

4-H Child Development Project
Unit III

NAME _____
CLUB _____
BIRTHDATE _____
YEARS IN PROJECT _____
YEARS IN 4-H _____

4H-454



Child Development Careers: Parenting and Others

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Contents

Introduction	4
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<i>Chapter 1.</i> A Really Big Decision	5
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<i>Chapter 2.</i> Becoming a Parent	11
-------------------------------------	----

<i>Chapter 3.</i> The Parental Role	14
-------------------------------------	----

<i>Chapter 4.</i> Child Care Careers	15
--------------------------------------	----

Bibliography	16
--------------	----

Activity Record Book	17
----------------------	----

Appendices	29
------------	----

Introduction

This is the third in a series of three projects designed to help you learn something of how you developed, how all children develop, and how to care for children. This particular project is specifically designed to help you explore the parent role (What is it really like to be a parent?) and possible careers in child development. It is intended to:

- Encourage you to understand the human reproductive process.
- Develop in you an appreciation for the growth and development of infants and young children.
- Refine your skills for caring for infants and young children.
- Help you learn what is included in the parent role.
- Provide you with additional experience in caring for children.
- Help you explore career possibilities in child development.

Each of these projects can be done independently but preferably should be done in sequence. Projects for Units I and II certainly should be resources used to complete Unit III.

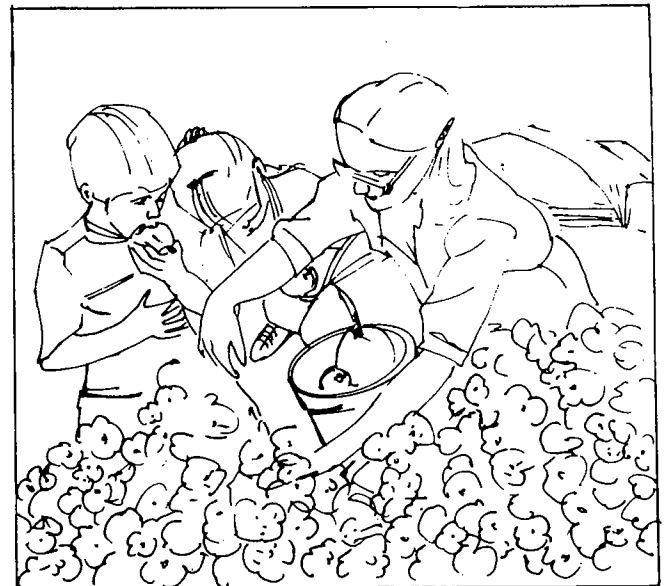
Definition

The dictionary describes *parent* as a term of biological reproduction. A parent is a "progenitor". The term *parenting*, a more recently coined term, is defined in Webster's dictionary as "the work or skill of a parent in raising a child or children." Parenting seems to have a connotation of nurturing and guiding or directing the development of the child from infancy to adulthood and from dependence toward independence.

General

The job of parenting has some unique characteristics. No education nor training are required of parents, though both are extremely helpful to the person who is parenting. Parenting is perhaps the most responsible job a person can hold, yet people are not usually paid for this job. Parenting requires full-time commitment. There are no nights off or vacations, and people do not retire from parenting.

There *may* be some rewards from parenting, but these are not guaranteed. Parents may enjoy their children at all ages if they are prepared for them emotionally, if they have financial resources to support children, and if they have learned how to be effective parents. Children complete the network that psychologically supports every family member at each stage of the life cycle.



Rewards for parenting and working in a child-care-related career are often intangible. This does not mean that a person cannot earn a comfortable living in a child-care career. It does mean that rewards in parenting and child care can include satisfaction that cannot be purchased.

