



**“KHETAUN (TOGETHER):
With Key Steps to Inclusion of Romani Children into Quality
Early Childhood Programs”**



TRUST-BASED PARENTING

Educational Modules for Educators, Mediators, and Parents

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• Trust-Based Parenting: Supporting the Child Development in the First Three Years, Cassie Landers, Ed.D., MPH, Illustrations, Joan Auclair

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Introduction

The general objective of this initiative is to create an efficient home-based learning environment for families, the children of which do not attend formal pre-school facilities. This goal can be achieved in a variety of ways, but all the programs seek to support and expand the knowledge, skills, and practices of parents regarding the development of young children.

This Trust-Based Parenting program has been developed with the help of the International Step-by-Step Association (ISSA) and the Open Society Institute to support parents and other caregivers in their efforts to provide children with an optimal environment.

Parents as the children's most important teachers have a great responsibility. They have the most significant impact on the child. Parenting is one of the most demanding professions, but it is one most of us have never been prepared for. Services for young children are dwindling, and those remaining do not have sufficient quality and pay little attention to the needs of parents and families. Despite an enormous amount of existing information, the information seldom reaches those who need it the most. Even if the parents have it, the quality and content of their parenting vary greatly.

Parenting research shows that: there is no single best way to be a parent. People learn to be parents in many ways, and it is a long process. However, all scientific disciplines agree that parent-child interactions play a crucial role in healthy growth and development of children. This set of thematic modules was designed to support parents as the most important teachers the child has. The modules aim to help parents better understand what they are doing well and provide them with information and support in creating a learning environment that enables them to explore alternative stimuli and skills for everyday positive interactions between them and their children. After acquiring the information and skills provided by this program, parents should gain the confidence needed to face new challenges related to the development of their children, as well as a sense of satisfaction based on doing everything they can to give their children the best start in life.

PRINCIPLES

Trust-based parenting reflects two complementary sets of principles - the child's developmental principles and a set of beliefs about adult and parental learning.

The principles of child development are contained in the following statements:

- Children learn actively. They learn best through physical experience and social interactions with parents and other children.
- Children learn best when they have the opportunity to come to their own conclusions by actively experimenting with objects and ideas. Their learning is based on their experience and understanding of the world.
- A play is a necessary means of social, emotional and cognitive development of children.
- Attention should be paid to all aspects of child development - social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic and motoric. Progress in one of the areas affects the others while being influenced by them.
- The sequences or patterns of changes are generally the same for all children. However, the rhythm or pace of development among the children varies.
- The developments take place in a relatively orderly succession, and the development and acquisition of new skills and knowledge are based on the already acquired knowledge.
- Significant differences in the speed and quality of child development are natural.
- Children learn best when they have the opportunity to practice new skills.
- Children's homes and communities present content-rich learning environments.

Trust-based parenting is also based on the following beliefs about adult and parental learning:

- Parents can direct their education.
- Parents have a distinct, individual learning style.
- Parents need to exchange experience.
- Parents need information about parental care and life.
- Parents need balanced information and support.
- Parents need to apply the acquired knowledge.

Active and participatory processes are most effective when working with adult learners. These include discussions in small and large groups, role-plays, brainstorming, observing and analyzing behaviors and training skills. The ultimate goal is to help parents make more responsible decisions about parenting and gain more confidence in decision making.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

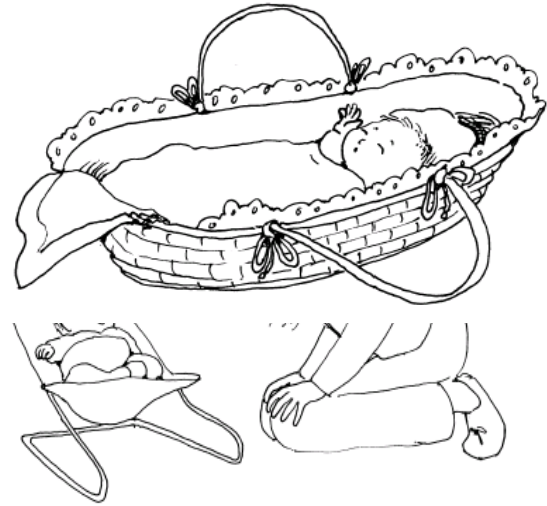
The general goal of the Trust-Based Parenting program is to empower families by:

- supporting parents in the education of their children,
- offering information about child development and alternative parenting practices,
- developing effective communication between parents and children,
- developing parenting skills to provide children with learning experiences,
- strengthening cooperation between parents and the school.

