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## **Chapter 1 Financial Aerobics Marital Team Expansion**

### **MWO 11 Roster**

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### **Prologue**

• • • Courtney Durite is a temperamental adolescent. She wants little to do with her parents and spends long hours on the phone and in the homes of her friends. Justin Durite wants more attention from his parents, which they are not able to give him. He is currently failing in three subjects and has trouble concentrating on his school work. Joshua and Lois have been so caught up in their own problems that they have lost touch with their two children • • •

You learn to be a parent from your parent's role model. What are Justin and Courtney learning? How to incorporate children into a marital relationship is addressed in this chapter. If a marital relationship is healthy, the chances of the expanded family team being sound are greater. This chapter presents some parenting tips. This section is not intended to be a thorough guide to parenting. For more on parenting go to: **Pathfinder Parenting: Tools for Raising Responsible Children** on this website at: <http://www.coping.us/pathfinderparenting.html>

## 11-1 The Family Reunion Inventory

Do this form independently of your partner. Compare your results later. Put a numerical rating for each of the following items for yourself, Use the following rating scales:

1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Almost Always 5 = Always

Rating	
	[1] I am able to ignore the outside pressures of my family of origin on my marriage.
	[2] I am comfortable in the company of my in-laws.
	[3] I am comfortable in the company of my parents.
	[4] We are completely financially independent from my parents.
	[5] We are completely financially independent from my spouse's parents.
	[6] I enjoy spending time with the relatives on my side of the family,
	[7] I enjoy spending time with the relatives on my partner's side of the family.
	[8] My family is supportive of my spouse and me.
	[9] My spouse's family is supportive of my spouse and me.
	[10] I am satisfied with the way I deal with conflicts that I run into with my parents and/or family.
	[11] I am satisfied with the way my partner deals with the conflicts that arise with his/ her parents and/or family members.
	<i>[Complete this section only if you have, or are planning on having children]</i>
	[12] I am happy with our decision to have children
	[13] I am happy with the number of children we have decided to have.
	[14] I am happy with the way I function as a parent.
	[15] I am happy with the way my partner functions as a parent.
	[16] My partner and I have an agreement as to what the roles of mother and father mean in our family.
	[17] I agree with the way my partner disciplines the child(ren).
	[18] My partner agrees with the way I discipline the child(ren).
	[19] The duties and responsibilities of having children have strengthened our marriage.
	[20] We have a common philosophy of child rearing.
	[21] I have open and free communication with our child(ren) .
	[22] My spouse has open and free communication with our child(ren) ,
	[23] We hold regularly scheduled family meetings with the child(ren).
	[24] We handle conflict with our child(ren) in such a way that both the child(ren) and we are "winners."
	[25] We treat our child(ren) in such a way that the child(ren) know(s) that we have faith in her/him "as s/he is" rather than demand for what s/he "could be."
	[26] We believe in the child(ren) experiencing the natural consequences or natural aftermath of a specific behavior to stimulate proper motivation for the

	child(ren) to change unwanted behaviors.
	[27] We believe in the adage "catch the child being good," while ignoring or not reinforcing negative or unwanted behaviors.
	[28] We believe that in a conflict situation with a child, words are useless and usually aggravate the situation.
	[29] In dealing with a misbehaving child we first try to determine what the goal of the child's behavior is (i.e. get your attention, power struggle, divert your attention, etc.) before we act.
	[30] We believe that the home and family setting is the primary source of education and stimulation for the child. Thus we provide sexual, religious, moral, ethical and academic training to our children without an over dependence on school, church and other agencies to do this task for us.

**My score:** \_\_\_\_\_

**My spouse's score:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Our average couple score:** \_\_\_\_\_

You can score this inventory only if you completed all thirty (30) items. To score add up the numerical ratings for each of the items. Record these scores in the appropriate blanks above. Then compare your scores and ratings with your partner. Openly discuss each area where you have different ratings or perceptions. To get the couple score add your score for yourself and your spouse's personal score then divide by two and round to the next whole number. The following is the interpretation of your scores.

<b>Score</b>	<b>Ratings</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
150-136	Superior	You both are to be congratulated! Dr. Spock move over! You have put a lot of energy, love and emotion into your family lives. Keep up the excellent effort!
135-121	Outstanding	You have both made a concerted effort to work out a balance between your individual, children and family needs. Best of luck - and keep up the good work!
120-105	Good	There are times when you or your partner let familial pressures affect you. Be careful, there could be pitfalls ahead if you don't take some preventative action now.
105 or below	Fair	You have run into the proverbial "family feud," and it has affected you and your spouse. Take hold of the situation. You might need to seek some outside help from either a family therapist or a child counselor. If you don't make some improvement in the situation, disaster may be looming in the future.