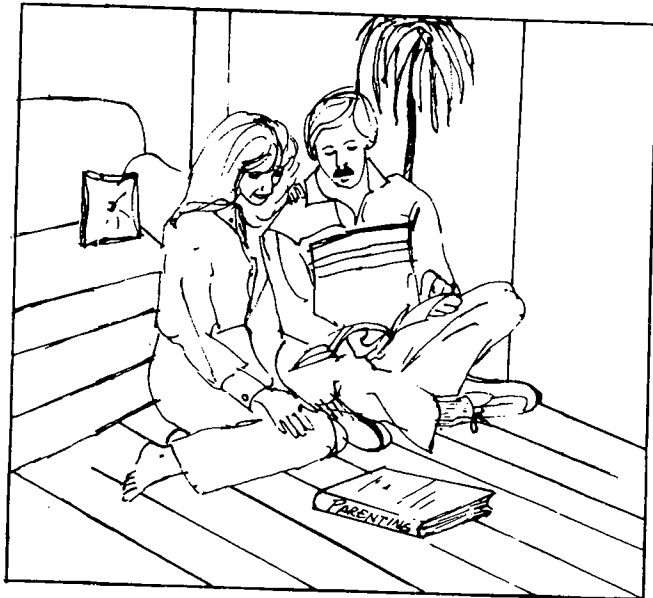
These very general comments should serve to help you begin to examine some of the requirements of being a parent. They may also motivate you to think about a career in child development.

This project was designed to provide you with information and experiences as a foun-

ation for an educated decision about two very important elements in your life: (1) Whether and when to become a parent and (2) whether you might enjoy a career in child development.

A Really Big Decision!

A baby—maybe? The decision to have or not to have a baby should be a conscious one. It should be based on thorough knowledge about: (1) your own emotional maturity, (2) the cost of having and rearing children today; and (3) caring for children.



Emotional Maturity

Value clarification strategies may help you examine your level of maturity. References are listed in the bibliography if you and your 4-H leader would like to try some of these strategies in your club. An examination of your reaction to the following situations will

also help you know how mature you are.

The last time I did not get to go someplace I wanted, I _____

The last time I did not get to purchase something I wanted, I _____

The last time I had a disagreement with my parent(s), I _____

Talk with your parent(s), teachers, and/or 4-H leader about behaviors that you exhibit that

are more mature or less mature. From these discussions make lists as in Figure 1.

MORE MATURE BEHAVIORS

(Ex: I have assumed responsibility for doing my family's laundry, and I never need reminding to do this.)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

LESS MATURE BEHAVIORS

(Ex: I got quite angry when I could not go to the beach with my friends, and I pouted in my room all day.)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Figure 1.

Ask the following persons to rate your emotional maturity on a scale of 1 to 10, one being rather immature and ten being quite mature.

Parent	1	5	10
4-H Leader	1	5	10
Teacher	1	5	10
Friend	1	5	10
Neighbor	1	5	10
Relative	1	5	10

Parenting requires emotional maturity. From the preceding exercise, what did you learn about your level of emotional maturity?

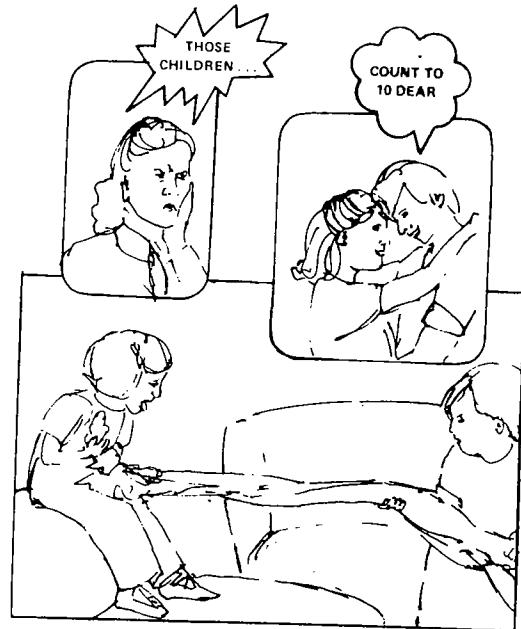
I learned that my level of emotional maturity is _____

Emotional maturity requires understanding your feelings and controlling your behavior. Feelings must be recognized and expressed in some way that is not destructive. Feelings that are not recognized and expressed constructively are suppressed and may result in tension that can be harmful to your health. Destructive expression of feelings are such behaviors as temper tantrums, child abuse, or self-indulgence. It is especially important to remember that every person experiences feelings. The difference between people who are emotionally mature and those who are immature is how they deal with these feelings.

