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SELF ✓
INSTRUCTION

PARENTAL SCRIPTS

UNIT 3



**PARENTAL SKILLS PROGRAM
HANDICAPPED CHILDREN**



SELF-INSTRUCTION WORKBOOK

UNIT III

PARENTAL SCRIPTS

PARENTAL SKILLS FOR PARENTS OF
HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

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PARENTAL SCRIPTS



INSTRUCTIONS: Turn the page and begin reading. Take a sheet of paper and slide it down the page as you read. Throughout the unit, you will come to exercises marked with a big circle. You should complete each exercise as you come to it. Then slide the paper down and check your answer with the answer provided immediately following the exercise. If you are not satisfied with your answer, go back and read the part just before the exercise and then redo the exercise. When you are satisfied with your answer, proceed with your reading.

UNIT 3

THIS IS THE THIRD UNIT IN THE PARENTAL SKILLS PROGRAM. THIS UNIT DEALS WITH FIVE DIFFERENT SCRIPTS PARENTS TEND TO "ACT OUT" IN PARENTING THEIR CHILDREN.

LEARNING PARENTAL SCRIPTS

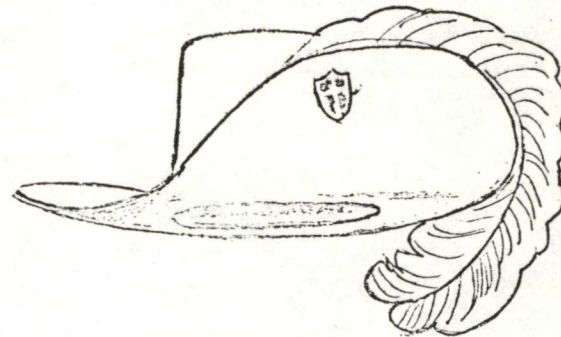
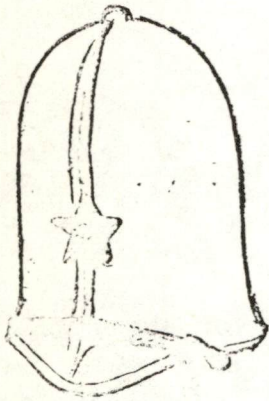
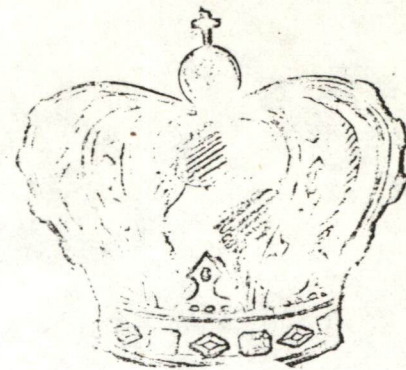
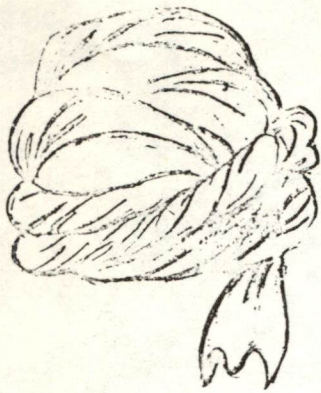
ALL OF US, WHETHER WE REALIZE IT OR NOT, TEND TO FOLLOW ONE OF THESE FIVE PARENT SCRIPTS. BEFORE DESCRIBING THESE SCRIPTS LET US LOOK AT HOW A PERSON COMES TO FOLLOW ONE PARTICULAR SCRIPT. WHERE DOES THE SCRIPT COME FROM? HOW IS IT LEARNED?

. COPYING PARENTS

MUCH OF A PARENT SCRIPT COMES FROM COPYING OUR OWN PARENTS. OUR PARENTS SERVE AS MODELS OF WHAT A PARENT DOES. WHEN WE BECOME PARENTS WE COPY OUR MOTHERS AND FATHERS.

. EXPERIENCE . TRIAL AND ERROR

OUR PARENT SCRIPT IS ALSO INFLUENCED BY OUR EXPERIENCES....WHETHER OR NOT WE HAVE BEEN AROUND SMALL CHILDREN....WHETHER WE COME FROM A LARGE OR SMALL FAMILY....WHETHER WE HAVE BROTHERS OR SISTERS. FINALLY, WE LEARN PARENTING BY TRIAL AND ERROR. THAT IS, WE TRY SOMETHING OUT AND IF IT WORKS WE TEND TO DO IT OVER AND OVER AGAIN.



5 HATS

MOST PARENTS TEND TO FOLLOW ONE OF FIVE DIFFERENT PARENTAL SCRIPTS. WE CAN THINK OF THESE FIVE SCRIPTS AS THE FIVE POSSIBLE HATS A PERSON CAN WEAR WHEN HE PLAYS THE PART OF PARENT. THESE FIVE SCRIPTS ARE THE MOST COMMON PARENTAL SCRIPTS IN OUR SOCIETY.

5 SCRIPTS

- . ABDICATOR
- . CONTROLLER
- . MARTYR
- . CAVALIER
- . ACTIVATOR

THEY ARE: THE ABDICATOR, REPRESENTED BY THE CROWN OF THE KING WHO GIVES UP HIS THRONE. THE CONTROLLER, REPRESENTED BY THE HELMET OF THE POLICEMAN WHO CONTROLS AND KEEPS ORDER. THE MARTYR, REPRESENTED BY THE TURBAN OF THE HOLY MAN WHO MARTYRS HIMSELF FOR HIS CAUSE. THE CAVALIER, REPRESENTED BY THE FEATHERED HAT OF THE MUSKETEER WHO SEEKS FUN AND ADVENTURE. AND THE ACTIVATOR, REPRESENTED BY THE SPORTS CAP OF THE COACH WHO GUIDES HIS TEAM TO SUCCESS.

DIFFER

- . VIEWPOINT
- . FLEXIBILITY
- . BEHAVIOR

EACH OF THESE SCRIPTS IS DIFFERENT. THEY DIFFER IN PARENTAL VIEWPOINT, OR HOW THE PARENTS PERCEIVE THEIR CHILD AND THEIR ROLE AS PARENTS. THEY DIFFER IN DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY AND THEY DIFFER IN THE TYPES OF BEHAVIOR THAT ARE EXPRESSED TOWARD THE CHILD.



List and briefly explain the three ways parental scripts differ from each other.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Each of the scripts differ in 1. their viewpoint or how the parents think of their child; 2. the amount of behavioral flexibility in the script; and 3. the types of parental behaviors included in the script.)

LEAN TOWARD

AS PARENTS WE DO NOT FOLLOW ONE SCRIPT EXACTLY. INSTEAD WE TEND TO LEAN TOWARD ONE OF THESE SCRIPTS MORE THAN ANOTHER.



ABDICATOR

ONE PARENTAL SCRIPT IS THE ABDICATOR. THIS IS THE PARENT WHO ABDICATES OR GIVES UP HIS RESPONSIBILITY.

