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THE EFFECTS OF A SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM  
ON CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION  
TECHNIQUES IN PARENT ADOLESCENT DYADS

by

Thomas A. Mills

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Family and Human Development

(Marriage and Family Therapy)

Approved:

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~~Co-Chair~~ D.K. Openshaw

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Dean of Graduate Studies

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Logan, Utah

1988

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Thomas A. Mills

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## ABSTRACT

The Effects of a Social Skills Training Program  
on Constructive Conflict Resolution Techniques  
in Parent-Adolescent Dyads

By

Thomas A. Mills, Master of Science  
Utah State University, 1988

Major Professors: Dr. D. Kim Openshaw

Dr. Gerald R. Adams

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The primary purpose of this thesis was to assess the effects of a short verses long-term social skills training program on (a) enhancing adolescent and parent social skills, while (b) reducing conflict and distress and enhancing warmth and cohesion. A modified pretest - posttest control group design was employed wherein the control group for the first experiment became a portion of the experimental group for the second experiment. The sample consisted of 43 parent-adolescent dyads who volunteered to participate. Of those, 25 met the minimum criteria for being included in the analysis, 18 dyads from the experimental group and 7 from the control group.

Results demonstrated that while the parents did perceive an improvement in skills assessed by the PARI sub-scores, the adolescents did not. Nonetheless, the findings demonstrated that the long-term program of one skill learned every week for eight weeks was more effective than the concentrated one-week program of two skills learned per night for four nights.

(127 pages)

## INTRODUCTION

For many parents, rearing an adolescent is viewed as the most challenging period of their parenting experience. From the inception of the term, literature focusing on the study of adolescence has suggested that this stage of life is characterized as a period of intra- and interpersonal conflict. For example in defining adolescence, Hall (1904) referred to this life stage as a period of "storm and stress" thereby suggesting that the degree to which the needs of the adolescent interfere with the needs of the parent is directly proportionate to the individual's feelings of frustration and diminished power in their relationship as well as the amount of exhibited argumentation and/or conflict. More recently, Small, Cornelias and Eastman (1985) have suggested that rather than adolescence per se being described as a period of storm and stress, perhaps the life stage may be more accurately characterized as a period of "parent-adolescent storm and stress." Propper (1972) provides an example of research supporting the notion of parent-adolescent storm and stress, indicating that 17% of the sampled adolescents reported a quarrel or serious disagreement with their parents "yesterday." These data suggest that almost two out of every ten adolescents are in conflict with a parent daily. Montemayor (1983) has also supported the notion of parent-adolescent storm and

stress, suggesting a universality of the phenomenon. He argues that conflict between parents and adolescents affects "all families some of the time and some families all of the time" (p.1). In his study of high-school sophomores, adolescents indicated that they had a substantial argument with their parents at the rate of about one every three days, with the average length of each argument being about 11 minutes. Adolescents in this study a) perceived the behavior exhibited during these conflicts as ranging from heated arguments to physical abuse, and b) stated that the affect of the conflict on themselves ranged from moderate emotional disturbance to running away from home (i.e., runaways and throwaways). Drawing on the results of his study, Montemayor estimated that approximately 4-5 million families are affected by significant parent-adolescent conflict each year.

Current research suggests that parent-adolescent conflict may be more a function of either a social skills deficit or performance deficit, in both parents and adolescents, rather than of adolescent development and the striving towards autonomy (Hazel, Schumaker, & Sheldon-Wildgen, 1985; Robin, & Weiss 1980). In other words, researchers postulate that parent-adolescent conflict is a consequence of not having the requisite social skills in the cognitive behavioral repertoire to adequately resolve conflict, or having the skills and not using them (i.e.,

performance deficit).

The notion that adolescence is a period of parent-adolescent conflict persists, even though many adolescents will experience little or no intrafamilial stress during this stage of life, proceeding to adulthood with minimal perturbations. One might prematurely conclude, based on the extant data, that a significant amount of parent-adolescent conflict may be attributed to social skills or performance deficit. Thus, it might be presumed that interventive programs have been designed to address (i.e., prevent and/or remediate) potential parent-adolescent conflict, especially in parent-adolescent dyads designated as "normal, yet in conflict." However, this is not the case. The reality of the situation is that there are few validly and reliably evaluated programs addressing parent-adolescent conflict, especially in parent-adolescent dyads designated as "normal, yet in conflict."

#### Parent-Adolescent Conflict Programs

The area of clinical and empirical relevance associated with parent-adolescent conflict that has received perhaps the most recent attention focuses on group social skills training (SST). For the most part, social skills programs have been developed to address specific adolescent populations, especially delinquents (Hazel, Schumaker, Sherman & Sheldon-Wildgen, 1981; 1983;

Manos, 1985; Serna, Schumaker, Hazel & Sheldon-Wildgen, 1986); Learning Disabled (Schumaker, Hazel, Sherman & Sheldon-Wildgen, 1982), and lonely youths (Adams, Openshaw, Bennion, Mills, & Noble, in press).

One program that claims to address parent-adolescent conflict within "normal" populations is ASSET, an acronym for Adolescent Social Skills Effectiveness Training. Although ASSET was initially designed for use with delinquent adolescents (Hazel, et al., 1985), the authors suggest that their program is capable of addressing and resolving problems ranging from ineffective communication with parents to habitually emotional labile arguments. Although assumed to be viable in a wide range of parent-adolescent situations, to date ASSET has been exposed to only limited empirical testing (Hazel et al., 1985). What remains undone is to examine the effectiveness of ASSET with adolescents who are socially defined as "normal" but in conflict with their parents.

In conclusion, there is a need for the development of social-skills training programs that are designed to address an array of "normal" parent-adolescent situations that result in conflict. Also, there is a need for empirical evidence attesting to the validity and reliability of programs in the remediation and/or amelioration of parent-adolescent conflict.

Objectives/Research Question

There is no objective evaluation of the relative effectiveness of the ASSEI program in the mediation of parent-adolescent conflict in normal parent-adolescent dyads. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the relative degree of effectiveness of the ASSEI program in the mediation of parent-adolescent conflict in a selected sample of "normal" parent-adolescent dyads. Questions to be addressed in this study are:

1. Will the participants' self-reported and observed social-skills (as operationalized by the ASSEI program measures) show a significant increase upon completion of the ASSEI training program?

2. Will the social skills learned lead to the reduction of global distress, hostility, school and/or sibling conflict? At the same time, will there be an increase in warmth and/or cohesion within the context of the parent-adolescent dyad?

3. Will a short-term (one-week) concentrated presentation of the ASSEI program be as effective in improving participant self-reported and observed social-skills, as an extended program that addresses one skill per week over an eight-week period?



### Definitions

ASSET is a social-skills training program focusing on eight social skills (e.g., giving positive feedback, giving negative feedback, accepting negative feedback, resisting peer pressure, negotiation, following instructions, conversation, and problem-solving skill) (Hazel, et al., 1985). ASSET utilizes video-taped instruction, modeled by an intervener demonstrating the designated skills within the context of authority-figure situations. The program is designed to be presented over a nine-week time frame (teaching one skill per week and having one week of evaluation).

Parent adolescent relationship inventory (PARI) is an instrument comprised of 13 parent-adolescent interpersonal-interaction subscales (Robin, Koepke & Mayor, 1984). The subscales included in the instrument are: global distress; cohesion; communication; somatic concerns; problem-solving; conflict over school; beliefs; conflict over siblings; warmth/hostility; time-together/activities; coalitions; conventionalization; triangulation.

Those subscales adopted for use in this study are defined below.

Global distress is a subscale assessing the overall degree of distress and conflict in the parent-adolescent relationship. Items reflect dissatisfaction with the parent-adolescent relationship, evidence of general conflict and arguments, and desire for change.

Warmth/hostility is a subscale assessing the degree of warmth and/or hostility expressed, received, and felt between parents and adolescents. This affective dimension is viewed as a continuum extending from warmth, love, and affection to anger, hostility, and bitterness. Items are divided between hostility and warmth but are scored such that higher scores represent greater degrees of negative affect in the parent-adolescent relationship.

Cohesion is a subscale assessing the degree of cohesion within the family. Cohesion is a dimension of family structure defined as the degree to which family members are connected to or disengaged from each other. In this scale cohesion is a continuum extending from disengaged to enmeshed. Items assessed include: loyalty to the family and mutual support of members for each other; degree of separation of generational boundaries; degree of autonomy of individuals within the family; mindreading; involvement of family members in family versus extra-family activities; Felt togetherness and closeness.

Conflict over school is a subscale assessing the extent to which parents and teenagers argue about school, homework, grades, school activities, or any other school-related issues. Items tap interactions concerning school issues, perceptions of each others' attitudes towards school and reactions to positive and negative school events.

Conflict over siblings is a subscale assessing the degree of conflict between the adolescent and brothers or sisters. Items addressed are: poor sibling relations; fighting and arguing between brothers and sisters; feelings of sibling dislike; jealousy and competition; differential parental treatment of siblings; teasing; verbal abuse.

An adglescent is defined as an individual who is in the state or period of growth from puberty to maturity or designated from ages 12 to 19. In normal subjects its beginning is marked by the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics, commonly at about the age of 12. In addition to the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics, this time period is significant to the development of a sense of individual identity and feelings of self-worth, including adaptation to an altered body image, improved intellectual ability, demands for behavior

maturity, and preparation for the assumption of adult roles (Blyth, Simmons & Bush, 1978; Erikson, 1968; Hinsie & Campbell, 1970; Ingersoll, 1982).

This study conceptualizes the term, "normal adolescent," as referring to an adolescent presently residing with her/his legal guardian who has not been court adjudicated or institutionalized nor been diagnosed as presenting with significant psychopathology (e.g., schizophrenia, anti-social personality, mood disorders, etc.).

A legal guardian refers to an adult who is related to the adolescent by any one or more of the following criteria: (a) blood relationship, (b) adoption, (c) marriage to the natural parent of the adolescent, (d) appointment to guardianship responsibility (e.g., foster parent) for the adolescent vis-a-vis a duly designated agency (e.g., court).

Conflict is a term evolving from "conflict theorists" where it is assumed that relationships are in a constant state of conflict and change. Emphasis is on the disagreements over goals and values which evolve out of the competing needs of the parent and the adolescent. It is suggested that interpersonal conflict is not necessarily destructive, but rather operates as a catalyst, bringing disagreements and conflicts of interest out in the open where they can be dealt with constructively through the use of such social skills as

problem-solving and negotiation (Coleman & Coleman, 1984; Sprey, 1979).

### Hypotheses

This study examined the degree to which the below listed hypotheses have been empirically supported.

1. Subjects in the experimental group will show statistically significantly more improvement in self-reported and observed social skills on ASSET scores than will subjects in the control group.

2. A statistically significant difference will be found between subjects in the experimental group and subjects in the control group regarding learned ASSET skills and their report of conflict resolution within the context of the parent-adolescent dyad.

3. There will be no statistically significant difference in the improvement of self-reported and observed social skills scores between subjects participating in the one-week versus the ten-week training program.

## Prior Research

### Introduction

Though various social-skills programs have been developed over the past decade, there has been only limited empirical verification of their relative effectiveness. This is particularly true within the context of parent-adolescent conflict where the adolescent was identified as "normal." Research suggests that this population could benefit from such training (Montemayor, 1983). It is the intent of this study to empirically test the validity of the assumption that "normal" parent-adolescent dyads in conflict could benefit from participation in social skills training.

### The Inevitability of Parent-Adolescent Conflict

It has been suggested that conflict is an inevitable part of "normal" parent-adolescent interactions (Offer, 1969; Offer & Offer, 1975). The research of Offer and Offer indicates that 80% of the males sampled reported their experience of adolescence as (a) a time of "tumultuous growth," a kind of turbulent, crisis-filled years (22%); (b) a stage of "surgent growth" wherein adolescents, although experiencing periods of anger, age

regressive behavior, and repression (35%), were reasonably well adjusted and coped with those developmental tasks associated with this period of life; or (c) a period of "continuous growth" characterized by "smoothness of purpose and self-assurance," built upon a foundation of mutual trust, respect and affection between parent and adolescent (23%). A closer examination of the results of the study suggests that more than 50% of those males categorized indicated they experienced some degree of conflict during adolescence.

Furthering the notion of conflict as an inevitable part of a "normal" parent-adolescent relationship, Montemayor (1983) suggests that conflict is not only found in severely disturbed parent-adolescent relationships but is also observed in "normal" parent-adolescent dyads. Montemayor's research contributes two essential elements to our understanding of conflict in the parent-adolescent dyads. First, he indicates that conflict is observed in "normal" parent-adolescent dyads and suggests that conflict may be inevitable. This assumption is congruent with other researchers and their findings regarding parent-adolescent conflict (Gant, Barnard, Kuehn, Jones, & Christophersen, 1981; Garbarino, Sebes, & Schellenbach, 1984; Gottlieb & Chafetz, 1977; Grotevant, 1984; Jacob, 1974; Kifer, Lewis, Green & Phillips, 1974; Morton, Alexander & Aliman, 1976; Prinz, Foster, Kent, & O'Leary, 1979; Prosen, Tolus & Martin, 1972; Rutter, Graham,

Chadwick & Yule, 1976; Steinberg & Hill, 1978; and Turner, 1970).

Secondly, Montemayor, implies that we broaden our conceptualization of conflict so that it can be conceptualized as a continuous variable. The range might include no conflict, mild conflict (e.g., simple disagreements about chores), moderate conflict (e.g., disagreements regarding fashions), severe conflict (e.g., disagreements regarding friends or activities), and extreme conflict (e.g., disagreement about girl/boyfriends).

If one assumes that parent-adolescent conflict is inevitable, a logical question then becomes, under what conditions can conflict, as found in normal parent-adolescent dyads, have a beneficial effect on the growth and development of an adolescent? To best answer this question, attention is first directed to a "dialectical" model of human development. Riegel (1975) posits that as one dimension of development pulls in a given direction (i.e., adolescents pulling away from parental authority and control in an attempt towards autonomy), it sets in motion an opposite force to counter the pull (i.e., parents tightening their striving for control). The "dialectical" model suggests a process of dynamic equilibrium through which corrective changes are initiated within the system in an effort to maintain a given level of system stability. Inasmuch as autonomy-striving



disrupts continued homeostasis, conflict is a logical consequence. Conflict thus sets the foundation for the facilitation of second-order change within the system by bringing about disorganization of the parent-adolescent system to produce a state of crisis of sufficient duration, frequency, and intensity to encourage a re-evaluation of the rules governing human behavior.

Grotevant (1984) addresses the importance of conflict in terms of identity exploration, thus suggesting that an achieved identity (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966) requires the individual to experience a period of conflict (i.e., crisis). His research implies that adolescent identity exploration is positively related to the frequency of expressions of disagreements with parents during family discussions, and that effective resolution of these conflicts results in a sense of satisfaction and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). This is supported by Garbarino, Sebes, and Schellenbach (1984) who indicate that of the important skills and abilities gained in families, some of the more important ones may very well be learned in the context of conflict. Thus it appears as though conflict in parent-adolescent relationships, when resolved in a constructive manner, may benefit identity exploration, positive feelings of self, and self-efficacy in adolescence (Count, 1967; Montemayor & Hanson, 1985; Peskin, 1967).

Further information on this hypothesis is offered by Schvaneveldt (1984) who indicates that even though conflict (e.g., arguments) may be painful, it may be productive if parents and adolescents invest adequate time and energy towards recognition and resolution of the issues underlying the conflict. Schvaneveldt (1984) postulates three conflict-resolution strategies that can be adopted in the parent-adolescent relationship and one strategy which represents a more conflict-habituated relationship (Cuber & Harrof, 1965). The resolution strategies include: (a) compromise: consisting primarily of give and take with negotiation until there is a win-win solution; (b) accommodation: wherein one person gives in for the sake of the relationship; and (c) withdrawal, wherein one or both parties remove themselves from the situation. "Running conflict," characterizing a conflict habituated relationship, consists of chronic arguments, wherein the problem is not solved and no equitable solution is found. Of the three resolution techniques, compromise represents the only democratic strategy allowing both parents and adolescents to win. Accommodation and withdrawal may frequently leave feelings of bitterness in one or both parties. Running conflict may also encourage coercive behavior, the resolution of the conflict frequently being based on physical strength differentials. Problems symptomatic of

a chronic history of severe parent-adolescent conflict include: (a) physical and emotional abuse of adolescents by their parents, or parents by their adolescents; (b) covert forms of throwaways, such as engagement in sexual promiscuity, substance abuse, or dropping out of school; and (c) overt forms of throwaways, such as the adolescent moving away from home or being kicked out of the home, joining religious cults, or teenagers marrying early.

Montemayor and Hanson (1985) provide empirical support for Schvaneveldt's speculations. Their data suggest that negotiation, withdrawal, and authoritarianism are the most often used methods of conflict resolution. Furthermore, they indicate that the most common conflict resolution technique found in their study of parents and adolescents was withdrawal, with negotiation being used only 15% of the time.

In sum, it can be argued that conflict is likely to result when an adolescent's efforts to attain a sense of self or promote an autonomous view conflicts with his or her parents' needs to retain authority and control. Such conflict may persist for an indefinite period of time with increasing intensity characterized by argumentation or other forms of dysfunctional communication. While researchers support the notion that conflict is essential to personal development (e.g., Riegel, 1975; Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966), it is constructive only if adequate conflict resolution strategies, which employ the

requisite social skills to address conflicting issues, are utilized.

### Social Skills Training (SST)

Before one can adequately appreciate what a social skills training program is, it is important to define the term "social skills." Libet and Lewinsohn (1973) define social skills as "the complex ability to maximize the rate of positive reinforcement and to minimize the strength of punishment from others" (p. 311). A more succinct definition, incorporating an interactional process, is offered by Combs and Slaby (1977). Social skills are conceptualized by them as

the ability to interact with others in a given social context in specific ways that are socially acceptable or valued and at the same time personally beneficial, mutually beneficial, or beneficial primarily to others. (p.162)

LeCroy (1983) enhances these definitions by suggesting that mediation is a primary goal of an interactional process founded upon designated social skills. LeCroy defines social skills as "a complex set of skills which allow the adolescent the ability to successfully mediate interaction between parents, teachers, and other adults" (p. 92).

