



## Eight themes on positive interaction

Q-0923 E



## Parental guidance

*The symbol for parental guidance is based on an ancient rock carving from the book «Helleristningene i Alta» by Knut Henskog.*

### The Programme for Parental Guidance

*This brochure is part of a package of information material produced for the parental guidance programme.*

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### The ICDP Programme for Parental Guidance

*ICDP is a Norwegian foundation for the development of programmes for children and caregivers. The foundation works in close cooperation with an international network of researchers and organisations.*

*The ICDP runs courses for various user groups.*

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*These eight themes on positive interaction have been formulated as simply and generally as possible so that they can be used with children of different ages and to provide scope for individual adaptation – how a caregiver shows love and recognition towards a child can vary from person to person and across cultures.*

*The themes are intended as a starting-point for discussion, to provide examples and to stimulate the way we naturally show love, convey meaning and expand a child's experience, the way we regulate behaviour and set limits in a positive way. The experiences referred to within each theme are available to all of us. Although these experiences are familiar, they are nonetheless the key to good care. The eight themes are not intended as rules to be followed to the letter but as a reminder and a catalyst for the experience that parents already have, but that tends to be forgotten in the stress that is part of our daily lives.*

*Having worked with these themes in different cultural settings from Africa and Latin America to various European countries, we have come to the conclusion that they express experiences that are common to us all and that most people recognise and regard as important in their care for children of different ages.*

*Karsten Hundeide  
Professor of Psychology at Oslo University*

THEME

1



## 1. Show positive feelings — show your child love

For your child to feel secure, it is important that you show her love, that you hug and caress her and meet her with joy and enthusiasm. Even babies that are too young to understand what we say to them in words, can understand love and rejection, joy and sorrow. There are many ways of showing love for your child, and the ways you choose will vary with the child's age.

- Smile and laugh together
- Hold your child in your arms, hug her
- Positive physical contact
- Share jokes and laughter
- Speak in a mild, loving tone of voice
- Tell your child that you love her when it feels natural to do so

### Tasks:

- A. Give examples of how you do this in practice. How does your child react?
- B. How do you think a child that is always met with indifference and negative feelings from its loved ones will react?
- C. Which of your child's characteristics do you appreciate most?
- D. How can you make your child happy?



## 2. Follow your child's lead

When you are with your child, it is important to be aware of what your child wants, what she is doing and what she is feeling, so that you can identify with your child's feelings and try to follow her lead. The child will then feel that you care. Everyone – children and adults alike – needs to be “seen” and understood!

It is important to early development that the child is allowed, within certain limits, to follow her own ideas instead of having activities organised for her by others. Be careful that you do not rush her and “take over”. Give your child time to bring out her own ideas. This does not mean that the child should decide over you!

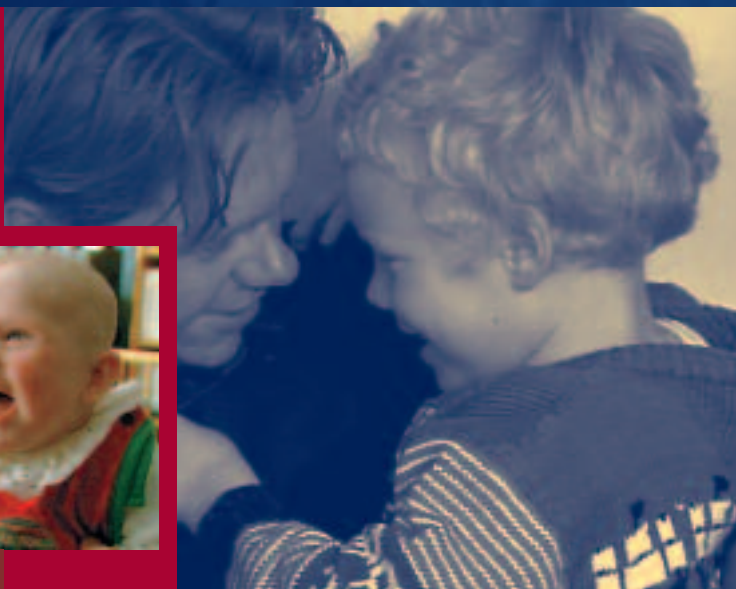
- Respond to your child when she turns to you
- Follow your child's activity and actions
- See what your child is doing, what she wants
- Read your child's body language
- Guess what your child wants and feels
- Respond to what your child wants and feels
- Adjust your actions to your child's mood
- Show interest in what your child is doing.

