



Signposts

for building better behaviour

**Working with Participants from
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Communities**

Facilitator notes

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About working with families from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) Communities

A number of terms are used to describe descendants of the original inhabitants of Australia. Some of these include ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders’ (ATSI), ‘Indigenous Australians’, and, in some States, ‘Koories’. In developing these materials, the term used is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. When appropriate, this is abbreviated to ‘ATSI’.

‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are the original inhabitants of Australia, and are defined as someone who:

- » is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent
- » identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- » is accepted as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander in the community in which he/she lives or has lived.’¹

‘Indigenous Australians are not a homogenous group. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders comprise a large number of diverse, culturally different communities. Each community has its own unique customs, cultural beliefs and associated ceremonies.

‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is not static or uniform. Like all cultures, it is continually changing and adapting depending on the influences on the person or the community. However, the concept of community, the central place of land and family obligations are common underpinning values within and across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities throughout Australia...’²

1 Face the Facts - Some questions and answers about Immigration, Refugees and Indigenous Affairs. Federal Race Discrimination Commissioner (1997).

2 Family Relationships Services Program. Consultancy and Development Unit, School of Education, RMIT University (2006).

The way that you work effectively with one ATSI community may be quite different to how you may work effectively with another community.

Approach

The overall aim of Signposts is to help families from a range of communities better manage their child’s behaviour and prevent more difficult behaviours occurring in the future. This is done by providing them with the opportunity to access the major principles and key concepts of the Signposts program.

This supplement alerts facilitators to areas that may be difficult or confronting for participants from ATSI communities and provides suggestions and resources that will enable facilitators to provide the program in a culturally sensitive manner.

Culturally sensitive interactions and targeted discussion through the implementation of the Signposts program also provide opportunities to increase the participant’s awareness of Anglo-Australian traditions in child-rearing practices for managing children’s behaviour.

For many families from ATSI communities, Signposts may appear inconsistent with their cultural mores and value systems. Much of the program reflects Anglo-Australian concepts which may be in contradiction with how these communities view situations.

It is essential, however, that facilitators recognise and be aware of the risks of making generalisations. We all live in a global society, and this impacts on a person’s culture.

Within ATSI communities, there are sub-groups that may interpret Anglo-Australian ways of raising children and family models

differently. Each family, and individuals within a family, is unique. Because of this, facilitators’ explanations will be viewed in different ways and with different emphases.

It is therefore not possible to be prescriptive about how the program should be delivered to each cultural group. Gathering information prior to and during the program through discussion, and closely observing participants’ responses to the sessions, will assist you to determine what participants are most comfortable with regarding communication and socialisation practices.

To assist, we have provided:

- » background information for working with ATSI families
- » notes for each Signposts module that alert you to places where language and strategies may need to be reconsidered in light of cultural issues, and providing some suggestions for alternatives
- » a resource directory with additional information about matters relevant to ATSI families.

Facilitators

Trained ATSI facilitators would be ideally placed to provide the Signposts program for parents from communities with which they are familiar. The majority of trained facilitators are most familiar with Anglo-Australian traditions, and are not proficient in any Indigenous languages.

To maximise the effectiveness of delivery to participants from ATSI backgrounds, facilitators may need to consider:

- » attending cultural sensitivity training
- » seeking advice from an ATSI support agency before delivering the program or in relation to specific modules

- » delivering sessions with one or more interpreters, if necessary
- » delivering sessions with an ATSI co-facilitator, or engaging ATSI facilitators.

Interpreters

For participants who prefer using a local language, it will be important to work with interpreters. However, information provided by them to participants will be influenced by the interpreter’s understanding and interpretation of the concepts in the program. Use of family members as interpreters is not recommended.

Booking the same interpreter for the whole program and spending time briefing them before the program or between sessions, and checking for their understanding of the key concepts would be ideal.

To assist with this, we have provided:

- » a brief summary of each module (parent summary sheet) which covers the key concepts.
- » a glossary of terms and concepts for quick reference by interpreters, co-facilitators and participants as part of the parent resources.

Participants

Participants may be anxious about what will happen to any information they give you either verbally or in writing. Clear descriptions of what information you will ask of them, (e.g. contact details, program evaluation questionnaires) and what you will do with this information are important, as is emphasising the confidentiality (including your mandatory reporting requirements) of group discussions.

