Parent Effectiveness Training (P.E.T.)

Forging Strong Families – the Best Prevention

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Developed by American psychologist, Dr Thomas Gordon, 1962 (nominated three times for Nobel Peace Prize). Student and colleague of Dr Carl Rogers.

Thomas Gordon identified Roadblocks to Communication and developed I-messages (both now routinely recognised as part of communication skills, and incorporated in many parenting courses)

Rogerian, relationship-based, democratic approach to parenting

Applicable across cultures (book translated into 32 languages, course taught in 43 countries, including China, Maldives, Korea, Romania, Saudi Arabia)

Well researched

24 hour course – 1x3 hour session for eight weeks

Highly practical and experiential, teaching respectful communication skills

Taught around Australia since the early 1970s.

References:
3. ‘Parent Effectiveness Training’ Thomas Gordon, 2005
P.E.T. Core Concepts

- Children do not misbehave – they behave to meet underlying needs
- Children and parents are people – each has needs to be met in relationship
- Parenting is about relationship
- Avoid win-lose when there is a conflict – aim for win-win
- Does not use rewards or punishment to change behaviour
- Seeks a change in child behaviour because of consideration for own and other’s need, not through compliance.
- Parents cannot always be unconditionally accepting
- Parents don’t need to show a “united front”, but can be supportive of each other.
- Flexible parenting within family values
- Parents can only change themselves, and can then aim to influence others through relationship.
Major skills taught in P.E.T.:

- **Understanding self and taking self-responsibility**
  - Through Thomas Gordon’s unique model of separating parent’s reactions from child’s behaviour

- **Problem Ownership**
  - Thomas Gordon’s second unique model helps parents determine whose needs are not being met in a situation
  - A guide for parents in choice of skill for a given situation

- **Active Listening**
  - Emotion coaching, empathy, emotional literacy, regulation of emotion
  - Major skill to uncover needs behind behaviour

- **I-messages**
  - Respectful assertiveness to meet parent’s need, while maintaining relationship
  - Helps develop emotional awareness in parent; consideration of other’s needs by child

- **Dealing with resistance**
  - Manage anger – child and parent

- **Win-win conflict resolution**
  - Alternative to parental power (that is, alternative to using rewards and punishment)

- **Values collision skills**
## Differences between parenting courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioural</th>
<th>P.E.T.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Aims for compliance</td>
<td>- Aims for mutual respect</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Parent centred</td>
<td>- Child and parent centred</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Relies on reward/punishment (win/lose)</td>
<td>- Involves child in solution (win/win)</td>
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<td>- External locus of control</td>
<td>- Internal, intrinsic locus of control</td>
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<td>- External discipline</td>
<td>- Self/inner discipline</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Child focuses on self to avoid reward/punishment</td>
<td>- Child learns consideration for self and others</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Does not teach parent/child problem solving skills</td>
<td>- Teaches problem solving between parent and child, and other relationship skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Does things ‘to’ children</td>
<td>- Does things ‘with’ children</td>
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<td>- Autocratic/authoritarian</td>
<td>- Democratic/relationship</td>
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P.E.T. complements, or is the ‘how to’ of:

The author of this poster believes that Parent Effectiveness Training complements, or is the ‘how to’ of:

- **Family Partnership Model**
- **Attachment approach to parenting**
- **Emotional intelligence as described by Daniel Goleman (‘Emotional Intelligence’ 1995); John Gottman (‘The Heart of Parenting’ 1997)**
- ‘Children are People Too’ by Louise Porter (2007)
Observed effects on families who use P.E.T.

- Stops attribution of intent - parents do not see children as ‘bad’, ‘deliberate’ or take things as personally.
- Helps parents VALUE children as people
- Helps parents and children develop emotional intelligence and resilience
- Teaches life long relationship skills
- Parents can develop reflective parental functioning - see children as separate
- Reduces stress, parents more confident
- Parents more pro-active, rather than reactive
- Parents stop seeing children as being problems, but rather as having problems.
- Empowering for both children and parents
- Parents yell less, are more patient, less likely to be punitive
- Protective for children when there is a relationship breakdown between parents
- Children and parents happier with each other, enjoy being together
- Program attracts a high proportion of fathers and step-fathers
Preventive Effects

- Parents give their children more TIME when using the relationship approach. (OECD rated Australia 18/27 on the question of time parents spend ‘just talking’ to 15 year olds more than once per week)
- Children with social and emotional intelligence more likely to have positive outcomes in adult life
- Teaches, models and promotes respectful, warm parent-child relationships. The ARACY technical report states that “parent-child relationships are the most important mediating factors of child wellbeing”.
- Lowest prevalence of teenage alcohol and drug use when both parents use democratic parenting style.
- Helps prevent self-harm, because children are validated and heard by parents. Self-harm is often a result of chronic invalidation by parents.
“Should be mandatory for all parents”

“[I] felt very unsupported by partner in parenting ways; now we support each other with arising issues. Communication is now calmer with children, less hostility, more chatting/discussions.”

“Overwhelming, big changes [in family]. Calmer, enjoyment together. Outsiders have commented, even though they had not known about me doing the course.”

“Effective, confronting, helpful. Improves self-awareness, offers opportunity to change. Assists joy to be found in parenting.”
Parent Evaluation comments

- “[I am] calmer, more respectful, listen more, more empathic, more reflective.”

- “My stubborn teenager has begun to be more expressive, a little more talkative and overall the family environment has been more peaceful”

- “[I have] much less feelings of anger and frustration, more willing to work at child’s level, not impose solutions. Calmer. [My children are] generally more loving and accepting of my needs re messy rooms etc.”

- “[I am] listening more! Not threatening the children with power. Enjoying the kids more and making time to do things with them. [My children are] willing to talk more about feelings, problems”