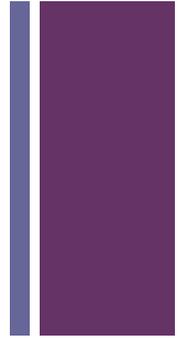


Task, Challenges, and Obstacles (TCO) of Parenting

South Carolina Conference of Adlerian Psychology, Myrtle Beach, SC
September 29, 2012

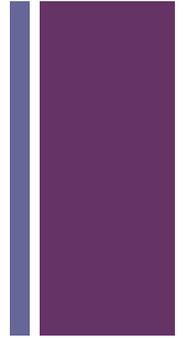
Presented By: **Paul R. Rasmussen, Ph.D.**
Director of the Adler Child-Guidance Center
Diplomate in Adlerian Psychology

+ What is Parenting?



- verb [with obj.] (often as noun **parenting**) be or act as a mother or father to (someone): *the warmth and attention that are the hallmarks of good parenting.*
- Arguably one of the most profound and important roles that can be undertaken in life.
- Reaches far beyond genetic contribution.
- Transcends age, race/ethnicity, social economic status, sexual orientation, and a broad scope of other demographic variables.
- Has evolved far beyond the traditional two-parent home.

+ Task, Challenges, and Obstacles (TCO) of Parenting



- Each must be addressed to some degree by *ALL* parents, regardless of culture.
- *HOW* the task, challenges , and obstacles are (successfully) addressed will vary based on culture and demographics.
- What works for one child might not work for another.
- What works for one parent might not work for another.

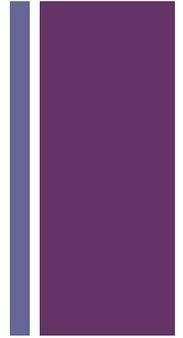


The Task of Parenting

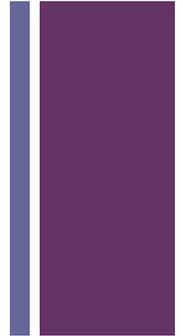


+ The Task of Parenting Defined

- “One’s responsibility to raise his or her child in such a way that he or she (the child) can develop into a contributing member of a civilized society.”

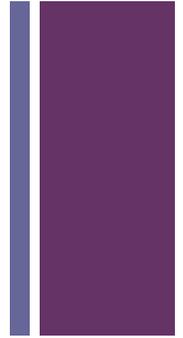


+ The Task of Parenting Defined continued...



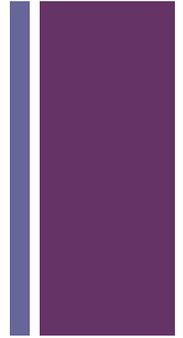
- “**One’s** responsibility to raise his or her child in such a way that he or she (the child) can develop into a contributing member of a civilized society.”
- The task of parenting is the responsibility of the individual parent.
- Each parent can only control his or her self.
- Each parent should be doing what is within his or her own power to achieve task fulfillment.

+ The Task of Parenting Defined continued...



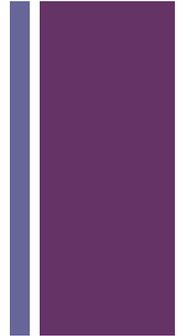
- “One’s responsibility to raise his or her child in such a way that **he or she (the child) can develop** into a contributing member of a civilized society.”
- Parents are not the only influential force on the development of their child.
- Task fulfillment does not guarantee that the child will choose to be a contributing member of society.
- Ultimately, the child will reach a level of maturity in which he or she will make choices and decide what type of person to be.

+ The Task of Parenting Defined continued...



- “One’s responsibility to raise his or her child in such a way that he or she (the child) can develop into a **contributing member of a civilized society.**”
- Not necessarily someone who makes a new discover or provides a better way to cultivate a natural resource.
- Part of contributing to a civilized society involves keeping society in mind when making decisions or solving problems.
- Doing what is morally mature/socially right, as opposed to acting just in one’s self-interest or following harmful/detrimental social norms (Kholberg, 1971).

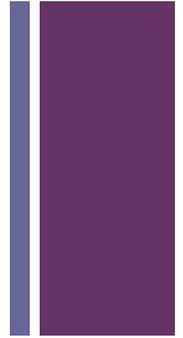
+ The Task as a Process



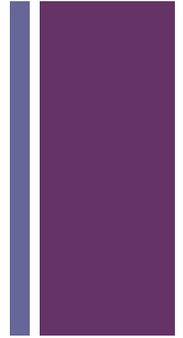
- The task of parenting is a dynamic process, as opposed to a static product.
- It is the who, what, when, where, how, and why of parenting.
- It is knowing what you are doing, and thinking about why you are doing it.
 - ~~“Because it’s how my parents raised me and I turned out fine.”~~
 - ~~“My neighbor told me that she had the same problem and it worked with her kid.”~~
 - **“Because I’ve thought about what it takes to be a contributing member of society, and I’m trying to help my child develop the qualities or characteristics that are conducive to this.”**

+ Theoretical Foundations for the Task

- This basic notion of keeping society in mind is at the crux of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology.
- According to Adler (1992), "The meaning of life is interest in and co-operation with other people" (p. 20).
- Those who conduct themselves in this manner will seek out solutions to the problems of life that will be exemplary for others, while also contributing to the whole (Adler, 1992).

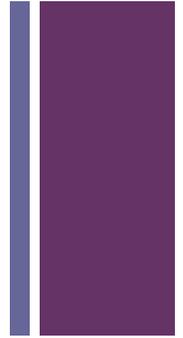


+ Theoretical Foundations for the Task continued...



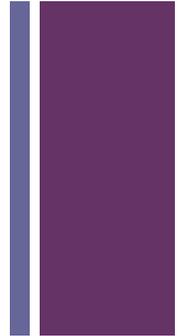
- Adler asserted that there were three problems of life that all humans are constrained by.
- These three tasks of life have an inseparable bond and cannot be solved independent of one another.
- Though these tasks of life were identified by Adler as Work, Social, and Love/Sex, they can be re-conceptualized to be more available/applicable to parents.
- Responsibility, Cooperation, Respect (RCR)

+ Theoretical Foundations for the Task continued...



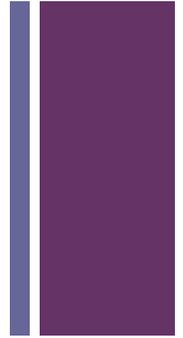
- Occupation Task: Not merely the job or career one undertakes, but sustaining one's self in a responsible manner.
 - The child does not necessarily have a job or career to attend to, but he or she does experience early training.
- Responsibility: Attending to things that need to be done, despite the presence or absence of unpleasantness.
 - A child might associate a certain level of unpleasantness to attending school, doing chores, and finishing homework, but he/she must learn to attend to the things that need done (i.e., school, family, neighborhood, etc.), and to avoid things that might be more attractive.
 - Negative outcomes for those who fail to develop responsibility and/or the capacity for hardship (Brooks, 2001; Patton, 1998)

+ Theoretical Foundations for the Task continued...



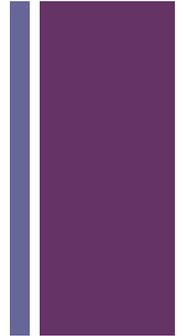
- **Social Task:** The way one goes about relating to others.
 - A child might not have the freedom and/or independence to relate to others in the way adults do, but they develop a style of relating to others first in the home, and then at school.
- **Cooperation:** Learning to relate to others in a pro-social manner. This involves working with others to lift up the group, as opposed to working against others to lift up the self.
 - A child observes how his or her parents and siblings interact with him/her, as well as how they interact with each other. The child makes conclusions based on these experiences and acts accordingly.
 - Our ability to function in the world is dependent upon our ability to cooperate (Worthen, Henderson, Rasmussen, & Benson, 2009)

+ Theoretical Foundations for the Task continued...