It is quite normal for parents to have negative feelings toward their children at times. Imagine how angry you might feel if right after you mopped the kitchen floor your seven-year-old daughter brought her puppy in-

side after it had been playing in a mud puddle.

Parents sometimes feel jealous of their children or resent them. Because a parent has some negative feelings toward their children does not mean they are bad parents. It does mean they must learn constructive ways to express such feelings.



Parents also experience many positive feelings toward their children. In our efforts to help future parents recognize the responsibilities of parenthood, we may fail to point out the joys. Sometimes we speak so strongly of the responsibilities of parenthood that we instill in parents the belief that to enjoy children is not good. Good parents surely do enjoy their children. We should emphasize this point to be sure that an unbiased description of the role of parent is presented.

Researchers today are studying strong, happy families. They are finding that these strong families spend time together. Furthermore, happy families enjoy spending time together and put forth the effort to plan other activities in such a way that they will have time to be together. In other words, parents and their children in strong families are not allowing other activities to infringe on their time together.

Cost of Child Rearing

Some people refuse to examine carefully the cost of rearing children. They say that children are too precious to be thought of in such monetary terms. It is true that the value of children to some people may far outweigh their costs. However, it is only rational to examine whether or not an individual or a couple can afford a baby, before having one. Consider the costs: one hospital charges \$1,300.00 for a three-day stay at the time of delivery and the doctor's fee for prenatal care and delivery is an additional \$650.00.

THESE COSTS CAN BE COMPARED WITH THOSE IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

Three-day hospital stay at time of delivery \$ _____

Doctor's fee for prenatal care and delivery \$ _____

Additional money is required for nursery supplies including a layette and for maternity wear. Some of these expenses may be greatly reduced by using equipment and clothing from friends or relatives. Also, Good Will Stores or yard sales may be sources of these items at greatly reduced prices.

At 1980 prices, it has been estimated that the cost of rearing a child to age 18 (excluding childbirth costs) at a moderate standard of liv-

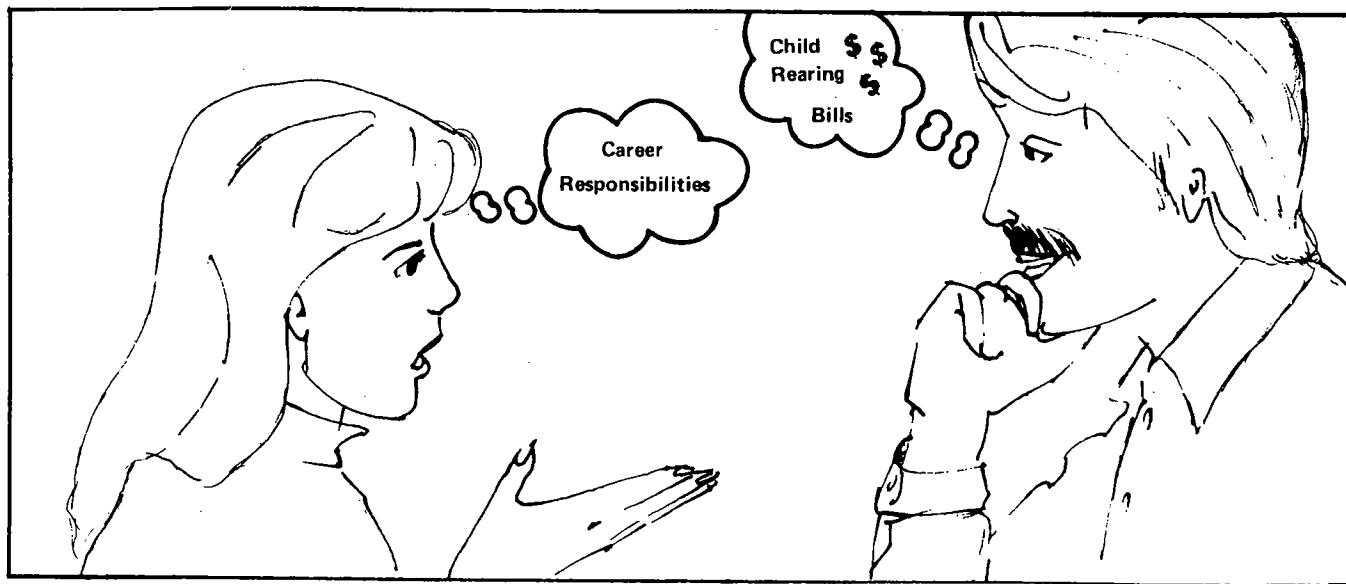
ing in the South is approximately \$75,000.00. At a low standard of living, the cost is approximately \$47,000.00.' In addition to the economic costs, there are some non-economic costs that should be considered. Some of these are:

- A decline in social activities.
- A loss of privacy.
- Fatigue.
- Emotional stress.

When making a decision, all aspects of the situation should be examined. When deciding whether to have a baby, benefits as well as costs should be examined. Some non-economic values of having a baby are:

- Adult status may be achieved by becoming a parent.
- To fulfill a need to be needed and expand one's self into the next generation.
- To establish a primary group for emotional security.
- To motivate and stimulate one.
- For creativity for those who have fulfilled themselves in other ways.
- For power over another person.
- For social status.

¹V.L. Mitchell. "The Cost of Raising A Child." *Family Economics Newsletter*, August, 1981.



Some of these benefits to adults may result in costs to the children involved.

Which ones would you classify as potential liabilities to the children involved and why?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Economic benefits of having a child today are not nearly so great as they were when our society was more agricultural. However, researchers have found that children do contribute to household work. Also adult children may make cash or in-kind contributions to aging parents whose income is insufficient.

When deciding whether to have a child, you must consider child care. Will one parent not work so that he/she can stay home and take care of the child? If both parents continue employment outside the home, how much will child care cost?

Interview three working mothers of preschool-age children. How much does child care cost them?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How To Care For Children

One of the best ways to gain knowledge about caring for children is to complete the 4-H Child Development Project - Unit II. This will give you insight about the development of infants and young children and provide you an opportunity to work with children to better understand their needs. There is also a bibliography at the end of this project which provides additional resources for care of children.

Following are some program topics and suggested resource persons that can help you present educational programs for your club:

The Newborn	- Pediatrician
An Immunization Schedule:	
When and Why	- Public Health Nurse
Development of Infant	- Child Development Specialist (Child Care Teacher)
Development of Young Child	- Child Care Center Teacher

WHICH PRESENTATIONS DID YOU PLAN?

TOPIC: _____

DATE: _____

SPEAKER: _____

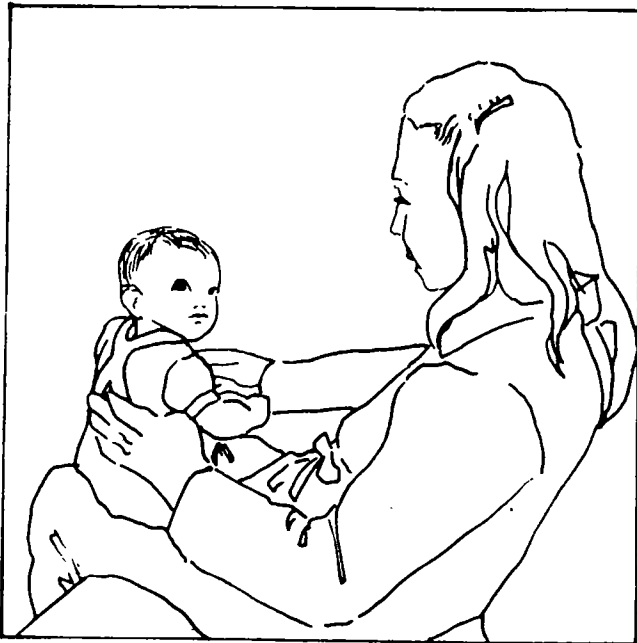
BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE PRESENTATION: _____

TOPIC: _____

DATE: _____

SPEAKER: _____

BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE PRESENTATION:



To care for children, you must fulfill their physical needs, their emotional needs, their social needs, and their mental needs. R.A. Spitz found in a classic study of children that those children whose physical needs were fulfilled but who were not cuddled and loved were far more likely to die during their first year of life.² Infants are now known to be far more responsive to mental stimulation than was thought a few years ago.