SCRIPT

IN FOLLOWING THE ABDICATOR SCRIPT, THE PARENT REMOVES HIMSELF EITHER PHYSICALLY OR MENTALLY FROM THE PARENT SCENE. THE DOMINANT THEME IN HIS SCRIPT IS TO DO NOTHING, TO LET SOMEONE ELSE DO IT.

• WITHDRAWS

THE ABDICATOR WITHDRAWS FROM SITUATIONS REQUIRING PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY. HE MAY READ, LOOK AT TELEVISION OR BECOME PREOCCUPIED WITH OTHER ACTIVITIES WHEN MAJOR PROBLEMS EXIST. THE ABDICATOR IS QUITE OFTEN ABSENT FROM THE HOUSE, ESPECIALLY DURING PERIODS OF CRISIS.

• POSTPONES

THE ABDICATOR POSTPONES ACTION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT FAMILY PROBLEMS. HE MAY SAY, "WE'LL TALK ABOUT THIS TOMORROW" OR "LET'S WAIT AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS." IF ACTION IS POSTPONED LONG ENOUGH, HE FEELS THE PROBLEM MAY SOLVE ITSELF OR BE FORGOTTEN.

• IGNORES

THE ABDICATOR IGNORES PROBLEMS BY PRETENDING THEY DON'T EXIST, OR THAT SOMETHING ELSE IS MORE IMPORTANT. HE TENDS TO ASSUME THAT SOMEONE ELSE IS OR SHOULD BE DOING EVERYTHING.

SHIFTS RESPONSIBILITY

THE NET RESULT OF THE ABDICATOR SCRIPT IS TO SHIFT RESPONSIBILITY TO SOMEONE ELSE. BY REMOVING HIMSELF, HE CREATES A VACUUM THAT SOMEONE ELSE MUST FILL. HE CREATES A SITUATION WHERE OTHERS MUST TAKE OVER HIS RESPONSIBILITIES.



Check (✓) those items which characterize the Abdicator parent.

- _____ 1. Withdraws from situations
- _____ 2. Takes immediate action on problems
- _____ 3. Postpones decisions
- _____ 4. Ignores problems
- _____ 5. Does everything himself
- _____ 6. Shifts responsibility

(Statements 1, 3, 4, and 6 should be checked. Most parents use Abdicator behaviors from time to time. For example, there are times when a parent needs to postpone a decision until he has more information. Or, all parents need occasional retreats and a change of pace, so they temporarily withdraw from situations. The Abdicator, however, makes a habit of using such behaviors all the time.)

ABDICATOR PARENT

BECAUSE HE ESCAPES FROM THE SITUATION, THE ABDICATOR EITHER DOESN'T DEVELOP CONTACT OR GRADUALLY LOSES CONTACT WITH HIS CHILD. AS A RESULT THE CHILD RECEIVES LITTLE GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT FROM THE ABDICATOR PARENT.



What are two possible negative effects of the Abdicator parent on a handicapped child?

1. _____
2. _____

(If the child does not receive the parent's support and guidance, his interests and skill level may be reduced. Second, if the parent stays away from the child, the child may wonder, "What's wrong with me?" A child's self-image is greatly affected by the way his parents act toward him.)



CONTROLLER

ANOTHER PARENTAL SCRIPT IS THE CONTROLLER. THIS IS THE PARENT WHO COMPLETELY DOMINATES HIS CHILD.

SCRIPT

THE CONTROLLER PARENT USES POWER. HIS CHILD IS FORCED TO FULFILL THE PARENT'S GOALS AND STANDARDS. THE CONTROLLER'S SCRIPT CALLS FOR HIM TO BE TOTALLY IN CHARGE.

DEFINES
AND
DIRECTS

THE CONTROLLER DEFINES THE GOALS AND DIRECTS THE ACTIONS OF HIS CHILD. HE THINKS HE KNOWS WHAT IS RIGHT AND WHAT IS WRONG FOR THE CHILD....HOW THE CHILD SHOULD BEHAVE, WHAT HE SHOULD DO. IN OBSERVING THE CONTROLLER'S ACTIONS IT IS OBVIOUS THAT HIS CHILD HAS NO "CIVIL RIGHTS".

JUDGES

THE CONTROLLER CONSTANTLY JUDGES THE CHILD. THE CONTROLLER'S VOICE, BEHAVIOR AND BODY STANCE TEND TO EXPRESS JUDGMENT. "YOU'RE NOT DOING THAT RIGHT" OR "WHAT DID YOU DO THAT FOR?" MAY BE FREQUENT EXPRESSIONS.

"PUTS DOWN"

THE CONTROLLER ALSO USES "PUT DOWNS" WHEN HE DISLIKES WHAT THE CHILD IS DOING. "PUT DOWNS" ARE PHRASES LIKE "HOW COULD YOU BE SO STUPID!" OR "WHY DO YOU ALWAYS DO EVERYTHING WRONG?". "PUT DOWNS" THREATEN THE CHILD'S SECURITY AND SELF-CONFIDENCE.

USES POWER

IN DEALING WITH THE CHILD, THE CONTROLLER CONSTANTLY USES POWER. THIS POWER IS BACKED BY THE THREAT OF RESTRICTION AND PUNISHMENT. THE CHILD MUST ALWAYS LOSE; THE PARENT MUST ALWAYS WIN.



Check (✓) those items which characterize the Controller parent.

- _____ 1. Defines goals for the child
- _____ 2. Recognizes the child's "civil rights"
- _____ 3. Judges the child
- _____ 4. Uses praise and rewards often
- _____ 5. Uses "put downs"
- _____ 6. Uses power

(Statement 1, 3, 5, and 6 should be checked. All parents at one time or another use some controlling behaviors with their children. This seems to be especially true when the child is very young. However, if the parent makes a habit of using such behaviors, the child may come to feel very inadequate or insecure.)

CONTROLLER PARENT

THE CONTROLLER BASICALLY SEES THE CHILD AS AN EXTENSION OF HIMSELF TO BE MOLDED. THE CONTROLLER IS HAPPY WHEN THE CHILD IS DOING WHAT HE WANTS. HE IS UNHAPPY WHEN THE CHILD IS DOING WHAT THE CHILD WANTS.

List two possible effects of the Controller parent on a handicapped child.

1. _____
2. _____

(Because of the way the Controller operates, his children may become less able to take care of themselves. They may be more dependent, have less self-confidence and be less willing to participate and learn new skills.)



MARTYR

ANOTHER PARENTAL SCRIPT IS THAT OF THE MARTYR. THE MARTYR PARENT IS ALWAYS UNHAPPY AND SUFFERS A LOT.

SCRIPT

IN THE MARTYR SCRIPT, THE PARENT CARRIES THE BIGGEST BURDEN AND IT IS OBVIOUS TO EVERYONE. HE MAKES EVERYONE FEEL GUILTY.

OVERWORKS

THE MARTYR PARENT OVERWORKS. THIS PARENT TRIES TO DO EVERYTHING FOR HIS CHILD. HE RARELY ASKS FOR OR ACCEPTS HELP, YET HE LETS EVERYONE KNOW HOW OVERWORKED HE IS.