From these definitions it can be concluded that social skills are specific skills (e.g., giving positive feedback, giving negative feedback, problem solving)

that form the foundation of mutually satisfying interpersonal relationships. As such, social-skills training refers to a standardized method of: a) teaching specific skills when a skills deficit is identified; or b) encouraging the use of said skills when a performance deficit is detected.

Though many different social-skills training programs exist, for the most part their primary goal is the enhancement of congruent verbal and nonverbal interpersonal communication and the facilitation of a mutually satisfying relationship. To promote verbal/nonverbal congruence, social skills training programs have targeted such nonverbal skills as eye contact, smiles, head movements, posture, voice intonation, and volume (Carkhuff & Anthony, 1979). While verbal/nonverbal congruence is an important element in social-skills training, it is within the context of problems founded on faulty communication that social skills training has evolved. Social-skills training programs view problematic behavior within the context of deficits in social skills (e.g., skills or performance). The term "problem" refers to a specific situation or set of related situations to which a person must respond in order to function effectively in his/her environment. Recognized social-skills deficits lead to treatment procedures designed to develop pro-active behavior and to facilitate pro-social responses in situations that tend to

elicit non-productive or reactive responses (Hazel et al., 1981; Trower, Bryant & Argyle, 1978).

In sum, social-skills training programs have been developed to address a wide range of social-skills deficits, including, but not limited to, resisting peer pressure, applying for a new job, and employing conversational skills (DeLange, Lanham, & Barton, 1981; Maloney, Harper, Braukmann, Fixsen, Phillips, & Wolf, 1976; Ollendick & Hersen, 1979). However, they are limited in their ability to assess an individual's application of the skills within various environmental contexts (Bellack, 1979).

#### Commonalities in social skills training programs.

Although social-skills training programs can be found in varying presentational and training formats, there are four specific elements held in common. Modeling, in vivo or vicariously, is perhaps the most basic of the common elements. Subjects observe the behavior, verbal and/or nonverbal, of an expert as she or he demonstrates a situationally specific social skill within a given authority-oriented context. After observing the expert model the specified social skill, the subject rehearses the behavior of the expert while attempting to apply the demonstrated social skill. Rehearsal thus becomes the second common element. It is through rehearsal of the social skill by the subject that the behavioral responses

are shaped to meet a predetermined criterion level. During the rehearsal of the social skill, the subject receives encouragement for his or her efforts. Encouragement consists of both constructive feedback regarding the subject's performance relative to the criterion level and positive reinforcement for his or her efforts. Finally, homework assignments are given to the subjects to encourage continuous practice of the skills learned during the training sessions.

Advantages of Social Skills Training (SSI). A review of the current literature on social-skills training programs suggests several advantages to the use of such training methods over other therapeutic modalities (Bellack, 1979; DeLange et al., 1981; Hazel et al. 1981; Hazel, Shumaker, Sherman, & Sheldon-Wildgen, 1982; Hazel et al., 1985; LeCroy, 1983; Ollendick, & Hersen, 1979). One advantage is that SSI may afford the group leader the opportunity to use a wide variety of people when rehearsing the skills. Groups that are comprised of a variety of subjects coming from different backgrounds with different, yet related, problems permit the subjects to generalize the skills to varying situations, contexts, and people. Secondly, a group setting can counteract defensiveness brought into group training due to the fact that the setting is composed of peers working together to learn the same skills. Thus small groups may reduce the

tendency for participants to feel as if they are the only ones experiencing the difficulties, thereby normalizing their experiences. The third advantage is that group members with similar concerns can support one another. The final advantage is that of economy, which is logical when one considers that two group leaders can train several parent/adolescent dyads in the same amount of time it may take, for instance, a therapist to train a family in these particular skills.

ASSET: A Social Skills  
Training Program For Adolescents

Among the group programs that are adaptable to a wide range of situations and may lend themselves to bridging the gap between research and practice is the ASSET program (Hazel et al., 1981). ASSET emphasizes seven social skills (e.g. giving and accepting positive feedback, giving negative feedback, resisting peer pressure, conversation, and negotiation and one problem solving skill). ASSET stresses both the use of verbal and nonverbal skills (e.g., eye-contact, facial expressions, posture, and vocal tone). Published research using ASSET suggests that adolescents can effectively learn the identified social skills in small group settings (e.g., Hazel et al., 1981, 1982; Serna et al., 1986; Adams et al., in press). Recently Adams et al. (in press) found interesting results in a pilot study conducted at Utah



State University. They used 20 adolescents who were assessed as lonely and lacking social skills (measured by the ASSET pretest instruments). The researchers found that after a five-day training program, there were increases in the subjects' use of social skills. In addition psychosocial and social loneliness were significantly reduced after social skills training, with reductions maintained over a three month period.

An interesting expansion of the ASSET program is noted in the research of Serna, and associates (1986). Serna et al. use a set of reciprocal skills to instruct and train parents of delinquent youths. Reciprocal skills refer to specific skills which parallel other social skills to facilitate a successful dyadic interchange. For example, the reciprocal skill of giving negative feedback is receiving negative feedback. Integration of reciprocal social skills into a program to facilitate effective dyadic communication is logical when one reviews the research of such researcher-theorists as Belsky (1984), Gottman (1982), and Stevenson-Hinde and Simpson (1981). These writers posit that each actor mutually contributes to the nature of the outcome of social intercourse. The research of Serna et al. (1986) is consistent with that of Belsky (1984), Gottman (1982), and Stevenson-Hinde and Simpson (1981). However, Serna et al. suggest that participants internalized skills more effectively when parents were included in the treatment program. Thus, it

is suggested that adolescents and their parents may be more able to resolve conflict in a mutually constructive manner if parents and adolescents participate in a social skills training program that utilizes a reciprocal skills approach.

It is the intent of this study to incorporate the use of reciprocal skills as developed by Serna et al. (1986) into a modified version of the ASSET program. The social skills with their attendant reciprocal skills are listed below.

Adolescent skill

Parent skill

- |                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Giving positive feedback    | 1. Accepting positive feedback  |
| 2. Giving negative feedback    | 2. Accepting negative feedback  |
| 3. Accepting negative feedback | 3. Giving negative feedback     |
| 4. Resisting peer pressure     | 4. Providing rationales         |
| 5. Negotiation                 | 5. Negotiation                  |
| 6. Problem solving             | 6. Facilitating problem solving |
| 7. Following instructions      | 7. Giving instructions          |
| 8. Conversation                | 8. Conversation                 |

Having established the importance of SSI with parent/adolescent dyads, efficacy of teaching methods and measures to determine influence and carry over will be discussed in the methods section.

## METHODS

### Sample

Subjects for this study were parent-adolescent dyads who expressed a desire to reduce the level of dysfunctional conflict in their relationships and improve their constructive conflict resolution skills. Potential subjects were identified through the use of various sampling techniques. Solicitations for participants were made through local school, religious, and mental health facilities. Articles were printed in the local newspapers; and ads also were broadcast on radio and TV. When these methods failed to produce a large enough pool of prospective subjects, a notice of the program was mailed to the parents of students in the junior and senior high schools of Logan. This exhaustive effort resulted in a pool of 43 parent-adolescent dyads who indicated their interest in participating in the training program.

Hazel et al. (1981) suggest that it is best if both the adolescent and the parent groups consist of heterogeneous participants (i.e., different ages, sexes, etc.). They suggest that the adolescents range in age from 13-17 years. They also suggest that no participant

should be significantly older or younger than the rest. Additionally only one male should not be in a group of females, or vice versa. These recommendations were followed as completely as possible without severely limiting sample size. In addition, any court-adjudicated youths or youths under current treatment by a mental health professional were excluded. However, the sample was limited to subjects who were willing and able to attend the training and testing sessions on a consistent basis over a ten-week period.

Since the program lasted for ten weeks, only participants from the Logan, Utah area were included. This resulted in a homogeneous group, dominated by subjects who were middle class, Caucasian, and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon).

### Procedures

Subjects volunteering for participation in this study were divided into two primary experimental and control groups.

#### Experimental Group

Thirty-two of the 43 parent-adolescent dyads selected themselves into the experimental group. Experimental group subjects were scheduled to participate in a series

of eight two-hour sessions for eight consecutive weeks, beginning February 8 and ending April 12, 1986. The sessions were scheduled for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings and participants chose a specific night to attend. Criteria for inclusion in the experimental group included the completion of a pretest, posttest, and participation in a minimum of six of the eight sessions. Based on these criteria, 18 of the 32 dyads in the experimental group were included in the final analysis.

#### Control Group

In addition to the eight-week program, a complete but concentrated one-week training program was offered during a single week. Participants involved in this one-week training session comprised the control group. Eleven parent-adolescent dyads chose to be assigned to participate in the concentrated one-week program. This one-week-long training session was held for three hours per night. Criteria governing the selection of subjects for control group included: a) previous involvement in two pretest sessions; b) no previous participation in the eight-week training session; and c) the completion of both the pretest and posttest. Eight of the 11 dyads met the established minimum requirements for inclusion in the analysis phase of this particular project. Of those included in the analysis, seven completed the concentrated

one-week program.

### Pretests

Pretests were scheduled for individual parent-adolescent dyads during the week of February 10 through February 14, 1986. Subjects completed the pretest training check list for the ASSEI program (Appendices A and B). They also completed either the parent or the adolescent form of the Parent-Adolescent Relationship Inventory (PARI) (Appendices C and D). Part of the ASSEI pretest was videotaped. In order to reduce scorer bias, the videotaped portions of the pretest were scored by an impartial scorer who did not know whether the videotaped sessions were pretest or posttest and whether subjects were experimental or control group members.

