Parenting In Partnership

Blending Perspectives and Perceptions for More Strategic Parenting

SPED*NET
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Why th'???

Parenting In Partnership

Agenda:

- *our changing roles as parents*
- *different roles of the PCP & APCP**
  * *Primary Care Parent & Alternate Primary Care Parent*
- *characteristics of our ND kids that can make parenting "a challenge"*
- *reconciling PCP & APCP's perceptions and perspectives: the language of conflict resolution*
- *charting the course*
- *Q & discussion*

Early jobs of parenting NT & ND infants for both PCP & APCPs:

- ***learning about being a parent via:***

  books *our OWN parents…* *siblings*

  friends *“coffee Klatches”* *pediatricians*

- ***tricks of the trade like:***

  feeding *diapering* *soothing*

  bathing *stimulating* *entertaining*

  establishing routines

Early jobs of parenting NT & ND infants:

for PCPs:

- *observe overall development*
- *foster development*
- *provide opportunities for social interactions*
- *compare development*
- *promote communication*
- *encourage family connections*

Early jobs of parenting NT & ND infants:

for APCPs…

- *encourage family connections*
- *promote communication*
- *observe development, albeit less frequently & in different contexts*
- *have fewer chances to compare development*
- *foster development, albeit less frequently*
- *provide opportunities for social interactions, but fewer*

Differences in parenting time and contexts with kids necessitate that PCPs & APCPs…

- *are open to learning from one another*
- *adjust for differences in parenting styles, temperament, etc.*
- *acknowledge that differing perspectives yield differing perceptions*
- *are open to constructive ~~criticism~~ commentary from one another*
- *practice active listening and using "I" talk vs "you" talk*
- *accept different temperaments and parenting "styles"**

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Characteristics of ND kids that kindle discomforting emotional responses

When our kids…

- *are challenging to soothe*
- *have unpredictable sleep patterns, food tolerance, tactile sensitivities*
- *have lagging communication skill development*
- *are idiosyncratically responsive to parents and siblings*
- *seem behind other kids physically, socially & emotionally*

And when "tried and true" parenting strategies are only intermittently effective*

* Some tried and true parenting strategies to keep in mind:

- *establish firm - but not rigid - routines*
- *tag-team between parents whenever possible and/or needed*
- *focus on - and reinforce the bejesus out of - incremental positive changes*
- *guide and acknowledge contributions by ALL members of the family*
- *set attainable goals for and with your ND kid(s)*
- *MAKE time to nourish YOUR relationship*

Characteristics of ND kids that can make parenting “a challenge”…

Highly, variable, inconsistent, development of

Motor Skills

Language skills

Social skills

Emotional / self-regulatory skills

School struggles

Family Issues that frequently trigger conflict:

- *fostering independence vs promoting dependence in the kids*
- *levels of expectations*
- *distribution of parenting responsibilities*
- *distribution of attention toward other siblings*
- *dissemination of "parenting advice"*
- *appearance of favoritism*
- *"Keeping pace with the Jones' kids"*