**In your Journal Record Your Personal Notes on this Exercise**

## 11-2 My Parents: My Self

Dads and Moms are our earliest role models of being a married couple and parents. The following questions are intended to help you identify why you currently act the way you do. Answer these questions independently from your partner. Check T if True for you. Check F if false for you.

True	False	
		1. My parents were rarely openly affectionate in front of me.
		2. My parents rarely fought in front of me.
		3. I believe my parents just stayed together "for the kids"
		4. My parents were rarely openly affectionate with me.
		5. My parents rarely openly discussed with me anything to do with sexuality
		6. My parents seemed to get uptight when anything to do with sex was mentioned.
		7. One or both of my parents had problems with drugs and/or alcohol and/or physical abuse.
		8. My parents openly disagreed about the family finances.
		9. My parents fought like cats and dogs most of the time I remember.
		10. My parents divorced while I was still living at home.
		11. My parents divorced after I had left home.
		12. My father was the sole wage earner in the home and he did not allow or want mom to work outside the home
		13. One of my parents let the other handle all of the bills, checkbook, etc, but yet would complain if the other ever said anything about the finances
		14. We rarely had family meals together.
		15. We rarely had regularly scheduled family meetings to discuss family matters.
		16. The TV or radio was a constant source of entertainment in my parent's home
		17. My parent's home was almost always disorganized, messy or untidy.
		18. My parents were not very strict in their discipline towards me and sometimes I wondered if they really cared about what I did or said.
		19. My parents believed it was important to put on a good face and to cover up our family problems when with others.
		20. My parents rarely took the time to spend alone as a couple away from the family.

		21. My parents rarely took me on a vacation.
		22. My parents rarely did recreational activities together.
		23. My parents were members of opposing political parties and it was a chronic issue between them.
		24. My parents were active members of different churches so that they rarely worshipped together and they didn't seem to show respect to the other's religion.
		25. I rarely saw my parents express any anger or displeasure with one another.
		26. I can remember my parents going days, weeks, months or even years without talking after having an argument.
		27. I rarely saw my father kiss my mother.
		28. I rarely saw my father cry.
		29. My best recollection of my father on Sundays was his body glued to the TV football games.
		30. Neither of my parents had hobbies.
		31. My parents rarely considered themselves as successful and they almost always bemoaned their status in life.
		32. My parents experienced a lot of "in law" problems during their married years.
		33. My parents enjoyed their social status and friends more than they did their children.
		34. My parents rarely had time for me when I was growing up.
		35. My parents rarely encouraged me to succeed in school or work.
		36. I consider one or both of my parents to be a self-centered and selfish human being, more to be pitied than loved.
		37. It was always difficult to show my love and affection to one or both of my parents.
		38. My parents had difficulties with me when I became an adolescent.
		39. One or both of my parents had a closed and distant relationship with me when I became an adult.
		40. I know that one or both of my parents were not faithful to the other during their marriage.
		41. My parents told me I was an unplanned or a "mistake" baby.
		42. One or both of my parents had problems with compulsive behaviors: drinking, gambling, food, sex, tidiness, etc.
		43. One or both of my parents needed individual counseling but never got it.
		44. One or both of my parents suffered from some form of mental illness
		45. My parents needed marriage counseling but never got it.

		46. My parents had few friends and were social isolates
		47. My parents lived way beyond their financial means.
		48. My parents have never openly discussed their own mortality and future deaths with each other or with me.
		49. My parents have poorly planned for their retirement.
		50. My parents would find it foolish of me and my partner to be spending time on improving and enriching our couple relationship.

**My score:** \_\_\_\_\_

**My spouse's score:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Our couple score:** \_\_\_\_\_

To score this inventory add up all of the T's checked. Put your score and your partner's score on the appropriate line. To arrive at your couple score, add your individual scores, divide by two and round to the next whole number. The following are the interpretations of the scores.