In addition, parents were asked to identify at least three areas of conflict currently occurring between themselves and their adolescent. These areas of conflict, as identified by the parents, were later utilized in the program for role-playing purposes.

### Training

After the necessary pretesting had been accomplished, treatment sessions commenced. In as much as

the ASSET program was originally designed for only adolescents, and since parents were included in this study, the original format of the ASSET training program was modified so that adolescents were taught a particular social skill (e.g., giving positive feedback) while parents were trained in the use of a complimentary or reciprocal skill (e.g., receiving positive feedback). At the beginning of each session, adolescents and their parents met together to rehearse the social skill previously taught and assigned for use in the home. Immediately following the review and practice session, the two groups and their group leaders separated. Both parents and adolescents practiced the new skill through the use of roleplaying, receiving feedback relative to their performance from their group leaders and other participants. While the adolescents were practicing a skill, parents were practicing the reciprocal skill. The goal of each session was for the participants to learn the new skill with 100% accuracy. Once the goal was met in their individual sessions, the groups were brought back together to practice the newly acquired skills with each other. Homework assignments designed to give the participants additional practice away from the training environment were given at the end of each session. It was anticipated that this additional training would help the newly acquired skills to be internalized and generalized (Hazel et al., 1981).



Posttest

Following the eight-week training sessions, participants were administered the same ASSET and PARI tests as during pretesting.

Design

The research design, therefore, was as follows:

Pretest	Treatment 1	Posttest 1	Treatment 2	Posttest2
MI 1-----	x1-----	I1		
MC 1-----		C2-----	x2-----	C3

matched treatment group (MI)  
matched control group (MC)

This design was used to compare PARI and ASSET pretest and posttest scores for both the experimental and control groups. Scores for the participants in the long-term program were compared against those achieved by participants in the short-term program.

The analysis of these test scores allowed comparison of not only the changes from pretest to posttest, but also of the efficacy of the shortened-delivery version of the ASSET program with that of the extended program.

In actuality, two experiments were conducted in this

study. In the first, the independent variable was the skills level on the ASSET program, while the dependent variable was the reported parent-adolescent conflict as assessed by the PARI instrument. The second experiment investigated the effect of the ASSET program with the independent variable being the length of time used to present the ASSET program. The dependent variable was the resulting scores on the ASSET and PARI program posttest instruments.

#### Internal Validity

Campbell and Stanley (1963) indicate that internal validity is determined by whether the treatment actually accounts for the difference between the experimental and the control group scores. It should be noted, however, that internal validation concerns for a standard pretest/posttest experimental control group design are minimal. History was controlled for, in this particular study, by the fact that any historical event that would influence the treatment group would also affect the control group. Maturation and testing effects were controlled for by the fact that both experimental and control groups would experience the same maturational and testing influences. It is suggested that the scores for both the experimental and control groups may increase due to maturation and/or testing; however, there is a greater

likelihood that the experimental group scores will increase at a more significant rate due to training effects.

Testing effects were minimized by either 1) employing only one observer for the parent group and another for the adolescent group, thereby eliminating any inter-rater effects, and 2) by keeping the scorers blind as to whether the subjects videotaped were pretest or posttest group or were experimental or control group subjects. Inter-rater reliability for the two scores was established using a training criterion of 80% agreement. While it is logical to assume that those who were desirous of changing their life-style and participating in the program in such a way as to affect their current style of interaction would be more likely to remain in the program than those not as motivated, attrition was noted in both experimental and control groups. Thus the fact of motivation assumed by using a convenience sample wherein subjects self-selected themselves into either experimental or control group depending on their desire to improve was not substantiated.

The second experiment included in this study differed from the first in that the experimental group received their eight-week program immediately following a pretest experience. The control group, on the other hand, received a pretest; 10 weeks later they received a posttest. Only then did they receive their concentrated

one-week program. These differences provided several rival hypotheses. First, there was a potential history effect as the programs took place at different times, thereby exposing the groups to different experiences. Maturation differences were nominal. Finally, the second experiment shared the first experiment's potential validity problems regarding instrumentation, sample selection and mortality.

#### External Validity

Campbell and Stanley (1963, p. 5) indicate that external validity asks the question "To what populations, settings, treatment variables and measurement variables can this effect be generalized?" In response to their question, relative to this study, it should be noted that it is not possible to generalize the obtained results beyond the specific sample used in this particular study; that is, groups that can be matched to the conservative, Mormon, rural population from which the sample was derived.

#### Instrumentation

Extant empirical testing of the ASSET program has been limited to populations consisting of either delinquent or learning-disabled subjects. A review of

these studies, however, provides no validity or reliability data for the various ASSEI pretest and posttest measures or the efficacy of the program, per se. Limited empirical research completed on the ASSEI program (see Adams et al., in press) has concluded that the ASSEI program is capable of improving participants' scores for the targeted social skills, and inter-rater reliability can be established between trained raters. This study provided validity and reliability data for a parent-adolescent population designated as in conflict, yet "normal." Indeed, this study contributes to present assumptions regarding the ASSEI program by focusing on issues of validity and reliability of the measures associated with the program within the context of normal parent-adolescent conflict. Even though an article by Serna, Schumaker, Hazel, and Sheldon-Wildgen (1986) addresses the issue of reciprocal skills in the parenting program, it should be noted that the reciprocal skills program for parents, as used in this study, is limited in its exposure to empirical testing.

The Parent-Adolescent Relationship Inventory (PARI) (Robin et al., 1984), although relatively new, has had greater empirical attention in validating the instrument's internal consistency. To date, however, no predictive validity has been established for the PARI. This suggests the need for continued research on the instrument.

### Analysis

Analysis of the data was carried out through utilization of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-X). For the present study, t-tests between pretest and posttest scores was the primary statistical methodology employed. Tests of the collected data focus specifically on three stated hypotheses. The first hypothesis indicated that the subjects in the experimental group would show statistically significantly more improvement in self-reported and observed social skills on ASSET scores than would subjects in the control group. The second hypothesis indicates that a statistically significant difference would be found between subjects in the experimental group and subjects in the control group regarding learned ASSET skills and their report of conflict resolution within the context of the parent-adolescent dyad. Finally, there would be no statistically significant difference in the improvement of self-reported and observed social-skills scores between subjects participating in the one-week or the eight-week training program.

### Limitations

Generalizability of the findings of this study is restricted not only by having a relatively homogeneous sample, but also by the non-random fashion in which the subjects were assigned to the experimental and control groups. However, these techniques were necessary in order to retain an adequate number of participants.

One of the main problems identified earlier with an extended eight-week training program was a high attrition rate among participants for both the treatment and control groups. Attrition can confound results by biasing them in favor of those participants who were more conscientious in the application of social skills learned. While this may have been the case, attrition was noted in both the experimental (44%) and control group (36%).

The subjects of this study were all volunteers, and no extrinsic methods of coercion or reward were used. Thus, we might say that the study was biased because those subjects interested in improving their relationships were retained, whereas the study excluded those participants who did not meet minimal criteria in terms of attendance. However, regardless of the bias the following should not be overlooked. First, all peoples, regardless of race, religion or community size are in need of social skills to facilitate day to day interactions. Second, this is a pilot study which provides a basis for future research.

## RESULTS

Reliability and Validity EstimatesReliability

Reliability estimates for the five subscales of the PARI were computed for internal consistency and test-retest stability using the parents' and adolescents' responses. Table 1 summarizes the internal consistency based on Cronbach's alphas for the pretest and posttest scores. All alphas were significant and at acceptable levels to assure internal consistency of subscales at both times of testing.

Tables 2 and 3 summarize the test-retest correlations between the pretest and posttest measures for the adolescent and parental control group samples. Significant and acceptable levels of test-retest reliability were observed for all of the PARI subscales.

For the ASSET measures test-retest correlations were on five of the eight measures of adolescents and the parents. Adolescents were consistent in giving-feedback, problem solving, following instructions, and communication. Parents were consistent in accepting positive and negative feedback, giving negative feedback, facilitating problem-solving, and conversation. Considerable inconsistency was observed between test and retest.



Table 1

Reliability Estimates (Alpha) for Adolescent Sample on  
the PARI Subscales

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<u>VARIABLE</u>	<u>Pretest</u> <u>Alpha</u>	<u>Posttest</u> <u>Alpha</u>
Global Distress	.82	.86
Warmth/Hostility (Mom)	.82	.78
Warmth/Hostility (Dad)	.76	.83
Cohesion	.69	.54
School Conflict (Mom)	.81	.81
School Conflict (Dad)	.66	.76
Sibling Conflict	.72	.76
PARENTS		
Global Distress	.94	.93
Warmth/Hostility (Parent)	.90	.89
Cohesion	.68	.68
School Conflict (Parent)	.84	.89
Sibling Conflict	.92	.85

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Table 2

Zero-Order Correlations of Test-Retest Reliability  
Estimates Over Twelve Weeks for Adolescent and Parent  
Control Group Samples on the PARI Subscales

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<u>VARIABLE</u>	Adolescent Parent	
	r	r
Global Distress	.74*	.80*
Warmth/Hostility	.78*	.83*
Cohesion	.83*	.89*
School Conflict	.79*	.69*
Sibling Conflict	.69*	.74*

---

All coefficients are statistically significant (\* $P < .05$ ).

