Humor Infused Child Discipline Training for Parents: Is This Thing on?

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Abstract

This literature review investigated humor and the subsequent benefits within interpersonal relationships. The results found that humor is useful within several areas of functioning including coping, stress and tension relief, building connections, and gaining perspective. Additional results found that the development of a sense of humor in childhood allows children to express negative emotions and gain a sense of connection with the adults in their lives. The author proposes that when applied to the parent/child relationship, humor serves as a tool to manage unwanted behaviors in children, to handle parental stress, and build strong family connections. With the use of Adlerian parenting concepts, a child guidance workshop is created and implemented within a community setting. This workshop educates parents on effective behavior management using an approach that integrates humor and democratic parenting techniques. An assessment of the effectiveness of the workshop based on participant evaluations and implications for future use is discussed.
Humor Infused Child Discipline Training for Parents: Is This Thing on?

Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................................. 2

Introduction to the Problem ............................................................................................................. 5

Where’s my wooden spoon .............................................................................................................. 5

Effects of the spoon on children .................................................................................................. 6

Statement of the Problem ............................................................................................................... 6

Parenting as a pre-existing condition ............................................................................................ 6

Discipline vs. punishment ................................................................................................................ 7

Parenting classes are boring ......................................................................................................... 7

Purpose of the Study ....................................................................................................................... 8

Entertaining education .................................................................................................................... 8

Humor as a catalyst for change ....................................................................................................... 8

Significance of the Study ................................................................................................................. 9

Using the benefits .......................................................................................................................... 9

Adlerian parent training ............................................................................................................... 10

Humor and connection ................................................................................................................. 11

Review of the Literature ................................................................................................................ 11

Humor theories ............................................................................................................................. 12

What are they laughing at .............................................................................................................. 13

Humor preference and development in children ........................................................................... 14

Babies and toddlers ...................................................................................................................... 14

Preschoolers ................................................................................................................................ 14
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**Introduction to the Problem**

Among the many challenges adults face throughout life, parenting is amidst the most difficult and emotionally complex. Age-appropriate disciplinary responses, child development and behaviors, and self-anger are the most requested topics parents believe should be made available on a wide-scale basis, indicating that parents are still in need of alternative forms of behavior management (Ateah, 2003). I postulate that the function of humor within Adlerian parenting concepts can aid parents in decreasing unwanted behavior. The function of humor in parenting will be used to increase the ability of parents to manage personal feelings and actions more effectively while simultaneously creating connection and belonging.

**Where’s my wooden spoon?** Recent studies have shown that the majority of parents in the United States continue to physically punish their children (Regalado et.al, 2004), with children aged 3-4 years making up the largest age range for receiving physical punishment (Gelles & Straus, 1979). In the General Social Survey conducted in 2004, 71.3 percent of American adults surveyed agreed with the statement that sometimes children need a “good hard spanking.” While the percentage of adults in agreement with this statement has declined since 1986 (84 percent agreement) (Gershoff, 2007), physical and harsh punishment still persists and proves to have long-term negative emotional and relational effects on children (McKee et al., 2007, Mulvaney & Mebert, 2007, & Scaramella et al., 2008).

When parents do not use physical punishment, arbitrary punishments such as grounding, taking away possessions, or losing privileges become their method of choice. Under the guise of thinking they are imposing consequences, these methods take the form of punishment when the parents impose their will upon the child. Fear becomes the motivating factor for children to
behave. This can result in feelings of anger, hatred, humiliation, and inferiority, and does not encourage children to develop new behavior (Oberst & Stewart, 2003).

**Effects of the spoon on children.** The concept of punishment within parenting does not only apply to physical punishment. Less physical means of punishment, such as verbal punishment, have also been researched. Results have shown that harsh parenting from the mother influenced children’s emotional regulation more strongly than did a father’s harsh parenting. On the other hand, harsh parenting coming from fathers had a stronger effect on child aggression, particularly in sons. The study emphasized negative emotionality as a possible cause of family conflict, including parenting and child adjustment problems (Chang et.al 2003). Internalizing and externalizing behaviors in children increase with the use of harsh and emotionally negative parent-child exchanges during early and later childhood (Scaramella et. al, 2007, Mckee et. al, 2007). The conclusion to draw from this current research is that the more parents use any form of punishment, the more disobedient, emotionally distressed, and aggressive their children become. Unwanted behavior may stop temporarily due to punishment, but long-term behavior modification is limited with this method.

**Statement of Problem**

**Parenting as a pre-existing condition.** Research has attempted to study the multifaceted nature of parenting. It has been determined there are several pre-existing factors that aid in determining parental responses to misbehavior in their children. Belsky (1984) attempted to understand these determinants and the influence they have on individual differences in parental functioning. He suggests that the determinants of parenting are directly influenced by the interrelationships of the personal psychological resources of parents, the temperament of the child, and societal sources of parental stress and support. Within the parent factor, he found that
knowledge level and abilities further determined differences in parent functioning. Such functioning varied depending on the parent’s own childhood experiences, value systems, education, and other life experiences.

**Discipline vs. punishment.** Definitions of the terms *discipline* and *punishment* contribute to the confusion of parents regarding current and appropriate parenting methods. This is due in part to these terms being used interchangeably, despite their different meanings. Discipline, derived from the Latin word *disciplina* (meaning teaching and learning), means to teach. “Discipline is not a single act or statement. It is a process” (Dinkmeyer et. al, 1997). Discipline “seeks to involve youth in learning social responsibility and self-control” (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2002, p. 109). Punishment is defined as a suffering, pain, or loss that serves as retribution (retrieved on November 22, 2010 from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/). It is common for parents to feel that their child must suffer in order to “learn a lesson.” This attitude results in the use of punishment rather than discipline. Punishment can take the form of, but is not limited to, threats, yelling, put-downs, and physical punishment such as hitting or spanking (Dinkemeyer et al., 1997).

Rudolf Dreikurs states (p. 16, 1948) that “in rearing their children most people follow the example of their own parents. As a result, the same errors in child training are handed down from generation to generation.” In childrearing, doing what parents know is the path of least resistance, even if it is not working. When parents decide they do not want to use punishment, alternative methods may seem hard to find. The use of punishment may be on the decline, but new, more efficient methods are not on the incline (Oberst & Stewart, 2003).

**Parenting classes are boring!** Parent education and training aim to address the emotional and relational concerns arising from the use of physical and harsh punishment with
children by offering alternative methods for parents. However, parents do not turn to parenting classes as their main source of knowledge on parenting topics. Other parents, parenting books, and personal experience serve as the best way for most parents to receive parenting information and knowledge (Ateah, 2002).

**Purpose of Study**

**Entertaining education.** The purpose of the study is to examine current research on parenting classes and evaluate the efficacy of educating parents on alternative forms of behavior management. Discipline continues to be a subject of interest to parents. Ateah (2007), who based her research on parental sources of information, attitudes, and educational needs, advises that “presenting information on expected child development and behaviors, effective and age-appropriate nonphysical disciplinary strategies, and anger management techniques to parents in a small group format in which parents have ample opportunity to discuss issues and compare experiences may be one of the most effective formats for program delivery” (p. 99). It is postulated that using an experiential, humorous teaching style with traditional teaching methods will increase the quality of participation where quality of participation rather than attendance is the predictor of parental response to training (Nix, Bierman, & McMahon, 2009).

**Humor as a catalyst for change. Say what?** Similar educational programs for children use humor as a means of impacting major concerns on a societal level. A re-conceptualized humor practice employs as a method of communicating messages on a societal level on overweight and obesity amongst children. Following the programs and special events presented within the program, “parents report they and their children found the humor approach to be novel and engaging” (Simson et. al, 2008, p. 93).
An additional aim of this study is to highlight and utilize the benefits of humor within parenting. An application of the function of humor will be combined with traditional Adlerian parenting concepts for the purpose of teaching parents how to use humor when disciplining their children. Parents will learn democratic parenting skills infused with humor to manage unwanted behavior in their children. The overall aim is to help parents learn skills to humorously and lightheartedly tame the “monster” that is their child.

