

MODULE 3

Parenting styles and parent-child relationships



Trainer's introduction

This module looks at different parenting styles and ideas of how to encourage good parent-child relationships. It also explores what it means to be a parent living with HIV and AIDS. The module continues the approach of building upon participants' existing knowledge, valuing their experience and increasing their confidence.

Approximate length of module 2 hours 20 minutes

Aims

The aims of this module are to:

- explore what it means to be a parent, and the impact of HIV and AIDS upon parenting responsibilities
- consider different parenting styles and factors that lead to better parent-child relationships.

Key learning outcomes

By the end of this session participants will:

- have a better understanding of what it means to be a parent, and the impact of HIV and AIDS upon parenting responsibilities
- have an awareness of parenting styles and factors that lead to better parent-child relationships.

Trainer's preparation

Module plan (with suggested times)

- Looking at what it means to be a parent, and the impact of HIV and AIDS upon parenting responsibilities – **50 minutes**
- Exploring parenting styles and factors that lead to better parent-child relationships – **1 hour 20 minutes**
- Reflection – **10 minutes**



Materials you will need

Overhead/flipchart 1: Outline of Module 3

Overhead/flipchart 2: How might changes in family circumstances related to HIV and AIDS affect parenting?

Overhead/flipchart 3: Parenting styles

Trainer's guidance

Introduction

Explain to participants that the purpose of this module is to give them an opportunity to explore what it means to be a parent, the different styles of parenting and to look at ways to strengthen relationships with their children.

Remind participants that they all have relevant experience they can share with each other. Encourage the group to offer examples of their experience in different parenting situations. Emphasise that there are many different ways to bring up children and there is no single correct way. By sharing ideas and learning from each other, and what the module offers, each participant can examine her or his own parenting style and might find some things they want to do differently in the future.

Go through the topics to be covered in the module and how it is structured.

Overhead/flipchart 1: Outline of Module 3

Please use the list in the module plan on page 27, but without the suggested times.

Looking at what it means to be a parent, and the impact of HIV and AIDS on parenting responsibilities

Activity 1 Looking at what it means to be a parent

Suggested time: 15 minutes

Explain that the aim of this activity is to explore what it means to be a parent. Before you begin, tell participants that there are no right or wrong answers. Everyone's ideas and opinions are useful and will help the group have a good discussion.

1. Brainstorm with the whole group on their ideas of what parenting is. Write up all their responses on a flipchart.
2. Make a definition of a parent with the group. Offer a definition you have prepared before the course. Put the ideas together and agree on a working definition of a parent with the group. Allow five minutes for this.

Activity 2 Looking at the issues faced by parents and carers affected by HIV and AIDS

Suggested time: 35 minutes

Explain that the aim of this activity is to explore how changes in family circumstances related to HIV and AIDS could affect parenting.

1. Ask participants to divide into pairs and discuss the questions on the overhead/flipchart 2 below. Tell them they will have 20 minutes before you ask them to report back to the whole group with the three most important points from their discussion.

Overhead/flipchart 2: How might changes in family circumstances related to HIV and AIDS affect parenting?

- If a parent dies when children are young, does he or she remain a parent?
- How might a parent who has died still have some influence on family members, particularly children?

- Guardians or foster carers may become the people with legal responsibility for a child – can they become parents and carers for the child too?
- In families where there is more than one wife, do the mothers only parent their own children, or do they have parenting responsibilities for the father's other children? What problems might come up? What might be the benefits?
- If a parent with HIV becomes too ill to do everything for the children, who else can share the parenting?
- What might happen if a step-parent (and maybe step-brothers and/or step-sisters) joins the family? How do you choose which parents should set out the rules of the household and style of living? What problems might come up?

2. Ask the pairs to come together as a large group. Ask each pair to explain the three most important points from their discussion to the rest of the group.

3. Record the points on a flipchart. Summarise the most important points and ask for questions or comments from the group. Allow 15 minutes for this.

Exploring parenting styles and factors that lead to better parent-child relationships

Introduce this topic by saying that you will build on participants' experiences of parenting, and consider different parenting styles and the factors that lead to better parent-child relationships.

Activity 3 Exploring parenting styles and factors that lead to better parent-child relationships

Suggested time: 55 minutes

Explain that the aim of this activity is to give the group an opportunity to discuss different approaches to parenting and share their experiences.