<b>Score</b>	<b>Ratings</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
0 - 5	Superior	You were very lucky to have excellent parental and marital role models. Here is hoping that you are doing the same for your children.
6 - 10	Outstanding	You were fortunate to have appropriate role models. However, there were some weaknesses which could cause you problems in your parental and marital functioning.
11 - 15	Good	You had some rough role modeling for your future adult lives. You may not have clear standards of healthy family functioning on which to rely. Extra work on this chapter and in parent education and marriage enrichment classes may be needed.
16 or higher	Fair	You lacked sufficient role modeling for your parenting and marital roles. You probably are experiencing some residual problems because of this. Extra help is needed either from a family, marital or child therapist.

Now that you have scored and compared your ratings with your partner, go back and jointly discuss each question to see if you can come to a better understanding of how your parents have influenced what you are today. Then consider these discussion questions.

### **Suggested Discussion Questions**

1. What are we doing today as "parent and married partner" role models to influence our child(ren)'s attitude about parenting and marriage?

2. It is said "you marry your mother" if you are a man and "you marry your father" if you are a woman. How true is it in our case?
3. It is said "you end up becoming just like your same sex parent." How true is it in our case?
4. What was the health of our role models for being marital partners? How much did we gain or lose by their influence on us?
5. It is said "you tend to discipline your child(ren) in the way you were disciplined" How true is it in our case?
6. It is said that "sometimes you do completely the opposite of the way your parents acted towards each other and you. How true is this in our case and if true, how wise a decision is it to follow such a course of action with each other and our children?"
7. It is said that "you can never go home." How true is it in our case?
8. It is said that "the legitimate way people run away from home is to go away to school, and/or get a job out of town, and/or join the military, and/or get married, and/or move away from the home town to seek legitimate opportunities which are not available here." How true is this in our case?
9. It is said that we never outgrow our sense of guilt or which or inadequacy which our parents have instilled in us as children." How true is this in our case?
10. Some people always strive hard in everything they do, not for personal satisfaction, but rather, to gain the approval of one or both parents even if the parent(s) is/are not around or alive. How true is this in our case?

**In your Journal Record Your Personal Notes on this Exercise**

## 11-3 An Overview of Pathfinder Parenting:

### What's in Pathfinder?

In the Pathfinder workbook you will find the following:

**Introduction Part 1:** Pathfinder Parents: Who are they? Is an introductory self-assessment work out for parents to determine if they are already Pathfinders in their dealing with their children.

**Introduction Part 2:** Pathfinder Parenting - A system of recovery for parents covers the system of recovery which is contained in the Tools for Coping Series and which is the basis for the parenting principles in the workbook. Parents are asked to assess if they hold to many Pathfinder beliefs

**P Pathfinder Parenting Principles** covers the essential guiding principles of the Pathfinder Parenting Model:

**A Activating** covers self-esteem enhancement over the life span

**T Tracking** is the meat of this material. It is a Birth to Adulthood Manual for parents to use until their children have their own grandchildren. This manual is based on the natural and logical consequence model as well as the concepts of the 12 Step model which encourages the use of the Higher Power's strength to gain serenity in life

**H Hugging** is a lifespan guide on how to develop a health bond with children and how to avoid both overbonding or enmeshment and underbonding or detachment with children

**F Formulating** explains the process of how to develop behavioral consequences with children

**I Intervening** covers how to assist children with a variety of losses they might experience in life such as divorce of parents, adjusting to step-parents and step-families, death of a parent or sibling, surviving physical or sexual abuse, coping with a parent or sibling with a severe emotional or addiction problem, coping with a developmental disability or chronic illness and coping with disaster or failure

**N Negotiating** focuses on how to be an advocate for children

**D Discussing Feelings** which helps parents identify how effectively they are tuning into the emotional life of their children

**E Establishing** covers how to establish healthy boundaries and limits with older children

**R Releasing** finally covers how we parents need to forgive ourself and let go of shame and guilt over our mistakes we made in our earlier parenting of our children.

### **Who are Pathfinders?**

Pathfinders are parents who put their energy into the provision of parenting which allows their children to accept personal responsibility for their own lives and to develop healthy self-esteem. Pathfinders are willing to let go of control of the need to insure that their children become the fulfillment of their fantasies of what is healthy and successful.

These parents believe that their children should be given a chance to prove themselves on their own merits. They give their children unconditional love. They strive not to give the wrong message that their children are only loved for what they do and accomplish. Parents who are pathfinders allow their children the freedom to define who and what they want to be in life without the burden of guilt for not pleasing their parents by becoming something other than what their parents expected. Pathfinders are open to the possibilities in life. They do not hold onto the pessimistic belief that their children will be losers if they do not act or believe the way they expect them to.

