

Putting Effective Parenting First

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In its most symbolic sense, this book is about gift giving. The gift is effective parenting, the greatest gift that any parent can provide for their children.

Why? Because when parents are effective, they -- and all of us -- benefit. Effectively raised children are the most likely to make us proud. They are the most likely to treat other human beings with kindness and respect. To do well in school. To become good citizens. To have productive careers and solid marriages.

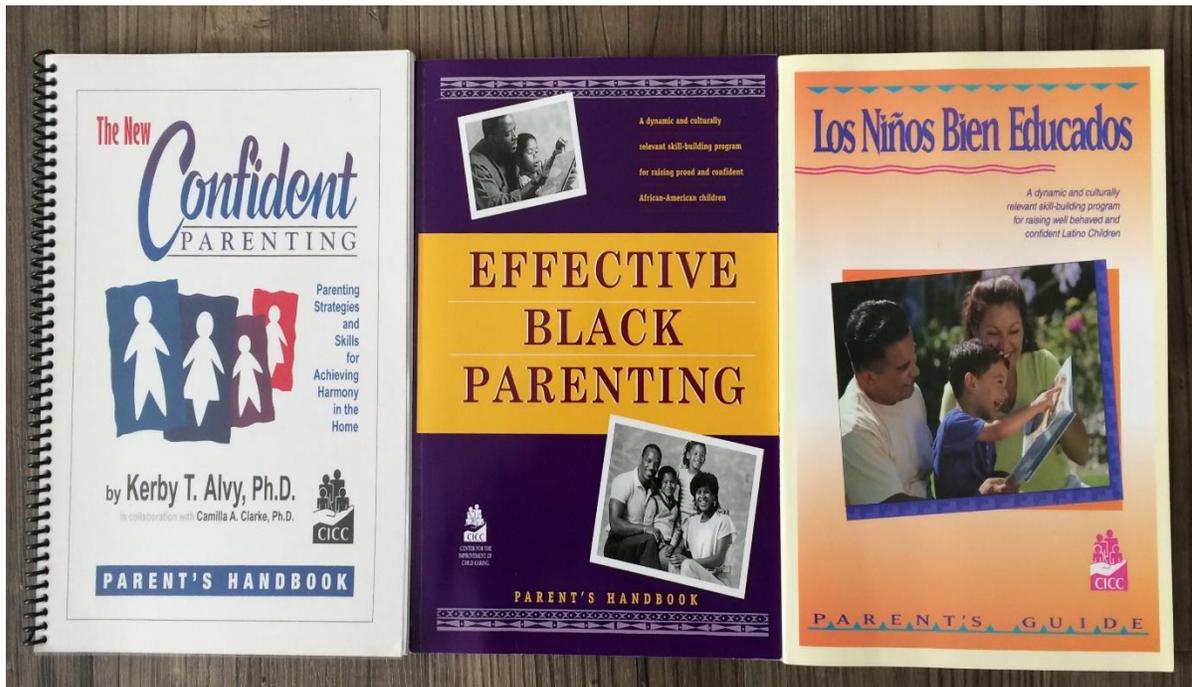
Effectively parented children are also the most likely to be effective parents themselves when they take on the awesome responsibility of raising children.

So, effective parenting is the ultimate gift that keeps on giving.

This book describes a journey to make that gift available to all children from all parents. It is the 42-year long excursion that this psychologist and the non-profit *Center for the Improvement of Child Caring (CICC)* has been on.

It is our sincerest hope that our work will inspire others who are able to help children and parents – other practitioners of psychological and human services – to also conduct and support similar efforts in the communities they serve. In addition, we are also hopeful that this book stimulates and inspires our fellow citizens who run our governments to be equally as supportive.

The formal phase of the journey began in 1974 when I conceived of and started CICC. The organization has since grown to be one of our nation's most influential and productive parenting education organizations. Among other important accomplishments, we have created three national model parenting skill-building programs: (1) a program that is now called the *New Confident Parenting Program (NCP)* which is for all parents regardless of their cultural backgrounds, (2) a version of that program specifically for parents of African American children called the *Effective Black Parenting Program*, and (3) a version designed specifically for parents of Latino children called *Los Niños Bien Educados*.



