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LEADER'S GUIDE:

'What Can I Do?' by Latonya Baskerville

My children needed me to try new ways to parent.

DISCUSSION FOCUS:

Trying new parenting techniques.

ACTIVITY GOAL:

Participants will identify new methods of responding to their children's behavior.

STORY SUMMARY

When Latonya's children came home from foster care, they were angry and running wild. Latonya did not know how to manage their behavior. She didn't want to hit her children but didn't know what to do besides yell.

Latonya thought back on parenting classes she had taken and thought about her children's needs. With her son, she set firm boundaries. With her daughter, she tried to be more nurturing. She also began to listen more to her children. Slowly, their relationships grew closer and her children's behavior improved.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

GROUP INTRODUCTION: 10 minutes

Today we're going to talk about our parenting styles and the tools we use to manage children's behavior. When parents decide they don't want to discipline their children by hitting or yelling, they sometimes feel that they have no other tools. We'll share other strategies you can use. Children may act out to test you or to get your attention or love. Communicating your expectations clearly and setting firm limits can help. So can nurturing and listening.

- How do you feel about this topic?
- Do you have experiences related to this topic that you'd like to share before we get started?

READ AND DISCUSS STORY: 15 + 30 minutes

Read the story out loud as a group. Help participants recognize the writer's emotions and coping mechanisms and their own. Go back over important moments in the story and ask the participants about how they've handled similar experiences:

STORY MOMENT	DISCUSSION QUESTION
Latonya doesn't want to hit her children or yell at them anymore.	What would you like to change about your parenting style?
Latonya feared that her son and daughter were putting themselves in danger.	What fears do you have about your children?
Latonya decided not to give her son extra attention for negative behaviors.	How do you respond to your children's negative behaviors? How do you encourage positive behavior?
While her son responded to distance, Latonya felt her daughter needed more nurturing and closeness.	How could you listen to and nurture your children?
Latonya learns that listening to her children helps them feel secure.	What do you think is the connection between feeling secure and behaving well?

JOURNAL TIME: 15-30 minutes

By writing in their journals, participants can more deeply reflect on their own experiences. Hand out the "Journal Reflections" worksheet and give participants time to write. They can share their responses with the group or in pairs, or after the workshop with a peer, family member, therapist or other important person in their lives.

NAME:

DATE:

JOURNAL REFLECTIONS: ‘What Can I Do?’ by Latonya Baskerville

When Latonya’s children came home from foster care they felt angry and were running wild. Latonya felt she did not know how to parent them, but she did not give in to feeling guilty or respond to their behavior with harsh discipline. Latonya used limit setting, straight talk, nurturing and listening. Slowly their connection improved and so did her children’s behavior. Write in your journal (or below) about strategies you can use to respond to your children’s needs.

1. What concerns do you have about your children’s behavior?

2. How do you typically respond to negative behavior?

3. How do you typically respond to positive behavior?

OVER 

4. What concerns do you have about your parenting style? What do you do well?

ACTION STEPS

Latonya says that trying new skills takes diligence and patience. List 2-3 new skills you could try or use more often.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

A SUPPORTIVE CONNECTION

I plan to get support and encouragement by talking about my reflections and action steps with:
