

Active Parenting Programs and the National Extension Parent Education Model

The following information is compiled by Active Parenting Publishers to illustrate how the Active Parenting Now and Active Parenting of Teens programs support the goals and structure of the National Extension Parent Education Model (NEPEM) and the National Extension Parent Education Framework (NEPEF). For more information, please visit www.ActiveParenting.com. A description of the NEPEF and NEPEM can be found at: www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/nepef/

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Active Parenting Now and Active Parenting of Teens

Active Parenting Now (APN), published in 2002, is the revised edition of the popular *Active Parenting Today* program (1993). *Active Parenting of Teens* (APTeen, 1998) is also a revised edition of the original teen program first published in 1989. Both programs' predecessor was the *Active Parenting Discussion Program*, the first video-based parenting education program, released in 1983. Based on the widely embraced psychological principles of Alfred Adler, Rudolf Dreikurs, and others, these video-based discussion programs have taught millions of parents around the world the skills they need to realize a harmonious family life and prepare their children to succeed.

Both programs consist of the following materials:

- **Video** (135 min., 156 min.)
Professionally produced video includes content instruction by a narrator and the author as well as many illustrative vignettes played by professional actors portraying fictional families representing culturally diverse backgrounds and varying family structures.
- **Leader's Guide** (approx. 160 pgs.)
A step-by-step guide for facilitating effective group sessions. Easy-to-recognize icons guide leaders to introduce videos and activities, and discussion questions help lead thought-provoking discussion within the group. Leaders can choose to follow the guide as written or can easily adapt to meet their audience-specific needs.
- **Parent's Guide** (approx. 250 pgs.)
A comprehensive guide for parents, with six chapters to coincide with each session of the program. The guide provides deeper detail on content covered in the videos and group discussion, and worksheets for completing skills practice and Home Activities.
- **Marketing Materials**
Colorful posters and reproducible flyers. Sample announcements and media releases, as well as group promotion tips, are available at the website, to help leaders promote their groups to parents.
- **Parent Completion Certificate**

Author

Michael H. Popkin, Ph.D., earned a Doctorate in Counseling Psychology from Georgia State University and served as Director of Child and Family Services at an Atlanta hospital before entering private practice. Since then Dr. Popkin has written and produced more than a dozen video and discussion programs, including *Active Parenting Now*; *Active Parenting of Teens*; *Families in Action*; *1,2,3,4 Parents!*; and *Parents on Board: Building Academic Success through Parent Involvement*. Dr. Popkin lives in Atlanta with his wife and two children.

Program Objectives

To help parents strengthen and develop skills to build in their children the qualities of resiliency, courage, self-esteem, responsibility, cooperation, and respect. Parents are taught that the goal of parents is "to protect and prepare children to survive and thrive in the kind of society in which they live." To this end, both programs seek to effect positive changes in the critical areas of:

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- Parent-child bonding, relationship building, and communication
- Positive discipline, protection, and parent influence on child behavior
- Parents building child's skills and positive character

Intended Audience

Active Parenting Now: All parents of children ages 5 through 12. (Full program also available in Spanish.)

Active Parenting of Teens: All parents of teenagers. (Video Library version is available dubbed in Spanish.)

Both programs are appropriate for parents of pre-teens. Video for both programs includes Caucasian, African-American, Latino, and Asian families.

Delivery Method

Parents meet together with a facilitator for six weekly two-hour sessions, where they view video vignettes, participate in discussions and activities, and practice skills both together and at home in weekly Home Assignments and Family Enrichment Activities.

Evaluation

National evaluation and field testing on both programs is currently underway. Research supporting the effectiveness of the previous edition (Active Parenting Today) and Active Parenting of Teens is published in the Journal of Individual Psychology, and can be accessed at www.ActiveParenting.com/research.htm.

Cost

Cost to parent varies depending on program provider, but is often either free of charge or the cost of the Parent's Guide. Program kit price to providers is \$389 (APN) and \$359 (APTeen), and Parent's Guides are \$9.45 to \$14.95 (APN) and \$9.45 to \$13.95 (APTeen), depending on quantity.