Each of these carefully constructed educational programs teach parents a series of very powerful and practical skills to use in raising their children. And, as you will learn, these programs strengthen relations between parents and children, and families change in some wonderful ways. Because of these types of reactions, and the use of these programs nationwide, CICC and myself have been the recipients of many awards, including being honored in the White House in 1995 during the inaugural celebration of National Parent's Day.



That initial access to the most powerful office and person in our nation gave me and CICC our first chance to promote a national effort to educate all parents to be as successful as they can. I will speak about all our efforts to influence presidents to take on effective parenting and parenting education as priorities in the concluding chapter of this book.

An important orienting point about our three-current parenting skill-building programs has to do with when they were created. The first was created in the 1970s and was then known simply as the *Confident Parenting Program*. (For simplicity of presentation purposes, we will refer to

that program as the *Original Confident Parenting* or *OCP* throughout this book.) It was the *OCP* that was adapted in the 1980s to create the two cultural versions, the *Effective Black Parenting* and *Los Niños Bien Educados* programs. Then in 2009 a different version of *OCP* was created that included many of the parenting strategies that are part of the two cultural programs. It is now called *The New Confident Parenting Program* or *NCP*. As we proceed through this book, you will learn why and how these helpful programs were created and have been so successful.

These programs are customarily presented to the public in the form of parenting classes and seminars. The groups who have been sponsoring these nationwide are local community agencies, schools, government departments and religious institutions. When CICC itself has had the necessary funding, it too has delivered such services to the public.

These parenting classes and seminars are taught by instructors who have received professional training through multi-day instructor training workshops run by CICC in different cities. Over 8000 CICC-trained instructors from 44 states and the District of Columbia, representing over 2500 local organizations, have already been trained.

Collectively they have educated more than a million natural, adoptive, foster and grandparents to be more sensitive and skillful in raising children.

The fact that so many people have benefited from these programs has to do with the amount and kinds of research that went into their creation and field testing the programs. Most of that research appears in such professional publications as the *Journal of Community Psychology* (Alvy and Rubin, 1981) and in monographs from *CICC* (Alvy and Rosen, 1984). Being able to estimate the numbers of people impacted also is an result of *CICC* keeping records on all the workshops it runs.

A state-by-state list of many of those organizations can be found by visiting the *CICC* website, www.ciccparenting.org. Once there go to the page on Instructor Workshops and find the link to the list in the second paragraph of that page.

In the next chapter, *Chapter 2*, I share what predisposed me to create the organization and the culturally-specific programs. Included are very personal and life changing experiences that brought me to the moment I founded the *CICC*. It reflects how a combination of family, education and work experiences were propelling forces.

Then you will learn in *Chapter 3* about the two most important concepts of this book, the phenomena of *Parenting and of Effective Parenting*. It will provide you with a context to appreciate what CICC's programs do and do not do to educate America's families. The scientifically determined definition of Effective Parenting in that chapter also can give you a standard against which you can evaluate your own parenting and that of your family members and friends. It closes with my reflections on my experiences as a parent.

Chapter 4 is devoted to how I and so many other child loving people helped to create CICC and how we were able to generate the organization's first funding. Our initial major project, a *Child Abuse Information Center* for the County of Los Angeles, receives special attention. That 1970's project set in motion important community services that continue to this day to help the Los Angeles community deal with the horror of child abuse and neglect.

The advocacy actions that were needed to create the funding source for that project are also explained, along with the bittersweet outcomes of that first project.

Throughout this book, the theme of creating funding sources will be heard repeatedly. Generating and

capitalizing on funding opportunities is crucial to keeping a non-profit open. Indeed, the cliché used to describe the reality of political life, that money is its lifeblood, also applies to the non-profit organization world.

Our work to deliver our own parenting classes, how we made them available to the public, and the various fundraising events that supported such classes will also be highlighted in that chapter. We will also summarize the many means that have been used to keep CICC afloat through the years.

In regard to fundraising events, particular focus will be given to the *Hits That Prevent Child Abuse* fundraiser that involved major league baseball teams.