Unfortunately, one of the most successful means of relieving a situation is too rarely employed. This is humor. Many people tend to neglect their sense of humor; they somehow feel it is their duty to be solemn and gloomy, and regard an occasional laugh as a lapse of dignity. Yet the quality of humor should never be wanting in dealing with children. If you possess it, your lot will be much easier (Dreikurs, p. 79, 1948).

**Significance of Study**

**Using the benefits.** Humor and the inherent benefits of its use within interpersonal relationships are not limited to verbal discourse. Smiling and laughter have similar positive effects with others. According to Schore (2003), positive emotional expression in the mother’s face has been shown to produce a biochemical response in offspring that is connected to the pleasure qualities of social interaction, social affect, and attachment. When individuals let go and laugh, they have the ability to “step outside themselves, for just a moment, to witness irony, silliness, and the downright absurd in themselves and their situations” (Parrish & Quinn, 1999, p. 204).

This act of not taking “things so seriously” is an essential element in parenting. “We live in a sort of fear that our children will grow up badly, learn bad habits, develop wrong attitudes, do things the wrong way. We watch over them constantly and try to prevent some mistake”
It is within these acts of parenting that humorous acts can assist parents in “letting go” and strengthen the parent-child relationship. Relational, emotional, and physical benefits arise when humor is used within interpersonal relationships. Family cohesion, emotion expression, coping, and decreased tension and stress all result from the use of humor (Everts, 2003; Dziegiegielewski et. al, 2004; Digney, 2009; Abel, 2002; Rieger, 2004; Parrish & Quinn, 1999; Dean & Major, 2008; Nelson, 2008; Richman, 2001).

In addition, children learn self-regulating skills through the use of humor when it is employed within a social context. Loizou states, “Humor happens in a social context and can provide opportunities for children to learn about themselves and their social partners, and thus develop and regulate their social self” (2007, p. 197). In a recent study on humor in infancy, (Loizou, 2007) infants were found creating and valuing humor by violating their caregivers’ expectations or by playing with reality as a way to socially situate themselves within a group setting. This study supports humor as a social event as both children’s activities are “very characteristic of their need and ability to act as social agents” (Loizou, p. 204). In a similar study, children used humor in a way to “assert themselves and empower themselves within the social group environment” (Loizou, 2005, p. 52).

**Adlerian parent training.** Using meta-analysis data, an evaluation of Adlerian parenting programs was conducted with promising results. Assessments were made in the following areas: children’s behavior, children’s self-concept, parental behaviors, and parent attitude. Positive changes were found in all areas. Specifically, mothers saw their children more affirmatively and learned to relate more effectively with them, had gains in the use of discipline rather than punishment techniques, developed a more tolerant attitude toward their children, encouraged communication between parent and child, and were less interested in “breaking the
will” of the child. Parents can promote “self-esteem, social interest, creativity, and wisdom” within themselves and their children by interacting with a humorous attitude (Gomez, Gomez, & O’Connell, 1994, p. 294).

An area that needs attention in future programs is implementing a follow-up or supplemental meeting with parents following the program. In one study researched by Burnett (1988), no major long-term behavior changes in parent-child interaction resulted after 12 months following program (Burnett, 1988). Ongoing communication with parents and educating parents on stress management, coping skills, and adequate self-care practices through the use of humor may help gain longer results.

**Humor and connection.** The overall aim of this study is to teach parents the inter-relational benefits of humor when used within behavior management. “Tapping into a young person’s sense of humor can be a key to establishing a connection” (Digney, 2009, p. 55). This connection is essential in building trust, respect, understanding, and empowerment. When working with parents in a group setting, humor will be used to make a connection and build trust. This allows parents to feel the impact of humor as a means of teaching, communicating, and relating to others.

**Review of the Literature**

The complex nature of humor has led researchers to study its origins and effects. Studies have found that humor enhances interpersonal relationships, serves as a means of stress release, and is a way of coping with daily life. The daily task of parenting can be both stressful and emotionally intense. Parents attempt to educate themselves on discipline, child development, and anger management, but still find long-term results on behavior management unsuccessful. The use of Adlerian parenting concepts combined with humor can serve to build skills needed to
strengthen the parent-child relationship, manage child behavior, and decrease the stress and tension of parenting. A review of the foundations of humor, child specific humor, and benefits of humorous interactions within the home conclude that humor can serve a supplemental role within relationships.

**Humor theories.** Theoretical foundations of humor include views from cognitive-developmental, psychoanalytic, cultural-historical, and moral development theories (Klein, 2003). While no single theory has been inclusively successful in explaining the multilayered nature of humor, the cognitive and social function of humor is identified most often within literature. Polimeni and Reiss (2006) reviewed current literature and found that humor theories have emphasized the adaptive qualities of humor and laughter. They found that, as a species, humor appears to be a function of “augmented social abilities and as an extension of language” (2006, p. 362).

Many humor theories have been conceived for adults, but only a limited number are directly related to children. Among the few who studied humor and children, Sigmund Freud addressed humor development from three to seven years. He paid attention to humor as a method of coping with challenging situations and as a way of expressing both meaning and emotion following the social and verbal discourse nature of most theories. He characterized three developmental stages of humor: play, jesting, and joking.

Play is the first stage of Freud’s theory on children, development, and humor, and occurs between the ages of two and three. Within this stage, children are focused on practicing incongruities within their environment. He posited that the jesting stage is derived from children realizing that adults have a preference for reasonableness rather than absurdity. Children then, in turn, enjoy finding and creating the absurd. Given the nature of the jesting and its dependence
on mutuality, this stage requires an audience. According to Freud, the joking stage allows for the expression of repressed feelings through laughter (Freud, 1960). In her guidebook on humor and children for practitioners, Klein (2003) adds to Freud’s theory stating, “Joking may neutralize social differences among individuals or groups, especially by enhancing bonds among them” (p. 19). The addition of a relational component within humor theory stresses the functionality of humor within the parent-child relationship.

What are they laughing at? Children are great observers of their environment. They gain an understanding of how the world works by observing themselves and others within the confines of their world. There are several areas of humor that enhance this testing and learning of the world for children. Categories of children’s humor serve this developmental function and can be carefully nurtured by the adults in their lives. Adults must find out what kids find funny in order to make a connection with them in their shared space. The power of laughter is most elegantly stated by Alfred Adler: “Laughter, with its liberating energy and powers of release, goes hand in hand with joy and represents the keystone of that feeling. It reaches out beyond the personality and engages the sympathies of others” (1927, p. 226). Humor and laughter can become a very powerful parenting tool when used appropriately.

Absurdity, exaggeration, human predicaments, incongruity, mockery and ridicule, slapstick, surprise, verbal humor (jokes, puns, riddles), and violence are the most common forms of humor that children use and respond to (Franzini, 2002). The function of these forms can vary by age and development of the child. “In general, the type of humor that children prefer as a group follows a regular developmental pattern” (Franzini, 2002, p. 26). Parents want additional information about development and behaviors (Ateah, 2003). Addressing the developmentally
appropriate and inappropriate responses to life within the framework of humor with parents will help them gain a sense of being informed and feeling knowledgeable about their children.

**Humor preference and development in children.**

*Babies and toddlers: Mind the talking banana.* Following a very general guideline, children create and respond to humor at all ages. Starting in infancy, a game of peek-a-boo is the emergent stage of humor for babies. The element of this game that is important to the function of humor is the violation of expectations. Physical and visual humor appear first because of primitive language development at this age. Verbal silliness and nonsense words will be funny to the young toddler. The inconsistencies of their environment will become clearer as they develop cognitive patterns within the environment. Those inconsistencies can be a potential opportunity for humor within the home (Franzini, 2002). For example, a talking banana or adult wearing underwear on his or her head will be funny for a child. The intentional violation of expectations within this age group often leaves parents frustrated and confused. Parents can deal with this misbehavior by humorously doing the unexpected.