Tie a ribbon loosely to an infant's wrist or ankle and to a mobile that is firmly attached to the crib over the infant's head. How long does it take for the infant to learn how to move the mobile?

Parents must understand that parenting is a job that goes on and on. It doesn't stop when the children outgrow the cute, cuddly, infant stage, and parents aren't promoted nor fired. An excellent way to learn about the needs of the young school-age child is to organize a 4-H group and lead them through some projects. Helping a group of 8-12-year-old 4-H'ers complete their Child Development—Unit I Project can help you learn about the needs of children in quite a wide range. The 4-H project, *Guiding The Preteen, Units I, II and III*, will also help you better understand something about caring for the 6-12-year-old child.



² R.A. Spitz. "Hospitalism: An Inquiry Into the Genesis of Psychiatric Conditions In Early Childhood", *Psychoanalytic Studies of Children*, 1, 1945.

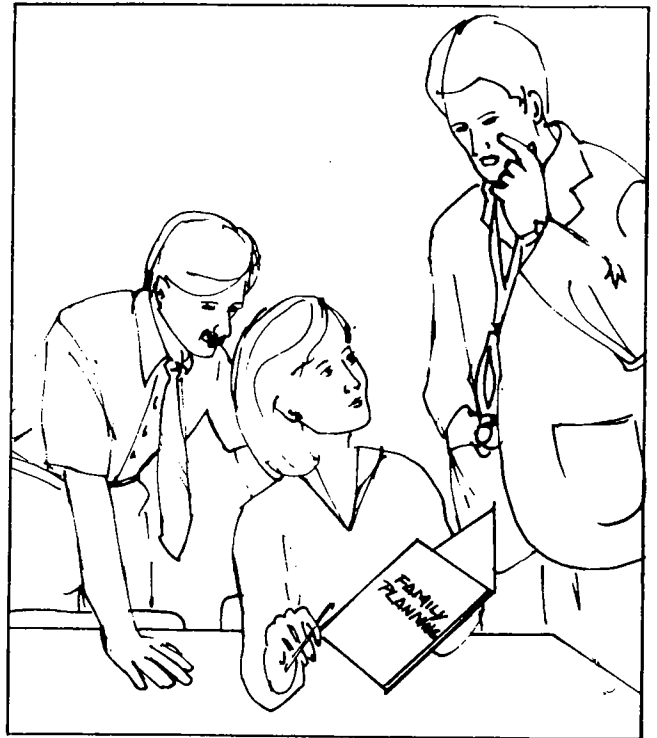
Becoming A Parent

Biologically, producing progeny results in one being classified as a parent. It does not, however, guarantee that you can adequately nurture a child to maturity. One may sociologically become a parent by adopting a child or volunteering to become a substitute parent for a child or children who, for one reason or another, are temporarily in the custody of the state. Anyone who interacts with a child or children may find themselves parenting—that is, nurturing and guiding a child. Those who adopt children or become foster parents for selfish reasons are a menace to themselves, the child, and society.

Even though some institutions in our society assume responsibility for certain aspects of our children's development, the parents hold primary responsibility for their children. For example, schools are responsible for providing education for children, but parents must see that children get to school and take advantage of the opportunities there. Churches assume a large share of the responsibility for the religious development of children, but again, parents have to be sure that children get to church and its activities.

Sometimes individuals or couples become parents without giving such an important decision adequate thought. This may result in consequences that are difficult for many people. People may allow their emotions rather than their intellect to direct their behavior.

Genetic counseling occurs when a physician talks with potential parents about the possibility of their children being born with certain genetic defects. Medical science has progressed to the point where accurate predictions can be made regarding the occurrence of certain genetic diseases in the offspring of two parents. Many young men and women will want to have genetic counseling before they decide to have a child—especially if they know of some genetic disease that has occurred in their family history.