Stress that, because there are many ways of parenting, participants will not necessarily agree with each other about everything. There is nothing wrong with this and it is to be expected. Also, parents and carers in the group will face some similar and some different challenges. Remind parents and carers of the group agreement and that they should not be judgmental. Say that listening to different opinions will help them think through their own values and styles of parenting.

1. Divide participants into three or four smaller groups. Give them 20 minutes to discuss the points on the overhead/flipchart. Give them flipchart paper and pens, and ask them to summarise the main ideas coming out of their discussion.

Overhead/flipchart 3: Parenting styles

- When you think of a parenting style that helps children, what do you think of?
- When you think of a parenting style that does not help children, what do you think of?
- Look at this list and think of the ways of tackling each point that work best for you:
 - giving children safety and protection
 - giving children physical contact and comfort
 - giving children emotional support
 - disciplining children
 - communicating in front of, and with, children
 - trusting and handing over responsibility to children
 - being a responsible parent.

As trainer you could add more parenting issues that might be appropriate for the group. Be aware of local practices and circumstances.

2. Display the flipchart papers on the wall and ask everyone to look at what the others have written. If it helps people, you could read out the points on the flipcharts yourself. Ask the group for comments. Ask the following questions to help the discussion:

- Are there any similarities in what the groups came up with?
- What are some of the differences?
- Are there any surprises?
- Has anything changed in the way you parent since becoming HIV positive?

Allow 10 minutes for this discussion.

3. Now ask the participants to return to their small groups. Give them 10 minutes to identify three to five factors they think are most important to good parenting.

4. Ask one person from each group to take three minutes to report back with the points that their group selected. Ask the whole group for comments or questions and see if they can agree on the three to five most important factors that lead to good parenting and better relationships with children. Make sure that the discussion covers the following points:

- It is important to be consistent and fair in whatever parenting style you choose. This means being as secure and predictable for your children as you can be, for example, in the way you give love and comfort, in the way you protect and care for them, in the way you reward and discipline them. (Note that you are not telling the group what to do as a parent, only how to do what they think is best.)
- It is important to try to listen to what your children say and give them time to express their hopes and fears. Be honest with your children. (This is a suggestion based on research and practice in childcare.)

Hopefully the group will be able to identify some points of agreement. However, if participants cannot agree on five points, say that this does not matter, because we all view parenting from different perspectives. Generally, parents and carers try to do what they think is best for their children. Allow 15 minutes for feedback and discussion.

5. To close the discussion, you could read out the following words from an evaluation of a NACWOLA memory work project in Uganda.

“The [memory work] project has had an extensive impact on the relationship between NACWOLA women living with HIV and AIDS and their children. This is evident from the ease expressed by mothers in talking about their status, and how free children are about their parents’ and carers’ lives and the plans they hold.”

Say that some of the issues raised by this activity might feed into the discussions in Module 9 on developing new relationships.

Activity 4 Looking at participants’ own experiences of families and parenting

Suggested time: 25 minutes

Explain that the aim of this exercise is for participants to reflect on, and draw lessons from, their own experiences.

1. Divide participants into groups of three to four people. Ask the groups to focus on their own childhood homes and upbringing, and use their experiences to role-play an imagined scenario. Each person should take on a different role: for example, of wife, husband, daughter, uncle. Give them five minutes to prepare their role-play.

2. Ask each group to perform their role-play to the main group, taking no more than three minutes each.

3. After each role-play, invite discussion of the different parenting styles demonstrated. To finish, as trainer you should remind the group that there is no one style of parenting that is ‘best’.

Reflection

Activity 5 Reflecting on the module

Suggested time: 10 minutes

1. Say that the module has focused on ways we might change being a parent. Give participants a quiet moment for individual reflection to think about positive things that stand out for them about being a parent.
2. Then give participants five minutes to consider:
 - what they found most helpful in the session
 - what content they would have liked on this topic, but did not get.
3. Ask for three volunteers to feed back. Record their responses on flipchart paper. Thank them for their input and say their comments will help you improve the content of the course to meet participants' needs more closely. Allow five minutes for this part of the exercise.

Close the session by thanking participants for their feedback and say you look forward to working with them on the next module. Wish them well in their parenting and planning for their children.