These parents recognize that they do not have all the answers in life for their children. They are open to receiving support from their friends, families, and professional helpers to handle this reality. They also seek out support in their letting go of the need to control the future for their children. Children raised by pathfinders experience freedom to be what they are capable of becoming. They are free of guilt and anxiety over pleasing their parents by their behaviors, activities and choices in life.

Children who have been encouraged to be all that they are capable of becoming are willing to take risks without the fear of failure or loss of other's approval. They are capable of accepting personal responsibility for their own behaviors and the consequences for their own actions. They allow themselves to become vulnerable by expressing their feelings openly. These children are recognized by the productivity in their lives at home, school and in the community. These children are capable of taking on leadership roles in school, sports and club activities. They have a broader sense of creativity and interest in the world around them. These children stand out from others because they have a healthy sense of who they are and where they are going in this world. These children become pathfinders in their own lives as adults.

### **What is the Pathfinder system?**

PATHFINDER is a system by which parents can assist their children to have healthy self-esteem. In order to assist others to have good self-esteem, parents need to have healthy self-esteem themselves. The systems of recovery of the SEA'S Program also

known as Self-Esteem Seekers Anonymous (<http://www.coping.us/seasmanual.html> ) contains the summation of what is needed in order to gain healthy self-esteem. The SEA'S system of recovery from low self-esteem contains procedures which allow people to cope with anxiety, stress, panic, fears, anger, resentment, guilt, loneliness, abandonment, the need to control, and relapsing into old behaviors. The SEA'S system teaches adults to re-parent their broken and wounded inner children which is their inner spirit. In Growing Down: Tools for Healing the Inner Child (<http://www.coping.us/growingdown.html> ) tools for healing and awakening the inner spirit are presented which enable parents to heal their inner children by re-parenting and becoming Pathfinders for themselves. Parents must be Pathfinders to themselves and their inner children before they can be effective Pathfinders for their own children.

PATHFINDER is the technique of dealing with children in a positively esteeming way which increases their belief in themselves. The ability to allow children to be their own people requires a lot of exercise and practice. It also requires that parents receive support from others who are understanding and who can call them on it when they are relapsing back into an over-controlling mode. When there are two or more parenting figures in the lives of children, it is important that they create a team-like approach and are consistent in their philosophy and treatment, if self-esteem is to be enhanced.

For single parent-led families and step-families, PATHFINDER is an appealing mode of parenting because it requires so little direct supervision and effort to encourage the development of healthy children no matter what is the makeup of the parenting unit. The ability of parenting figures to agree on PATHFINDER technologies is much more feasible when all parties involved have a reasonable and realistic outlook on the need to give children as healthy a preparation for life as possible.

Where it is impossible for both natural parents to communicate in a healthy manner, it is still possible for one of the parents to be a Pathfinder as long as that parent does not resort to putting down the other parent in the eyes of the children. The children will benefit from the PATHFINDER techniques even if from only one parent. The children will have to determine for themselves what is important to retain or reject from the messages transmitted by the non-pathfinding parent. Unconditional acceptance and love are key formulas which the children will learn in the Pathfinder's home and therefore will be able to accept and love the non-pathfinding parent for who and what that person is. The children will be able to judge on their own the merit or lack of merit of the directions being given them by their non-pathfinding parent.

In the beginning, as parents initiate pathfinding technology in their home environment, the children will be resistant. This is because it is new and different and will require a change in their attitudes, beliefs, and understandings about themselves and others. They may resist the notion that they are solely responsible for the consequences for their own behaviors. They may begin to act out and rebel because it does not feel

normal or the way it has always felt in the family. This reaction is to be expected. Novice Pathfinders will need a great deal of support and help during this transition in the changing family scene. The parents will need to depend on their support groups to clarify their thinking and emotional reaction to the children's response to the changes in parenting style.

**Are you a Pathfinder?**

Married couples can determine if they are currently Pathfinders by answering the following parenting inventory.