To prevent unplanned pregnancies and unwanted children, each male and female who has reached the stage of being capable of reproduction should have access to accurate knowledge about human reproduction. Again, you should be helped to understand your feelings so that you can behave responsibly. Premature and/or irresponsible sexual activity is accompanied by health and social risks that are far easier prevented than cured.

Some parents are able to communicate with their children about sexuality from the time the children are quite young. With such a foundation to build on, sex education is simplified and young men and women are helped to fully understand why they must behave responsibly and how. If you have not received, from your parents or your school, sound information about human reproduction, you can get information from your local health department, planned parenthood offices, and libraries.

Remember that human reproduction should involve far more than simply bearing or siring a child. It should include love shared between the parents and among the parents and the child; emotional maturity to unselfishly care for others; and a sincere valuing of children. When people adopt children, they are sometimes given a better opportunity to examine their motives for becoming parents than are people who are biological parents. Ideally, before people became parents, they should consciously (1) decide to decide whether to become a parent; (2) examine thoroughly the role of parent, the joys of parenting, and the expense of parenting; and (3) finally make a decision based on what they learned and their present situation.

More mothers who bear infants out of wedlock are keeping their babies today than has been true in the past. However, there are still opportunities to adopt children. When people apply to adopt a child, they are questioned about why they want a child and whether they will be able to provide for the child's psychological and physical needs. This procedure is a healthy one appropriate for all prospective parents.

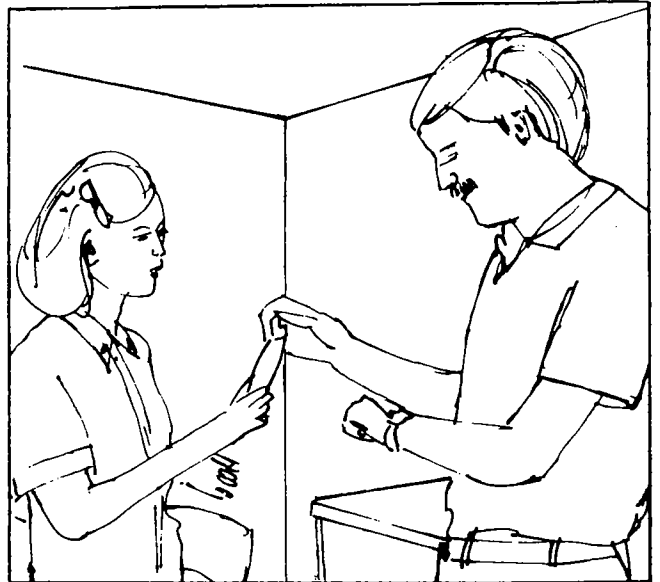
Special children require special attention—maybe special parents. If you carefully consider and choose to adopt a gifted child or a child with a handicap perhaps you are already that special person. If you biologically become the parent of a handicapped or gifted child, you may find yourself becoming a special person.

It has been found that parenting is a dynamic reciprocal interaction. In other words, children nurture the development of parents too. Special children may have even more influence on the lives of their parents.

Eda LeShan believes strongly in homeostasis or *balance* in sociological and psychological as well as physiological matters. This need is certainly evident in parenting. Parents need to:

- Be nurturing and loving but not over-protective.

- Guide and discipline but not abuse or neglect.
- Be responsible for their children, but allow the children to mature.



Parents often encounter fine lines between overdoing and underdoing. Therefore, you must remember that parents do sometimes make mistakes. Really mature parents can know this, admit their mistakes, make amends for their mistakes (either with an apology or by correcting a mistake), and still feel good about themselves and their relationship with their children. Hopefully this project and other 4-H experiences that you have will help you become this kind of person.

Simulations are used to train people to do many, many tasks. Astronauts go through simulations to learn to fly in space. Nurses in training go through simulations to learn to give injections and other medical procedures. Simulations have also been designed to help young men and women learn what parenting is about. One of the most effective such simulations for parenting is to use an egg to simulate a baby and have you take care of it for a specified amount of time. One of the activities of this project will be such a simulation. You will need to plan this with your family so that their routine is not terribly disturbed by this simulation.