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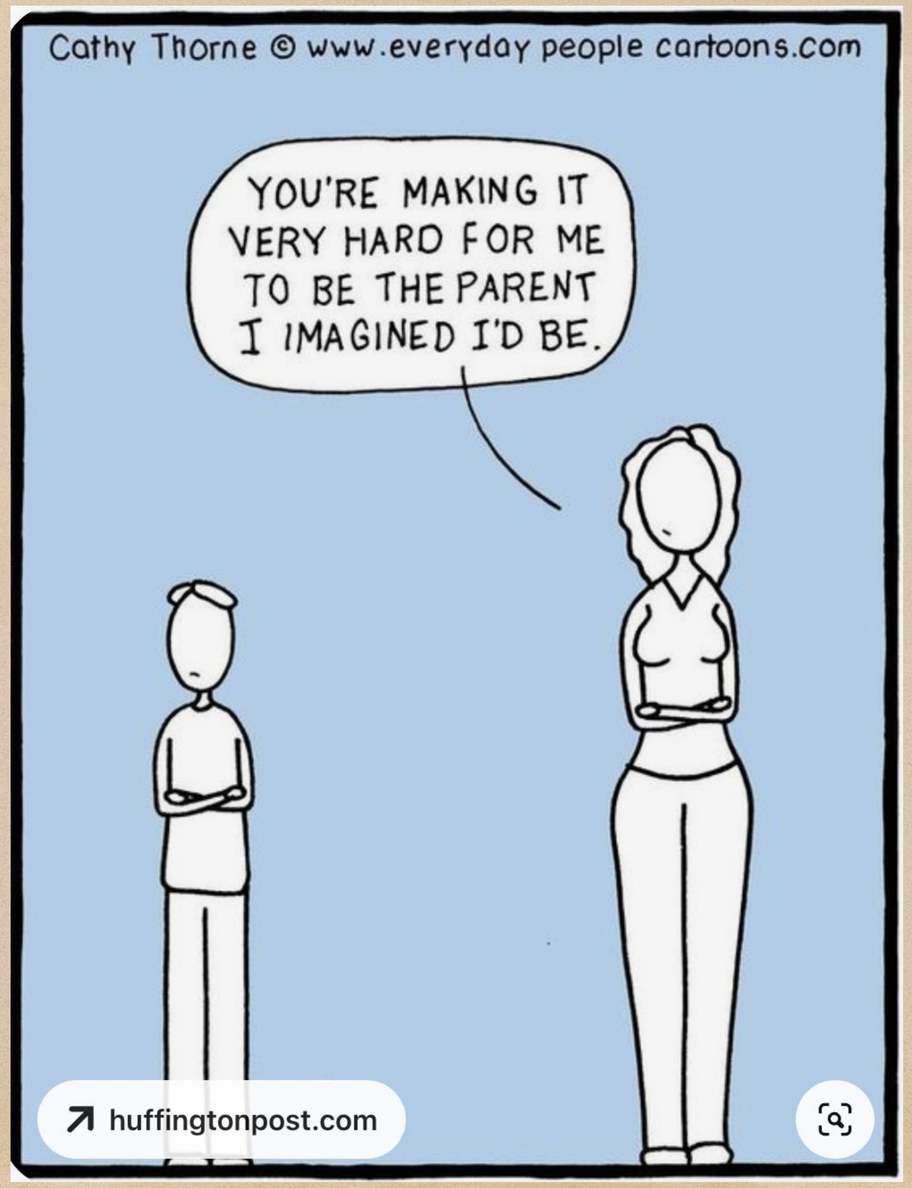


So.

It makes logical sense that the scope and nature of these challenges would impede the rate of development and improvement in our kids - and we KNOW that - but still...

WHY DOES IT DRIVE US SO CRAZY SOMETIMES?!?!?!?!?

Mayhaps…

… we're unaccustomed to not succeeding?

… we're used to a more predictable feedback loop?

… it makes us impatient to see other parents make it look SO DAMN EASY?!?!?

… it's so exasperating to try to do what the "experts" tell us to do and it STILL doesn't work?

… we're bright learners but it's so hard to figure out our kid?

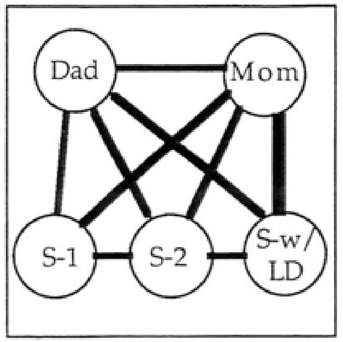
… it makes us sad to remember that we used to be such a good team?

*… family dynamics **

How a Learning Disability or Attention Deficit in the Family May Affect the Relationships Within

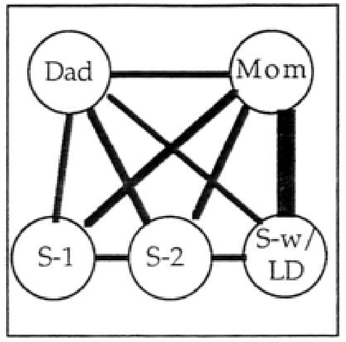
Scenario One

1



Mom becomes increasingly aware of the special neediness of the child with learning problems, and develops a particularly close relationship with him / her.

2



As the child's struggles increase, so too does Mom's role as a buffer, interpreter and comforter. An inter-reliance may develop between them. Dad may perceive the child as being pampered, and detach emotionally from him / her.

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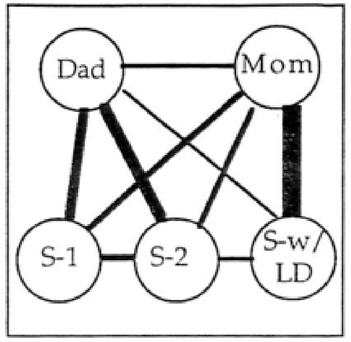
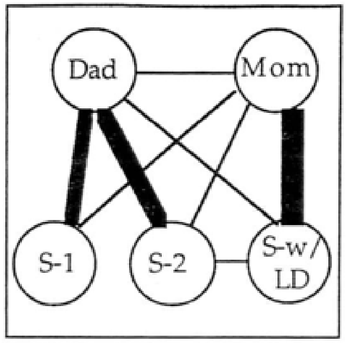


The more time Mom spends meeting the needs of the child with learning differences, the less time is available for the other siblings. As Dad distances from the child with learning problems, his attachment to the other siblings grows stronger. The relationship between Mom and Dad may begin to be strained.