Participants may wish to know the identity of interpreters or other co-facilitators in advance, as some groups or individuals may not wish to

discuss personal issues in front of a particular individual or others from particular sections of their own or other ATSI communities.

Each participant’s current mastery of English will impact on how they understand key elements of Signposts that are presented orally or in writing. See comments on communication.

At present, all written materials are in English, with a reading level approximately equivalent to year 7.

To assist with teaching the key concepts, written information may be supported by:

- » 1:1 assistance
- » joint discussion of workbook exercises rather than individuals working on them alone
- » reducing the number of written exercises
- » use of the summary sheets
- » use of parent cards
- » visual/pictorial aids (not included)
- » use of interpreters.

Facilitator resources

- » Background information for working with ATSI families.
- » Recommendations for facilitators to support effective communication with ATSI participants relevant to the content of each parent booklet.

Parent resources

There are a variety of materials that can be offered to ATSI participants.

- » Parent booklets
- » Summary sheets
- » Parent cards
- » Glossary of terms and concepts
- » Visual aids as appropriate.

The parent booklets used can be either:

- » the generic Signposts booklets, which have been designed for working with parents of children with an intellectual disability, or
- » the Signposts Early School booklets, which have been designed for working with parents of typically developing children who have difficult behaviours.

These two sets of booklets only differ in their reference to intellectual disability and typical development, and in the written and DVD examples. The underlying principles and recommended strategies are exactly the same. Read the evidence base of the Signposts suite of materials on the website (www.signposts.net.au) then choose whichever you think best suits the current needs of particular families you are working with.

Background information for working with ATSI families

History

As a legacy of history and government policies, Aboriginal Australians continue to be disadvantaged compared to other Australians and program delivery needs to consider presenting issues in a context of past experiences of grief and loss.

Some of the impact of history on Indigenous communities can be seen in the terms and definitions in the following table.

Dispossession	Land is a key part of Indigenous peoples' traditional economy. Loss of land increases material poverty.
Exclusion	Until the late 1960s, many Indigenous Australians were excluded from access to mainstream services provided by governments to other Australians. This has left a significant legacy of inequality in areas such as education, health, housing and infrastructure.
Recent inclusion	Access to welfare in recent years has unintentionally created poverty traps from which it is hard to escape.
Past poverty	Low past and present household income has prevented and continues to discourage saving and private investment, leading to poverty being handed down from one generation to the next.
Location	A relatively high proportion of Indigenous Australians live in rural and remote areas where there are few jobs or economic opportunities and service delivery is expensive to provide.
Demography	Indigenous families and households are large and include a number of generations. More people are dependent on the income earner than in other Australian households. Population growth rates are also much higher than the Australian average.
Separation	The National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families found that the policies of forced removal had left a legacy of pain, grief, mistreatment, family dysfunction, loss of cultural identity and languages and was linked with high rates of deaths in custody.

Source: Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation - Learning Circle Kit (1999).

Terms and definitions

It is important to have a developing understanding of terms generally used in ATSI communities. Terminology may vary between groups.

Country	A culturally defined area of land associated with a particular culturally distinct group of people or nation.
Elders	Highly respected people within Indigenous communities recognised as being able to provide advice, offer support and share wisdom in a confidential way with other members in the community, particularly younger members (Forrester & Williams 2003).
Indigenous person	<div>An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person is a person who:<ul style="list-style-type: none">is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descentidentifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanderis accepted in the community in which he or she lives as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.<p>Identifying as an Indigenous person is based on ancestry and connection to culture, not skin colour.</p></div>

Kinship	Family structure which people use to define their relationships to other people.
Men’s business	Male-specific health and wellbeing and cultural matters that, traditionally, women must not observe.
Mob	A term that identifies a group of Indigenous people associated with a particular place or country.
Nation	Refers to a culturally distinct group of people associated with a particular culturally defined area of land or country. Each nation has boundaries that cannot be changed, and language is tied to that nation and its country.
Sister/brother/cousin/aunty	Terms ‘sis’, ‘bruz’, ‘cuz’, ‘uncle’, ‘aunty’ have wide and different meanings for Indigenous communities. These terms may be used as a greeting between Indigenous people, to acknowledge a person, or as a sign of respect.
Torres Strait Islander person	A person or descendant from the Torres Strait Islands, whether or not they are also of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent.
Traditional owner	An Indigenous person or group of Indigenous people directly descended from the original inhabitants of a culturally defined area of land or country.
Women’s business	Female-specific health and wellbeing and cultural matters that, traditionally, men must not observe.