Knowledge about child development is the primary objective of all the modules - what behavior to expect, when and why? They seek to enhance the observation skills of the parents and improve their understanding of verbal and non-verbal expressions of their children. The Trust-Based Parenting program also strives to help parents to understand better who they are, where they come from and where they should be heading. It achieves the goal through a variety of activities that encourage the participants to reflect on their experience and the impact it has on their current feelings and actions; to become aware of the influence of the family and culture; to explore the questions of temperament and learning style of the children. The terms "parents," "participants" and "caregivers" are used equally in the material. The term "parent" refers to both the mother and the father, while the term "caregiver" refers to any person who has the main responsibility (usually for a longer time) for the child's development.

COMMUNICATION WITH SMALL CHILDREN

Newborn babies know how to express their feelings from the moment they scream for the first time. Since then, they use their voice, face, and hands to inform their parents about their feelings. Even babies with disabilities use their senses and their abilities to express emotions.



Objectives

- Recognize the vital role of facial expressions, gestures, bodily posture and movements in personal communication.
- Get prepared to respond to the nonverbal communication of children.
- Practice communication with children in a game.

INTRODUCTION

Infants do not know what they want. They only know what they feel. They need months of growth and maturation to realize what they want and become able to let adults know about it. Before babies learn to talk, parents need to observe their movements and listen to the sounds they are making to find out what they need. Parents often only guess what the baby wants. If the parents' response to crying or other attempts at communication satisfies the child, they know that they have interpreted the child's needs correctly. Otherwise, they have to try something else. The sooner the parents learn to understand the baby's behavior, the easier it will become for them to respond to it.

There is no such thing as one best way to be a parent. It is worthwhile to follow the information and advice from experts as these are based on years of research and work with children. However, it is up to the parents to decide, whether such recommendations are consistent with their values, lifestyle, culture, personality, and experience. Parents have to find out what is best for them and their children.

Speech development begins with gestures and emotional expressions such as smiling, puckering the forehead, looking and pointing at things. These manifestations send out strong signals to others throughout the person's life. If we want to understand what is someone really saying to us, we have to learn to read his or her "body language." When the words of a person do not correspond to his or her body language, we are confused and do not know what he or she wants to say precisely.

Communication is a two-way process that begins in infancy between the parent and the child. Parents not only send signals to their children, but they also strive to understand their thoughts and feelings. Communication can be seen as an exchange of relevant information between the sender and the recipient. How we communicate affects all our relationships. Communication training is a vital, lifelong task.

When parents engage in play with their children, they support the development of their thinking and improve their ability to communicate. Through sensitive interactions, parents open and close the "communication cycles."

A C T I V I T Y

What do I feel?

In this activity, we can learn about the vital role of facial expressions, gestures, bodily posture and movement in interpersonal communication.

The participants play a game similar to charades (a social game, in which the syllables of a word are acted out). Each person gets a card with a word written on it. They are not allowed to show the card to anyone else in the group. In pairs, they express the word on the card with grimaces, gestures, and sounds. Their partner in the couple tries to guess the emotion they are showing.

When the partners in each pair swap, comment on the extent to which they have successfully managed to express their feelings without using speech and if they understood the body language of their partner. What did they learn during this activity?

Summary of the activity:

- Facial expressions, gestures, body position, and movements are often more revealing than words.
- Children sometimes get a negative impression based on the body language of an adult, which then manifests in their communication with this person.
- Learning to read another person's body language is very important if we want to understand the signals that this person is sending.
- Reading the body language is a skill we practice, refine and use throughout our lives.

At the end of the discussion, the parents mention one thing they learned in this activity.