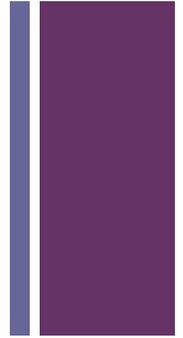
- Love/Sex Task: The way an individual approaches love/partnership (regardless of sexual orientation), and how his/her dyad or partnership contributes to the next generation (i.e., natural birth, artificial insemination, adoption, etc.).
 - Children might not have a romantic partner, but they are still learning how to treat partnership through their development of Respect.
- Respect: Recognizing and maintaining thoughtfulness/consideration of others, while continuing to do so for the self as well.
 - Through respect for self, the individual is willing to control urges/impulses and accept responsibility.

+ Theoretical Foundations for the Task Continued...



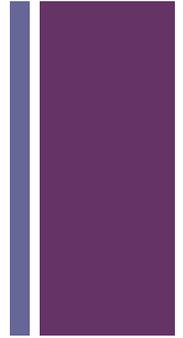
- Although Alfred Adler did not articulate parenting as one of the tasks of life, the Individual Psychology was/is highly focused on human development and child guidance.
- Adler established over thirty child guidance centers prior to World War II, performed public family demonstrations, and lectured to teachers-in training about the problem child.
- Needless to say, Adler recognized the benefits and necessity of preparing the next generation.

+ Theoretical Foundations for the Task continued...



- Adler asserted that the greater the amount of trained/acquired community feeling in childhood, the greater the expectation could be of one's accomplishments.
- Successful fulfillment of the life tasks does not cause and/or lead to consistent happiness or subjective well-being.
- However, the likelihood of negative consequences is minimized, and the opportunity for positive life experiences is maximized.
- Therefore, childhood is the training ground for adulthood.

