



Module MP-M3

Helping parents cope with negative perceptions of their children

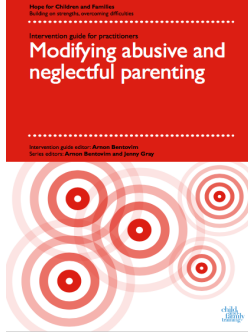
Content

- The consequences of being in a stressful situation
- Parents 'leaking' to children how they are feeling
- The consequences of thoughts, feelings and behaviour
- Identifying challenging thoughts
- Practising and reporting back.

Materials

- h** Handout
- n** Practitioner notes
- r** Record
- w** Worksheet

- How does stress in parents lead to harm of children? [MP-9] **n**
- ABCs of CBT [MP-10] **w**



Main steps

See 'Parents coping with stress and the link with abusive and neglectful parenting' [MP-M2] as this has a clear link with this module.

Indicate that the agenda will focus on the sorts of feelings and attitudes the parents have about their children, which in turn can lead to the kinds of negative consequences that have been discussed previously.

Discussion of the consequences of being in a stressful situation

The aim is to help parents look in more detail, from the information available in the assessment, at the sequence of thoughts, feelings and actions associated in general with stress, and specifically with the abusive action that has been perpetrated.

Initially, discuss the consequences of being in a stressful situation in general terms, and then discuss the specific consequences for them.

In 'How does stress in parents lead to harm of children?' [MP-9] a number of different possibilities of abusive action are presented. Choose statements that relate to what is known about harmful processes that have affected their children, or that may have been discussed in general terms previously.

Parents need to be very specific about the particular sequence of thoughts, feelings, behaviour and consequences that have led to harm occurring.

This has been used successfully as a way of helping parents begin to acknowledge processes once a positive relationship has been created with a therapist.

When we are stressed it is very easy for us to blame other people for why we are feeling very wound up. I'm going to describe some stressful situations.

Do you understand the idea of something becoming a 'self-fulfilling prophecy'?

This is an example of what we mean.

Changing perceptions of children's behaviour

'ABCs of CBT' [MP-10] illustrates the way in which a parent can come to develop a set of thoughts, feelings, behaviours and convictions which result in a child being harmed. In this example a child spills some milk. In the top row, the response in terms of thoughts, feelings and behaviour results in an angry outburst. The bottom row shows an alternative way of thinking.

The ABC example is to assist a parent in thinking of examples where their child has been harmed. What were the thoughts, feelings and behaviour that followed and what were the consequences?

n How does stress in parents lead to harm of children?

Amongst children and families, using questionnaires such as the Parenting Daily Difficulties Scale, helps the parents to focus on the kinds of negative perceptions of their children. For example, listing their abusive perceptions of children or the discipline of how they behave in a way that identifies external stressors and attributes, looking at them as they are responding in ways that suggest the child has an illness that needs to be investigated or the child should be forgiven.

To access this type of process it is helpful to begin to explore with parents what it is about their children that has led them to feel and behave in ways that have been judged to be abusive, even though their as parents feel absolutely justified in their actions. Exploring factors that lead to stress, and therefore negative perceptions of their children, is a helpful way to begin to break this cycle.

How does stress in parents lead to harm of children?

Many people feel themselves blaming their children when something goes wrong. We sometimes think that they have made the choices wrong, and it is quite easy to feel distressed in the moment that we think they are trying to make our lives miserable, almost trying to make us fall as parents. We wonder whether you have had moments like that, or whether your partner or others in the family have voiced the same sort of idea.

- Caring for children is stressful. It is easy to feel quite resentful when children seem unresponsive and negative. It is easy then to lose control when children are naughty and we are stressed. They can lead to the sort of cycle of anger and harmful behaviour which has been a concern. Does that make sense for you?
- It is very easy for us as parents to 'talk' to children just how annoyed we are, finding ourselves communicating negatively, or ignoring them even if they are behaving acceptably. It is easy to get into the mindset which says, 'You are good now. Why weren't you good like this before?' When we find ourselves thinking like this, children - who are very sensitive to our moods, our tone of voice, our attitude - may themselves behave more negatively.

In the way of thinking one that is familiar to you or within the family - people getting labelled, perhaps unfairly, because they are seen to resemble a parent or family member who is perceived negatively!

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W ABCs of CBT

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Thoughts	Feelings	Behaviours	Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's so messy It's trying to annoy me It's bad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anger Disgust Impatience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shout child Blame to give child more milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refused to child permission Child is angry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was an accident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displeasure Patience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help child clean up Buy milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nothing Milk is consumed Child gets more milk

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