Preparation note: Prepare the cards for each participant. Write one of the following feelings on each card: surprised, furious, sleepy, jealous, bored, nervous, sad, worried, happy, frightened, impatient, angry, relaxed, upset, depressed, confused, biased, horrified.

THE FIRST YEARS REMAIN ESSENTIAL

Advice of Dr. T. Berry Brazelton

GROUP DISCUSSION

Distribute worksheets with Dr. Brazelton's advice. Ask the participants to read it quietly. Start the discussion with the following questions:

- When your baby is crying, you know it needs something. If you take the baby in your arms, what signal is it likely to send?
- If your baby is nervous when you hold it in your arms, what do its movements say to you? How do you know if your assumptions are correct?
- What do you think about Dr. Brazelton? Do you think that the ability to "read" your child comes naturally or do you need to learn it?



ACTIVITY

Listening to the Child and Talking to it

Distribute the worksheets "Listening to the Child and Talking to it" and read them. Discuss the following ideas and recommend to parents to try and implement them during the week.

Practice responding to your child's non-verbal communication:

- Carefully observe your child's nonverbal communication – facial expression, gestures, and body position.
- Try to read the child's nonverbal communication and understand what it is trying to say.
- Try to do something you think will satisfy the baby's need - for example, take the baby in your arms or help the toddler climb up the couch. Observe changes in the child's behavior to see if you interpreted its non-verbal communication correctly.
- If you did not manage to satisfy your child, try something else. Remember how many attempts were needed to meet the baby's need.
- If your child can talk, read its facial expressions and gestures that accompany its words to understand better what it feels.
- Practice communication with the child in a game:
- Try to get involved in the child's game.

- Show interest in the child.
- Join the child in his or her activity.
- Try to open and close communication cycles with the child during play.
- Ask questions starting with question words: when, where, what, and why?
- Try to get a natural rhythm of interactions or conversation with the child without interfering with his or her activity.

Before leaving, distribute the worksheets "Communication with Children: Key Points."

GROUP DISCUSSION

Continuation

Discuss your observations.

READING THE CHILD

- How many of you have tried to "read" the behavior of your baby or older child?
- How hard was it to guess what the child wanted?
- How did you attempt to satisfy the child?

CYCLES OF COMMUNICATION

- Were you able to recognize when you completed "communication cycles" with your child?
- Have you ever tried to prolong them?
- Have you ever started to play a game with the child, in which you took turns in an interaction? Talk to us about it.
- What happened when you tried to join the child in an ongoing play?
- What happened when you tried to hold a conversation with the child?
- Provide examples of such a conversation and the kind of questions you asked.

Literature:

Department of Health and Human Services. 21st Century Exploring Parenting. Administration for Children and Administration for Children and Parenting Families Administration on Children and Families Head Start Bureau. Under contract No.213-00-0010. BMA Inc, Landover, MD, 2002.

Worksheet for parents

LISTENING TO THE CHILD AND TALKING TO IT

Practice responding to your child's non-verbal communication:

- Carefully observe your child's nonverbal communication – facial expression, gestures, and body posture.
- Try to read the child's non-verbal communication and understand what it is trying to say.
- Try to do something you think will satisfy the baby's need - for example, take the baby in your arms or help the toddler climb on the couch. Observe changes in the behavior of the child to see if you understood its non-verbal communication correctly.
- If you did not manage to satisfy your child, try something else. Remember how many attempts you needed to fulfill the baby's need.

Practice communication with the child in a game

- Try to get involved in a child's game
- Show interest in the child
- Join the child actively
- Try to open and close cycles of communication with the child during his / her play
- Ask questions starting with question words: when, where, what and why?
- Try to get a natural rhythm of interactions or conversation with the child without interfering with its activity.



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Being a parent is an intense and emotional experience - incredibly exhilarating and fulfilling, but also very demanding and stressful. Parents are always worried about having the right skills and abilities needed to bring up a happy and healthy child. To develop their full potential, children need someone who loves them; someone who tries to understand their personality; someone who will strive to respond sensitively and carefully to their unique character. Everyday moments of simple, affectionate interaction between parents, other caregivers, and the children provide them with essential ingredients necessary for a healthy social, emotional and cognitive development. Not only what the parents say and do matters, but their interactions with the child are also significant. Children who feel loved, respected and cared for have the best start in life.