Values

The following table lists some values that are generally held in ATSI communities. However, care should be taken not to over-generalise.

Family	Family and extended family rank as the priority.
Children	Children are the responsibility of the extended family and the community.
Shared responsibility	Each person is required to be responsible in one area or another. If this role is neglected it becomes automatic for another member of the family or the extended family to ‘fill in’.
Acceptance	Each individual is understood for both their strengths and their weaknesses.
Sharing	Sharing is seen as part of a person’s responsibility. It is an honour.
Equality	Each person is respected, with the ‘right’ to be treated equally.
Belonging/connectedness	Belonging/connectedness to your people, your land and your ‘rights’ are of utmost importance.
Land	Land gives a complete sense of belonging.
Respect	Respect for one’s position and responsibilities in all areas is understood.
Time orientation	This often means a focus on the past and present rather than on the future.

Person orientation	Human relationships is a valued factor.
Ownership	The sense of family/group ownership rather than individual ownership is prevalent, as is an emphasis on commonly held virtues such as tolerance, acceptance, compassion and generosity.
Humour and resilience	Retaining a distinctive sense of humour and showing often remarkable resilience.
<i>Source: Adapted from the Family Relationships Services Program, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Research and Cultural Information Resources. Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; Consultancy and Development Unit, School of Education, RMIT University (2006).</i>	

Communication

Each participant's mastery of standard Australian English will impact on how they interpret the language, content and strategies of Signposts. Many, but not all, Aboriginal people speak 'Aboriginal English'.

Aboriginal English

Aboriginal English is the first language, or home language, of many Aboriginal people. This is a distinctive language, which is a powerful way Aboriginal identity is transmitted. Although many Aboriginal languages are no longer spoken, patterns and influences can be seen in the ways Aboriginal people speak English.

Aboriginal English is the name given to dialects of English spoken by Aboriginal people. There are different regional variations. Aboriginal English differs from standard Australian English not only in words and meanings, but also in grammar and ways of thinking and feeling. The language encompasses gestures, body language, eye contact, sounds, expression and tone. It is through this language that Aboriginal children learn to communicate and function.

Aboriginal English is a living oral language and should be valued and respected in its own right.

Adapted from Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children in Kindergarten. Department of Human Services (July 2005).

Written communication

Written material is not always the most appropriate method of information dissemination in Aboriginal communities. This is because the emphasis in Indigenous culture is on verbal rather than written forms of communication.

Indigenous people identify and associate with Indigenous colours and art. Aboriginal art is important for attracting Indigenous people to the materials.

Posters are particularly useful means of written communication.

Adapted from Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children in Kindergarten. Department of Human Services (July 2005).

Indirect communication

It may be more natural for ATSI people to take a less direct approach. ATSI people tend to find direct, non-Indigenous styles of communication confrontational and even rude.

Avoid leading questions

In some interactions, ATSI people may not express a firm opinion. They may discuss a topic generally while gauging others' views before stating their own.

Listening

ATSI people may listen without looking at the speaker. This relates to traditional culture, where Indigenous people are not allowed to look their elders in the eye, as this could be considered disrespectful. It is considered disrespectful if you are viewed as not listening.

Building positive relationships with ATSI families

For non-ATSI workers, it is important to appreciate that ATSI children and families are likely to:

- » value different things compared with people of other cultures
- » interpret behaviour differently and value certain behaviour differently
- » have different social rules and norms
- » view the world differently to those of the other culture
- » view the world differently because of what has happened historically
- » say what they believe the worker wants to hear
- » communicate differently. ³

3 Bamblett and Kennedy. Working with Aboriginal Children and Families. VACCA (2006).

Bamblett and Kennedy outline the five most important requirements in building positive relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Building trust is the key to developing useful relationships and can be achieved through:

- » collaborative partnerships
- » respect
- » taking time
- » knowledge – gaining adequate knowledge of the clients’ cultural background to be able to establish a relationship
- » resourcing – where there is adequate funding and human resourcing, to achieve and sustain a fruitful relationship. ⁴

4 Adapted from the Family Relationships Services Program, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Research and Cultural Information Resources, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; Consultancy and Development Unit, School of Education, RMIT University (2006).

Introduction

Before you start

As with any work with families, consider the characteristics and particular issues which may be relevant to the parents/carers participating in the program.