Table 3

Zero Order Correlations of Test-Retest Reliability  
Estimates Over Twelve Weeks for Adolescent and Parent  
Control Group Samples on the ASSET Subscales

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<u>VARIABLE</u>	Adolescent Parent	
	E	E
Giving Positive Feedback	.06	
Accepting Positive Feedback		.80*
Giving Negative Feedback	.38*	
Accepting Negative Feedback		.88*
Accepting Negative Feedback	.14	
Giving Negative Feedback		.45*
Resisting Peer Pressure	.14	
Giving Rationales		-.08
Problem Solving	.32*	
Facilitating Problem Solving		.79*
Negotiation	.47*	.04
Following Instructions	.60*	
Giving Instructions		-.26
Conversation	.48*	.53*

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Correlations are for parents combined: no significant differences were observed for mothers vs. fathers.

\* $P < .05$ .

This finding is likely to be reflective of adolescents and parents who have inadequate social skills and are generally inconsistent in their behaviors from one setting to another.

Convergent-discriminant validity. Tables 4 and 5 summarize the convergence and discrimination between the five basic subscales of the PARI. All significant correlations are as one would logically anticipate. Global Distress is positively associated with hostility, school and sibling conflict. It is negatively associated with family cohesion. Hostility is negatively correlated with cohesion while being positively correlated with school and sibling conflict. Cohesion is negatively correlated with school and sibling conflict, while school conflict is positively correlated with sibling conflict. While the magnitude of the correlations differ slightly between adolescent and parent responses, the directions in findings are identical.

Therefore, similar estimates of convergent and discriminant validity are observed from the subscales of the PARI between adolescent and parents.

#### Pretest Group Equivalence

A series of t-tests were computed between the experimental and control group adolescent and parent subjects on the PARI subscale scores. For both the

Table 4

Zero Order Correlations between PARI Subscales for Parents  
on the Pretest Measures

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<u>PARENTI</u>	<u>G.D.</u>	<u>W.H.</u>	<u>Coh.</u>	<u>Sch.</u>	<u>Sib.</u>
A. Global Distress					
with Adolescent	1.00	.93	-.52	.69	.59
B. Warmth/Hostility					
with Adolescent		1.00	-.43	.69	.52
C. Cohesion					
with Adolescent			1.00	-.33	-.43
D. School Conflict					
with Adolescent				1.00	.37
E. Sibling Conflict					
with Adolescent					1.00

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p<.05.

Table 5

Zero-Order Correlations between PARI Subscales on pretest scores for Adolescents

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<u>ADOLESCENT</u>	<u>G.D.</u>	<u>W.H.</u>	<u>Coh.</u>	<u>Sch.</u>	<u>Sib.</u>
A. Global Distress					
with Parent	1.00	.74	-.69	.59	.57
B. Warmth/Hostility					
with Parent		1.00	-.51	.63	.79
C. Cohesion					
with Parent			1.00	-.43	-.49
D. School Conflict					
with Parent				1.00	.46
E. Sibling Conflict					
with Parent					1.00

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p<.05

parental subjects and the adolescent subjects no significant differences were observed between the experimental and control groups. Therefore, full equivalence was observed at the initiation of this investigation on the measures under consideration.

#### Pretest To Posttest Changes

##### Adolescents.

Pretest to posttest changes on the ASSET and the PARI behaviors and self-reported measures are summarized in Tables 6 and 7. Significant improvement in social skills over the control group comparison is observed on giving positive feedback, giving negative feedback, accepting negative feedback, resisting peer pressure, problem-solving, negotiation, and conversation. No significant improvement was observed on following instructions. While significant changes in social skills were observed, no corresponding significant changes were reported by the adolescent on the PARI subscales. Indeed, when significant change was observed, it was matched by improvement in the control group, or the significance was marginal as in the case of family cohesion.

Parents. A somewhat different set of findings were found for the parents. As Tables 8 and 9 indicate, significant improvement was observed for all eight basic social skills on the ASSET training program.

Table 6

Mean Comparison With Standard Deviations Between Experimental and Control Groups on Pretest-to-Posttest on the ASSET Scales (Adolescent Sample)

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Group</u>	<u>---Pretest---</u>		<u>-----Posttest-----</u>		<u>I-tst</u>	<u>Prob.</u>
		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>		
Giving +	E	59.00	10.1	67.9	12.9	-2.32	.03
Feedback	C	69.80	7.2	74.0	9.3	-.96	ns
Giving -	E	29.7	8.5	58.4	12.5	-5.69	.0001
Feedback	C	28.4	14.8	31.7	6.1	-.64	ns
Accepting -	E	55.8	6.0	61.3	7.5	-2.84	.01
Feedback	C	53.9	7.0	45.6	15.8	1.34	ns
Resisting	E	49.7	8.5	62.8	9.4	-4.20	.0001
Peer Pressure	C	57.9	7.6	60.0	11.9	-.43	ns
Problem	E	43.3	9.0	58.6	17.0	-3.62	.002
Solving	C	47.3	14.1	43.3	12.2	.68	ns
Negotiation	E	56.5	18.1	71.7	9.5	-3.99	.001
	C	62.1	6.3	58.1	10.0	1.17	ns
Following	E	64.0	13.5	70.1	11.6	-1.70	ns
Instruction	C	48.0	12.0	50.7	19.0	-.47	ns
Communication	E	49.6	11.3	57.9	12.3	-2.28	.03
	C	52.3	7.9	61.0	14.6	-1.79	ns

E = experimental; n = 18 C = control; n = 7 for each group



Table 7

Mean Comparisons With Standard Deviations Between  
Experimental and Control Groups on Pretest-to-Posttest on  
the PARI Scales (Adolescent Sample)

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Group</u>	<u>--Pretest--</u>		<u>-----Posttest-----</u>		<u>T-tst</u>	<u>Prob.</u>
		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>		
Global	E	43.7	23.9	34.7	21.6	1.43	.06
Distress	C	41.1	11.9	28.6	19.9	2.91	.03
Warmth/Hostility: Mom							
	E	25.4	21.9	22.5	17.9	.68	ns
	C	21.0	10.9	18.0	17.4	.51	ns
Warmth/Hostility: Dad							
	E	30.7	17.9	26.9	21.1	.80	ns
	C	24.8	15.4	23.3	22.0	.35	ns
Cohesion	E	50.0	18.5	57.6	12.5	1.77	.08
	C	53.6	12.4	50.0	18.3	.97	ns
School Conflict: Mom							
	E	36.7	22.1	33.3	19.3	.70	ns
	C	47.1	17.8	41.4	23.8	.93	ns
School Conflict: Dad							
	E	38.6	16.2	39.4	20.1	.29	ns
	C	35.7	13.9	25.0	16.6	6.30	.001
sibling	E	36.1	21.4	31.7	20.1	1.04	ns
Conflict	C	35.7	13.9	25.0	16.6	6.30	.001

Table 8  
Mean Comparison with Standard Deviations Between  
Experimental and Control Groups on Pretest-to-Posttest on  
the ASSET Scales (Parent Sample)

Variable	Group	---Pretest---		-----Posttest-----			
		M	SD	M	SD	T-tst	Prob.
Accepting +	E	69.8	11.0	79.1	12.9	-3.08	.007
Feedback	C	60.7	14.8	63.3	16.7	- .68	ns
Accepting -	E	58.4	10.9	69.9	10.8	-3.83	.001
Feedback	C	56.1	13.8	50.3	9.7	2.22	ns
Giving -	E	32.8	8.0	45.7	7.4	-5.44	.000
Feedback	C	30.6	6.7	34.7	7.4	-1.48	ns
Giving	E	41.4	16.4	49.3	12.8	-2.32	.033
Rationales	C	35.0	12.7	35.3	10.6	- .04	ns
Negotiation	E	62.5	8.2	74.2	8.3	-3.56	.002
	C	54.6	13.0	60.4	9.6	- .98	ns
Facilitating							
Problem	E	20.1	5.4	30.1	18.0	-2.19	.042
Solving	C	21.0	7.2	26.0	18.8	- .96	ns
Giving	E	58.9	11.3	72.7	7.9	-4.57	.000
Instruction	C	57.1	15.5	60.6	11.4	- .42	ns
Conversation	E	66.7	7.6	76.5	9.4	-4.18	.001
	C	60.4	5.6	62.3	10.0	- .39	ns

Table 9

Mean Comparisons With Standard Deviations Between Experimental and Control Groups on Pretest-to-Posttest on the PARI Scales (Parent Sample)

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<u>Variable</u>	<u>Group</u>	<u>---Pretest---</u>		<u>-----Posttest-----</u>		<u>T-tst</u>	<u>Prob.</u>
		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>		
Global	E	40.2	22.7	33.3	19.0	1.99	ns
Distress	C	42.2	23.3	46.0	26.9	.95	ns
Warmth/	E	31.3	24.4	19.4	17.1	3.05	.007
Hostility	C	27.2	19.6	31.1	29.2	.89	ns
Cohesion	E	53.7	9.3	54.0	10.5	.17	ns
	C	41.2	13.6	44.4	15.6	.61	ns
School	E	34.5	19.2	28.0	19.6	1.73	ns
Conflict	C	46.4	24.8	46.4	27.4	.00	ns
Sibling	E	33.9	26.4	25.2	15.9	2.18	.04
Conflict	C	45.1	26.4	39.0	27.9	1.22	ns

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Likewise, parents perceived a significant decrease in global distress, hostility and sibling conflict due to the training program. Also, a nonsignificant trend was found on parents' observations of their adolescents school conflict levels.