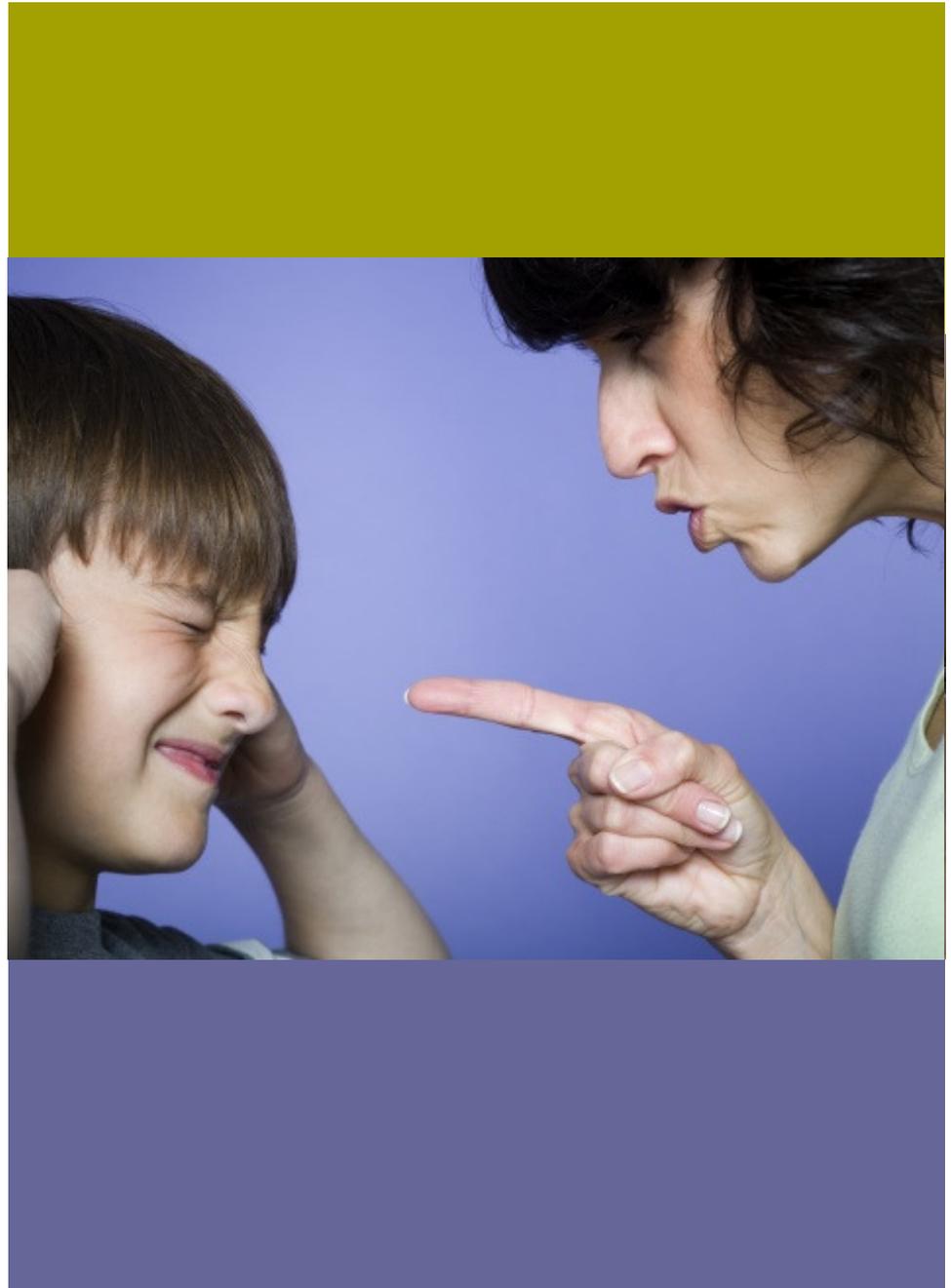
+ Task Fulfillment



- Successful fulfillment of the task of parenting is likely to contribute to:
 - The child's development of human strengths and optimal human functioning.
 - The success/progression of the next generation.
- The task of parenting can be defined as a universal concept because it can be applied cross-culturally.
- However, this is not to say that fulfillment of the task will be a universal process that will be accomplished in the same way.
 - Optimal human functioning must be considered within the cultural context it occurs.

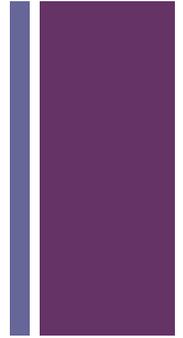


The Challenges of Parenting

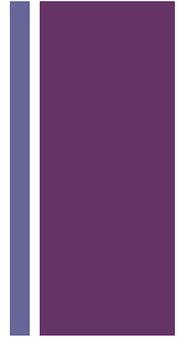


+ The Challenges of Parenting Defined

- “The immediate issues that provoke a parent’s reaction in order to reach a timely solution.”

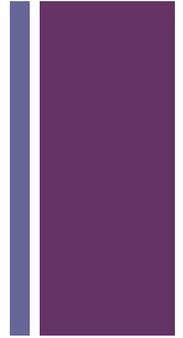


+ The Challenges of Parenting Defined continued...



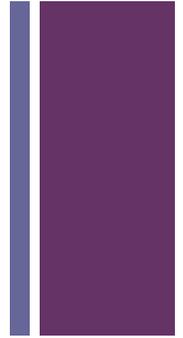
- “The **immediate issues** that provoke a parent’s reaction in order to reach a timely solution.”
- These occur in the here and now:
 - “My child did not do so well on his/her report card.”
 - “My son just got caught lying to me.”
 - “My daughter tried to sneak out of the house...but got caught.”
- Does not have to be a bad thing or a problem:
 - “My son wants to throw the ball around, but I have to get these reports done for tomorrow.”
 - “My daughter asked if I could teach her how to put on makeup, but I have to attend to the baby.”

+ The Challenges of Parenting Defined continued...



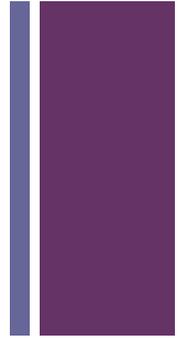
- “The immediate issues that **provoke a parent’s reaction** in order to reach a timely solution.
- At times, these do not *require* a parental reaction, but one is often warranted:
 - “My two boys just started arguing in the other room and I feel I need to go in there and set them straight!”
 - “My son/daughter cannot find the shirt that they wanted to wear to school today.”
 - “My child does not want to study for the spelling test he/she is taking tomorrow.”