*Preschoolers: Pull my finger.* Humor becomes more personal to the individual preschooler and silliness prevails. “Perception rather than logical thinking will influence what is funny” (Franzini, 2002, p. 28). Environmental incongruities are similar to the previous age group, but the incongruities depend on what the child knows to be true about that particular concept or object involved in the “joke.” Children of this age are not able to appreciate the rational incongruities of verbal humor, such as puns, riddles, and most jokes. One will find preschoolers laughing at things that they consider implausible and incredible (Poole, Miller, & Church, 2005). One area that parents find troubling in this stage is the use of bathroom humor.
Helping parents become knowledgeable about this developmental stage may alleviate exaggerated response from parents to this kind of behavior.

**Early school-age: Knock-knock. I’m a five year old.** The use of language prevails within this age group; however, many of the jokes and riddles will not likely require a logical thought process (Franzini, 2002). Rules of conversation and the skills one needs to use a sequential linguistic pattern will be honed (Poole, Miller, & Church, 2005). Slapstick and body movement become a tool for creating laughter in this age group. Early school-age children identify that humor is used differently within the social environment of school. “Five and six year olds use humor as a way of building friendships and becoming part of a larger group” (Poole, Miller, & Church, 2005, p. 33.) They typically discover that “joke-telling gets them lots of attention” (Franzini, 2002). Parents can manage this stage by containing their own reaction to inappropriate humor and encourage humor that builds connections.

**Middle school and teenagers: Love me, love my humor.** Humor preference starts to develop by age eight. Body parts and bodily functions are still funny to this age group, as are puns, more complicated riddles, jokes, and any deviation from predictable behavior and appearance. Children ages eight to 10 are “able to perceive and create sympathetic humor and can channel negative feelings into positive humorous situations” (Franzini, 2002, p. 30).

Children ages 11 and 12 move from humor preferred by younger children, such as verbal and physical, to more verbal and witty humor. These age groups become more skilled at using humor to accomplish their own personal and specific social goals. A clear and independent self-image is established within these ages. “Humor preferences reflect that concern and the newly-felt importance of interpersonal relationships” (Franzini, 2002, p. 31). The necessity of humor within the interpersonal relationships of children of this age includes parents and caregivers in
creating a self-concept in addition to friends and peers. A humorous attitude can give parents a way to connect with their pre-teen. Ages 13 and up reflect more adult-like humor preferences with individual humor preferences well-established. Irony, reality-based incongruity, and socially awkward situations are common themes (Franzini, 2002). There are more similarities than differences with this age group and their parents’ humor. These similarities create an opportunity for parents to continue to foster their relationship with their children as equals.

**I laugh, therefore I belong.** Adler recognized the ability of humor and laughter to “make connections or break them” (Adler, 1927), the latter occurring when laughter is directed at others’ misfortunes. A prescription of humor can be used in the home as a means of relief and as a means to teach a child not to take him/herself so seriously (Taffel, 1995).

Everts (2003) conducted a phenomenological study of family humor within the home. She found that humor accomplishes simultaneous goals within the family, building solidarity and intimacy. “A family exhibits humor styles that are the result of longstanding customary joking relationships among its members and that reflect the values and goals, cultures and experiences of that family” (Everts, 2003, p. 410). In the end, humor served to socialize the family members into having an attitude of competence and hope within the family (Everts, 2003).

**Humor, stress, and coping.** Many research studies have focused on parental stress and coping within families with children with disabilities. The functions of humor within these families are described as a means of releasing negative emotions and as a stress remedy, as well as providing a framework for learning, problem solving, and connecting. Families within this study mentioned that this form of connecting is more easily extended to a much broader community than with a single family. It serves as a form of communication, and a means of building positive thinking, (Reiger, 2004). Families who struggle with everyday discipline and
behavior management can benefit from the functions of humor identified in families coping with the stress of a child with a more specific disability.