SUFFERS

THE MARTYR CONSTANTLY SUFFERS. HIS SUFFERING IS OBVIOUS TO ALL. HE MAY DEVELOP REAL OR UNREAL PHYSICAL AILMENTS DUE TO HIS OVERWORK AND SELF-SACRIFICE.

SEEKS PITY

THE MARTYR PARENT SEEKS PITY. HE TELLS HIS CHILD AND OTHERS HIS PROBLEMS AND BURDENS. THEY IN TURN ARE EXPECTED TO SYMPATHIZE AND RECOGNIZE HOW MUCH THE MARTYR GIVES UP FOR THEM.

USES GUILT

THE MARTYR PARENT USES GUILT TO GET THE CHILD AND OTHERS TO DO WHAT HE WANTS. FOR THE MOST PART THEY RESPOND TO THE GUILT. BUT IF THE MARTYR PARENT OVER-PLAYS HIS HAND BY CREATING TOO MUCH GUILT, THEY OFTEN BEGIN TO FIGHT BACK OR BUILD DEFENSES.



Check (✓) those items which characterize a Martyr parent.

- _____ 1. Works very hard
- _____ 2. Is eager to accept help
- _____ 3. Constantly seems to suffer
- _____ 4. Uses guilt
- _____ 5. Seeks pity
- _____ 6. Does not want sympathy

(Statements 1, 3, 4, and 5 should be checked. Many parents, not only the Martyr parent, must work very hard. The Martyr differs, however, in why he is working so hard. The Martyr parent could get help from his family, but often refuses their help. Martyrs work so hard in order to make others feel guilt and in order to gain pity. Through pity and guilt Martyrs hope to make others do what they want.

MARTYR PARENT

THE MARTYR PARENT ACTS AS IF HIS CHILD'S NEEDS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN HIS OWN, AS IF HE HAS NO "PERSONAL" RIGHTS. HE TENDS TO EXPRESS TREMENDOUS SELF-SACRIFICE AND DEVOTES ALL OF HIS EFFORTS TOWARD THE CHILD. HIS CHILD, ON THE OTHER HAND, EXPERIENCES GUILT BECAUSE HE IS ALWAYS REMINDED WHAT A BURDEN HE IS TO HIS PARENT, AND HE IS CONSTANTLY DEPRIVED OF OPPORTUNITIES TO DO THINGS FOR HIMSELF.

List two possible effects of a Martyr parent on a handicapped child.

1. _____
2. _____

(A handicapped child with a Martyr parent may develop a great deal of guilt because of the sacrifices and effects he sees his parent make for him. This kind of guilt could make the child resentful of his parent. Also, because the parent tries to do so much for the child, the handicapped child may not be allowed to learn skills or have the opportunities he needs to do things for himself.)



CAVALIER

ANOTHER PARENTAL SCRIPT IS THE CAVALIER. THIS IS THE PARENT WHO WANTS HIS CHILD TO LIKE HIM AND PROVIDES HIS CHILD WITH PLEASURE. HE ALSO WANTS THE CHILD TO ESCAPE FROM ANYTHING UNPLEASANT.

SCRIPT

IN THE CAVALIER SCRIPT THE PARENT ENTERTAINS HIS CHILD IN ORDER THAT THE CHILD CAN ESCAPE FROM HIS PROBLEMS.

DIVERTS

THE CAVALIER FREQUENTLY DIVERTS HIS CHILD INTO FUN-MAKING ACTIVITY. HE IS ALWAYS READY TO GO SOMEWHERE OR DO SOMETHING THAT'S FUN. TO HEAR THE CAVALIER DESCRIBE AN ACTIVITY, ONE CAN'T WAIT TO GET STARTED ON IT.

AVOIDS JUDGMENT

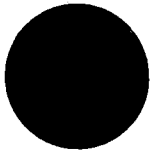
THE CAVALIER IS EXTREMELY NON-JUDGING. WHERE THE CONTROLLER JUDGES THE CHILD, THE CAVALIER IS JUST THE OPPOSITE. THROUGH GESTURES, SPEECH AND BEHAVIOR THE CAVALIER ALLOWS THE CHILD COMPLETE FREEDOM. WITH THE CAVALIER PARENT THE CHILD FEELS HE CAN SAY ANYTHING AND DO ANYTHING.

ENTERTAINS

THE CAVALIER CONSTANTLY ENTERTAINS HIS CHILD. HE ACTS LIKE THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ENTERTAINMENT COMMITTEE.

PROVIDES PLEASURE

THE CAVALIER'S MAJOR GOAL IS TO PROVIDE THE CHILD WITH PLEASURE. THE CAVALIER PARENT TENDS TO SEE HIS CHILD'S SITUATION AS VERY SAD. HE THINKS THAT HIS JOB AS A PARENT IS TO MAKE IT UP TO HIM. HE GIVES HIS CHILD AS MUCH PLEASURE AS POSSIBLE.



Check (✓) those items which characterize the Cavalier parent.

- _____ 1. Often rewards learning and achieving
- _____ 2. Diverts to fun activities
- _____ 3. Criticizes when necessary
- _____ 4. Wants to entertain all the time
- _____ 5. Avoids judging
- _____ 6. Provides pleasure to the child

(Statements 2, 4, 5, and 6 should be checked. All parents want to enjoy their children and so they plan pleasant experiences together. Parents of handicapped children, however, often feel a special need to cavalier with their child. They find their child's situation very sad and are trying to make it up to him. Parents of handicapped children should try to focus on developing their child as well as providing him pleasure.)

CAVALIER PARENT

SINCE THE CAVALIER IS PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH DIVERTING OR GIVING HIS CHILD PLEASURE, HE AVOIDS FACING UP TO UNPLEASANT PROBLEMS SUCH AS PHYSICAL CARE. THE PARENT SIMPLY WANTS HIS CHILD TO LIKE HIM. IN THE CHILD'S EYES OTHERS BECOME VILAINS AND THE CAVALIER PARENT IS THE GOOD GUY.



ACTIVATOR

THE FINAL PARENTAL SCRIPT IS THE ACTIVATOR. THIS IS THE PARENT WHO TRIES TO ACTIVATE HIS CHILD TOWARD GROWTH AND INDEPENDENCE.

SCRIPT

IN THE ACTIVATOR SCRIPT THE PARENT SEEKS THE LONG-RANGE DEVELOPMENT OF HIS CHILD'S POTENTIAL.

ACCEPTS

THE ACTIVATOR ACCEPTS HIS HANDICAPPED CHILD AS A PERSON. HE RECOGNIZES THAT HIS CHILD HAS CIVIL RIGHTS.

MOTIVATES

THE ACTIVATOR SEEKS TO MOTIVATE HIS CHILD. HIS MAJOR THEME IN MOTIVATION IS TO HELP HIS CHILD DEVELOP A POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

COMMUNICATES

THE ACTIVATOR OPENLY COMMUNICATES WITH HIS CHILD. IN COMMUNICATING HE EMPATHIZES, LISTENS, INVOLVES AND SHARES. HE IS NOT ONLY A SENDER AND RECEIVER OF INFORMATION; HE SEEKS TO SERVE AS A MODEL OF HOW PEOPLE COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY.