+ The Challenges of Parenting Defined continued...



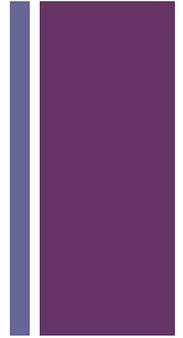
- “The immediate issues that provoke a parent’s reaction in order to **reach a timely solution.**”
- These issues often interfere with the parents life if left unresolved:
 - “I am going to be late to work, if he does not get out of bed in the next five minutes.”
 - “If I can’t get my daughter to stop crying over this toy, what will the other people in the store think of me?”
 - “I can’t stand a messy home! He needs to get up there and pick up his toys now!”

+ Why Do Challenges Occur?



- Children have needs, desires, and wants.
- Parents have needs, desires, and wants.
- Challenges occur when the child's needs, desires, or wants conflict with the parent's needs, desires, or wants.
 - A child wants attention, but the parent needs to finish his/her paper work.
 - A mother wants to have coffee with a neighbor, but the child needs a snack.
 - The child desires another vacation to Disney World, while the parents have been longing to go to Disney Land.

+ Why Do Challenges Occur? continued...



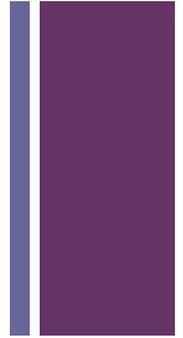
■ The Child's World

- A young child often operates from an immature orientation towards life: "I want what I want when I want it."
- Frequently, young children have yet to develop the capacity to consider the group before themselves.

■ The Parent's World

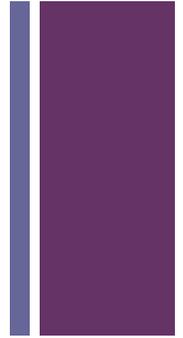
- The parent has had time to develop a more mature orientation towards life: "I can't get all the things I want (though I can get many of them with careful effort), and at times it is my responsibility to do things I don't necessarily want to do."
- Parents recognize that there are others in the picture that must also be considered.

+ Why Do Challenges Occur? continued...



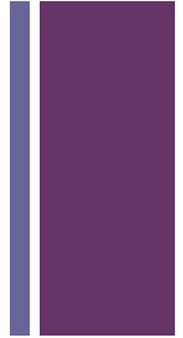
- 4 Goals of Misbehavior:
 - Attention: “Pay attention to me!”
 - Power: “I’ll show you!”
 - Revenge: “You’ll pay for that!”
 - Demonstration of Inadequacy: “Don’t bother; I just can’t do it.”
- Account for the child’s purpose for misbehaving.
- Misbehavior does not account for all challenges, but it accounts for a substantial amount.

+ Facing the Challenges



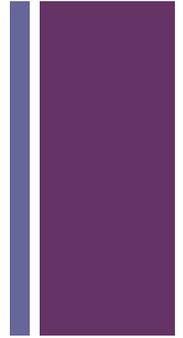
- Today's society is increasingly focused on equality and democratic process:
 - Equality does not imply lack of leadership.
 - Even Democracies have a President.
- Fallacy of punishment and rewards:
 - Reinforces power differential.
 - Focuses on external reinforcement.
 - Fails to develop intrinsic motivation.
 - Play into the intentions of the child rather than acting as educators.

+ Facing the Challenges continued...



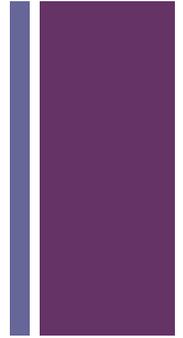
- Natural and logical consequences:
 - Allow the child to experience the consequences of his or her actions.
 - Provides a learning situation.
 - Encourages and empowers the child through choices.
 - Allows the child to develop intrinsic motivation.

+ Facing the Challenges continued...