All of these experiences significantly help shape the essential parts of the child's brain that will allow him or her to think, feel, love, laugh, and move throughout their lives.

Objectives

- Understand the baby's need for an emotional bond.
- Familiarize yourself with the babies and brain development.
- Understand anxiety and fear of separation/strangers.
- Familiarize yourself with the infants' growing sense of self-awareness.
- Helping two-year-olds who want to do everything alone.

ACTIVITIES FOR PARENTS

You are the decisive factor

Ask the parents to take a moment to think and write down words that characterize the type of person they would like their child to become when he or she grows up.

Then, ask the parents to think about the kind of interactions that could currently contribute to the child becoming the type of adult that they described. For example, if you appreciate friendliness, you can model cordial and caring relationships with the family members and neighbors.

Ask parents to share their views with their partners. Then you can invite volunteers to share some examples with the whole group.

Summarize the activity through the following points:

- Each interaction with a small child, every response to his or her signals teaches the child something important about the functioning of the world and what to expect from the closest people and personal relationships in general. When you react to their cry, children learn that they can induce a process of interaction by using their voice and that they are important and can trust others.
- If parents want to respond sensitively and kindly to their children, they need to be self-aware and responsive to the children. For example, if the parents react to the child's cry with too much anxiety, it will be more difficult for them to comfort it.

GROUP DISCUSSION

When presenting the following information, the facilitators can use the term emotional bond and explain why it is crucial for the baby. A group discussion will follow a short lecture. The babies will create a strong emotional bond with people who react to them when they need help or company, who smile at them when they smile, who hear them when they "talk" and who listen and respond to them.

All babies need at least one person with whom they can create a strong connection. Through this relationship, they get to know other people and the world and acquire the more mature ability to love. Babies who receive adequate physical care, but lack emotional responses, do not develop so quickly and do not achieve the level of development their innate instinct and potential allows for.

At the age of one and a half year babies become more attached to their caregivers. They have a lot of love to give and many people who are special to them. Regardless of the number of emotional bonds the babies create, they will choose one person - usually the main caretaker - with whom they have the most important relationship. At the age of 6 or 7 months, all the child's expressions of loyalty are positive. At the age of 8 months, the baby tries to keep his or her principal caregiver in sight all day long, and when separated from him or her, it panics. The baby will create a secure emotional bond with a person who loves it, treats it lovingly and tenderly and enjoys its company. Careful responses to the baby's signals are also critical. Parents who respond appropriately to the needs of their children create the basis for the most positive emotional ties.

Discussion questions:

- Why do most babies create a strong emotional bond with one person in the first few months of their life?
- Why do some parents have difficulty to build a strong emotional relationship with their infant?
- How does the behavior of infants who have a strong emotional bond differ from the behavior of infants who do not have one?
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INFANTS AND THE BRAIN

GROUP DISCUSSION

Start the discussion with the following question:

- Why is interaction with people and objects during the first few months of life so essential for the brain development?

After the discussion, speak to participants about the following facts regarding brain development.

Thanks to new technologies, we now understand the complexity and high level of brain activity in small children much better. We already know that early age experiences affect the way the brain is structured. Parts of your baby's brain, responsible for language communication form long before it speaks the first words. When your newborn child waves his hands and feet, the parts of the brain that will later help him walk get activated. All daily

activities and interactions present a necessary brain exercise. As parents, you have always known that your behavior is affecting the child. When you smile, your baby also smiles. When you admire the child, it is proud. When it is disobedient, and you frown at him or her, the child will frown too and become sad. You are the center of your child's world.

Research shows that during the first three years of life, the brain develops faster than in the later period. Thought patterns and reactions are being formed. As a parent, you have a unique opportunity to help your baby grow in the way that will enable him or her to prosper socially, physically and cognitively. The first years remain essential throughout the person's life.