**Parenting Inventory**

Do this inventory on your own and then compare your results with your partner. Read each statement and then rate yourself as to how true that statement is for you using the following rating scale:

1 = Never    2 = Rarely    3 = Sometimes    4 = Frequently    5 = Almost Always

Rating	
	[1] I call my children names when I am angry at them for not doing what I ask them to do.
	[2] I believe that my first priority in life is my children and that it is my responsibility how they turn out later on in life.
	[3] I blow up a lot when my kids get me angry and I let them know that they have an obligation to do what I expect them to do.
	[4]. I am disappointed in my children's behaviors and the way they treat me, which is so disrespectful and not the way I expected my children would act towards me.
	[5] I find that I use a lot of the same words and disciplinary actions that my parents used on me. This is just the opposite of what I had promised myself when I was younger that I would do if I had children.
	[6] I let my children know that they disappoint me when they do not reach the expectations I have had for them as to success at school and/or in sports and/or in community activities and/or socially and/or in participation in the family.
	[7]. I find that I am very sensitive to my children's behaviors, attitudes and treatment towards me
	[8] I find it hard to have fun with my children.
	[9] I find it difficult to hold a civil conversation with my children because of their attitude, rebelliousness or insensitivity to my feelings, desires, and directions.
	[10] I find that I am either very depressed, or tired, or very stressed out when dealing with my children.
	[11] I find that I tend to use a lot of manipulation and guilt to get my children to comply with my requests.
	[12] I resort to shaming my children to get them to change behaviors which I

	believe are immature, inappropriate, or embarrassing.
	[13] I will not speak to my children for hours, days, or weeks in order to give them a taste of what it is like to live with people who are inconsiderate, disobedient, or obnoxious.
	[14] I let my children know when they are blowing it with me by the choices they are making in the types of friends they hang out with and the activities in which they engage.
	[15] I have threatened to send my children to a state foster home or detention center if they did not clean up their act.
	[16] I have said to my children: "Do as I say, not as I do."
	[17] I will not tell my children when I feel I have made a mistake in judgement with them. In fact I think my judgement has been on the mark with my kids since they were born.
	[18] I believe that parents know more than their children about life and that children should seek out their parents' input and respect what their parents suggest for them to do.
	[19] I feel that my children are much more than I bargained for when I decided to become a parent and I resent the pressure they put me under.
	[20] I feel it is my obligation to please my children and to make them happy.
	[21] I find that I am easily manipulated by my children's behaviors towards me, especially when I feel guilty and ashamed for how I have treated them in the past.
	[22] I do not believe you can ever spoil a child too much. I see nothing wrong in keeping my children happy and content even if I may go overboard at times.
	[23] I am afraid of my children's response when I try a new or different form of discipline with them.
	[24] I feel like I am messing up my children and I don't know how to stop myself.
	[25] I envy others who seem to have an easier time with their children and I wish that I could trade in my kids for theirs.
	[26] I do not agree with my partner in child rearing on how to raise, discipline, and control our children.
	[27] I remind my children that our family's business is ours to keep quiet, private, and a secret from others. I tell them it is nobody's business what goes on in our house.
	[28] I leave my children's education to their teachers and the schools. They are professionals and that's what we pay taxes and tuition (if children in private school) for.
	[29] My partner and I fight a lot about the children and how we handle their rearing.
	[30] My children are told that they do not have the freedom to think and act for themselves until they leave home. Until that time they will do what I say or

	else.
	[31] I have a difficult time getting my children to follow the rules I have set for them.
	[32] I find that I am getting bitter about my children and am beginning to suspect that I would be a happier person if I had never had them.
	[33] I believe that it is good for children to learn how to compete in the world. That is why I put my children into team sports or other competitive activities to understand this lesson early and become more competitive themselves.
	[34] I want my children to have it better materially than what I had as a child. I work hard to make it happen for them.
	[35] I want my children to get educated, become professionals and be successful in adult life.
	[36] I want my children to meet the right persons to marry and have a family with. I believe that I can set the stage for this by the neighborhood we live in, the schools they go to, and the social outlets I make available for them.
	[37] I tell my children to keep their tempers in check and to not ever get angry around me.
	[38] I believe that raising kids is hard work. If I put enough effort into it, I will be able to shape my kids into what I want them to become in life.
	[39] I believe that my children owe me a lot for everything I have done and sacrificed for them.
	[40] I expect only the best of my children and therefore I expect them to do their best at all times.

**My Score** \_\_\_\_\_

**My Partner's Score** \_\_\_\_\_

**Our Couple Score** \_\_\_\_\_

### Scoring Directions for the Parenting Inventory

Add up all of the ratings you gave on the 40 item inventory and put that number on My Score line. Then post your Partner's score. Finally to get your couple score, add up your two scores and then divide by two and round to the next whole number.