Available from Active Parenting Publishers. (800) 825-0060. 1955 Vaughn Rd., Suite 108, Kennesaw, GA 30144-7808. cservice@activeparenting.com, www.ActiveParenting.com

HOW ACTIVE PARENTING PROGRAMS SUPPORT THE NEPEM's SIX CATEGORIES

Active Parenting shares the same priorities the Cooperative Extension System (CES) has identified in their National Extension Parent Education Model (NEPEM). *The Active Parenting Now* and *Active Parenting of Teens* programs teach parents the skills and knowledge that the NEPEM recommends, and both programs ...

CARE FOR SELF Both programs encourage parents to identify, acknowledge, and build on their existing strengths in parenting. Both programs also encourage parents to seek information and support outside of the home, and both programs inherently foster parent peer support through the weekly "Share and Tell" time, when parents relate their experiences trying new skills during the week and offer support and suggestions to each other.

APN includes a section to Session 1 titled "Take Care of the Caregiver," which emphasizes the importance of self-care and effective family management to family life. Parents identify specific ways that they can reduce stress, relax, and clear their minds each day. This activity becomes a part of each session's Home Activities.

Active Parenting's Bonding/Relationship Building/Communication outcome domain supports the NEPEM's CARE FOR SELF category. Examples of specific modules supporting CARE FOR SELF are:

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- Taking Care of the Caregiver: All sessions, as part of the Home Activities. Reviewed each session as part of “Share and Tell.”
- Share and Tell: Each session, parents share their experiences during the week and offer support and ideas.
- Encouragement Circles: During the closing, parents participate in an activity designed to congratulate each other on successes and encourage each other to continue their efforts and “stay on track.”

UNDERSTAND

Active Parenting agrees with the NEPEM that parents need to understand their children’s behaviors and needs in order to embrace new or different ways of responding to them. Both programs educate parents on the age-appropriateness of various behaviors and knowledge in child development, and the goals of child behavior. Parents are taught that behavior is a result of the child’s goals, and those goals can be met in either positive ways or negative ways (misbehavior). Parents are also taught “the anatomy of a power struggle,” and how events, thoughts, and feelings determine the child’s (and the parent’s) actions (the Think-Feel-Do Cycle and the Parent-Child Cycle). And finally, parents are taught how to observe their children’s behavior and seek to understand the underlying goals beneath the behavior before determining a course of action.

Active Parenting’s Bonding/Relationship Building/Communication outcome domain supports the NEPEF’s UNDERSTAND category. Examples of specific modules supporting UNDERSTAND are:

- Goals of Behavior: Parents learn the goal behind their children’s behavior, and how that understanding should determine the parent’s course of action.
- The Think-Feel-Do Cycle: Parents learn how events influence a child’s thoughts, which determine her feelings, which influences her actions, which then affects the event.
- The Parent-Child Cycle: Parents learn that their own Think-Feel-Do Cycles interact with the child’s, and how the two cycles affect each other.
- Active Listening: Parents learn how to really listen to their children, including verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Responding to Feelings: Parents learn to identify and understand the child’s feelings and respond to the feeling rather than to just the content.
- Value the Child As Is: Parents are reminded of each child’s uniqueness, and learn ways to celebrate and value that uniqueness.

GUIDE

As stated before, one aspect of Active Parenting’s definition of the purpose of parenting is to “prepare children to survive and thrive in the kind of society in which they live.” In both programs, parents learn specific skills to guide children in developing the skills and characteristics they will need to succeed. One of the first principles covered is the immense importance of “mutual respect,” because children are much more likely to respect parents (and therefore be influenced by parents) if parents first respect the children. Parents are then taught how to influence children toward positive behavior, and respectful methods of discipline to use when necessary.

Active Parenting’s Discipline/Protection/Influence outcome domain supports the NEPEF’s GUIDE category. Examples of specific modules supporting GUIDE are:

- Avoiding Problems: Parents learn ways to avoid problems before they happen.
- Freedom within Limits: Parents are taught that children need (and actually want) limits, and those limits should expand as the child gets older. Parents also learn to be appropriately flexible with the limits they place on their children, and sometimes allow children to influence their decisions.