The daily stress of parenting is not often identified within research studies. An article in the Encyclopedia of Stress addressed the existence of stress arising from the daily tasks of raising children. Impacting the levels of stress are the individual characteristics of both the parent and the child. The stress of parenting has negative effects on parents. The areas most affected are mood, marital satisfaction, parenting behaviors, and children’s development (Jennings & Dietz, 2007).

The stress of care giving creates an assortment of common emotions. Parrish and Quinn (1999) identified common caregiver emotions when caring for a terminally ill loved one. Of these emotions, guilt, anger, and ambivalence are the most common. Because these emotions influence how the caregiver responds to others, knowing how to manage these emotions impacts their interpersonal relationships with their loved ones.

The authors studied the use of humor as a means of managing emotions when in a care giving role. The authors’ first set of criteria when beginning the process of using humor is responding to situations from a child’s perspective. This qualifies laughter, silliness, and delighting in a “good laugh” as essential elements to care giving. By looking at situations from a child’s perspective, it can allow one to step outside a painful, frustrating situation to view the humor in the experience. Less emotional investment can be achieved, and clearer problem solving will prevail. Second, the authors found that humor has the ability to increase the likelihood of conscious efforts to seek alternative perspectives to problems, which emotionally distances the individual from the stress and reduces the negative emotions arising from the experience (Kuiper et al, 1995; Parrish & Quinn, 1999). Third, sharing humorous situations with
others appropriately helps us recognize that we are never totally in control (Parrish & Quinn, 1999).

Because few studies focus solely on “typical” families who are struggling with misbehavior, knowledge of development, and the overall challenges of managing children, learning from others in care giving roles can prove to be valuable. The previous authors conclude that “Changing individual perspectives and using humor and wit as an internal resource can mean the difference between just surviving caregiving or surviving caregiving with a little laughter and some peace of mind” (1999, p. 206).

**Humor and the four goals of misbehavior.**

“If you have a small child traveling with you, secure your own mask before assisting with theirs.”

Abel (2002) conducted a study on humor, stress, and coping, and found that individuals with a high sense of humor exercised more attempts at “distancing” themselves from the stressful situation they were currently in as well as regulating their personal feelings and actions than individuals with a lower sense of humor. Dreikurs discusses the more obvious and direct means of distancing oneself from the misbehavior of children. The humor he uses to describe the “bathroom technique” can be used by parents learning how to distance themselves from stressful situations. Dreikurs describes the bathroom as the “ideal retreat” that “should have a magazine rack stocked with literature for such times and a radio to shut out the noise” (1964, p. 158). He describes the use of this technique with children who are looking for undue attention and when a parent wants to disengage from a power struggle.

Regulating emotions adheres to the crucial component of the Four Goals of Misbehavior. More specifically, the notion that feelings and behaviors of the parent must be identified and
changed first before the child’s behavior can or will improve. An identification of parental feelings and actions help to identify the child’s mistaken goal. Most importantly, however, it is the management of parental feelings and the change in parental behaviors that serve to decrease misbehavior and strengthen the parent-child relationship (Dreikurs, 1964).

Because the study of humor origins is complex, humor theories have been unsuccessful at explaining the multi-layered nature of humor. The specific uses of humor have been studied with stronger results and the benefits have been quantified. The results have shown that while the intricate nature of humor is still somewhat unknown, the results of using humor are positive within human relationships. Interpersonal relationships, stress relief, and coping strategies are enhanced when combined with a strong sense of humor. Parents can include humor in their “bag of tricks” as children respond to specific humor styles and have humor preferences that also serve a developmental function. When combined with democratic parenting concepts, humor allows parents to use the benefits specific to the parent-child relationship.

Methodology

Video, book, and lecture-style teaching have been used to educate parents on Adlerian parenting concepts with significant success (Burnett, 1988; Fashimpar, 2000). Studies on the effectiveness of parenting programs such as Active Parenting and Systemic Training for Effective Parenting, which are based on an Adlerian parenting model, have found that positive changes occurred in the home in relation to a decrease in the use of punishment techniques, enhanced management of children’s behavior, and changes in parental attitudes and perceptions toward their child. The overall goal of each of these programs was to emphasize the basic tenants of Adlerian theory, including mutual respect among family members and democracy amongst its members (Fashimpar, 2000). Adler recognizes the connections made among individuals with
humor and the empathic enhancing qualities of laughter. He states, “Joy is indeed the correct expression for the overcoming of difficulties. It goes hand in hand with laughter in its freeing effect, representing the keystone of this emotion, as it were. It points beyond oneself and solicits the fellow feeling of the other person” (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 228).