Scientists have long believed that the brain of a child is an exact copy of the genetic code of its parents. For example, if the mother is an artist, there is a higher probability that the child will also be artistic. Although genetics plays a vital role in determining the skills and abilities of a child, the latest research confirms that the environment plays an equally important role in shaping its personality, and so do the parents. Scientists already know that the experiences of the first days, months and years significantly impact the brain development. Nature and care cooperate.

You probably think that the processes running in the brain of an infant are relatively simple compared to the thought and brain activity of an adult. It is not true - in fact, the brain of a baby is twice as active compared to the brain of an adult. Scientists focus particularly on the first three years of life, as they have identified this period as very significant in human development. During this period, the human brain has the highest learning potential. Babies do not only learn quickly, but their basic ways of thinking, responding, and solving problems are formed. Note for example the ease, with which a child can learn a foreign language. It's much more challenging for an adult.

What does it mean for you as parents? You and the environment you create will influence how your children will manage to deal with their emotions, interact with people, think and develop physically. By creating a suitable environment, you will allow the child's brain to develop naturally. An appropriate setting is child-oriented and enables the learning to be in line with the child's development, interests, and personality.

Hand your participants the copies of the worksheet "Building Your Baby's Self-Esteem." If you have enough time, ask the parents to read and discuss it in groups. They can also read it at home. The next meeting should then start with the main points from the worksheet.



Sources:

Partners for a Healthy Baby. Home Visiting Curriculum for New Families. Babies First Six Months. Graham, M., Powell, A., Stabile, I., Chiricos, C. Florida State University Center for Prevention and Early Intervention Policy, 2001.

Shelov, Steven P., Ed. The American Academy of Pediatrics: Caring for Your Baby and Young Child. New York: Bantam Books, 1998.

Worksheet for parents

BUILDING YOUR BABY'S SELF-ESTEEM

Parents help children in the development of strong positive self-perception: self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-worth. These qualities help children develop important life skills, such as the ability to deal with problems, understand their feelings and reactions, as well as the feelings and reactions of others, make and maintain friendships, stand up for their beliefs. When you support your children, you give them wonderful gift of courage.

The development of self-awareness begins the very moment the child is born. These are some of the ways how to help make a good start for a baby.

Love and affection

Let your baby know it is loved. Respond to its cry, caress it, make eye contact, sing and talk to it, and laugh. When it does something well, let it know that you like it. Even a smile or loving words will help your child get a sense of importance.



Accept feelings

When your child is afraid, try to understand the reason; let it know that you understand it. You can say, "That was a big noise. It scared us."

FIND OUT WHAT MAKES YOUR BABY UNIQUE

Every baby is special and unique. Every day sit down for a few minutes and observe your child. You'll be surprised by all the things it can do. Collect as much information about your baby's temperament as possible. It will help you understand what to expect from it in the future.

AVOID UNEXPECTED SURPRISES

Try to avoid unexpected surprises. Babies like regularity; it helps them get the feeling that the world is a safe and predictable place. When the child is exposed to change or surprised, soothe him or her in a peaceful voice and help it get back on track.

FOCUS ON YOUR BABY

give the baby as much attention as possible; let it know that it has your full attention. if it asks for attention when you cannot give it to him or her, be sincere about it, but make sure to spend some time with the child every day.

Satisfy your baby's needs. Remember that babies are not here to please you; be flexible and adapt your program to your baby's needs. Your baby is not able to conform to your program.

Understand your baby's abilities. For example, if he/she is able to concentrate on something only for 10 minutes, do not force him/her to work on something longer. Allow children to develop their skills at their own pace.

Help your child to learn gradually; Divide all challenging tasks into individual steps. Each time the child takes a step, he/she will feel good about it and gain trust that he/she has things under control.

Expect the baby to behave well. Do not expect your child to behave badly; it will meet your expectations. If you consider him/her to be good and wise, he/she will behave better. Notice the things he/she does well and talk about them. All children make mistakes. Do you only speak with your baby when he/she makes mistakes? Be sure to note all the positives of the child. Tell him/her that you are proud of him/her. "You are doing it well, my dear."

Source: Mary Nelson, ed., *The New In the Middle of the Night Book* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Meld Publications, 1999).

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