- Be firm, but mindful of the task:
 - Resist the temptation to dominate.
 - Encourage respect, cooperation, and responsibility (RCR), by demonstrating RCR.
 - Implement order in daily life and maintain routine.
 - Eliminate destructive criticism and minimize mistakes.
 - Provide constructive feedback and focus on what is done right.
 - Take time for training, and be mindful of the task when resolving challenges.

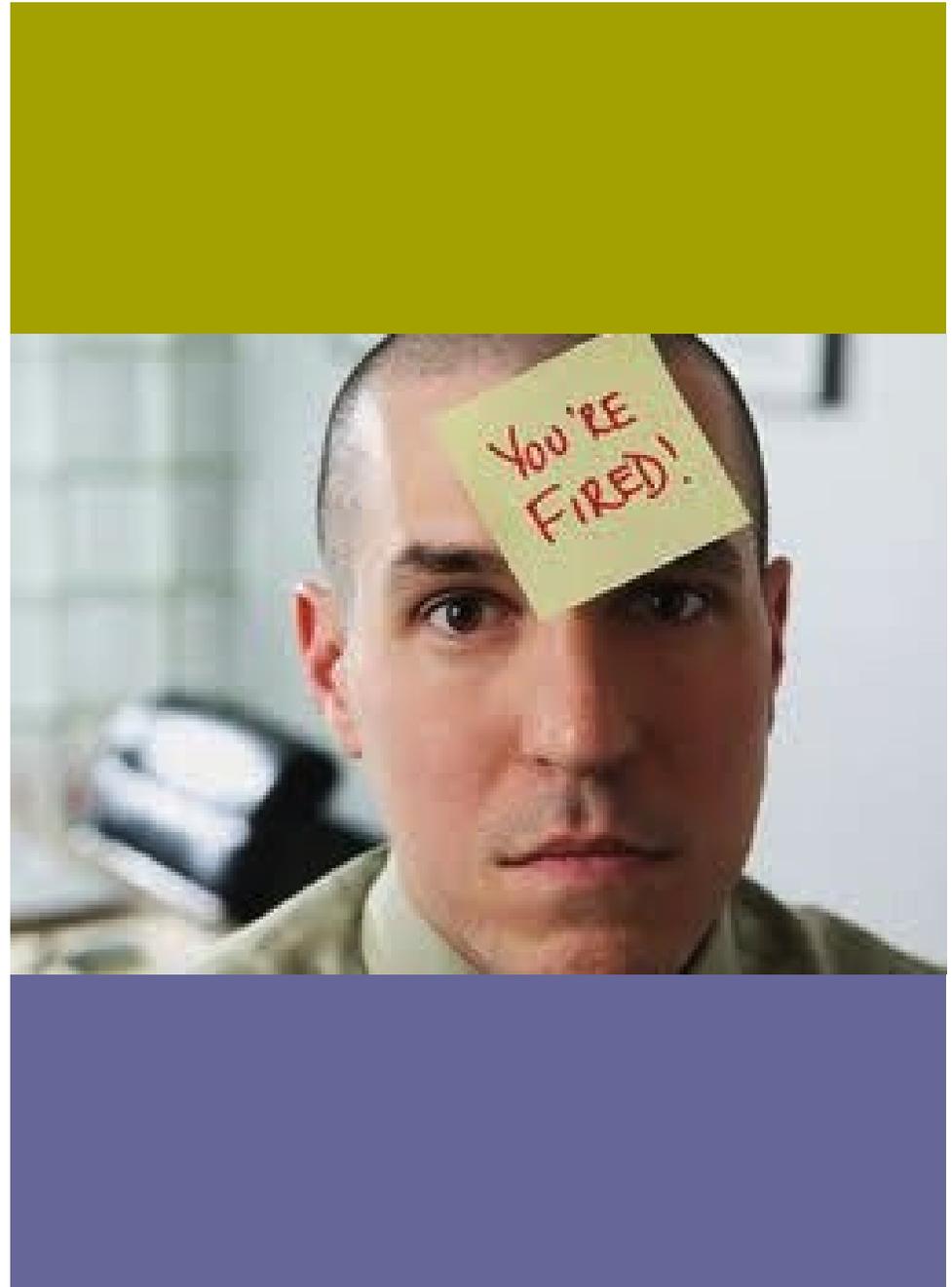
+ Challenges → Task



- One's approach to the challenges of parenting has direct impacts on the task.
- The task is a process; the challenges are the steps along the way.
- Challenges are opportunities to address the task through training, educating, and preparing the child for adulthood.