Overall, parents in one study “significantly improved their attitudes toward physical punishment, but demonstrated no improvement in empathy for children, expectations for children, or in beliefs about family roles” (Fashimpar, 2000, p. 75) A subgroup of parents with increased rigidity in attitudes toward empathy, developmental expectations, family roles, and physical punishment within relations with their children produced no change within the Active Parenting program (Fashimpar, 2000). Voluntary and involuntary participants account for the negative results of the study. In addition, the program used video lessons as the main teaching method. I believe that creating a new style of learning for parents based on humor as a catalyst for change may decrease the negative results seen in the above studies.

Adlerian parent training benefits parents and children, but does not improve some areas of child rearing. I propose that the introduction of humor within the home and between family members will bridge this educational gap and teach empathy, development expectations, and healthy parental beliefs toward their children. The overall focus of using humor with parents emphasizes the ability of humor to strengthen family connections and ultimately fulfill their child’s need for belonging within the home and community. Children will decrease their need to use misbehavior as a means for belonging, thus creating stronger parent-child relationships.

In using a voluntary opportunity for parents in an informal setting, along with a didactic/discussion/experiential style of teaching, I will provide a humor-based program for parents to learn Adlerian parenting concepts and techniques. Facilitating active engagement
among parent participants through experiential activities will allow for a greater treatment response (Nix, Bierman, & McMahon, 2009). Parents will learn how their own childhood experiences impact their parenting as it relates to expectations of behavior. They will have opportunities to “walk in their children’s shoes” through experiential activities allowing for empathic discussions regarding their children. Parents will learn the emotional, relational benefits of humor combined with Adlerian parenting concepts. Through the use of humor, I will create a non-judging, empathic, relaxing atmosphere for parents to learn new techniques needed to replace old styles of parenting.

A free community based program will be offered to parents within and surrounding the community of Savage, MN. Savage City Hall will provide a large space at no cost to reduce overhead and facilitate group activities. Flyers will be posted at local businesses that predominantly serve parents of all socio economic status, such as child care centers, churches, and other child related retail establishments. The city library will serve as the leading marketing site using a staff run, high visibility, non-profit advertising board. Early childhood programs, held weekly at the city library, will provide a greater opportunity for program advertising exposure. Electronic mail, available through the Scott County Licensed Family Childcare website, will also be used to reach in-home family child care providers.

The initial task in developing a workshop on humor is to integrate it into the framework of an established specific program (Klein, 2003). In this instance, humor will be integrated into Adlerian parenting concepts building on the themes of connection and belonging among family members. Legitimacy of such a workshop signifies a good fit if humor integration promotes the overall learning outcomes of the program, complements and enriches the existing program, and is intellectually sound and academically viable (Klein, 2003).
The development of a humor program begins with a brief understanding of the theoretical basis for humor. This knowledge will be passed on to the parents and will assist them in interpreting children’s behavior to help them understand how “humor can change or alter that behavior” (Klein, 2003, 116). For example, comic incongruity during stressful, tense, or fearful situations can influence the perceptions of children toward life’s experiences by decreasing negative emotions and building trust within caregiver relationship.

**Description of Project Implemented**

**Rationale.** The workshop, Humor Infused Discipline: Is This Thing On?, provides a framework for parents to learn behavior management skills in an effort to defuse unwanted behavior while strengthening the parent-child relationship. The introduction of humor within Adlerian parenting concepts will serve to increase connectedness within the family, provide a means of stress and tension relief, and as an alternative method of coping with everyday parenting challenges. The purpose of the workshop is to provide an opportunity for parents to learn about their parenting style, investigate children’s development and behavior, and gain new parenting skills to replace outdated, ineffective methods of behavior management. The concepts of belonging and encouragement will be used throughout the workshop as a guiding principle for parents to understand the behavior of children as goal directed and manageable. The combination of experiential, open, and traditional styles of teaching will allow parents to actively participate in the process, enhancing the learning process.