Score	Ratings	Interpretation
200 -160	Very Poor	You are suffering from severe low self-esteem as a parent. You are in need of extensive recovery work on your low self-esteem. You have a very controlling parental attitude and most probably have a severe negative impact on your children's self-esteem.
150 -120	Poor	You are suffering from moderate low need of much recovery work on your low self-esteem. You are very controlling as a parent and most probably have a

		moderately negative impact on your children's self-esteem.
119 - 80	Fair	Your self-esteem as a parent is low. You are amenable to the Pathfinder system of parenting your recovery from low self-esteem. If you do not adopt a less controlling mode of parenting, you will have a negative impact on your children's self-esteem.
79-60	Good	You feel good about yourself and your self-esteem as a parent is good. You utilize many of the Pathfinder principles in your parenting. You can still have a negative impact on your children's self-esteem, but you are willing to work with your children to assist them to feel better about themselves.
59-40	Excellent	You have mastered the Pathfinder System of parenting. Your self-esteem as a parent is high. You utilize the principles in Pathfinder, to let go of the need to control the outcomes for your children. Your role model of a healthy life style: free of unhealthy expectations, obligations, and over-responsibility influences your children to experience life on their own terms with a high degree of personal self-esteem.

### **Suggested Discussion Questions**

1. How do you feel about yourself in your role as a parent (or parent to be)?
2. What are the major obstacles keeping you from enjoying your current (or future) parental role?
3. What are your major worries about being (or becoming) an effective parent?
4. How have your efforts at recovering from your own low self-esteem assisted you to become a more effective parent (or parent to be)?
5. What irrational beliefs about being a parent do you currently ascribe to which keep you locked into an over-controlling mode with your children (or future children)? (Tip in answering this question: the 40 questions in the inventory are all irrationally based statements)
6. What do you need to change in your current (or future) parenting style in order to become a Pathfinder facilitator of growth and personal responsibility taking for your children?

7. Can you think of any parents you have met in your lifetime who may have been Pathfinders? How did their parenting style differ from what you are currently (or planning on) doing?

8. How open are you to changing your behavioral style, patterns and behaviors? How threatening is this concept of Pathfinder to your current beliefs, philosophy of life, and ideals about what a parent is and what constitutes a happy family?

9. What risks do you foresee in pursuing the Pathfinder model of parenting with your children (or future children)?

10. How well do you think this inventory did in identifying where you are in terms of your self-esteem as a parent (or parent to be), the level of control you use (or will use) in your parenting, and the impact of your parenting on your children's (or future children/s) self-esteem?

**In your Journal Record Your Personal Notes on this Exercise**

## **11-4 Family Councils: A Family Work-Out Model**

### **I. Tips for setting up a Family Council:**

These tips will help you to establish a means by which open communication with your children can be encouraged. A family council is a meeting in which all family members can participate.

1. The entire family council should meet at a regularly designated hour, once a week and not whenever one member of the family feels the need for it.
2. All members of family have equal participation, each one having one vote. Required age level for each child depends on his ability to understand what is discussed.
3. Chairmanship of the council can rotate by plan either weekly or monthly so that every member experiences this role and its responsibility.
4. Participation in the council sessions are not obligatory. To get reluctant members to attend, use their absence to reach decisions which they may not like so that they will have to come to the next meeting to get the decision changed.
5. The council can be somewhat democratic and not just used by the parents to scold or impose their will. Parents should point out their viewpoints just like the children do. Parents should allow the family council to make decisions in areas which strengthen family life.
6. The council should follow parliamentary order to ensure that each member has the opportunity to be freely expressive and to listen to the others. To be successful, family council members must learn to listen to one another and understand what the other means.
7. The council should not be used as a gripe session. As soon as an objection is raised, focus on improvement should be addressed by such questions as: "What can we do to improve this situation?" Emphasis should be on improvement rather than complete solutions since complete solutions are hard to find and take a great deal of time. Short term improvements give encouragement to the family that the council is working and hopefully will lead to complete solutions in the long run,
8. Decisions made by a council must only be those that serve the benefit of all and not of any one particular interest. They should answer the question, "What can we do about this situation or predicament?" Decisions are: plans accepted by the majority; plans of action for non-compliance; and plans in regard to unpleasant or to objectionable possibilities.