Summary. While adolescents and parents showed increased skills due to training, only parents perceived this increase as associated with reduced stress and conflict. However, neither parents nor adolescents perceived that the skills acquired enhanced family cohesion.

#### Post-test Experimental and Control Group Differences

Adolescents. Tables 10 and 11 summarize the findings regarding the posttest differences. For the adolescent sample the experimental subjects were better able to give negative feedback, accept negative feedback, problem-solve, negotiate and follow instructions. However, they did not perceive their distress, conflict, family cohesion, and related social or family life conditions to have correspondingly improved over that of the control group.

Parents. As Tables 12-14 indicate, on all but facilitating problem-solving, parents manifested improved social skills. However, when experimental and control

Table 10

Mean Comparison with Standard Deviations Between  
Experimental and Control Groups on Posttest Scores on the  
ASSET Scales (Adolescent Sample)

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<u>Variable</u>	<u>--Experimental--</u>		<u>-----Control-----</u>			
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>I-tst</u>	<u>Prob.</u>
Giving +						
Feedback	67.9	12.9	74.0	9.3	-1.31	ns
Giving -						
Feedback	48.4	12.5	31.7	6.1	4.47	.0001
Accepting -						
Feedback	61.3	7.5	45.6	15.8	2.52	.04
Resisting Peer						
Pressure	62.8	9.4	60.0	11.9	.55	ns
Problem						
Solving	58.6	17.0	43.3	12.2	2.51	.02
Negotiation	71.7	9.5	58.1	10.0	3.07	.01
Following						
Instructions	70.0	11.6	50.7	19.0	2.52	.03
Conversation	57.9	12.3	61.0	14.6	- .49	ns

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Table 11

Mean Comparisons With Standard Deviations for Experimental and Control Groups on Posttest PARI Scales (Adolescent Sample)

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<u>Variable</u>	<u>---Experimental</u>		<u>-----Control-----</u>		<u>I-tst</u>	<u>Prob.</u>
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>		
Global Distress	34.7	21.6	28.6	19.9	.67	ns
Warmth/ Hostility Mom	22.5	17.9	18.0	17.4	.57	ns
Warmth/ Hostility dad	26.9	21.1	23.3	22.1	.37	ns
Cohesion School	57.6	12.4	50.0	18.3	1.02	ns
Conflict Mom School	33.3	19.3	41.4	23.8	.80	ns
Conflict Dad Sibling	34.4	20.1	28.6	12.2	1.65	ns
Conflict	31.7	20.1	25.0	16.6	.85	ns

---

Table 12

Mean Comparison with Standard Deviation Between  
Experimental and Control Groups on Posttest ASSET Scores  
(Parent Sample)

<u>Variable</u>	<u>--Experimental--</u>		<u>-----Control-----</u>		<u>T-tst</u>	<u>Prob.</u>
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>		
Accepting +						
Feedback	79.1	12.9	63.6	16.7	2.3	.050
Accepting -						
Feedback	68.9	10.8	50.3	9.7	4.4	.001
Giving -						
Feedback	45.7	7.4	34.7	2.8	3.3	.007
Giving						
Rationale	49.3	12.8	35.3	4.3	2.8	.015
Negotiation	74.2	8.3	60.4	3.62	3.3	.008
Facilitating						
Problem Solving	30.1	18.0	26.0	18.8	.05	ns
Giving						
Instructions	72.7	7.9	60.6	11.4	2.6	.031
Conversation	76.5	9.4	62.3	10.0	3.3	.008

n = 18 for experimental group n = 7 for control group

Table 13

Mean Comparison with Standard Deviations Between  
Experimental and Control Groups on Posttest PARI Scores  
(Parent Sample)

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<u>Variable</u>	<u>-Experimental-</u>		<u>-----Control-----</u>		<u>I-tst</u>	<u>Prob.</u>
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>		
Global Distress	33.3	19.0	46.0	26.9	1.14	ns
Warmth/ Hostility	19.4	17.1	31.2	29.2	1.00	ns
Cohesion School	54.0	10.5	44.4	15.6	1.49	ns
Conflict Sibling	28.0	19.6	46.4	27.4	1.63	ns
Conflict	25.2	15.9	39.0	27.9	1.23	ns

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n = 18 for experimental group n = 7 for control group



Table 14

Mean Comparison with Standard Deviations on Pretest-to-  
Posttest ASSET Scores for Experimental Group Males and  
Females (Adolescent Sample)

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Variable	Gen.	--Pretest--		-----Posttest-----			
		M	SD	M	SD	T-tst	Prob.
Giving +	M	60.7	9.8	70.1	13.0	-2.07	.06
Feedback	F	56.3	10.7	64.4	13.1	-1.12	ns
Giving -	M	28.5	10.1	50.7	13.6	-5.30	.000
Feedback	F	31.6	5.0	44.9	10.5	-2.67	.04
Accepting -	M	56.3	6.2	60.2	7.3	-1.54	ns
Feedback	F	55.0	6.1	63.0	7.9	-2.69	.04
Resisting Peer	M	49.1	9.9	62.7	7.8	-3.82	.003
Pressure	F	50.7	6.1	62.9	12.2	-2.33	.06
Problem	M	41.6	10.4	61.7	2.0	-3.33	.008
Solving	F	46.0	6.0	53.7	10.4	-1.80	ns
Negotiation	M	51.9	21.6	69.9	10.0	-3.13	.01
	F	63.7	7.5	74.4	8.5	-2.98	.02
Following	M	66.7	12.8	70.3	11.5	-.76	ns
Instructions	F	59.7	14.3	69.7	12.7	-1.77	ns
Conversation	M	51.0	12.7	59.5	13.0	-1.54	ns
	F	47.4	8.9	55.6	11.7	-1.93	ns

---

n = 10 males n = 8 females

group subjects were compared on posttest measures of self-reported PARI subscales no significant differences were observed. In most cases, the mean differences were in the expected direction, with greater improvement shown for the experimental group; however, large standard deviations within both groups resulted in variability that reduced the chance of significance between groups.

Control Group-to-Experimental  
Group: Short-term Training

The final objective of this study was to determine if a short-term training program of approximately 1 week is as potentially effective as a longer 8 week program. Tables 15-17 summarize the comparison of the posttest scores from the original experimental group with that of the second posttest scores wherein the control group became an experimental group. For both the adolescent and parent samples, the analysis indicates that no significant increases of importance to the experimental effect was observed.

Indeed, in several cases in the week long program of training, ASSEI scores actually went down. Because of these results on the ASSEI instruments, no scores were computed for the PARI instruments. The fact that the scores went down may suggest that in a short-term program there is too much to absorb in such a short period of time. It may be possible that there is a need to practice

Table 15

Mean Comparison with Standard Deviations for Experimental  
Pretest-to-Posttest Group ASSET Scores for Males and  
Females (Parent Sample)

---

Variable	Gen.	--Pretest--		-----Posttest-----			
		M	SD	M	SD	I-tst	Prob.
Accepting +	M	66.0	12.1	69.8	12.2	-1.12	ns
Feedback	F	72.8	9.7	86.5	7.7	-3.2	.012
Accepting -	M	58.8	10.6	70.4	13.3	-2.20	.062
Feedback	F	58.1	11.8	69.5	9.2	-3.10	.013
Giving -	M	28.1	5.1	47.1	6.3	-7.54	.000
Feedback	F	36.5	8.2	44.5	8.3	-2.60	.027
Giving	M	41.4	16.4	49.3	12.8	-2.32	ns
Rationales	F	35.0	12.7	35.3	10.6	- .04	.024
Negotiation	M	64.9	5.9	72.1	8.6	-1.60	ns
	F	60.6	9.6	75.8	8.2	-3.40	.008
Problem	M	21.8	4.0	34.8	22.8	-1.55	ns
Solving	F	18.7	6.1	26.4	13.3	-1.50	ns
Giving	M	58.1	6.5	73.4	6.8	-4.81	.002
Instruction	F	59.5	14.4	72.1	9.0	-2.60	.031
Conversation	M	67.1	7.2	75.4	11.5	-3.05	.019
	F	66.3	8.3	77.4	7.8	-3.00	.016

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n = 18 for experimental group n = 7 for control group

Table 16

Mean Comparison with Standard Deviations on Posttest 1 and Posttest 2 ASSET Scores for Control-to-Experimental Group Short-term Condition (Adolescent Sample)

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Variable	Posttest #1		-----Posttest #2-----			
	M	SD	M	SD	T-tst	Prob.
Giving +						
Feedback	69.8	7.2	74.0	9.3	-.96	ns
Giving -						
Feedback	28.4	14.7	31.7	6.1	-.64	ns
Accepting -						
Feedback	53.9	7.0	45.6	15.8	1.34	ns
Resisting Peer						
Pressure	57.9	7.6	60.0	11.9	-.43	ns
Problem						
Solving	47.3	14.1	43.3	12.2	.68	ns
Negotiation	62.1	6.3	58.1	10.0	1.17	ns
Following						
Instructions	48.0	11.9	50.7	19.0	-.47	ns

---

Table 17

Mean Comparison with Standard Deviations on Posttest 1 and Posttest 2 ASSET Scores for Control-to-Experimental Groups Short-term Condition (Parent Sample).