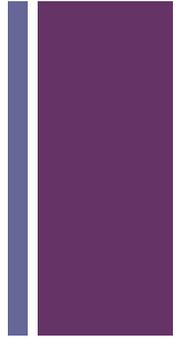


The Obstacles of Parenting

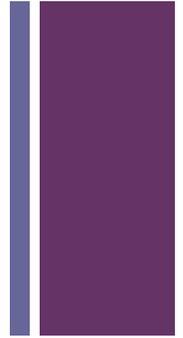


+ The Obstacles of Parenting Defined

- “The forces of influence that are affecting a parent’s capacity to meet their task.”

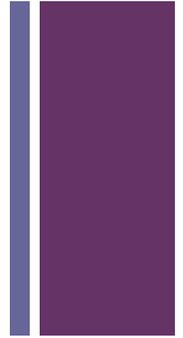


+ The Obstacles of Parenting Defined continued...



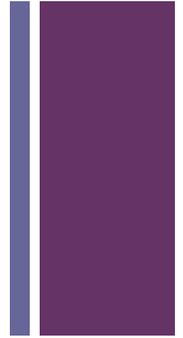
- “The **forces of influence** that are affecting a parent’s capacity to meet their task.”
- These are factors that are beyond the microsystem (i.e., things that impact parenting, but are beyond the parent-child relationship):
 - Parent’s workplace
 - Mass Media
 - Government

+ The Obstacles of Parenting Defined continued...



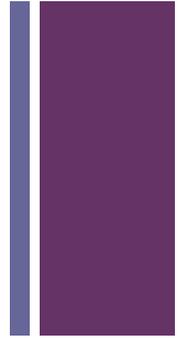
- “The forces of influence that are **affecting a parent’s capacity to meet their task.**”
- The Parent might be doing all that they can, but there are going to be things out of their control:
 - A local gang leader recruiting at the child’s school.
 - A receding economy resulting in job cuts.
 - A cut in social services, decreasing insurance coverage.

+ Navigating the Obstacles of Parenting



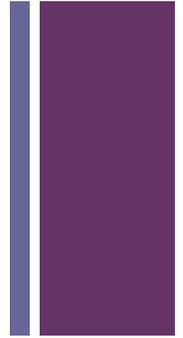
- Obstacles are often not within parent's control.
- Decide what I can and will do about the obstacle:
 - "I can't control the gang leader, but I can contact the school and/or local police department."
 - "I can't stop my boss from laying me off, but I can use this to teach my child a lesson in perseverance."
- Obstacles often take president over task fulfillment and challenges
- Often involve a parent or child's basic needs:
 - Joining a gang might interfere with a child's need for safety.
 - Getting laid off might interfere with a parent's capacity to provide food for the family.

+ Navigating the Obstacles of Parenting Continued...



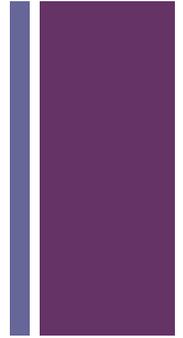
- Enlist the service of others when needed:
 - The task focused on helping the civilized society
 - The obstacles might require enlisting the help of the civilized society

+ What Can I Do?



- Get involved with your community.
- Help build your community.
- Be a part of the solution, not the problem.

+ In Conclusion



- Parenting is one of the most profound and important roles that can be undertaken.
- The Task, Challenges, and Obstacles (TCO) are faced by all parents and transcend all demographics and cultures
- Fulfillment of the task is directly impacted by how a parent handles/manages the immediate challenges that arise.
- Think about what you are doing, why you are doing it, and what you hope to accomplish by it.
- It might not be easy, but it is certainly worth it.
- And remember, you are not in this alone...

+ WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER!

