

The Art of Better Parenting

Caregivers in Ethiopia are often challenged by limited resources, education and opportunities. Arranged marriages, cultural practices and a patriarchal social system leave many parents in problematic relationships, and their children suffer the consequences.



N.Parkinson/FHI360

Professionals widely accept that quality parenting is characterized by effective communication based on empathy, positive discipline and consistent monitoring in a warm and caring environment.

FRAMEWORK FOR BETTER PARENTS

In 2012, FHI 360 designed a set of Better Parenting resources for use in Ethiopia through the Yekokeb Berhan Program. FHI 360 created a guideline, training manuals, and a flip-chart that uses pictorials to assure the messaging reaches its target. Parents use the learning aids as a starting point for sharing experiences and group discussions. The training—delivered in the local community one-to-one or to groups of parents during coffee ceremonies—covers topics such as:

- Parenting responsibilities, rules and styles
- Communicating with children
- Setting limits and monitoring children
- Positive discipline methods
- Being a positive role model for children
- Dealing with negative emotions

Better Parenting trainers lead participants in discussions that **discourage corporal punishment** and reject cultural practices that are harmful such as female genital mutilation, early marriage and child labor. On the other hand, discussions **encourage gender equality**, protection and improved relationships between children and their parent/caregiver.

About FHI 360: FHI 360 is a nonprofit human development organization dedicated to improving lives in lasting ways by advancing integrated, locally driven solutions. Our staff includes experts in health, education, nutrition, environment, economic development, civil society, gender, youth, research, technology, communication and social marketing — creating a unique mix of capabilities to address today's interrelated development challenges. FHI 360 serves more than 70 countries and all U.S. states and territories.

IMPROVING PARENTING ATTITUDES

A 2014 impact evaluation study found that FHI 360's Better Parenting training indeed reduced negative parenting attitudes and practices while enhancing positive ones. Among the results, the study shows:

Improved Attitudes Towards Parenting: 71% of Better Parenting participants have positive attitudes towards parenting responsibilities, compared to 36% of the control group.

Improved Communication: 58% of Better Parenting participants showed positive attitudes towards communication with their children, compared to 28% of the control group.

Positive Parenting Style: Better Parenting participants were 68% less likely to have permissive parenting styles and 74% less likely to practice authoritarian parenting style compared to the control group..



A MOTHER'S TOOLS: EMPATHY AND AWARENESS



Mother who used to tie up her children takes lessons on better parenting

Yesewlek Admitew, 40, grew up in a loving household in Debre Markos, a small city north of Addis Ababa. Her father never used violence to punish her and her siblings. Nonetheless, she and her parents rarely had open lines of communication. At 14, she was forced into marriage. She and her husband had three children together, but on a farmer's income, the family lacked many things. As the marriage worsened, so did her children's behavior. *"I was frustrated and unhappy. We didn't have a nice home, and my husband didn't help raise the children. I started hitting my oldest son out of frustration and sometimes tied him up to control him."* They divorced and Yesewlek moved. She remarried and had another child. She continued beating her children out of habit. In 2013, volunteers came to her home with information about better parenting. After the training she helped create a network of 20 mothers and fathers committed to parenting without corporal punishment. *"I stopped hitting my children and saw improved behavior. We sat down and listened to him more often."*

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