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<u>Variable</u>	<u>Posttest #1</u>		<u>-----Posttest #2-----</u>			
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>T-tst</u>	<u>Prob.</u>
Accepting +						
Feedback	65.5	17.1	71.8	14.0	-1.22	ns
Giving -						
Feedback	37.0	4.7	41.3	5.1	-1.88	ns
Accepting -						
Feedback	51.3	10.2	56.3	5.8	-1.05	ns
Giving Rationale	36.5	11.0	50.0	18.8	-1.58	ns
Facilitating prob						
-lem solving	28.0	19.7	22.2	4.3	.76	ns
Negotiation	58.5	8.9	68.2	14.4	-2.09	ns
Giving						
Instructions	60.8	12.4	67.3	6.4	-1.20	ns
Conversation	63.3	10.5	75.5	7.8	-2.08	ns

---

and integrate the acquisition of one skill to effect the acquisition of another skill.

#### Summary

Consistent with the pretest to posttest change, adolescents and parents in the experimental group manifested growth in social skills over the control group at posttest measure. Further, as the pretest to posttest change scores reflected, posttest comparisons of adolescents revealed no significant perceived changes on the PARI subscale measures. However, parents who reported significant changes in their perceptions of their adolescents due to skill training, were found not to have improved dramatically over the control group and maturational effects. This inconsistency is likely due to the large variance found in the between-group t-test comparisons and the corresponding reflection that within group variability was less dramatic than between group variability in self-perceived improvement. Thus, training effects are judged to be equivocal in the present study.

Finally, although the results failed to demonstrate the significant improvement hypothesized, they nevertheless gave clear indication that these essential social skills were learned by both the parents and their adolescents.

## DISCUSSION

Parent-adolescent conflict has become a topic of increasing interest for social and behavioral scientists, as well as for clinicians and other practitioners. Literature in the area is rapidly expanding, focusing on various theories and addressing the relationship of many different variables with parent-adolescent conflict.

Small, Cornelius, and Eastman (1985) have suggested that adolescence may be characterized as a period of parent-adolescent "storm and stress." Offer and Offer (1975) suggests that more than 50% of those males experienced stress. Montemayor (1983) suggested that normal dyads experienced substantial arguments every three days for about 11 minutes, ranging from heated arguments to physical abuse. Drawing on the results of the Montemayor study, it was estimated that approximately 4-5 million families were affected by parent-adolescent conflict.

Erikson (1968), Grotevant (1984), Marcia (1966) and Riegel (1975) suggest that conflict may have a beneficial effect on growth and development if the parent-adolescent dyads employ adequate conflict resolution strategies. Garbarino, Sebes, and Schellenbach (1984) indicate that important skills may be learned through conflict. This research project suggests that a social skills deficit

(i.e., performance or skills deficit) may underlie conflicted situations recurring in parent-adolescent dyads. This study also suggests that a reduction in social skills deficits gained by employing appropriate strategies may lead to the above mentioned beneficial effects.

For the purpose of this study the more general assumption (that social skills deficits are directly correlated with parent-adolescent conflict) was first broken down into two parts. First, can parents and adolescents learn and use basic social skills? Second, will the learning and use of these social skills result in a reduction in dyadic conflict and an increase in warmth and cohesiveness? Finally, the study was designed to address the question of whether learning effectiveness is best facilitated when parents and adolescents are taught basic social skills over a short (i.e., one week of concentrated training) or extended (i.e., eight weeks) time period. Hypotheses, previously stated, focusing on these questions were formulated. Critical variables were operationalized through the use of the ASSET program, with its attendant instruments, and the PARI instrument.

#### Hypothesis 1

Subjects in the experimental group will show statistically significantly more improvement in



self-reported and observed social skills on ASSET scores than will subjects in the control group. Across the adolescent sample the data clearly suggest that the experimental group improved significantly over the control group on the social skills of: giving positive feedback, giving negative feedback, accepting negative feedback, resisting peer pressure, problem-solving, negotiation, and conversation. These particular adolescents were lacking in adequate knowledge of these social skills to communicate in a way that would reduce or resolve conflict situations. They were also performing at remedial levels in the use of such skills. It is significant that these findings were observed in a "normal" population. It can therefore be argued that these adolescents are not being schooled in those basic social skills critical to dyadic interaction.

However, research has already demonstrated that these social skills can be learned. Examining the posttest means of the two groups of adolescents on the ASSET skills reveals that there was a change from the pretest to posttest score. A comparison of the means of the experimental and control groups did show a significant difference. This change suggests an improvement in the experimental group's ability to use these skills. In particular, there were differences between the two groups on giving negative feedback, accepting negative feedback, problem solving, and negotiation. These findings suggest

that change did occur and was maintained on these skills. However, while there was perceived change from the pretest to the posttest on resisting peer pressure, there were no difference among the adolescents when the means were compared. In the variable following instruction, there was no noted change from the pretest to the posttest.

In terms of improvement in the adolescents' ability to follow instructions, the results suggesting that there was no significant difference between the two groups are not surprising. Much of one's school experience is dedicated to learning how to follow instructions. This is not the case, however, of the other social skills where improvement was noted.

In examining the results for the parents relative to improvement in social skills through training in ASSET, the data suggest that parents improved in all eight of the designated social skills. However, there was one minor exception in the area of facilitating problem-solving. This exception is notable due to the fact that much conflict is associated with the ability of the dyad to effectively initiate and maintain problem-solving behavior during the course of conflict. Whether or not the ASSET skills generalize to reduce this conflict will be discussed in hypothesis two.

## Hypothesis 2

A statistically significant difference will be found between subjects in the experimental group and subjects in the control group regarding learned ASSET skills and their report of conflict resolution within the context of the parent-adolescent dyad. Five measures from the PARI were adopted to test this particular hypothesis: global distress, warmth/ hostility, cohesion, school conflict, and sibling conflict. An examination of the data acquired from the adolescents on the PARI variables reveals the fact that no significant improvement was noted in any of the variables. When comparing the means of the experimental group with the control group, findings were consistent with those noted in the change from the pretest to the posttest scores. That is, there was no significant difference between the groups.

One explanation for such a finding may be that the given social skills were not designed to address the variables identified in the PARI. It may be that the training program, since it did not explicitly address each of these areas and the method of applying the skills to them, only gave a general overview of the skills. Thus there resulted a non-specific application which could

effect generalization. In other words, while ASSET skills may be necessary, it appears that they may not be sufficient in and of themselves.

The findings reported in the posttest mean comparison seem to indicate that although the adolescents were able to learn the basic social skills, they did not necessarily perceive an improvement in parent-adolescent interaction.

However, the results from the parents' experimental group are quite different from those from the adolescent group. Notable in terms of parental response were those responses related to actual change in behavior. While the parents perceived significant changes in several of the PARI variables, a comparison of the mean scores between the experimental and control groups did not suggest any differences on the PARI subscales measuring perceived improvement. In other words, parents who learned ASSET skills, as well as those who did not both, experienced improved perceptions of their relationship with their adolescents. Or may be that there is no specific relationship between ASSET skills and the PARI variables. While this may bring into question the relative effectiveness of the program, it is felt that such a judgment cannot be adequately made until a methodological procedure (e.g. Solomon 4 group design) is employed and/or a longitudinal design is used .

"Why then did the parents' experimental group perceive improvement in their parent/adolescent

relationships when the adolescent experimental group did not?" There are several explanations for the differences in perception. First, since this population was self-selected into the project, it is likely that these were parents who were most motivated to make improvements in their relationships with their adolescents. Second, a "halo" phenomenon may have resulted, prompting a more optimistic perspective on the part of the parents. Third, there may have been an element of social desirability resulting in parents' reporting more improvement than actually occurred. Finally, and perhaps the most likely explanation, the results reflect a combination of the above and will need to be more explicitly examined in future research using a longitudinal design to test logical explanations.

No significant change was noted by the parents in the control group across the PARI variables, whereas significant improvement was indicated in the experimental group on two of the five variables (i.e., warmth/hostility ( $p < .007$ ) and sibling conflict ( $p < .04$ )). No improvement was noted in global distress, school conflict and cohesion. In terms of warmth and hostility, what may have occurred is a general reduction in feelings of anger due to the parent acquiring or implementing a technique to voice concerns. It is logical to conclude that the implementation of a "voicing" technique will result in one or more of the following: a) a cathartic

effect produced when concerns are verbalized, b) a reduction in the relative degree of frustration which would be created from holding resentments, c) an increase in self-efficacious behavior by interrupting the power dynamics associated with conflictual situations, and/or d) increased power through the use of communication. These explanations may also be related to why the parents reported an improvement, though not statistically significant, in global distress.

One final area unexplained is that of sibling conflict, and how sibling conflict affects parent-adolescent conflict. While there are many explanations for why sibling conflict exists, one especially salient explanation focuses on "pecking order" dynamics. Some adolescents, feeling ineffective in dealing with various parent situations, may turn their frustrations on siblings. If so, symptom relief may be noted when a parent appropriately implements a method that enhances the adolescent's interpersonal ability to deal effectively with parental issues. On the other hand, sibling conflict as a "normal" developmental stage may be exacerbated when a parent does not utilize appropriate social skills and remedied when the parent does.