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- Responsibility: Parents learn what true responsibility is, and ways they can teach their children responsibility.
- Effective Discipline Techniques: Parents are taught a non-violent, respectful sequence of discipline techniques: Polite Requests, “I” Messages, Firm Directions, Logical Consequences. Parents learn to use either/or and when/then choices to guide their children toward positive behavior and discourage negative behavior.
- Parents as Filters: (APN). Parents are taught that it is one of a parent’s responsibilities to act as a filter in their children’s lives, to filter out negative influences such as harmful media or dangerous situations.
- Parents Influencing Events: (APN). Parents are also taught that they should find ways to expose children to positive influences, such as team activities, positive media, and positive adult mentors.
- Using Anger Positively: (APN) Parents discuss how to use their own anger positively and model it appropriately, as well as help their children do the same.
- The Risks: Drugs, Sexuality, and Violence: Parents discuss the risks in today’s society, and learn ways to play an active role in helping their children avoid those risks (Family Talks, Character Talks, Parents as Filters, Parent Involvement).

NURTURE

Active Parenting believes that healthy nurturing of the child is an important indicator of the child’s self-respect, competence, and success later in life as a healthy adult.

Active Parenting’s Bonding/Relationship Building/Communication outcome domain supports the NEPEF’s NURTURE category. Examples of specific modules supporting NURTURE are:

- Mutual Respect: Parents are taught the importance of showing respect to their children as well as expecting (and in order to expect) their children to show respect to the parents and others.
- Every Day a Little Play: Parents are repeatedly encouraged to spend time each day with each child, engaging in age-appropriate play or other interaction.
- The Power of Encouragement: Parents are taught specific and appropriate ways to encourage children.
- Active Communication and Active Listening: Parents learn this effective method of communicating with children in helpful, non-threatening ways, encouraging two-way communication, avoiding “communication blocks,” and listening effectively and in a way that encourages children to talk and solve problems.
- Family Enrichment Activity: Taking Time for Fun: The family plans a fun family activity together, and parents report on the experience.
- Family Enrichment Activity: Bedtime Routines and “I Love You’s”: Parents learn the importance of a bedtime routine and to express affection in creative ways every day.
- Family Enrichment Activity: In Our Family: Parents are encouraged to tell stories about their family history, and instill in their children a sense of pride in who they are and where they came from.

MOTIVATE

Active Parenting subscribes to this statement by Rudolf Dreikurs: “Children need encouragement like plants need water,” and teaches that parents must act as teachers who are preparing their children for a final exam called life. Parents who effectively motivate their children to do well are more

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likely to have children with more courage, good character, and higher self-esteem. Both Active Parenting programs repeatedly emphasize the important role parents play in motivating their children, and teach parents specific skills for doing it effectively. (Active Parenting also offers a separate program for parent involvement in children's education: Parents On Board.)

Active Parenting's Child Development/Skills Building/Character Building outcome domain supports the NEPEF's MOTIVATE category. Examples of specific modules supporting MOTIVATE are:

- The Encouragement Process: In both programs, parents are taught both the importance of encouragement, and how to give it in specific and constructive ways. Parents are taught the value of the following, as well as specific steps to support each:
 - Stimulating Independence vs. Overprotection and Pampering
 - Building On Strengths vs. Focusing On Mistakes
 - Showing Confidence vs. Expecting Too Little
 - Valuing the Child vs. Expecting Too Much & Perfectionism
- Family Enrichment Activity: Letter of Encouragement: Parents write a personal letter to each of their children, praising the child on some area of achievement, encouraging the child, and expressing affection for the child.
- Family Enrichment Activity: Teaching Skills: Parents choose an activity both the parent and the child enjoys, and teaches the child how to do the activity (or the child may teach the parent a skill!).
- The BANK Method: Parents learn this method of encouraging a child toward a specific goal.
- Parents as Influencers of Events: Parents are encouraged to provide their children with opportunities to learn, experience new things, and grow in positive and healthy ways.

ADVOCATE

The first part of Active Parenting's definition of the purpose of parenting is "to protect" children. In both programs, parents are encouraged to advocate for their children in many different ways. The act of attending an Active Parenting program is an act of advocating for children, since in most cases the parent is seeking out ways to improve their children's and family's need to live in a harmonious, safe, and healthy environment by learning effective parenting practices. (Parents learn specific ways to be their children's advocates in the school system in the Parents On Board program.)

Active Parenting's Discipline/Protection/Influence outcome domain supports the NEPEF's ADVOCATE category. Examples of specific modules supporting ADVOCATE are:

- Parents as Filters: Parents learn ways to filter negative influences and situations out of their children's lives.
- Parents as Influencers: Parents learn ways to initiate and encourage positive events in their children's lives, such as becoming involved in the local community.

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