

Parenting, Parenting Education, Parent Support: Related but Distinct

I n v e s t i n g i n F a m i l i e s a n d C h i l d W e l l b e i n g

November 15, 2018

for the NGO Committee on the Family, New York
at the Baha'I International Community Offices
866 United Nations Plaza, New York

Eve Sullivan, Founder, Parents Forum

Ryan Koch first introduced . . .

Renata Kaczmarska, Focal Point on the Family at the UN, who said a few words on plans for 2019 International Day of Families / IDF. She let us know that the theme will be

Sustainable Development Goal / SDG #13 – Climate Action: **Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts** – and the celebration will focus on how family members, all generations, can become involved.

Please send your ideas for IDF activities and speakers to Renata by email: kaczmarska@un.org .



Then Ryan Koch introduced . . .

The main speaker . . . that would be me,
Eve Sullivan.

This version of my slides (prepared Nov.26, 2018)
will continue in the first person, as if I were
speaking to you in the Baha'i Community
center, in their newly renovated and very
pleasant conference room.

I will begin with a
vocabulary lesson (part one)

Today's program is called "Investing in
Families and Child Wellbeing".
and the title is right in one sense, but
misleading in another.

"Families" include * all * generations, so
to make the most of our investments
in protecting child wellbeing ...

(vocabulary lesson, part two)

we need to talk about investing in parents and consider how best to do this. So I want to explain the title of my presentation:

“parenting,

parenting education and

parent peer support:

. . . related but distinct”

First, parenting ...

We all know that parenting matters: good parenting makes a tremendous positive difference in children's lives.

The opposite seems to be true as well: bad parenting is equally effective in the opposite direction:

I am very eager to read In My Father's House: a new view of how crime runs in families. The author, Fox Butterfield, cites studies indicating that '5 percent of all families account for perhaps half of all crimes and 10 percent for two-thirds of all crimes.'

Imagine if we could reach those 5 or 10 percent of parents and teach them how to do a better job at childrearing!

Next, parenting education ...

It has three elements:

- = knowledge about child development
- = skills in doing what needs to be done to guide children at each stage
- = social-emotional capacity to develop healthy and loving relationships;

These elements are cognitive, behavioral and affective.

Now, parent support ...

This category includes policies and practices in the workplace and the wider community: parental leave, day care, adjustments in work schedules following birth or adoption and for other demands of family life as well as economic and social infrastructure: jobs, libraries, reliable transportation that benefit everyone whether or not they are have children.

Finally, parent peer support ...

This multiplies the effects of good parenting,
as parents share their successes and support each other in making positive changes in the ways they relate to their children, and it

minimizes the burdens of poor parenting,
as parents share their struggles and support each other directly, as well as guide each other in avoiding replicating mistakes that their own parents may have made.

With the vocabulary review out of the way,
let me get to the topic I was really
invited to talk about ...

The October 2018 meeting and conference
“Parenting, Child Wellbeing and
Development”
sponsored by DIFI, the Doha International
Family Institute, in Doha, Qatar.

With generous support from the Qatar Foundation I and another Parents Forum board member flew to Doha, where ...

On October 22, 2018, a Civil Society Meeting brought together about 30 representatives of ten organizations to discuss a Statement on Parenting

www.difi.org.qa/?s=statement+on+parenting

This had been circulated in advance. Parents Forum contributed some edits, particularly adding 'education' to the phrase

"investing in parenting education..."

The Civil Society meeting was followed by a two-day conference ...

This was a very rich experience, with plenaries and break-out sessions providing deep learning and inspiring examples for work with and on behalf of parents.

Let me share some brief notes on the conference program.

Let me, first, thank ...

Ms. Noor Al Malki Al Jehani, DIFI Executive Director,
Ignacio Socias, Director of Communication for IFFD,
The International Federation for Family Development, and
Dr. Anis Ben Brik, Family Policy Department Director at DIFI.

And share **the first conference objective** ...

To highlight the importance of investing in parents and parenting strategies, programs, laws and policies at all levels.

Among the many powerful stories,
this one stuck with me . . .

Refugee families, given the bread they desperately needed, found it wrapped in paper printed with child development information and positive childrearing practices.

Imagine: food for the body, the mind and the spirit,
all in a single package.

I'd say all parents need this!



Now to ‘part deux’ . . .

The second reason I was invited was to speak about Parents Forum, the parent peer support program that I founded over 25 years ago. It has lasted and thrived with help from many other people. Let me explain the context for our work and give you a recap of the program’s history.





Parents Forum is part of a larger picture:
Parenting education is something that doctors,
teachers, social workers, faith community leaders
and, especially, parenting educators do for parents.
It is also something we can do with, and for, each
other. It is parent peer support.



Parents Forum started with listening.

Having received good listening,
I was able to provide it in turn
to my sons and,
eventually, to other parents.
Professionals helped us in
various ways, but the best help
I got was from other parents.



the Parents Forum mission and curriculum

- Our mission: to foster caring, honest and respectful communications throughout society, starting in families
- Our curriculum: an agenda of eight questions on family life issues and our 'tools of the trade'

We help parents – anyone, really! – increase their emotional awareness. You can download our agenda and 'Tools of the Trade' for free at our website.



People say Parents Forum works:

“The workshop gave me information that I can use immediately, at home and everywhere.”

“The things that Parents Forum taught me transformed my relationship with my teenage son.”

The above comments are a brief sample of two decades worth of positive feedback from Parents Forum workshop participants.

How can we reach more than just *a few* parents?

Since there are simply not enough people in the helping professions to meet the challenges we face in preventing violence and child maltreatment, **we must engage parents in helping each other.**

We can and should give young adults and children in middle school the same peer support tools.

Our brochure 'What challenges do you face...?' is available for free download under Resources on our website and describes the three versions of our program: for parents, for young adults and adults who are not parents, and for middle school students.

Parents Forum is eager to take a larger role in our common effort to make our communities more peaceful and productive. I thank you for your time, look forward to hearing from you and invite you to visit these websites:

Doha International Family Institute "DIFI"

www.difi.org.qa

and Parents Forum

parentsforum.org

Let's continue our conversation!

Eve Sullivan

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