### Tasks:

- A. Give examples of how you do this in practice.
- B. How does your child react when you adjust to her reactions and follow her initiative?
- C. How will a child who never receives a response to her initiative react?
- D. How can you see a child's feelings and mood by observing her body language?



## THEME 3



### 3. Talk to your child about things that interest her and try to establish “emotional communication”

Even only a short time after your child is born, you can start communicating with her on an emotional level by gazing, smiling, making body movements and expressing joy, with the caregiver making positive comments on what the child does or is interested in, and where the child “answers” with happy sounds. This “conversation” is important for the child to bond to you, learn how to interact with others and develop good verbal communication. Older children also need intimate contact through personal conversations where they can share confidences and talk about personal issues.

- Intimate talks
- Closeness
- Sharing confidences and “secrets”
- Rhythmical interaction through non-verbal language
- Eye contact
- Imitation and exchanging positive body movements
- Conversation with a reciprocal exchange of thoughts, words and feelings

#### Tasks:

- A. Give examples of how you do this in practice.
- B. How does this emotional communication take place with children of different ages (baby, 3-year-old, 8-year-old, 13-year-old girl and 16-year-old boy)?
- C. How will a child develop if close contact is rare and there are seldom opportunities to confide in someone?
- D. What can you do to make room in a busy schedule for personal contact and time to be together?



## 4. Give praise and recognition when the child does something well

For a child to develop confidence in herself and the courage to try something new, it is important that someone is there to make the child feel she is valued and that she is capable. This can be achieved by reacting positively when the child does something well: praise her, tell her what was good and why it was good. It is important that the child feels she has been “seen” so that she can develop a realistic level of confidence.

### “See” the child:

- Eye contact
- Smiling and greeting the child
- Positive touching as a response

### Verbal confirmation:

- Give praise and recognition:  
“That’s good. Well done”  
“That’s good, because when you do that...” with an explanation of why what she did was good.

### Tasks:

- A. Give examples of how you do this in practice.
- B. How does your child react when she is praised for something she did well?
- C. How will a child who never receives praise from her parents react?
- D. How would you give recognition to a baby?



## 5. Help the child to focus her attention, so that you can enjoy your experience of the surroundings together

Children often need help to focus their attention. You can help by focusing the child's attention on the surroundings. You can say "Look at this.." and show the child what you want her to experience or see. Or you can adjust to whatever the child is interested in so that you can focus your attention on the same thing. It often happens that the child is interested in one thing and the parents in something else. Without a shared experience of the surroundings, it is difficult to talk or do something together. This is the basis for close contact and communication.

- Focusing attention and sharing the experience of what the child is interested in, what she looks at.
- Focusing by directing the child's attention towards things, details and characteristics of your surroundings that are of interest to you both: "Look!" "Come here!"

### Tasks:

- A. Give examples of how you help your child to focus her attention, so that you can experience things around you together.
- B. How does your child react?
- C. How will a child develop if she constantly experiences confusion because there is so much happening at once, and if she is seldom offered help to focus her attention?
- D. Do you and your child have time together to focus on and share the experience of things that interest you both?





THEME

6



## 6. Give meaning to the child's experience by describing what you experience together and by showing feelings and enthusiasm

By putting words to an experience, naming things and showing how they function and at the same time showing your feelings about what you experience together, the experience will be one the child will remember as important and meaningful.