In *Chapter 5*, you will learn about the original version of the *Confident Parenting Program*, the *OCP*. The unique history of that seminal program will be etched.

That chapter is prefaced by introducing the difference between the two types of research that are often conducted on parenting programs, *Program Development* and *Program Evaluation Research*. This book reports on these types of research for all CICC's programs. As indicated above, the success of these programs has been greatly based on the amount and type of research that has been conducted.

Program success also has been a function of the work of the professionals who have been leading the instructor workshops, CICC's National Trainers of Instructors. These psychologists and educators, all of whom delivered classes themselves before being trained to conduct instructor workshops, are excellent and inspiring role models for the thousands of service providers who they have trained. These National Trainers of Instructors have had to shape their workshops to the needs and characteristics of wide variety of participants. The workshop participants range from being Ph.D. level psychologists, masters level therapists and counselors, individuals with undergraduate degrees, and paraprofessional community workers. Without the talents of the National Trainers to navigate and manage the intricacies of such diverse workshop participants, CICC's programs would not be as successful as they have been. Kudos are deserving to the National Trainers in the various programs. These include the late Dr. Marilyn Steele, Drs. Bryan Nichols, Camilla Clarke, Jeffrey Morrow, Lupita Montoya Tannatt, Martha Lopez, Bennie Thompson and educators Carl Shackelford, Ida Collier, Homero Tamez, and Camilla Moore.

The basic parenting skills of the *OCP* are described in this chapter by breaking each skill into its component behavioral parts, which is how they are taught in the

program. These types of descriptions should aid you in learning these skills yourself if you are so disposed.

The skills are *Behavior-Specific Praise*, or the Art of Effective Praising, *Mild Social Disapproval*, a verbal confrontation skill, *Systematic Ignoring*, *Time Out* from parental attention, and a *Special Incentive* method. These skills are taught in all the CICC programs, but it is only in this chapter that they are presented with their behavioral components.

In *Chapter 6, CICC's National Model for Training Parenting Instructors* is presented. This model was created in the late 1970s when CICC had earned a grant from the Manpower Division of the National Institute of Mental Health, NIMH, the federal government agency responsible for promoting mental health and treating mental illness in our nation.

The model consisted of four training events taught over a four-month period. The first was a conference for mental health agencies to showcase parent training programs that they might want to bring to and provide at their agencies. The **OCP** was one of the programs.

The conference was followed by intensive, multi-day workshops to train agency personnel to deliver the program of their choice. Then the personnel took part in a seminar on child development and cultural issues, and a

seminar on how to generate and maintain parenting classes in their agencies.

The many uses that instructors make of their training are presented, based on the results of a study that appeared in the *Journal of Community Psychology* (Alvy and Rubin, 1981).

In *Chapters 7 and 8* the history and development of CICC's two culturally-specific versions of the *OCP* are presented. An introductory section to *Chapter 7* orients you to the reasons why programs for specific cultural groups must be developed with great care. This introduction also alerts you to the fact that both cultural programs were initially worked on through another NIMH grant project called *The Culturally-Adapted Parent Training Project*.

Then in *Chapter 7* the *Effective Black Parenting* program itself begins to come to life. First you will be exposed to the extensive *Program Development Research* that was conducted to determine what cultural issues should be taught in that program. Then the program itself is described, session-by-session. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the *Program Evaluation Research* on the impact of the program, which includes the results of a study that was published in the *Journal of Community*

Psychology (Myers, Alvy, Arrington, Richardson, and Marigna, 1992).

The *Program Development Research* that was conducted on *Effective Black Parenting* employed a variety of research methods. One of the most unique methods had to do with learning about the parenting world views, or cultural frame of reference of African Americans. That method, a word association or projective technique, was also used in the research to create the program for Latinos. The method produced results that were highly influential in what is taught in the programs.

The *Program Evaluation Research* sections in these chapters include what parents said about the impact of the program after having just completed the programs. For the program for African Americans you will also find reports of how that program continues to have positive effects twenty years after parents completed it. For the program for Latinos, the results of a study that focused on the cultural dimensions of that program, and which appeared in an article in the *Journal of Extension*, will provide insight into why that program is being so well received in Latino communities (Ortiz and Plunkett, 2003).