Booking of interpreters, briefing of interpreters or co-facilitators, translation or adding local artwork to invitations or any materials may extend your preparation time.

You may need to consider issues such as the gender of participants and of facilitators, and details such as the nature of any food requirements, if providing refreshments.

Welcome and introductions

Consider a 'Welcome to Country' and an acknowledgment of the traditional owners of the land on which you are meeting for the first session of the program.

In some communities, particularly in more remote areas, inviting a male and a female Elder to offer a Welcome to Country is appropriate. In more urban areas, inviting an Elder or someone they have delegated the task to is appropriate.

If you are not a member of an ATSI community, and no Elders or their delegates are able to offer a Welcome to Country, you can acknowledge the traditional owners.

Check with local community members which language groups or nation should be acknowledged. If that information is not available or you are not sure it is correct, acknowledge the traditional owners without naming them:

'I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today and to pay my respect to their Elders past and present and to all community members here today.'

This can be a symbolic way of showing your respect and your genuine effort to establish good and respectful relationships.

Difficult behaviour and intellectual disability

Some participants will have concerns about the concept of disability. This may reflect the value that each individual is accepted for their strengths and their weaknesses, and possibly a historical sense that Anglo-Australian communities have a particular perspective on what they value as skills. Parents' own experience of schooling and employment opportunities may also influence their perceptions of their child's development.

The term disability can be offensive or even unfamiliar in some communities. The child may not have received a diagnosis of developmental delay or intellectual disability. The family may not accept the use of this term, or not have an understanding of the implications of any diagnosis on how their child learns.

It will be important to explain that Signposts was initially written for children with intellectual disabilities, but the practices and strategies identified in the program are suitable for all children demonstrating behaviours that are of concern to parents or carers.

It may be more effective initially for facilitators to refer to the specific behaviours rather than the disability. Use the term disability once you have established trust with the family. It can then be explained that certain behaviour, for example, a ten-year-old not being able to ask for what they want, most probably would be described as a disability in Anglo-Australian society.

Do not link difficult behaviour and intellectual disability. Instead, talk about the impact of the difficult behaviour on everyone, and how it is everyone's responsibility to help this child learn.

Identify behaviours that are of concern to participants from the group or select a behaviour that would be relevant to the group such as:

- » refusing to go to bed when asked
- » not sitting at the table during meals
- » being noisy and disruptive when others are watching television
- » being disruptive in public places.

Then discuss in terms of how these behaviours affect parents and siblings. For example:

- » Parents unable to relax and enjoy special activities with their children.
- » Siblings get angry or upset, or resent that a sibling's behaviour spoils their special time watching television.
- » Family participation in community activities is 'at risk' because of the unmanageable behaviour.

Some behaviours families identify as inappropriate may be considered appropriate in non-Indigenous society, e.g. children initiating conversation with adults.

Much of the Signposts terminology will need to be explained by the facilitator. If you feel uncertain at any time, ask participants what is culturally appropriate for them.

You may need to plan one or more preliminary sessions. It may be necessary for you to be introduced to potential participants by a trusted community member, and to address many of these cultural issues. In these sessions, participants could be encouraged to talk about culturally appropriate family practices, particularly in relation to acceptable behavioural patterns. This will need to be discussed in relationship to what is generally acceptable in Australian society. An important aim of this session will be to establish trust between facilitators and participants.

The Signposts procedures

There may be differences in approaches to:

- » discipline
- » communication and interaction between children and parents
- » application of negative consequences.

Co-facilitators, interpreters or community leaders who are present may have their own views about the content of the program. For example, some may see some strategies discussed in Signposts as punishment.

At times, the facilitator may be made aware of practices that are not in line with Anglo-Australian principles, e.g. hitting. In this case, the facilitator needs to offer the family support through referral to ATSI specific or other appropriate agencies, as well as fulfilling their own mandatory reporting requirements.

Signposts is a useful family resource

The vast majority of families who implement the strategies in the Signposts program find them to be useful.

The effectiveness of the format of the material – that is, the English language written booklets, workbook and DVD – in communicating the content may be limited for some ATSI families. Some participants will have limited formal education and may need to be engaged almost exclusively verbally and through using the DVD. Others will make use of the various written materials in English to supplement the discussions, which take place in English, or through an interpreter.

A focus on parents

On occasions, you might replace the term ‘parents’ with ‘family’ or other terms frequently used by participants, to steer away from the stereotype of a nuclear family.

