



Case study of a parent group co-facilitated by Fozia, a project support worker in Bradford

Our parent group run through a children's centre consisted of 12 Pakistani Mums who have all come to England after getting married, 9 of them live with their in laws.

The programme had a huge impact on the families and we had tears a few times! I was very anxious about delivering the group in Urdu. From the outset I felt that parents would struggle with the 4 constructs as they are quite difficult to explain in Urdu. However when we asked the parents what they thought the four constructs meant, they gave answers which were very thoughtful and accurate we just had to add some little bits that they missed out.

The Urdu word for empathy is literally translated as "understanding" so they were able to answer this accurately and say that it is important to understand your child and others around you and they also acknowledged that it is important that other people understand you. To some parents the concept of others understanding them was new and they said it gave them food for thought because they needed to think about how they communicate their feelings so that they could be understood properly, this was especially significant for the mums who felt they were quite 'controlled' at home.

One mum in particular feels she is very restricted as to what she can do due to her home situation, her son started the nursery where we were running the group and she told her mother-in-law that instead of walking back home it would be better to wait at the school for her son to finish, it is in that time that she attends the group. She has benefited from the group by learning about how she can build a positive relationship with her son despite all the negative relations she has been a part of and her son has witnessed. She didn't know where to start with praising him or boosting his self esteem but she says she has a clearer idea of how to do that now and is looking forward to being a positive person in his life.

An important and emotional session was week 4 when we talked about personal power. Again relating back to their home lives, and life in this country with in-laws who have their own opinions on how their daughter in law should be, the mums felt they were in a difficult situation to start exercising personal power around things like where they go, how they travel and what they wear. We made it clear from an Islamic perspective that no one has the right to control or oppress another person, and, if they allow others to oppress them then they are doing wrong by allowing this and should build up their strength to voice their opinions in a way that won't be harmful to them.



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One of the mums came back the following week and said she was so happy that we had done that session, she said the 'I' statements had been very helpful for her to voice her opinion without coming across as being cheeky or moody. She said it was good to see her husband responding to her in a thoughtful way and respecting her wishes. She didn't realize he was like that because she had never tried to object to something before.

The group has been full of laughter because all the parents share similar experiences and for that reason are very open and honest within each session. We have had some mums telling us about how they usually get in a mood with husbands and refuse to be intimate towards them. They said being cold towards their husbands left them feeling guilty and ultimately made their mood worse. However it made so much more sense for them to express their feelings verbally and not let ill feelings stay in their hearts.

Sessions 5, 6 and 7 were also very interesting, particularly session 6 where mums were reporting that they felt guilty about pushing their children out of the house in a rush. They came back in week 7 and told us about how it was difficult to change this as this is what the children were used to and talking to them calmly delayed their response as they weren't used to being spoken to nicely. This was a real wake-up for some of the mums and they felt bad about it when they analysed the impact their actions were having and the messages they were sending out to their children. Culturally, some of them felt they were being looked at as being too lenient at home and the nurturing approach was frowned upon, however the teachers at school were pleased with the change in attitude from the parents and felt it would help the children when they were at school!

In session 8 we had a general discussion about issues around sex and keeping children safe, one mum reported that her son had asked her where he came from and she had instantly replied "I got you out of the bin". The other parents were horrified about this and immediately came up with suggestions about how she should change this as soon as she sees him [a clear indicator into the change in attitudes from week 1!]. The mum came back the following week and said she had apologized to her son for saying that and had said he came from her tummy where she grew him with love and she will explain it all to him when he's a little older, she also said she felt regretful that she had let him think he had come out of the bin.

The last session was very emotional and parents didn't want the group to end, my co-facilitator at the Children's Centre has set up another group so the parents can continue meeting and sharing experiences. Parents were particularly happy with the fact that the group had ran in Urdu as they feel they have benefited a lot. They are using the positive strategies, particularly praising confidently and are bypassing what family members have to say about it because they are loving the results they are seeing in their children!