round, I want you to think of one hope you have for your children. As you toss the ball of yarn, tell what that hope is.

Now I am going to put a beach ball or balloon on the yarn net we have created. Notice how the net supports the ball. The beach ball or balloon represents your child or children. As a group, we have created a net of support. The yarn net represents our relationships in our families and community that support our children's growth and development. With this kind of support, our children can grow to be healthy and strong adults.

What happens though if I cut a piece of the yarn net? What happens if I cut more than one piece of yarn? The beach ball or balloon eventually falls to the ground. When our children are not supported by their parents' relationships with each other, with their families and with their communities, they have more difficulty growing up healthy.

In this program, we are going to learn about the ways that you can strengthen your relationship with your children's other parent. You will acquire the skills to create stronger connections with him or her even if you are no longer romantically involved. You have taken a first step toward understanding how important it is to have a good relationship with each other.

ACTIVITY: Mini-Lecture on an Introduction to the Program

By taking part in this class, you have made an important step toward creating a healthy and secure future for your child or children. Most of you are not married to your children's other parent or parents, and may no longer be romantically involved with him or her. But hopefully, you want to have this other parent involved with your children.

In today's session, we will introduce the program to you and give you an idea of what you can expect during each session. The next session will help you to look at yourself and your goals for the future. The rest of the sessions will help you:

- Achieve a good relationship with your children's other parent. We often call this relationship a "co-parenting" one.
- Ensure that both you and your children's other parent stays involved in your children's lives.
- Acquire the resources to support your children and meet their needs.
- Make healthy decisions about your romantic relationships. As you enter new relationships, you'll want to consider what is in the best interest of your child.

ACTIVITY: **Creating a Memory Book**

This program may be different from others that you have attended in the past. Part of your work in the program is to create a memory book from the activities we do in class. This book is a place where you will write down and keep track of what you learn in this class. Some pages will be from class activities and other pages will be those that you create using scrapbooking materials and techniques.

We are providing you with a three-ring binder plus the handouts you will complete and the materials you need to prepare scrapbook pages. During each session you will complete one or two handouts and one scrapbook page to put into your notebook.

At the end of the program, you will have a “memory book” to share with your children, friends, and other family members. There are some things you may want to keep private. For these items we are providing you with a separate folder in which to place them.

The next activity we do will be the first entry in your memory book.

ACTIVITY: **Tell Me About You**

If your child or children were interviewing you, what would they want to know about you? The first activity in the memory book asks you to tell your child or children about you. Fill in the blanks of the handout.

After you have completed the questions, make a page using the scrapbooking materials that express who you are. No one is going to judge your work—this page is for you and your children.

Take pictures of the participants using the digital camera. Print off their photo and have them include it on the handout and/or their scrapbook page.

HOMEWORK:

Ask participants to have the child's other parent or another family member complete the **Tell Me About You** handout. Place this handout in their workbook at the next class.

In addition, ask participants to complete the journal page titled **My Goals**. This activity is designed to encourage reflection on what he or she hopes to gain from the program. The activity will form the basis on the next lesson or Part II of the Introduction.

Lastly, introduce the participants to the magnet frame. Each one will receive a frame. At the end of each session, participants will get a take-home message to place in the frame. He or she will also write a goal statement or one step they plan to take as a result of the session. Encourage participants to post the magnetic frame and take-home message on their refrigerator or other metal surface in their home.

CLOSING:

Today, you have begun a very important journey for your children and family. We learned about how important it is to create a net of support for our children. We also introduced you to what would be covered in this program. You will be learning how to have a good relationship with your child's other parent. The last thing we did was show you the Memory Book you will be making in this class. And you made your first pages for the memory book.

IDEAS FOR CREATING A MEMORY BOOK

The Memory Book is the final product that participants will take away with them that represents all of the hard work they have put into making a plan for their future and their children's future.

The book can be as simple as a thin 3-ring binder with the handouts from this series of workshops plus blank sheets of paper, or as elaborate as saving all of the handouts until the end and having the participants design and decorate their own covers.

One sample Memory Book cover you might try can be done like this:

- Using a knife, cut two pieces of foam core poster board to a size slightly bigger than 8 1/2 x 11 (standard size sheet of paper).
- Wrap each of the covers with brightly colored gift wrap (or you could substitute foil, plain paper, cloth) and glue down.
- Line the inside of the cover with a blank sheet of paper.
- Punch three holes in each of the covers and pages that will go in the Memory Book.
- Assemble the book by using ribbon threaded through the holes. Be sure that the ribbon is not so tight that you can't fully open the book.

There are lots of creative, inexpensive ways to make covers such as making magazine picture collages, having each family member make a handprint, drawing pictures, writing a letter to the baby, etc.

Each memory book should include blank pages; envelopes or bags to save things like locks of hair, first tooth, etc.; and supplemental pages that might be nice to include. There are many baby books/ memory albums that can help give you ideas for additional pages.

As the instructor, you will need to make a decision about keeping track of the handout pages that the participants do throughout the course of the series. It might be a good idea to start a file folder or envelope for each person for collecting handouts and handouts. As participants finish handouts they can put them in their folder, or if they miss a class, they will have the blank handouts to do later. If the final Memory Book is a 3-ring binder, you may want to start out the first night using that as the course notebook that has to be brought to every session.



Tell Me About You

Questions Your Children Ask About You

Your name (first, middle, maiden and/or married)

.....

Were you named after anyone?

If so, tell me who it is and a little about his or her relationship to you.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Do you have any nicknames? How did you get them?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Tell Me About You

Questions Your Children Ask About You

Who are you besides my parent? (Employee, traveler, basketball player, etc.)

.....

.....

.....

.....

What else do you want me to know about you?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Put a picture of yourself here.



My Goals

Why have you come to this program?

.....
.....

As a result of this program, what goals would you like to achieve in (write only one goal for each time period):

.....
SIX MONTHS

.....
ONE YEAR

.....
FIVE YEARS

What skills or knowledge will you need to get there?

.....
.....
.....



My Goals

What specifically would you like to work on in this program that will help you move towards these goals?

.....
.....

What can we do in this program to help you move toward your goal?

.....
.....

What supports do you have in place to help you reach your goal?

.....
.....

Do you have transportation? Yes No

Do you have reliable childcare? Yes No

Have you talked to your family and friends about taking this program? Yes No

Write down anything that you think might stop you from achieving your goals for this program?

.....
.....

Take Home Message for This Session

Directions: Think of one step you will take before the next session and write it down in the space provided. In addition, write down the time, date, and location of the next session.

**“If you can DREAM it,
you can DO it.”**

—Walt Disney—

My Action Steps:

.....
.....

The Next Session:

.....
DATE

.....
TIME

.....
LOCATION