Some participants may believe that school is the place children learn, or need to learn, the sorts of skills the program addresses. It may need to be stressed that children learn in all environments, and that home, which is managed by the parents and sometimes other family members, is a very important influence.

Families may have very specific gender roles related to decision-making and parenting practices. When discussing components of the Signposts program (particularly *Dealing with stress* and *Your family as a team*) and specific strategies, facilitators need to be alert to using appropriate examples and assisting participants to consider who they will engage in supporting them to implement the program.

The importance of practising strategies may need to be emphasised even more than usual. Facilitators may need to focus on effective ways of practising strategies during the sessions, and discuss with participants what support they might need to enlist to be able to implement these strategies at home.

Some families might be experiencing difficult circumstances including unemployment, disempowerment and depression, and the impact of their family’s personal history. These circumstances may make it difficult for them to implement suggested strategies and, particularly, to establish and maintain routines. Strategies may need to be introduced over a longer period of time, and with greater attention paid to identifying and addressing factors that could facilitate or inhibit families’ use of the strategies.

Using the modules and workbook

Emphasise the icons in the parent materials to guide participants through the activities in each module.

Where you need to minimise written materials, do the exercises in the workbook as a group where possible, with the facilitator recording whatever is necessary. Where participants are focusing on their own child, you can still describe the exercise verbally and (facilitator, interpreter, co-facilitators) assist participants to record their decisions as required.

The additional resources of the summary sheets and the parent cards included in the supplementary materials provide other options which still give parents a record of the key points of the modules, and at a minimum, a record of what they need to do between one session and the next.

With regard to the DVD, explain that many of the images of the children and presenting behaviours will not necessarily relate to their experience. They need to focus on the strategies the parent is using to manage the child's behaviour rather than the details of the scenarios.

Module 1 – Measuring your child's behaviour

Preparation

Prior to this session prepare culturally relevant names and examples for at least some of the exercises. Encourage parents to provide their own examples during the session.

Prepare sufficient numbers of supplementary parent materials, summary sheets and parent cards and the parent program for participants to have a choice.

Session rules

Check cultural considerations for session rules and adapt accordingly, e.g. it may be appropriate to have an extended greeting session. Expectations of participants may need to be modified. Conducting role plays, for example, may not be culturally appropriate.

Asking questions

Participants may not be willing to ask questions, or may not ask you to repeat information if they have not understood it. Let participants know that you want them to ask questions as often as they like. You will be able to address some issues at the time; others you will need to follow up individually after the session.

Role plays

Always refer to this as “practising” or “trying out” what we have just talked about. Parents may not wish or consider it inappropriate to perform in a group setting. It may be more effective for the facilitator and interpreter or co-facilitators to demonstrate the practise. You may be able to gradually involve participants as trust is established. There may be one participant who is prepared to start. Use lots of examples.

Describing your child's behaviour

You may need to teach the concept of clear descriptions using only positive behaviours, then the concept of clear descriptions using only negative behaviours so as not to mix the nature of the behaviour (good/not good) with the clarity or otherwise (good/not good) of the description.

Measuring

Plain English and, where necessary, its interpretation, will be more effective with most participants. You may decide to use:

- » ‘how often?’ instead of ‘frequency’
- » ‘how long?’ instead of ‘duration’
- » ‘how many?’ (or, ‘how many can you see?’) instead of ‘permanent products’.

Substitute practise examples for Exercise 1E

1. John is giving his parents trouble every night because he takes a long time to go to sleep.
How would you measure this behaviour?
2. Linda has been kicking the wall lately.
How would you measure this behaviour?
3. Lana's job is to fold family members' socks after washing.
How would you measure this behaviour?
4. Andrew is very slow at getting ready for school in the morning.
How would you measure this behaviour?

Recording

Simplifying methods of recording, or assisting parents with their recording, will depend on individual needs. You may consider aids such as golf counters (for frequency), limiting recording to specific times of the day or week, or verbal reporting if necessary. Graphing can form a useful visual record. The facilitator could do this based on the parent's verbal report of the behaviour.

Participants might have suggestions of what would work for them.

Homework

It is recommended that you do as much as possible within the session and help participants plan how they will implement the rest of the agreed activities. Remind participants that they should still come to the next session if they have forgotten or have been unable to do the homework.