In these two chapters the basic parenting skills are mentioned but not broken into their behavioral parts.

Something new is added to skill descriptions in these chapters. These new features ground the skills in the heritage of both groups. For the program for African Americans you will find *African Proverbs* that connect the skills to the heritage. In the program for Latinos, cultural *Dichos* or sayings serve that connecting purpose.

The *NCP, the New Confident Parenting Program*, appears in *Chapter 9*. This program includes the use of a video that depicts how various parenting skills and strategies from the program can be used to defuse potentially explosive child rearing challenges. The video is titled, *Yelling, Threatening and Putting Down: What to Do Instead*.

Chapter 10 elucidates on *The Substance Abuse Prevention Project* that CICC conducted during the so-called war on drugs in the 1980s. That project utilized the showcase conference vehicle from the National Training Model to initiate a variety of far-reaching accomplishments. One was to stimulate every state in our country to include parent training as part of its Comprehensive Substance Abuse Prevention Plans. It was through that project that CICC began to conduct instructor training workshops nationwide.

Chapter 11 deals with the turn-of-the-century projects that were created to bring parent training into the child

care system and a related project that included special classes for parents whose children have special needs. Those projects were made possible through funds that came available in California by the passage of a ballot proposition, Proposition 10, to use taxes on tobacco products to fund services to enhance the development of children birth to five years of age.

My personal advocacy efforts in Los Angeles County to have parenting services included as a funding priority will be taken into account. Those efforts eventually resulted in CICC receiving several millions of dollars over a three-year period to operate three large projects and to employ more than 25 people during those years. We refer to that chapter as *Proposition 10 in California, Child Care and Special Needs Children*. As part of those projects CICC developed the nation's first online questionnaire to help parents determine whether their young children had special needs that require professional attention.

The final chapter of this book, *The National Benefits of Effective Parenting*, reviews our efforts to have presidents become champions of effective parenting and parent training. It provides blueprints for how our nation can become one of the best places on this planet to raise children. The blueprints indicate how public, government

entities, like *Departments of Effective Parenting*, can be created to make this possible. And it shows how the private sector can assume leadership by creating and funding a *National Parenting Television Network*.

CICC's work to educate parents has not been without controversy, especially our work with and for parents of color. We have included in the Appendix a feature article from the *Los Angeles Times* which captures one of the most controversial issues that I and CICC have had to deal with. The article was written soon after we had successfully field tested our *Effective Black Parenting Program* with parents from South Los Angeles.

The article that you will find in the Appendix was not the initial one that was written by a reporter from the *Times*. The first article on the program was based on interviewing me and the other key staff who were involved in the project, all of whom were African Americans. When the reporter submitted that article to the editor at the *Times*, the editor said that the article did not deal with the most unique aspect of the project. He reassigned the article to an investigative reporter who also came out to interview me. That reporter, Gary Abrams, wanted to know and contact all of the figures who were involved in creating the program including the members of the Black Family

Advisory Council to the program, all whom were nationally prominent scholars, including the late Dr. Charles Thomas, the father of Black Psychology. These important advisors were, of course, African Americans. Gary wanted to know how to contact each of them.

He also wanted a copy of the book I had written about the program, *Black Parenting: Strategies for Training* (Alvy, 1987). He contacted all the scholars and read the book. Then he submitted his long feature article to the editor. It was published with the following title: *The Education of Kerby Alvy: Can a White L.A. Psychologist Teach Low-Income Blacks How to Be Better Parents? Yes, Say Prominent Black Educators Who Take Seriously His Views on Discipline and the Heritage of Slavery* (Abrams, 1988).

It is a very good read as Gary is a fine writer. He included the most important findings and features of the program, as well as what he learned through the many phone interviews that he conducted for the article.

That article shows, using the language of today's racial discussions, that CICC always has believed that Black Lives Matter.

CICC has continued to be sensitive to societal racial matters by including such guidance as *The Ten Rules of Survival If Stopped by the Police* as a supplement to all its

parenting programs. Copies of both the English and Spanish versions of those practical rules are available for your use in the Appendix.