

Volunteer Leader Training Guide

Extension Resources to Help You Along Life's Journey

Lindsey Smith, Child Care Technician

Objectives

To make individuals aware of all the family life resources available to them so they will obtain the resources, learn from them, and implement better relationship and individual development practices.

To encourage participants to share excellent family programs with others (including civic groups, schools, friends, agencies, churches, etc.) in their communities.

Target Audience

- EHC leaders and members
- Family and friends of EHC members
- Anyone who has an interest in developing healthier relationships

Advanced Preparation

Obtain a copy of the following publications for each person in attendance:

- The Personal Journey
- The Marriage Garden
- The Parenting Journey and Travel Guides
- See the World Through My Eyes
- Managing Stress: Turning Challenges Into Blessings

Have extra copies of the publications available for participants to give to others who may be interested.

Opening

Whether you're an individual, a spouse, a parent or any combination of the three, the resources developed by the Marriage, Parenting, and Family Life team at the Cooperative Extension Service are here to help you along your life's journey.

The Personal Journey

[Hand out a copy of *The Personal Journey* publication to each attendee.]

Let's start by talking about *The Personal Journey*.

What helps us along our individual journey? And what gets in our way? Having good answers to these questions can make very big differences in our lives!

A few decades ago the magic potion to achieve personal well-being was considered to be self-esteem. Many believed that loving ourselves was essential to our happiness and progress. Recent discoveries have challenged that idea.

Many people who love themselves are terrible nuisances for society. Meanwhile many people who hardly think of themselves make amazing contributions and live meaningful lives. In fact, some insightful observers have suggested that the modern focus on self is one of our major problems in society today.

So it turns out that self-esteem is not the magic potion for personal well-being. This discovery can leave many people feeling adrift. What does help people in their personal journeys? The good news is that solid research has demonstrated several choices we can make that will improve our well-being.

The Personal Journey, based on psychologist Martin Seligman's summary of research on well-being, describes the key processes for personal well-being.

Marriage Garden

[Hand out a copy of *The Marriage Garden* publication to each attendee.]

The next resource I'd like to tell you about is *The Marriage Garden*.

Many enter marriage hoping it will always be as passionate and exciting as a great date – not unlike the relationships modeled on reality shows like “The Bachelor.” But both research and experience suggest that marriage is more like a fruitful garden that requires the right tools, patient care, and sensible effort in order to achieve enduring success.

A good marriage is as lush, rich, and satisfying as a great garden. But neither the good marriage nor the great garden happens without wise and consistent effort. That is why it has required decades of intensive research on marriage to provide the key to building strong relationships.

Using the metaphor of relationships as gardens meant for cultivation, nourishment, and dedication, *The Marriage Garden* focuses on six proven principles shown to make marriage blossom into a loving, long-term source of sweet companionship. In a culture where individualism has run amuck, it takes great discipline to institute sensible principles in relationships.

A national publisher was so impressed with *The Marriage Garden* program that they asked Drs. Wally Goddard and James Marshall to expand it into a book. The book has just been released by Jossey-Bass publishers and is now available in bookstores and online.

Couples or individuals may be interested in using the guides to embark on their own self-guided study or lead a group discussion. For a limited time, both the folder and the lesson guides are available free from your county agent. Normally, the lesson guides can be printed from the web or purchased from Extension.

Parenting Journey and Online PSA

[Hand out a set of *Parenting Journey* publications to each attendee.]

Next, I'd like to introduce you to *The Parenting Journey* and the online *Parent Self-Assessment*.

The parenting journey has twists and turns and an occasional detour. But with travel guides and a good map, both parents and children can enjoy the journey and the destination. There is an exciting map to help parents along their way called *The Parenting Journey*.

The Parenting Journey summarizes the key elements of parenting in only 1,000 words. The 19 tips for parents included in the map are organized into six "communities" based on the National Extension Parent Education Model. And the journey takes parents through the communities of Wellness, Loveland, Insight, Character Heights, Discovery Point and Reunion Springs.

A supplementary DVD is also available to provide additional pointers related to each community.

The Parenting Journey map is at the center of a network of extraordinary resources. On the UACES web site is the *Parent Self-Assessment (PSA)* that allows parents to assess their strengths and educational needs. There are many features that make the PSA useful to parents, including user-friendly measures, many options for added learning, and connection to educational resources.

A user might review the points in the map, go to the web site for self-assessment, and then choose among the resources recommended by the PSA. In fact, over 60 instructional units are available on the UACES web site, www.arfamilies.org/families_life.htm, covering a variety of family topics and organized according to the communities on the map. In addition, users can choose among other web and print resources recommended at the site. To access the PSA, visit <http://psa.uaex.edu/>.

Also, remember that this program, like all others, is available for you to get and share with family, friends, community members, your schools – anyone who cares about their family.

See the World Through My Eyes

[Hand out a *See the World Through My Eyes* publication to each attendee.]

Let's move on to another program intended to help people who work with children: *See the World Through My Eyes*.

When we were children, many of us told ourselves that we would never forget what it was like to be a child, especially when we were feeling mistreated or misunderstood by an adult. But then we grew up and we forgot. We get so immersed in the adult world that we forget what it was like being children.

Now we wonder why our children do the things they do. We may find it difficult to relate to a crying baby, a one-year-old who gets into everything, a two-year-old who constantly says “No,” a three-year-old who won’t eat her vegetables, a four-year-old who thinks there’s a monster in his closet, or a five-year-old who tells lies. And these are only some of the challenges parents of preschoolers face.

See the World Through My Eyes can help parents, teachers, and anyone else who is around children remember what it is like to be a preschooler.

See the World Through My Eyes introduces 21 common developmental challenges as seen from a child’s point of view. Topics include things like crying, eating, exploring, potty training, etc. Each developmental challenge addressed in the curriculum presents information on (1) what that issue is like for the child, (2) what the child wants us to know about the issue, and (3) how we can be of help to the child. The curriculum also describes four things we can do to help children grow up to be good people.

Whether you use the program yourself or share it with others, it can help us understand and help children. We can all do a better job with children when we see through their eyes.

Managing Stress: Turning Challenges Into Blessings

[Hand out a *Managing Stress* publication to each attendee.]

I should also alert you to the newest family life resource, *Managing Stress: Turning Challenges Into Blessings*.

Managing Stress: Turning Challenges Into Blessings, as you can see, is a fully illustrated, interactive workbook that you can use to help you through even some of your most stressful and challenging days. Based on Reuben Hill’s discoveries about dealing with stress, this workbook will help you figure out what causes stress in your life and how you may overcome or better deal with those stressors.

According to Hill’s work, there are two things that can keep challenges from turning into distress: the first is properly using the resources we have, and the second is to change how we think about our challenges. This program helps each of us to work through these steps so that stress doesn’t have to disable us.

Conclusion

I am glad to be sharing with you all the many parenting and family life resources which are available to you free of charge. I encourage you to share these resources with others in your life who may benefit from applying research-based, sensible information to their lives. For additional copies of these resources or more information on any of these topics, please visit your local county Extension agent.