The participant – or the facilitator – may write key points to remember on a blank Parent Card for the participant to take home and stick on the fridge or some other place they see often, as a prompt to collect information or implement strategies between sessions.

Module 2 – Systematic use of daily interactions

Setting goals and using the goal achievement scale

Make sure you use relevant examples to talk about setting goals, and complete this task in the session.

Possible scenarios:

- » Wearing a seat belt in the car
- » Staying at the table and eating the meal during mealtime
- » Having a shower/bath without crying
- » Behaving appropriately towards adults when visiting (needs definition of ‘appropriately’ to pass the telephone test)

Some participants may not want to discuss their children or concerns in a group. You may need to develop parallel scenarios to describe during the session and check after the session that they have been able to apply the concept to their concerns.

Remember that participants may be very hesitant about practising strategies in a group setting.

Identifying strengths

Check that participants have an understanding that strengths may be seen in behaviour that we do not like. This is different from what we were talking about in Module 1 when we asked participants to list five things their child had done recently that they liked and two things that they didn’t like. The example in the Parent booklet Module 2 featuring Suresh is relevant.

The relevance of strengths as a basis for dealing with the difficult behaviour, and how to build on your child’s strengths, may be quite a new way of thinking about behaviour that may need to be emphasised.

Triggers

The term ‘trigger’ may be quite unfamiliar, and the notion that the way we give instructions to children can affect whether they do what is required or not, may need considerable reinforcement. Use lots of examples of instructions, and emphasise the idea that the more specific the instruction, the more likely the child will carry it out.

Consequences

Positive consequences may be a new concept. If you alter the language of your description of positive outcomes, make sure you retain the focus on the idea that a positive consequence is something that makes it more likely that the behaviour will happen again. For example, a positive consequence for a child might be that they get to watch TV or to avoid doing something they don’t like. If you do use descriptions for positive consequences such as “a happy outcome” or “something they like” make sure your audience understands that this means from the child’s perspective, and with the goal of making the behaviour more likely to occur again. It has nothing to do with whether the outcome is positive for the parents or not.

Statements that link the two concepts, such as “Leena likes (whatever the consequence) so she is more likely to do (whatever the action) again”, will reinforce this connection.

Negative consequences may be equated with punishment. It is important to emphasise that a negative consequence is one that makes it less likely the behaviour will happen again. Cultural practices need to be kept in mind, but participants also need to recognise that for individual children certain consequences may or may not be negative because of their unique characteristics and preferences, e.g. time out might be a positive consequence for a child who has autism.

Triggers and consequences together

You may choose to substitute the following examples as alternative scenarios for Exercise 2D.

Trigger	Behaviour	Consequence	Effect on future behaviour
TV program finishes	Dheran asks his sister nicely to change the channel.	Sister ignores Dheran's request (that is, no consequence).	Dheran is less likely to ask his sister nicely again.
Losing the game	Kiah throws the cards at her friend Nerida.	Nerida packs up the cards and stops playing with Kiah.	When Kiah loses a game she is less likely to throw the cards at her friend.

Alternate Scenario for Exercise 2D

Xavier and his mother go to the supermarket. Xavier sees the chocolate bars. He asks his mother for a chocolate bar. His mother says 'No'. Xavier hits his mother, screaming and reaching for a chocolate bar. His mother gives him the chocolate bar.

- » What was the trigger for Xavier's behaviour?
- » What was the consequence of Xavier's behaviour?
- » What effect will the consequence have on Xavier's future behaviour?

Household rules

Writing down household rules may not be appropriate for some families for cultural or literacy reasons. Pictorial representations may be useful.

The following may be culturally appropriate examples to use:

- » Stay at the table for mealtimes.
- » Wear shoes for going outside.
- » Wear a seat belt in the car.
- » Don't hit your sister.
- » Don't throw food.

Module 3 – Replacing difficult behaviour with useful behaviour

Remember to provide examples using names and scenarios that are appropriate for the participants.

Identifying the purpose of the difficult behaviour

Remember to consider each participant’s understanding and use of the terms ‘developmental delay’ and ‘intellectual disability’.

Obtaining physical pleasure

For some people, any discussion of masturbation in a group setting will be unacceptable. For others it may be acceptable if all participants, facilitators and others present are of the same gender.

Working out the purpose of your behaviour

This can be a quite complex discussion. Working through examples together as a group, then 1:1 assistance for each participant while they are working out the purpose of the identified behaviour for their child may be required. This may be an instance where it may be helpful to have a specific discussion prior to the session with community leaders or interpreters to assist their understanding.