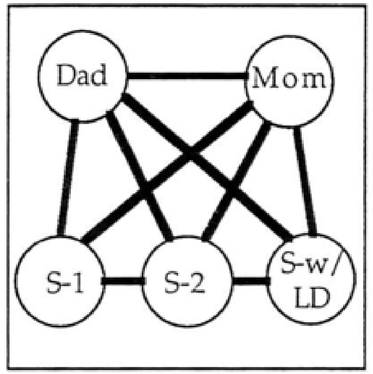
4



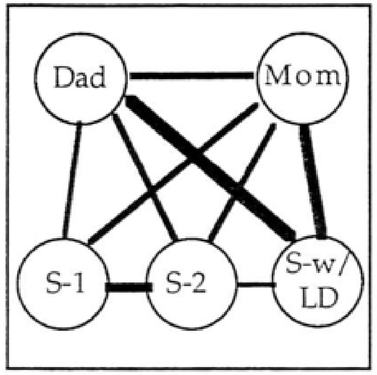
Mom focuses all her energy on helping the child with learning problems, at the expense of her relationship with the other siblings. The family begins to ressemble two camps, as the majority of Dad's time is spent with the siblings without learning problems. Disagreements abound, as does marital discord.

How a Learning Disability or Attention Deficit in the Family May Affect the Relationships Within

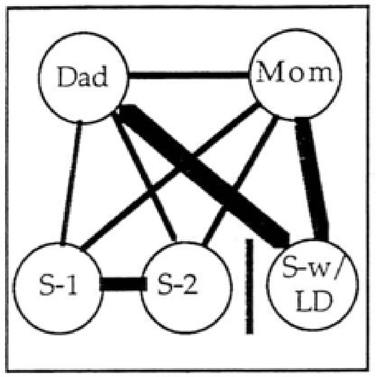
Scenario Two



Initially, all familial relationships and connections are of equal strength and addressing the special needs of the sibling with learning disabilities is a shared, cooperative experience.



As the child with learning differences struggles more academically and socially, more and more of Mom and Dad's time and energy are allocated to him / her. The other siblings begin to experience typical academic, social or adolescent issues, but find Mom and Dad insufficiently available to them.



The distancing of the other siblings continues as Mom and Dad's investment in the child with learning problems increases. Resentment of that sibling may be voiced or unvoiced at this stage, depending on the temperament and adjustment of the other siblings.

Potential Paths to Less Crazy

- ***discomforting emotions that often morph into anger:***

Embarrassment	*Jealousy*	*Confusion*
Inferiority	*Frustration*	*Inadequacy*
Impatience	*Exasperation*	*Futility*

Worry / Anxiousness

Emotions Kindled by Parenting Our ND Kids:

[see previous slide… ALL of it]

Getting a Grip on Emotions

- ***"Don't Apologize for discomforting feelings - Articulate them!"***

- *"Scratch away the anger & see what's underneath and ARTICULATE IT!"*

- ***Feelings Happen***

- *realize that we can't control the experience of emotions,*

we can manage the expression of them

Getting a Grip on Emotions

- ***develop & practice our affective vocabulary***

- ***Expressive***: *emotional gradients (how many ways can we say the different levels of ANGRY: irked, peeved, bothered, furious, etc.)*
- ***Receptive***: *what are the cues we can use to figure out what others are feeling (tone of voice, eyes, body language, etc.)*

- ***try to anticipate your partner's emotional response to the topic and use those words***

- *"I know this is a frustrating/disappointing/discouraging topic…"*

The Language of Conflict Resolution

Which of the following might be good ways to begin a productive and mutually satisfying conversation about parenting our ND children?