RELEASES

THE ACTIVATOR RELEASES HIS CHILD. IN RELEASING HIS CHILD HE PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE CHILD TO EXPAND HIS SKILLS AND HORIZONS. HE WANTS HIS CHILD TO LEARN NEW IDEAS AND NEW SKILLS, TO EXPERIENCE NEW FEELINGS, NEW PEOPLE AND NEW PLACES. THE ACTIVATOR ALLOWS HIS CHILD TO TAKE CALCULATED RISKS.



Check (✓) those items which characterize the Activator parent.

- _____ 1. Accepts the child
- _____ 2. Judges the child
- _____ 3. Motivates the child
- _____ 4. Communicates with the child
- _____ 5. Controls the child
- _____ 6. Releases the child

(Statements 1, 3, 4, and 6 should be checked. Few parents have had opportunities to learn all of the Activator's skills. Most parents, however, do use at least some of these behaviors. In the following units, many of the Activator's skills will be described and you will have an opportunity to learn about them.)

ACTIVATOR PARENT

THE ACTIVATOR VIEWS HIS CHILD AS HAVING RIGHTS, NEEDS AND POTENTIAL. HIS JOB AS A PARENT IS TO PROVIDE THE CONDITIONS, GUIDANCE AND MODEL FOR MAXIMUM DEVELOPMENT. HE SEEKS TO HELP HIS CHILD DEVELOP SKILLS FOR COPING WITH AND MANAGING HIS LIFE.

REVIEW

- . VIEWS
- . BEHAVIORS

WE HAVE DEALT WITH FIVE PARENTAL SCRIPTS. NOW LET US REVIEW THE BASIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THESE SCRIPTS IN DEALING WITH A HANDICAPPED CHILD. MAINLY THEY DIFFER IN THE PARENT'S VIEWS OF THE CHILD, WHICH RESULT IN DIFFERENCES IN PARENTING BEHAVIOR.

VIEW OF CHILD

EACH OF THE FIVE SCRIPTS TENDS TO HAVE DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE HANDICAPPED CHILD, REGARDLESS OF THE TYPE OF HANDICAP. THESE VIEWS RELATE TO HOW THE PARENT SEES THE CHILD AND WHAT IS EXPECTED IN TERMS OF DEVELOPMENT AND POTENTIAL.

VIEW

PROBLEM
HELPLESS
BURDEN
UNHAPPY
POTENTIAL

THE ABDICATOR SEES THE CHILD AS A PROBLEM THAT CANNOT BE SOLVED. THE CONTROLLER SEES THE CHILD AS HELPLESS, AS ONE WHO MUST BE CONTROLLED AND DIRECTED. THE MARTYR SEES THE CHILD AS A BURDEN WHICH HE MUST ENDURE. THE CAVALIER SEES THE CHILD AS UNHAPPY AND NEEDING TO BE ENTERTAINED. THE ACTIVATOR SEES THE CHILD AS A PERSON WITH POTENTIAL TO BE DEVELOPED.

BEHAVIORS

ABDICATOR----- ESCAPE
CONTROLLER----- RULE
MARTYR -----SUFFER
CAVALIER ----- PLAY
ACTIVATOR--DEVELOPS
CHILD

IN EACH PARENTAL STYLE THE PARENT'S BEHAVIOR IS CENTERED AROUND A GENERAL THEME. FOR THE ABDICATOR, HIS BEHAVIOR RELATES TO ESCAPE, WHILE THE CONTROLLER'S BEHAVIOR CENTERS AROUND RULING THE CHILD. THE MARTYR SUFFERS WHILE THE CAVALIER PLAYS. THE ACTIVATOR'S BEHAVIOR CENTERS AROUND DEVELOPING THE CHILD.



Below is a list of 20 characteristics for the five styles of parenting. You are to match the characteristics with the appropriate style. Write in the numbers of the characteristics next to the name of the style to which it belongs. HINT: Each style should have four characteristics.

ABDICATOR	___	___	___	___	1. Motivates
					2. Diverts
CONTROLLER	___	___	___	___	3. Overworks
					4. Defines and directs
MARTYR	___	___	___	___	5. Withdraws
					6. Accepts
CAVALIER	___	___	___	___	7. Avoids judgment
					8. Suffers
ACTIVATOR	___	___	___	___	9. Judges
					10. Postpones
					11. Ignores
					12. Puts down
					13. Seeks pity
					14. Entertains
					15. Communicates
					16. Releases
					17. Shifts responsibility
					18. Uses power
					19. Provides pleasure
					20. Uses guilt

(The correct answers are: Abdicator 5, 10, 11, 17; Controller 4, 9, 12, 18; Martyr 3, 8, 13, 20; Cavalier 2, 7, 14, 19; Activator 1, 6, 15, 16.)

RESULTS

- . SKILLS
- . SELF-IMAGE
- . SELF-SUFFICIENCY

THE LONG TERM EFFECTS OF EACH PARENTAL SCRIPT ON A HANDICAPPED CHILD CAN BE SUMMARIZED AS FOLLOWS: THE ABDICATOR'S, CONTROLLER'S, MARTYR'S, AND CAVALIER'S CHILDREN ALL TEND TO DEVELOP FEWER SKILLS. THEY ALSO HAVE LESS POSITIVE SELF-IMAGES AND DEVELOP LESS SELF-SUFFICIENCY THAN THE ACTIVATOR'S CHILD. THE PARENTS IN TURN EXPERIENCE MORE PROBLEMS AND FEELINGS OF FAILURE.

HANDICAPPED CHILD

HANDICAPPED CHILDREN TEND TO BE INFLUENCED BY PARENTS MORE THAN OTHER CHILDREN BECAUSE OF LIMITED MOBILITY AND EXPOSURE TO PEOPLE. ISOLATION OF THE HANDICAPPED CHILD COMPOUNDS PARENTAL INFLUENCE. THE SCRIPT THE PARENT FOLLOWS IS A PRIMARY FACTOR IN THE CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT.

ACTIVATOR PARENT

IN WEIGHING THE EVIDENCE, THE BEST SCRIPT FOR PARENTS OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN TO FOLLOW IS THE ACTIVATOR'S. OVER THE LONG HAUL THIS SCRIPT WILL PROVIDE GREATER BENEFITS TO THE CHILD AND GREATER RETURNS TO THE PARENT.

"TO TYPE OR NOT TO TYPE"

THIS CASE HISTORY WILL GIVE YOU AN OPPORTUNITY TO APPLY YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE FIVE POSSIBLE PARENTAL SCRIPTS TO A PROBLEM SITUATION.

Ellen Wilson is 11 years old and she is blind. Her mother has been informed by the school district that she can attend regular class rather than Braille class if she will learn how to type during the summer.

Describe what Ellen's mother would do about the typing problem if her parental style were that of a:

CONTROLLER: _____

ABDICATOR: _____

MARTYR: _____

CAVALIER: _____

ACTIVATOR: _____

(The answers appear on the next page)

ANSWERS

The following are brief descriptions of the behaviors each parental script would follow in dealing with the typing problem.