Encouraging an alternative behaviour

It may be appropriate to ask if there are activities that parents want the child to learn so that they can contribute to the community. Be prepared to offer suggestions that are likely to be culturally appropriate, particularly in terms of the gender of the child.

Providing a trigger for the alternative behaviour

Remind participants that their instructions to the child are triggers for behaviour, and that they therefore need to provide an appropriate instruction to trigger this alternative behaviour.

Providing positive consequences for the alternative behaviour

Food is often used as a positive consequence in many cultures, although it may not necessarily be identified as a consequence. It might be appropriate, as with any family who frequently uses food as a consequence, to encourage them to pair use of food with labelled praise. Remind participants to be careful of the nature and the quantity of food they provide on each occasion, and to plan to reduce and finally to omit the food once the behaviour is improved. Encourage families to use alternatives to food wherever possible.

Providing negative consequences for the difficult behaviour

Hitting is often used as an acceptable negative consequence in many families. This needs to be discussed in terms of its acceptability in current Anglo-Australian culture, the fact that there are better options, and the mandatory requirements under which you work. Focus on assisting parents to come up with alternatives for their interaction with their children. Referral to ATSI agencies for additional discussion or support may be appropriate.

Using time out

It is usually a good idea to include a careful description of ‘time out’, as many people apply this term to a variety of strategies that can be well or quite inappropriately used. Caution should be employed when working with families who have experienced trauma, such as separation of family members, imprisonment or where there have been child protection concerns.

It is recommended that facilitators and/or interpreters demonstrate the scenarios if parents have been hesitant to participate actively in practises. Parents can participate by observing and, where appropriate, using the Time Out monitoring form to tick off the steps as they are enacted. If recording is difficult, just ask them to report at the end which steps they saw.

For the scenario to practise giving instructions, consider that some families may not have access to books or magazines, so elicit an alternative from the participants or provide another scenario. In regard to the second scenario, children might not be expected to do domestic tasks in some families. Perhaps substitute doing homework or eating their meal.

Flow charts

Assist parents to decide on the purpose of their child’s difficult behaviour. Where you are minimising the use of written material, provide them just with a copy of the most appropriate flow chart to guide their decisions about the sequence of action they need to take. You might need to work through each step with individual parents, and help them to record their decisions in the Action Plan, even if the parent does not record the rest of the action plan.

It may be appropriate for you or the parents to use the Parent Cards to record the key points of what they have decided to do.

Module 4 – Planning for better behaviour

Overview

Now is an important time to review participants’ progress with their own actions and the changes they have observed in their child’s behaviour. It may be appropriate to refine some strategies, to celebrate successes to date, and to look at ways to encourage participants to implement various strategies at home if they have been having difficulty thus far.

Planning daily routines

Daily routines (sequences of tasks that are typically associated with a particular time of day) may not be familiar experiences for some families. Some will find it difficult to plan because of the instability of their living situations. Some may have such limited access to resources that survival issues demand most of their energy. Some have so many factors competing for their time and attention that they have to respond to the current top priority rather than adhere to routines. Barriers such as unemployment, disempowerment and depression, and separation from community may need to be taken into account.

Examples of routines

Asking participants to reflect on their usual daily activities, or those of other family members, may elicit more appropriate examples than using the examples in the Module 4.

For some families, roles within the families may be clearly defined, and these will determine who participates in certain routines.

Planning for high risk times

The term ‘high risk’ may be emotive for some families, who may associate it with protective concerns. The key is getting participants to recognise situations where it is “highly likely” that the child’s behaviour will be difficult because the setting may not be very suitable for children, such as waiting for an appointment, visiting relatives, etc.

Module 5 – Developing more skills in your child

Some parents strongly believe that schoolteachers are the experts and that as parents they have no role in teaching their children. Facilitators may need to revisit the idea that children learn in every environment, and that those who have delays or intellectual disabilities are slower to learn and often need more structured teaching than other children.

Teaching your child new skills

Facilitators may need to focus on the role of teaching new skills in order to replace difficult behaviour, and less on the benefits children gain by learning to be more independent.

Consider examples that are appropriate to the participants and that may not be specifically self-help skills. For example, a parent may want their child to learn to occupy themselves quietly while the rest of the family watch a TV program or while the mother does a domestic task.