9. Wrong decisions, particularly on the part of children, can be excellent learning experiences. Parents should not prevent wrong decisions, but rather, let the children experience the consequences. At the next meeting they will be more willing to accept an alternative which the parents did consider as more adequate.

10. Once a decision has been made, any alteration has to wait for next week's session. In the interim, no one has the right to decide a different course of action and to impose this decision on others. On the other hand, the parents may not feel bound by the decisions either, if the children refuse to abide.

11. In a detached discussion of their problems, children are usually more reasonable than parents would assume. Only in the moment of conflict does a child appear unreasonable because he does not want to give in. An appeal to the child's good sense is more effective in the council discussion than an attempt to subdue the child intellectually.

12. Even if the sessions of the council should not be effective for a period, they should not be discontinued. Making the council effective may impose hardships on the parents for a while, but in the long run, it will produce beneficial effects for all.

## **II. Seven Adlerian Principles Related to the Family Council Model:**

The following are principles of child rearing known as the Adlerian approach which comes from the writings of Rudolph Dreikurs and Alfred Adler.

**1. Encouragement** - a child misbehaves only if he is discouraged and does not believe in his ability to succeed with useful means. Encouragement implies your faith in the child, it communicates your belief in the child as s/he is rather than in what s/he could be.

**2. Natural Consequences** - is utilizing the situation to exert the necessary pressure to stimulate proper motivation for a child to change unwanted behaviors. Consequences are different from punishment and there is a wide range of consequences which can be used to assist children to alter unwanted behaviors. A natural consequence is allowing the child to experience the natural aftermath of specific behaviors.

**3. Action Instead of Words** - in a conflict situation, words are useless and usually aggravate the situation and do not bring the desired result, but often have the opposite effect. Effective action in the moment of conflict can consist of natural consequences, physical motion, or if these are not possible, self-removal from the scene.

**4. Firmness without Domination** - firmness is your refusal to give in to your child's undue demands. Domination is the imposition of your will on the child and usually not effective.

**5. Efficacy of Withdrawal** - withdrawing from the scene when the child demands undue attention or tries to involve you in a power struggle is effective by defeating the child's bid for attention.

**6. Understanding the Child's Goal** - misbehaving may be a bid for attention and service, or a part of a power contest. It is important to recognize these goals so as not to reinforce the child's belief that s/he is bad.

**7. Logical Consequences** - are those consequences for a behavior which have been arranged beforehand between parents and children. They are effective tools where natural consequences do not exist or are too dangerous.

### **Suggested Discussion Questions**

1. How comfortable are we in setting up a "democratic model" of family meetings with our children?
2. How willing are we to set aside the time necessary to make family meetings work?
3. How comfortable are we in being open with children about our feelings concerning the family and its future?
4. What obstacles do we foresee in setting up such family councils in our family?
5. How comfortable are we with allowing our children to experience the natural consequences of their own actions?
6. What are some of the benefits of acting, rather than talking, in conflict situations with our kids?
7. How will having weekly meetings with our children affect our Marriage Work-Out program?
8. What is our understanding of the difference between firmness and domination in our dealings with our children?
9. How would we feel if we just removed ourselves when one of the children is acting up, seeking attention?
10. What stops us from taking the time to figure out the goal of our child(ren)'s behaviors before reacting to the behaviors?

**In your Journal Record Your Personal Notes on this Exercise**

## **11-5 Follow-Up Work-Out Plans for Families and Children**

As a result of our exercises, discussions, and efforts in this chapter of our Marriage Work-Out on Family and Child Management with each other, we have come up with this action plan to continue and follow up the health enhancing what we have just completed.

### **I. Nurturing Our Expanded Marital Team**

The following are needs which we still have to address to fully achieve full health in the family and child rearing aspect of our marital relationship:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### **II. Strategic Steps towards Growth in Establishing a Healthy Family**

The following are specific steps we will take to address our needs to improve our family and child rearing skills:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

### **III. Personal Responsibility Taking**

The following are the things I will specifically do to ensure that we as a couple continue to grow in family and child rearing skills in our relationship:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

**IV. Evaluation of Action Plan for improving our family and child rearing team**

We will know we have achieved our goal to grow in family and child rearing by the following measurable behavioral changes:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10

We agree to the above Marriage Work-Out plan for nurturing our family and child rearing skills.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**My signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**My partner's signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**