CONTROLLER

A Controller parent would tell the child... "Your going to learn to type." The parent would set up a rigid schedule for the child to maintain. The child would not be allowed to have a say in the situation. The parent would pay a great deal of attention to the child's failures and constantly judge performance. If the child did not progress in accordance to the parent's standards, the parent would use "put downs" such as "You don't want to go to regular class" or "I guess that is all I can expect out of you."

ABDICATOR

An Abdicator parent would do nothing about the typing problem. Instead, the Abdicator would expect the other parent or even the child to take care of it. The Abdicator would find something more important to do or would be too busy. If asked for an opinion about the situation, the Abdicator would not have an opinion or put off answering.

MARTYR

The Martyr parent would tell Ellen that she was going to help her learn to type even if it made extra work for the parent. Therefore, Ellen should do her part. Ellen would be reminded over and over that she had to practice because her mother was doing so much for her. The parent would tell everyone how hard she was working to get Ellen in regular classes.

CAVALIER

The Cavalier might take Ellen out to buy a typewriter if she thought Ellen might like one. It would be like buying a toy. If Ellen didn't enjoy learning to type the parent would not force her to continue. The Cavalier would think up something that was more fun to do.

ACTIVATOR

An Activator parent would discuss with Ellen her opportunity to go to regular classes. The parent would explain why it was important and listen to Ellen's ideas and opinion about the opportunity and the practice schedule she would like to follow. The Activator would want learning to type to be Ellen's goal and not the parent's goal. The parent would frequently praise Ellen on her learning progress.

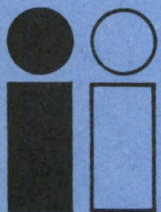
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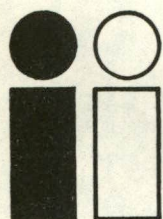
PARENTAL SCRIPTS

UNIT 3



PARENTAL SKILLS PROGRAM HANDICAPPED CHILDREN





interaction inc.

3802 Las Palmas Drive
Houston, Texas 77027
(713) 621-8171

FIRST DRAFT

TEXT

UNIT III - PARENTAL SCRIPTS

PARENTAL SKILLS FOR PARENTS OF

HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

PROGRAM

By

Charlotte A. Clifford

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UNIT III

PARENTAL SCRIPTS

Some of the problems and difficulties of parenting a handicapped child, or a non-handicapped child, for that matter, are caused by the kinds of behavior a parent uses with his children. In following the behaviors they learned from their own parents, some parents find it difficult to communicate with, motivate, and develop their children. This is because some parental behaviors have real drawbacks in terms of the child's development and result in children with undeveloped skills, poor emotional health or negative self-images.

Part of the problem relates to the fact that parents have little opportunity to learn new parental skills, or to learn to use the new approaches that research has shown are effective in parenting children.

FEW PARENTS EVER ANALYZE THEIR SCRIPT

Parents of handicapped children often speak of feeling that there must be better ways for them to handle their relationships with their children. The problem is that they either don't know better ways, or ~~don't know what they are doing~~ that is not working. For that matter, parents of children without handicaps talk of sensing the same thing. And yet, few of us ever analyze our parent script though it might be the crux of the problem. We seldom if ever take a look at our basic ideas about children and think about our actual behavior toward our child.

FIVE BASIC PARENTAL SCRIPTS

There are five different and distinct styles of parenting that parents tend to use. These five styles of parents seem to follow five distinct scripts.^(a) There are parents who are Abdicators. These are the parents who tend to be away from their children most of the time or avoid parental responsibility. Other parents are Controllers. These parents try to control what their children think, believe and do at all times. There are also parents who are Cavaliers. These parents think their job is to entertain their child and make every day a holiday. Still other parents are Martyrs. These parents give up everything for their children. They sacrifice and suffer, and their goal seems to be to receive recognition for their suffering. Finally, some parents are Activators. These are the parents who have a wide range of behavior skills. They seek to stimulate and motivate their children and help them develop.

In this unit we will look at these five parental styles to see what impact each style has on a handicapped child.

IDENTIFYING SCRIPTS

As you read the descriptions of these parental styles, or scripts, you may wish to relate them to your own situation. In doing so, try to identify your script, your spouse's script, and the script of both your own and your spouse's parents.

In identifying your own script, remember that all parents use all of these scripts at

^(a) See 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 37.

one time or another; however, over an extended period of time one script will stand out as the one you use more than others. This is your major parental style and the way your child sees you most of the time.

In identifying your spouse's script, remember that his or her script has an impact on you and your child. Also remember your spouse may not know any other script.

In identifying your parents' scripts and those of your spouse's parents, remember that they provided the models for the scripts you and your spouse tend to follow.^(b) Sometimes these scripts are perpetuated through generations unless new scripts are learned or developed. Whether your script developed from modeling your own parents or whether it arose through trial and error,^(c) all scripts are learned.^(d)

In identifying your major script and the scripts of your spouse and both of your parents, remember that the descriptions of these scripts present the most dramatic extreme of each script in order to give you a clear idea about each of them. Actually, parents seldom fit the extreme pattern described. However, parents do tend to lean toward one parental style more than the others.

THE ABDICATOR PARENT^(e)

Abdicator parents are parents who are away from the parenting situation most of the time, or rarely interact with their children. They may spend most of their time away from home, or if they are at home they are busy with work, or perhaps watch television, and they are not concerned with and do not listen to or guide their children.

(b) See 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 21.

(c) See 19.

(d) See 7, 10, 15, 21, 29.

(e) See 16, 17, 23, 25.

Abdicator parents tend to have the following characteristics:

1. Assume very little if any parental responsibility.
2. Are often absent from the parenting scene.
3. Tend to withdraw mentally or are too busy to interact with the children.
4. Almost always ignore problems related to the children.
5. Very often postpone taking action or making decisions about the children.
6. Create a situation where someone else must assume almost total responsibility for parenting the child.

NOTE: All parents occasionally are absent from home. Most parents occasionally mentally withdraw or get too busy to pay attention to their children. All of us sometimes ignore a problem or fail to take action or put off a decision. In this respect all of us are Abdicator parents at one time or another. However, the true "Abdicator" parent is the parent who is rarely around and who rarely interacts with his child.

Abdicator parents tend to follow a pattern. This pattern involves the following behaviors:

ABDICATOR

- . Withdraws
- . Ignores
- . Postpones
- . Shifts Responsibility

ABDICATORS WITHDRAW ^(f)

The Abdicator parent tends to constantly withdraw both physically and mentally from parental responsibility and from difficult parental decisions. Since they mentally escape, or are not around, they do little parenting and do not really become involved with their children.

Abdicator parents always seem to have a good reason for staying away from the parenting situation. For example, some husbands insist that the mother's role is to care for the children, while their only responsibility is to spend practically all of their time in earning the living. When such fathers devote long hours to their job, few people can suggest they are not doing their part. Yet, in so doing, they leave all the parenting to the mother and their influence on the child is either negative or has no impact at all. But fathers aren't the only ones who are abdicators. Some mothers withdraw from the actual parenting situation by becoming extremely involved in a worthy cause related to their child's handicap. One mother told of how she had to spend five nights a week and sometimes weekends in her work on various committees related to helping handicapped children. Who could say she wasn't doing noble work, or didn't have a good reason for spending little time with her handicapped child?