Discuss with interpreters and participants. Ask what parents would want or let their child do, rather than make assumptions that they will want the child to learn the next steps toward independent living. Or use examples of learning new communication skills to teach the concepts to the participants.

Ways of teaching skills to your child

It may be appropriate to discuss how participants learnt things from their parents. Focus on observation as a lead-in to teaching by showing. Elicit other examples as a lead-in to step-by-step teaching.

Putting it all together

Exercises 5E, F, G in parents' workbook.
An example for discussion of what parents might like to work on would be:

- » Given an appropriate video or TV program, Austin will watch the program without disturbing other members of the family.

Your child at school

This is an opportunity to discuss the expectations of schools (including various staff such as teachers, welfare co-ordinators, integration aides) and roles they can play and what expectations they can or do have of parents.

Some participants may have limited formal education, or negative education experiences. Schools may be seen as authoritarian and coercive rather than as potential partners in supporting parents to manage their child's behaviour. On the other hand, teachers may be seen as occupying positions of authority, and parents may believe they have no right to ask questions of them or to express any concerns.

It may be helpful to discuss how parents could prepare for talking to their child's teacher, referring to and practising communication skills found in *Your family as a team*.

It might also be helpful to lead a discussion about good communication between parents and schools that ties together the key points:

- » Brief written communications
- » Taking an advocate to meetings
- » Holding meetings at times when other family members can be present
- » Making sure parents have contact details for relevant services
- » Consistent use of interpreters, when relevant

A good starting point would be to ask parents what has worked best for them in the past.

Your family as a team

In a number of families the child’s difficult behaviour will be of minor concern compared to other factors such as unemployment, dislocation, or depression, which have a far more significant impact on their ability to function effectively as a family.

It must also be remembered that where roles are clearly defined and accepted by all parties, that group (including families) is likely to function well. Members of a family do not necessarily have to share the same roles to support each other as a team.

An important factor to discuss is that when a family is attempting to make changes to a child’s behaviour, family members may need to put in more effort in different ways than what is usually done in order to bring about the change.

Discuss with participants who can help them when help is required. It may be a partner, other relatives or friends, siblings or someone from outside the family. If you have a range of participants, particularly if you have fathers in the group, you might ask them to make suggestions in a way that does not put them personally on the spot.

Speaking skills

Some of the strategies are may not be appropriate to some ATSI families. For example ‘I’ messages are not consistent with the way some groups express themselves in that they would not usually say how they feel.

The key messages remain the same. Speak in a way that your listener has the best chance of understanding what you really mean; do not blame your listener or make them feel uncomfortable; talk about what you want to happen now rather than describing what has happened in the past.

Listening skills

In more traditional families or communities showing that you are listening, and therefore respecting others can look quite different to other families. What all families have in common is that it is considered disrespectful if you are viewed as not listening.

As with speaking skills, the key message is to use the skills that best indicates to those you are with that you are listening to what they are saying. Practising some of the strategies described in Signposts, such as not interrupting, is likely to help get this across.

Problem-solving skills

Many families have their own way of addressing problems. The options provided here are designed to help when the solutions tried so far have not worked well for a particular problem. The strategies suggested may be modified to suit individual families, such as parents only being involved in the discussion, or parents and a facilitator having the discussion before the children are told what is going to happen, or a male facilitator discussing the issues with the father and then the rest of the family being told the decision.

Facilitators and other staff present can model the skills for the group, rather than participants being expected to do so, if that is more appropriate.

Dealing with stress in the family

Each of us has a unique experience of stress and we all respond in our own way.

Contemporary experiences may include limited education and employment opportunities, impact of family dislocation and separation from community, and unsupportive perceptions of disability in the general community.

These are all factors over which individuals have had very little control but which have a significant impact on how they deal with stress in their daily life.

Recognising what stresses you

It may be helpful to guide parents to think about a relatively minor stressor to work on in this session. There may be some participants for whom this would best be done individually, or only through observation of others' discussions. Ensure that participants have contact details of relevant organisations (see Resources) and encourage them to make contact with those agencies, other program participants or their own family or friends if they feel upset or keep thinking about these issues more than usual after the session.

Contact details for local telephone support services such as Lifeline and Parentline (Victoria, Australia) may also be helpful.

Managing stress

Where families are simultaneously dealing with a number of significant stressors, there may be limitations to any significant changes they can bring to their lifestyles. Remind participants that even small changes can make a difference.

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