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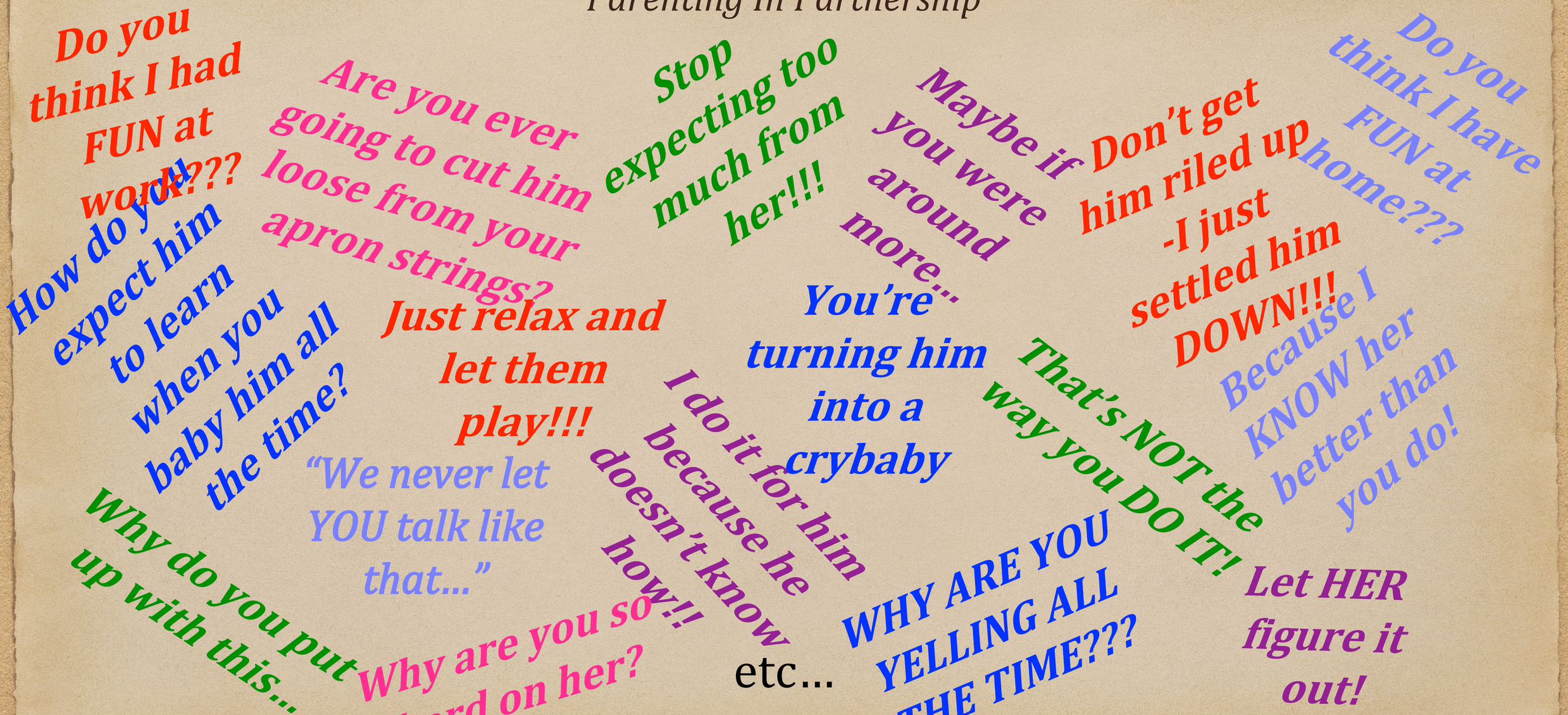

Talking the (effective) Talk

- ***Practice active communication skills***

- *communicate the desire to UNDERSTAND as well as the desire to BE UNDERSTOOD (there's a reason we have one mouth but TWO ears…)*

- ***Respond to the FEELINGS behind what's said as well as the content***

- *non-verbal cues, affirmative statements, affective matching*

Talking the (effective) Talk

- ***Pick the best time to talk***

- *the less heat the better*
- *the fewer words the better*
- *the fewer eyes the better*
- *the lower the volume the better*

- ***Clearly ID the problem***

- *agree upon the main problem you're focusing on*
- *avoid "You-Talk"*

Talking the (effective) Talk

- ***Talk about observables rather than opinions***
  - *check for mutual agreement on your facts*
  - *staying calm breeds calmness in return*

- ***Create a solution-oriented plan***
  - *articulate the Parent-Team goal*
  - *brainstorm possible solutions, anticipate possible snags*
  - *agree on a time for a progress check*
  - *assess the process and adjust as needed*
  - *Frustration ≠ Failure*

Talking the (effective) Talk

- ***if the talk doesn't go as planned…***

- *it's really important to avoid the Blame Game*
- *identify the sticking points & plan to ponder them before the next chat*
- *make plans for the next talk if possible*
- ***CONGRATULATE YOURSELVES for a yeoman effort to work things out!!!***

YOU ALL ARE WARRIORS!!!

Thanks for taking the time to be

with us this morning

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Characteristics of ND kids that can make parenting “a challenge”…

Idiosyncratic interpersonal connections related to

poor eye contact

physical engagement (aggressiveness, passivity)

difficulties with “emotional matching” and expression

slow to develop empathy

Characteristics of ND kids that can make parenting "a challenge"…

Ineffective use of language to mediate emotions leads to…

physical responses to frustration (hitting, refusal, etc.)

emotional explosiveness

unpredictable reactions

parents uncertain about language comprehension

inappropriate voice modulation

Characteristics of ND kids that can make parenting "a challenge"…

Painful social isolation stemming from kids'…

trouble learning social/behavioral norms

immature/clingy in public

inappropriate public behavior can be alienating and embarrassing

No Breathers for parents… ugh.

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