There are many ways that parents abdicate their parental roles. Some Abdicators escape from parental responsibility by drinking or taking drugs. Others

^(f) See 23, 24.

escape by staying away as much as possible.

ABDICATORS IGNORE (g)

Other Abdicators, although home much of the time, bury themselves for hours in front of the television, or spend hours on hobbies or household projects. They are so busy they can't take the time to become involved with or to interact with their children. They are always too busy, or preoccupied with something else. They ignore their children.

ABDICATORS POSTPONE ACTIONS AND DECISIONS

Abdicators constantly postpone action. They may say such things as "How should I know what to do?" or "It can wait a while longer". Abdicators do not really want the responsibility of making decisions. They want someone else to make them.

Because Abdicators postpone action and fail to help make decisions, someone must make the decision for them. This often places terrible burdens on their spouse. A good example of this was given by one mother who told how her husband refused to help make the decision concerning the possible institutionalization of their extremely handicapped child. The decision was left up to this mother. She was the one who finally made the decision and took the child to the institution alone. This was a serious decision for a young mother to make by herself. It was a decision that should have been a joint one.

ABDICATORS AVOID AND SHIFT RESPONSIBILITY

Abdicators also avoid responsibility. By failing to be around or involved with

(g) See 23, 24.

the children's problems, they have very little to say about the children. By establishing such a relationship they avoid the responsibility of being a parent. If they aren't there, or haven't kept up with what's happening, how can they possibly be responsible for the children's problems? In this way, Abdicators shift the parental responsibility to their spouse and gradually, over the years, place themselves in the position where they are expected to have little responsibility or concern for their children.

ABDICATOR'S EFFECT ON THE CHILD

Abdicators tend to have either a negative effect or no impact on their child.

First of all, their children sense and wonder why they are being avoided and excluded.

They feel the rejection. One young man told how his father could always make it to the Cerebral Palsy Parent meetings, but he just never could find time to take his son anywhere. Although his father was always at home in the evenings, he was always behind a paper or in front of the television set. He wondered why his father did not communicate with him. The young man said that although he had spent hours in the same house with his father, he honestly didn't know his father at all. He also said his father did not know him.

Abdicators tend to set bad models for their children to follow. Since children model after their parents, Abdicators tend to teach their children how to avoid responsibility, how to withdraw from unpleasant tasks, and how to pass the buck.

OVERALL ABDICATOR EFFECT ON THE FAMILY

When one partner is an Abdicator parent, an imbalance is created in the family. The other parent becomes overburdened with the amount of work to be done, the total decision making responsibility, and the responsibility for managing all the child rearing and the details of getting all things done. Of course, in families where there is a handicapped child, many parents must physically abdicate by working long hours to make ends meet. Other parents' jobs demand absences from home for necessary work and travel. The problem is when a parent tends to be an Abdicator in the total parent-child relationship, and the parent abdicates both mentally and physically most of the time.

THE CONTROLLER PARENT

The opposite extreme from the Abdicator parent is the Controller. A Controller parent is always watching, correcting, punishing and seeing to it that a child does exactly as the parent says.

A Controller parent tends to have the following characteristics:

1. Assumes full and total control of the child.
2. Seldom allows the other parent to share in parenting.
3. Shows little concern for the child's needs and rights.
4. Uses parental power and authority to the limit.
5. Believes he knows exactly what is best for the child.

(h) See 4, 11, 12, 25, 28, 35, 36.

6. Believes children can't be really trusted and must be watched.
7. Often very rigid and inflexible.
8. Issues orders and commands which must be followed.
9. Makes all decisions for the child.
10. Constantly judges the child and points out mistakes.

A Controller parent feels that he owns his child and can do with the child as he wishes. He sees his child as an object for direction and manipulation. He doesn't care what the child wants or thinks. He believes only he knows what is best for the child. Controllers make all the decisions and are reluctant to share decision making with anyone. They tend to issue orders and commands, and judge and punish a child when he fails to do as directed. Controllers tend to hide goals and control the information the child receives. They parcel out information to the child little bits at a time. They never fully explain or tell a child in the beginning why he must do something.

Controller parents tend to follow a pattern. This pattern involves the following behaviors:

CONTROLLER

- . Defines And Directs
- . Judges
- . Puts Down
- . Uses Power

CONTROLLERS DEFINE AND DIRECT

Controller parents define and direct every action of their child. (i) They are the parents

(i) See 4, 11, 20.

who control everything their child does. They tell their children what to do, when to do it, and exactly how to do it. Their children have little say about anything and must do exactly as they are told with no backtalk. Their children are required to show extreme respect and never question their parent's decision.

CONTROLLERS JUDGE

Controllers set themselves up as the judge in the household. They decide what is right and what is wrong, what is done correctly and what is done incorrectly. They decide who is being good and who is being bad. Controllers constantly judge their children and point out to their children all their mistakes, all their errors, and all their failures.⁽ⁱ⁾ In acting out judging behavior, Controllers tend to frown, stand above the child, or point their finger at the child.

CONTROLLERS PUT THEIR CHILDREN DOWN

As part of their pattern of judging, controllers use "Put Downs". The "Put Down" lets their children know that they aren't up to the Controller's standard. Controllers often "Put Down" their children by telling them how bad they are, how terrible they are, or that something terrible will happen to them if they continue "Their Ways". They tend to say such things as "You are stupid," "You are lazy," "You are a loser," "You were born to lose".

CONTROLLERS USE THEIR POWER

Controllers maintain control by the use of their power.^(k) They pass out favors and

⁽ⁱ⁾ See 4, 25, 36.

^(k) See 4, 11, 12.

privileges. They withhold privileges. They spank. They reprimand. Children are afraid of the severity of the punishment, which more often than not is out of proportion to the deed. The Controller will punish a child for even the slightest failure to do as he was told. Controllers lecture, moralize and preach. Controllers issue warnings such as "Go to your room now. If you don't, I'll see that you get there." Many children who have extreme Controller parents are actually frightened by their parents. This fear of the parent tends to build up a resentment against the parent that may last for years.

NOTE: All parents to some extent define and direct the activities of their children. Parents also judge their children, and punish them, and withhold privileges. However, this does not make them Controllers in the true sense. They are merely using some of the Controller behaviors. The true Controller is the inflexible, overly strict parent who directs the entire show as he wants it without considering the child and what he might want or like or need.

CONTROLLER'S EFFECT ON THE CHILD

The effect of extreme controller behavior on the child is to keep the child undeveloped, to generate a more or less constant state of stress and to generate within the child a poor self-image. Controller parents do not give their children the opportunity to practice decision-making or to communicate to the parent their

ideas and feelings. They teach their children how to follow, rather than to become independent. Because Controllers ignore their children's rights and needs, the children are often in a state of stress. This stress is often brought about by the difficulty the child faces in living up to the Controller's standards, which are usually too high for the child's level of development and skill.

Because Controllers feel it is their duty to point out every mistake, their children develop a backlog of failures - that is they believe that all they do is fail. This often gives the child a poor self-image. The child develops a feeling that he is a loser.