For a child to understand what is happening around her and have an experience of something meaningful and interesting, she needs an adult to put words to the experience. This will also make the child feel more secure. This is how the child learns, for example, language, enabling her to interact with others. This often happens automatically from the beginning when the child is a baby: "Look, we're going to change your nappy, is your little bottom sore?"

- Talk to your child about what you experience together
- Give names to and describe what you see
- Show how things work
- Show enthusiasm and interest in what you experience together

### Tasks:

- A. Give examples of how you do this in practice. How does your child react?
- B. How will a child react if no-one ever gives meaning to her experience?
- C. How can you convey meaning to children of different ages?  
(to a baby, a 3-year-old, to a 14-year-old girl)



## 7. Go into detail and give explanations when you experience something with your child

For the child to be able to understand more of the world around her, it is important that someone explains or tells stories about why things happen. With young children, you can expand the child's experience and understanding by comparing what you experience together at the time with something the child has experienced earlier. "Do you remember when we visited ....? The last time we saw ..." With an older child, you can tell stories, give explanations, ask questions, find similarities and differences, etc. This is how we expand what the child is experiencing at the time. This is all important to the child's intellectual development.

- Give explanations, tell stories and find reasons why something happens
- Compare similarities and differences in relation to another experience
- Find connections to the past and the future
- Make and tell stories about what you experience together
- Draw, look at pictures and play theatre games based on what you experience

### Tasks:

- A. Give examples of how you do this in practice.
- B. How can you enrich a one-year old child's experience of her surroundings?  
How can you expand a 7-year-old's experience of her surroundings?
- C. How will a child develop if things that happen are seldom explained?
- D. Do you take the time despite a hectic schedule to stop and explain things to your child when she asks?



## 8. Help your child to learn self-control by setting limits in a positive way: by showing leadership, positive alternatives and by planning together

Children need help to learn self-control and planning. This is largely achieved by adults taking a leadership role in a positive way without taking over. When children behave inconsiderately and egoistically, breaking the rules for interaction with other children and adults, it is important that caregivers intervene and set limits in a positive way, explaining why certain things are not allowed. Instead of continually saying “no” to your child, it is important to show leadership in a positive way, showing what the child is allowed to do and preferably set off some time for her. When children behave badly, they are often seeking positive attention from their parents.

- Make adjustments to prepare for children’s activities, for example by clearing away objects that you want to keep safe from very young children
- Lead the child by suggesting, pointing to and saying what she can do
- Help her to plan step by step
- Give support as long as your child needs it – pull back when she is successful, so that she has the experience of managing on her own
- Challenge the child by presenting her with tasks where she has to use all her capabilities
- Set clear limits to define in a positive way what is allowed. Explain what is allowed and what is not allowed.
- Give explanations when saying no to your child. Distract the child when she does something “wrong” by pointing out alternative activities.
- With older children and young people, negotiation can also be used, for example in relation to what time they have to be home by.

### Tasks:

- A. Give examples of how you do this in practice.
- B. How will a child react if she never experiences that her parents set limits and show leadership? Or whose leadership consists of saying “no”?
- C. In frustrated situations, it is easy to set limits by shouting “no” and being angry. Which other more positive ways do you use to set limits?

## Parental guidance programme

*Parents are experts on their own children. This unique expertise must be safeguarded, strengthened and developed further.*

*One of the aims of the Parental Guidance Programme is to give parents the opportunity to meet in order to exchange experiences and talk about child-rearing issues. The themes for these meetings are wide-ranging and the agenda is decided by the parents. We have commissioned recognised specialists to produce books, guides, special issue booklets, videos and DVDs. The brochure you are now holding was written by Karsten Hundeide, professor of psychology at Oslo University. It is one of many publications dealing with various aspects of parenting. As well as the various booklets and videos, activities that relate to the written material are being established in the municipalities. Contact your local health clinic for more information on the activities available in your area.*

*For more information on the parental guidance programme, please see [www.foreldreveiledning.dep.no](http://www.foreldreveiledning.dep.no).*