**Teaching objectives.**

- To teach parents the emotional, physical, and relational benefits of humor within the home.
• To teach parents developmentally appropriate child behaviors from birth to young adult.

• To teach parents democratic parenting concepts including the four goals of misbehavior and natural and logical consequences.

• To teach parents new methods of humor infused discipline that strengthens the child’s inner discipline, builds self-esteem, and focuses on success.

• To teach parents how to have more satisfying daily interactions with their children that support the family identity through the use of humor.

• To help families bring fun back into their lives through humor, family activities, and increased positive interactions.

• To teach parents the importance of self-care.

Learning outcomes. As a result of this workshop, parents will be able to:

• Recognize developmentally appropriate child behaviors in an effort to increase unconditional acceptance.

• Recognize the goal of their child’s misbehavior based on their own initial feelings toward the situation.

• Use humor and democratic parenting concepts to defuse unwanted behavior and build connection.

• Use humor as a method of managing stress and tension caused by children’s misbehavior.

• Recognize the importance of self-care and how to identify the thoughts and feelings associated with burnout.
Presentation link.

http://prezi.com/upqnaldtgkgi/copy-of-humor-infused-discipline-is-this-thing-on/

Personal Evaluation of Workshop

The seamless integration of humor and Adlerian parenting concepts was evident throughout the workshop. I was able to link connection and belonging and the use of humor as a means to achieve this goal by highlighting the relational benefits found in current research. Many of the participants who attended described themselves as currently using humor in their daily lives, but did not know the relational and emotional benefits.

Attendees identified that they were all experiencing similar challenges and as parents they are more alike than different. This building of connection was enhanced by a lighthearted, fun, and non-judgmental atmosphere where parents could share personal experiences in an effort to learn new parenting strategies. I succeeded at discussing developmental behaviors throughout the workshop in an effort to normalize children’s behavior and allow parents to temporarily let go of guilt and shame.

In evaluating my own skills in presenting the information, I feel I did an adequate job of presenting the topic of humor, but feel I could have explained the benefits of humor more thoroughly. Similarly, I would have liked to spend more time on integrating development and humor. The presentation lacked some of the attention to detail as it relates to humor that is evident in the research paper portion of the project. Adlerian parenting concepts were covered in depth as I am comfortable in my knowledge, more familiar, and passionate about this topic area. My enthusiasm for the event showed and I was well prepared. This event reinforced my love of teaching and helped me hone down my goals for my professional career.
Participant Evaluation of Workshop

Participants appreciated the non-judging atmosphere and felt comfortable discussing the daily challenges of parenting. One parent expressed her appreciation for reframing her child’s behavior into a list of positive qualities for her child such as resourceful, creative, and helpful. Many of the participants expressed their desire to implement some of these techniques at home, but feel they will meet resistance from partners or spouses.

Overall, participants found the information useful. However, while wanting to learn new techniques, they did not fully embrace the idea of change as a process and wanted more concrete examples of what to do in specific situations. Some comments made by participants include, “Very entertaining” and “Stephanie did a great job at keeping the evening flowing.” As well as, “More specific techniques” and “Occasionally got off topic.”

Future Use of Project

The feedback I have received from the community is positive and future use of the project is well under way. “It sounds so interesting” is the most common response from others. I have been contacted by several community groups and agencies to present the topic already. I was hired by a local daycare center to present to their staff during a professional in-service day. In addition, a community mom’s club has asked me to speak at an upcoming meeting. Queries to magazines and online resources for parents are also avenues I will use in the future.

The positive response from the community to this workshop is evidence that people already know the benefits of humor albeit indirectly. This workshop will continue to help parents and children build their comic connection and strengthen this important relationship. As long as there are parents and children in the world, I will be presenting this workshop to whoever will listen.
References