Controller parents fail to allow their children enough freedom to learn on their own, to develop ingenuity, or to become independent. A Controller's children often grow up into adults who wait for someone else to do things for them, or for someone else to tell them what to do. They are often the people you see who are the passive observers in life.

Outright revolt is another reaction for some children, rather than passive resignation. Some children become belligerent and fight the Controller for identity. In this case, open warfare develops between parent and child. The relationship becomes a power struggle to see who is going to rule the child - the parent or the child himself.

Controllers do not have very much trouble with small children who need direction and control. Their troubles begin when they do not change their behavior as their children grow up.

CONTROLLING IS A FULL TIME JOB

Being a Controller parent is a full time job. Since such parenting behaviors fail to create a desire within the child to want to do things, the Controller parent has to keep directing, keep correcting and keep threatening the child over and over. Controllers have to keep on their toes, always watching, always correcting, and punishing their children to keep them in line.

Controllers often feel that if they turn their back, their child won't do as they wish. This is true. This is because Controllers fail to involve their children in decisions and plans, and when they are not watching, the child may goof off. So controlling gets to be a 24-hour a day job. Few Controllers realize that their very parental behavior is causing the problem.

Seldom Two Controllers In A Family

You seldom find two controller parents in one family. In most families the strong Controller parent forces the other parent to become an Abdicator or a Cavalier. The Controller assumes full control and responsibility. He leaves no room for the other parent to parent.

Controllers often force the other parent to be conniving and secretly take the side of the child or to play games in order to get their way. This is because Controllers usually see only one way as the "right" way to do things. Such conniving is the only way for the spouse or the children to get any flexibility in the family situation.

THE MARTYR PARENT⁽¹⁾

Another kind of parent is the Martyr. The Martyr parent is always unhappy and suffers a lot. In the Martyr's script, the parent carries the biggest burden in terms of work and giving of himself to other family members. Other family members are aware of the Martyr's willingness to carry the burden and generally let him do it.

Martyr parents tend to have the following characteristics:

1. The Martyr parent is always overworked.
2. The Martyr parent appears to suffer a lot.
3. The Martyr parent is the object of pity.
4. The Martyr parent makes his child and others feel guilty.
5. The Martyr parent appears to sacrifice himself for his child.
6. The Martyr parent does everything for the child.
7. There is no limit to which the Martyr won't go for his child.
8. The Martyr parent does not know how to enjoy anything.
9. The Martyr parent is often sickly.

⁽¹⁾ See 17.

When there is a child with a handicap involved, you often see a Martyr parent. This is the parent who sacrifices everything for the child.^(m) These parents give their life to their child. The child comes first, and the parents' personal needs and desires always take a back seat. Martyr parents work and overwork. There is no burden they will not bear.

The Martyr parent will devote his life to his child. People often say to the Martyr, "I just don't see how you do it." What they are really saying is "I don't see why you do it."

The Martyr parent is so overworked and so self-sacrificing that everyone around feels guilty. It is the handicapped child who suffers the most guilt. The child often must sit by and see the parent literally give up everything for him, and the child can't get the parent to stop. "I want to do it for you," the parent will say, "I don't mind". The child on the other hand thinks "If I did it myself, I wouldn't feel so bad".

Basically the Martyr parent wants pity and he must constantly set up situations that will attract pity from others. For example, one Martyr mother proceeded to tell someone in front of her child that she never had a chance to go anywhere or do anything. "I have to stay at home and take care of Jean. I can't ever go anywhere." Another Martyr father said, "We can't take a vacation, you know, even

^(m) See 17.

though Jean is at the special camp. She would so enjoy going, that we can't go without her."

It has been suggested that the motive behind the Martyr's script may be the recognition that parents receive from others. It has also been suggested that the feelings of guilt some parents experience force parents to "suffer" to atone for their imaginary wrong-doing.

Martyr parents tend to follow a pattern. The pattern involves the following behaviors:

MARTYR

- . Overworks
- . Suffers
- . Seeks Pity
- . Uses Guilt

MARTYRS OVERWORK

All parents must work, especially if there is a child with a handicap, but the Martyr parent overworks. This parent tries to do everything for his child. He rarely asks for or will accept help. Yet it is obvious to everyone that the Martyr is overworking.

MARTYRS SUFFER

The Martyr constantly suffers. ⁽ⁿ⁾ This suffering is obvious to all. Most Martyrs develop real physical maladies due to their overwork and self-sacrifice. For some Martyrs physical suffering only adds to their pattern of martyrdom as they continue to overwork.

⁽ⁿ⁾ See 17.

MARTYRS SEEK PITY

The Martyr will tell almost anyone about his problems, his burdens, and how he must sacrifice and work so hard. Others in turn are expected to express amazement at the self-sacrifice of the Martyr, and to sympathize and recognize how much the Martyr gives up. The handicapped child is expected to recognize what the parent is sacrificing because of him.

MARTYRS USE GUILT

The Martyr parent uses guilt to get his child to do things. He will say such things as, "I give up so much for you; please pick up your shirt," or such things as "After all I've done for you, you could at least do as I tell you," or "If I die from overwork for you, you will be sorry."

THE MARTYR'S EFFECT ON THE CHILD

The Martyr parent acts as if his child's needs are more important than his own, and as if the parent has no personal rights. Martyrs tend to devote all of their efforts toward the child. They do everything for the child and thus deprive the child of opportunity to learn how to do things themselves. They make the child dependent upon them. They make the child need them by not allowing the child to develop self-sufficiency.

When these parents do everything for the child, overwork themselves and sacrifice their needs, eventually the child feels guilty. The child is prohibited from making

a contribution, prohibited from developing a feeling of self-reliance. In its extreme state the Martyr parent has no other interest, no outlet other than his child. When this happens the parent begins to need the child more than the child needs the parent. The parent hangs onto the child, never allowing the child to go out and do things on his own. As one mother expressed this, "If I had some free time, which I don't because I'm so overworked and Billy needs me so, I wouldn't know what to do with myself. I haven't done anything for myself in seven years."

OVERALL EFFECT

In a family where there is a Martyr, many problems occur. The Martyr often creates guilt feelings on the part of other family members who feel they haven't done their share. Then these family members often seek to escape from the situation. This is because Martyrs make other people feel uncomfortable. In some situations parents get a divorce. Martyrs often end up alone with only the child to comfort them.

NOTE: All parents are Martyrs at one time or another. All of us give up things for our children. We all sacrifice at one time or another. Few parents have failed to use guilt as a way to get a child to do something. Yet the true Martyr is the parent who is the extreme of self-sacrifice, the parent who devotes all of his efforts toward the child, with no apparent concern for self.

THE CAVALIER PARENT ^(o)

Another script parents follow is that of the Cavalier. Cavalier parents are those parents who believe that every single day must be fun and games for their child. This is the parent who wants his child to like him and who wants his child to have pleasure. He also wants his child to escape from anything unpleasant.

Cavalier parents tend to have the following characteristics:

1. Cavalier parents hide anything unpleasant from their child.
2. Cavaliers help their child escape from reality.
3. Cavalier parents teach their children how to pass time in non-productive ways.
4. Cavaliers allow their children to avoid unpleasant things even if it is detrimental to the child.
5. Fun and games is the menu for every day.
6. Cavalier parents help their children escape from problems.

Cavalier parents tend to follow a pattern. This pattern involves the following behaviors:

CAVALIER

- . Diverts
- . Avoids Judgment
- . Entertains
- . Provides Pleasure

CAVALIERS DIVERT

The Cavalier frequently diverts his child from productive activities into fun-making

^(o) See 24.

activities. He is always ready to go somewhere or to do something that is fun.

The Cavalier parent, for example, may let a child stay home from school because it is a pretty day, or because the child doesn't like Joe who sits next to him. The Cavalier is the parent who would not make Mary wear her brace today, because Mary says it's heavy or doesn't want the other children to see it. A Cavalier will not insist that Jim take his medication because it makes Jim cry.

CAVALIERS AVOID JUDGMENT

The Cavalier parent is extremely non-judging. Through his speech and his behavior the Cavalier allows the child complete freedom. With the Cavalier the child feels he can say or do anything and the parent will not care. If the child wants to do it, it's okay with the Cavalier, so long as it makes the child happy.

CAVALIERS ENTERTAIN

The Cavalier parent is constantly seeking ways to entertain his child, to make him laugh, to make him happy. The goal of the Cavalier is to make everyday fun, regardless of the consequences for the child in the long run.

CAVALIERS PROVIDE PLEASURE

Cavalier parents see their handicapped child's situation as extremely sad. A Cavalier parent thinks his job as a parent is to make it up to the child by providing the child with as much pleasure as possible.

Children with severe handicaps, or children who may not live a full life often have Cavalier parents. These parents go on the assumption that there is no tomorrow. There are also Cavalier parents who are personally unable to make long range plans and who cannot see the consequences of failing to provide their child with opportunities to learn; who, for example, fail to see the connection between not wearing a brace now and a crooked limb later on.

Cavalier parents often over identify with their child. They feel so sorry for the child everyday that they can't think of tomorrow.

CAVALIER'S EFFECT ON THE CHILD

Cavalier parents tend to develop children who escape from reality. Since these children are never required to take on responsibility, and are not taught that today's acts sometimes affect tomorrow, they grow up handicapped in ways that have nothing to do with their basic handicap. These children are often unproductive, have no goals, and have very unrealistic ideas about life. They also have expectations which are unrealistic.

NOTE: All parents cavalier with their children at times. We all say, let's forget tomorrow and have fun today once in a while. We all say, "okay, today you don't have to wear the brace," or "practice reading braille." Who wouldn't occasionally say, "okay, if you don't want to wear your hearing aid today that's fine." But there are parents who cavalier every single

day in an effort to make their child's life constantly pleasant.

THE ACTIVATOR PARENT (p)

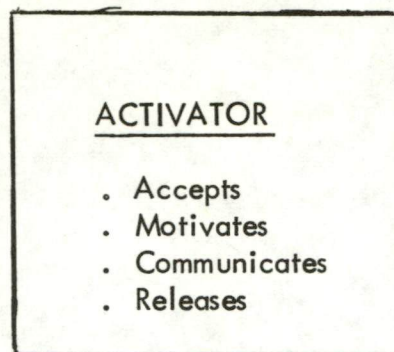
Finally, there is the Activator parent. This is the parent who looks long-range and seeks to develop his child's potential. This is the parent who has a plan related to developing his child toward growth and independence. What makes the Activator different from the other scripts is his behavior flexibility and his willingness to learn new parental skills and develop new insights which will assist him in parenting his child.

The Activator parent has some of the following characteristics:

1. He accepts his child as a person with a handicap and not as a handicapped person.
2. He has insights into his child's physical, social and personal needs.
3. He respects his child as a person.
4. He has an open image of his child's potential.
5. He seeks to develop self-motivation in his child.
6. He seeks to develop his child's skills and provide common childhood experiences.
7. He openly communicates with his child.
8. He releases his child to learn and develop.

(p) See 11, 27, 36.

Activator parents tend to follow a pattern. The pattern involves the following behaviors:



ACTIVATORS ACCEPT THEIR CHILD

The Activator parent accepts his child as a person. He is not turned off by stereotypes concerning his child's handicap. He respects the personhood of his child in the child's right to free time and to personal likes and dislikes, and a right to be accepted and involved. He is concerned with his child's right to develop his potential. He is aware of the rewards his child will personally sense at being able to contribute and become involved in life.

The Activator is open concerning his child's potential. He is aware that the potential of a handicapped child is often an unknown and he therefore does not place an arbitrary ceiling on what he believes his child can or cannot do. Instead, he accepts his child's personal timetable. An Activator judges his child's progress not in terms of where he "should be" at a given time, but in small progress steps - one step at a time.

ACTIVATORS MOTIVATE THEIR CHILDREN ^(q)

Activators feel that success is a strong motivator of children, for with success comes a

^(q) See 27.

positive self-image. Therefore, Activators seek to motivate their children through positive behavior and success reinforcement.

ACTIVATORS COMMUNICATE WITH THEIR CHILD ^(r)

Activators openly communicate with their children. They empathize, listen, involve and share. They not only send messages to their children, but they seek to receive information from their children. They provide their children with a model of effective communication.

ACTIVATORS RELEASE THEIR CHILDREN

Activators provide opportunities for their child to expand his skills and horizons. In providing such opportunities, the Activator releases his child to experiment and learn for himself. Activators want their child to learn new ideas, new skills and experience new feelings, new people and new places. Activators seek to equalize the experiences of their handicapped child with those of other children. In releasing their children, Activators allow their handicapped children to take calculated risks.

NOTE: The goals of the Activator are usually the goals of most parents. The problem is that most parents may use the other scripts in trying to reach these goals and the parental behavior of the other scripts prevents the goals from being accomplished. Many of the insights and behaviors of the Activator parent are new and must be learned by the parent.

(r)

See 11, 34.

ACTIVATOR'S EFFECT ON THE CHILD

The Activator sees his child as developing all his life and expanding his interests, his skills and his abilities. The activator believes that when handicapped children are overprotected, denied opportunities to have experiences which are equal to or similar to other children, the handicapped child will fail to develop his potential.

The Activator's effect on the child is to nurture growth, to encourage independence and self-reliance and to develop in the child a positive self-image. The Activator seeks to prepare his handicapped child to be a participant in life.

SUMMARY

We have described five types of parental scripts. Each of these descriptions was general and depicted an extreme view of the script to emphasize the differences. Few parents will fit such an extreme, but many parents tend to follow a script that is more like one than the others.

The Abdicator, Controller, Martyr and Cavalier scripts all have serious drawbacks for a handicapped child. All, in one way or another, deny the child opportunities and conditions where he can develop and grow. Some scripts create emotional handicaps which only further handicap the child.

It is the Activator script which enables a parent to effectively parent his handicapped child.^(s) THE REMAINING CHAPTERS IN THIS BOOK DESCRIBE JUST WHAT AN ACTIVATOR PARENT DOES, AND HOW HE DOES IT.

^(s) See 11.

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