Thus, it is possible that parents, when using the social skills with one child, models them in such a way that other children in the family desire to adopt these same social skills. This is the case especially if the

use of social skills maximizes reward and minimizes punishment. This modeling could then result in the other siblings learning and adopting the social skills and using them in other confrontation situations with their adolescent brothers and/or sisters. Whether these social skills are better learned in a short or long-term training program is addressed by the third hypothesis.

### Hypothesis 3

There will be no statistically significant difference in the improvement of self-reported and observed social skills between subjects participating in the one-week versus the ten-week training program. The data clearly indicates that those adolescents and parents participating in the short, one-week training program did not perceive improvement in the acquisition of social skills from the ASSET program, whereas those participating in the eight-week training program did report improvement. This basic finding suggests that while both groups were taught the same skills using the same methodology, there were no training effects noted when the program was shortened. A logical assumption for this may lie with a basic principle of learning; that is, sufficient time needs to be given between the presentation of a skill and its internalization. During the time period, adolescents and parents have an opportunity to use the skill in

specific conflict-oriented situations and to begin to generalize the skills out to other conflict-related contexts both within and outside of the family. This may account for the improvement.

It is of interest to note that females and males improved in some different areas. Specifically, female adolescents indicated improvement in their abilities to give negative feedback, accept negative feedback, and resist peer pressure. Male adolescents, on the other hand, indicated perceived improvement in giving negative feedback, resisting peer pressure, problem solving, and negotiation. Findings may be related to sex-role socialization. Females have typically been socialized to remain relatively submissive, thus encouraging an inability to give negative feedback while remaining submissive to peer pressure. Males, on the other hand, have been reared to be more aggressive, as opposed to assertive. For males, social-skill training may encourage them to view more clearly their rights as well as the rights of others, thus promoting assertive behavior. Thus, it appears that this training could be beneficial in facilitating the remediation of antiquated sex-role standards.

When the findings of both males and females are taken together, it can be said that social skills training, by facilitating the development of self-efficacy, may facilitate that phase of adolescence commonly referred to



as separation-individuation. This may be accomplished by providing the adolescent functional skills to assert autonomy and enhance self-esteem. Such a process may counteract anticipated development of psychopathology. On the one hand, this process may prevent the escalation of oppositional and conduct disordered behavior into antisocial behavior. By the same token the use of social skills may promote adequate self-development, thereby preventing an identity disorder or borderline adolescent behavior disorder.

Mothers of adolescents participating in the eight-week training program, as compared to the mothers in the one-week training program, indicated that they noted improvement in accepting positive feedback, accepting negative feedback, giving negative feedback, problem-solving, giving instruction, and communication. Fathers perceived improvement in accepting negative feedback, giving negative feedback, problem solving, giving instruction, and conversation. While the results indicate that fathers demonstrated greater gain than mothers in giving negative feedback and giving instruction, the overall results suggest that the effectiveness of the ASSET program may be seen in mother-adolescent dyads. This finding is not surprising when one considers that the preponderance of requests for mental health assistance for families comes from the mothers. This is not to say that the father is any less concerned about the family, but,

at least historically, the self-esteem of mothers has been more invested in the family, whereas the fathers' ego has been more located with over involvement with things outside the family (eg. work, leisure) and/or stereotyped parenting roles.

#### Summary

The results of this study suggest that, even though there are major limitations (as outlined in the Methods Section), the ASSET program does appear to be effective in changing the perception of adolescents as well as adults in terms of their applications of basic social skills. However, these perceived changes were only noticeable in the experimental group trained across eight weeks. While there were reported changes in the use of social skills, adolescents did not perceive their increased effective use of the social skills as necessarily reducing the conflict or increasing warmth or cohesiveness as measured by the PARI instrument in this particular study.

With the above in mind, several suggestions appear to be in order. First, the ASSET program is most effective when taught across an extended, rather than abbreviated period of time. Second, the effectiveness of the skills in reducing parent-adolescent conflict may be more likely to be perceived if (a) the program identified specific conflict areas, (b) training addressed the use of the

skills within the context of the identified conflictual context, and (c) generalization training was incorporated. Third, implementing a follow-up review of the skills with specific training could further enhance the remedial use of skill(s) by focusing on the perceptions of the subjects. Last, verification of the effectiveness of the ASSET program would be enhanced by designing a longitudinal study which effectively addresses the previously stated limitations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix AASSET Training Checklist - Parents

## Parents: Accepting Positive Feedback

1. Face your child.
2. Look directly at the youth--keep eye contact.
3. Smile when you are talking.
4. Use an enthusiastic tone of voice.
5. Keep a relaxed posture.
6. Acknowledge the youth's feedback by responding positively to the compliment or the "thanks."
7. If the youth leads into a conversation, you can respond with a statement concerning the topic. If the youth does not lead into a conversation, you can ask a question that will lead into a conversation.

## Parents: Accepting Negative Feedback

1. Face the youth during the conversation.
2. Remain calm -- do not move away from the youth giving feedback.
3. Maintain eye contact with the youth.
4. Keep a neutral facial expression.
5. Maintain a straight posture.
6. Pay attention when the other person is talking by giving head nods.
7. Restate what the youth said to check for understanding of what was said -- or ask for clarification.
8. If you agree with the feedback, apologize and ask for suggestions. If you do not agree with the criticism, tell the youth that you understand the criticism and tell your side with facts and rationales. If you decide not to accept the feedback state your rationales with the benefits and consequences of your actions.
9. Thank the youth or give a statement of appreciation (or a statement that you understand the youth).

## Remember To:

Keep a normal voice tone.

Pay attention when the other person is talking by saying "MM-HMM or Yes".

Remain calm.

Do not interrupt the youth when he/she is speaking.

Stay near the youth -- don't move away.

Listen closely to the youth so that you know what he/she is saying.

REMAIN CALM!

## Parents: Giving Negative Feedback

1. Face the person who you are talking to.
2. Use a serious voice tone.
3. Keep eye contact.
4. Keep a straight posture.
5. Keep a serious facial expression.
6. Ask if you could talk to the person for a moment.
7. First say something positive about the person.
8. Tell the person how you feel or what you think he or she did wrong.
9. Give the person a reason for changing.
10. Ask the person if he or she understood what you said.
11. If the person did not understand, explain again.
12. Ask the person how he or she feels.
13. Give the person suggestions for changing.
14. Thank the person for listening to you.
15. Change the topic to something else.

During the conversation remember to use a concerned tone of voice and be sure to tell the person that you are concerned about him or her.



## Parents: Giving Rationales

1. Face the youth when talking.
2. Keep a serious facial expression.
3. Maintain eye contact.
4. Use a casual statement.  
(eg. If you \_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_).
5. State the benefits the youth may obtain by doing something appropriate. State the short-term benefits the youth will acquire. State the long-term benefits the youth will acquire.
6. State the negative consequences the youth may receive by doing something inappropriate or not doing something appropriate.
7. Ask the youth if he/she understands.
8. Ask the youth how he/she feels.
9. End the conversation with a concerned statement about the youth or the problem.

## Remember:

Use a concerned voice tone. Make the rationale personalized (what is important to the youth!) Give examples of short-term future (if possible). Give examples of long-term future (if possible).

## Parents: Facilitating Problem Solving

1. Try to remain calm.
2. Thank your son/daughter for coming to you with the problem.
3. First, try to decide exactly what the problem is.  
Ask the youth for clarification (if necessary).
4. Ask your son/daughter to think of at least three different solutions to the problem.
5. If the youth can't think of enough solutions, you might volunteer a solution to help him/her.
6. After the youth has come up with three different solutions, PRAISE THE YOUTH for being able to do this.
7. Ask your child to think of the results to each solution -- what will happen if you use the solution. The results he/she should consider:
  - a. how others will react.
  - b. the immediate good and bad results.
  - c. the long-term good and bad results.
8. Ask your child to decide on the most desirable results -- the ones with the most good and least bad. (Make sure it is the youth's decision.)
9. Ask your child to choose the solution that leads to the best results.

10. Ask your child to figure out the steps to do the solution. You may have to guide him/her through this.
11. PRAISE your child for working out the problem. If the solution does not work, help your child go back to step 4 and pick the second best solution. Then go through the steps again. You may need to combine solutions to get the results that your child would want, so be ready to guide him/her toward this. You may need to instruct your child that the solution might not work. If it does work, reassure him/her that you will continue to help.

## Parents: Negotiation

1. Face the youth.
2. Look directly at the youth -- keep eye contact.
3. Keep a neutral facial expression.
4. Keep a straight posture
5. Keep a normal voice tone.
6. After the youth has stated what he/she wants, ask him/her for more information. (If necessary.)
7. State your opinion with rationales. Give your opinion. State the benefits the youth may obtain by doing something appropriate. State the negative consequences the youth may receive by doing something inappropriate or not doing something appropriate.
8. Wait for the youth's response.
9. If the youth agrees, let him\her know that you appreciate the youth seeing your side of the conflict. If the youth does not agree, propose a solution with pros and cons. \*If the youth accepts the solution, let the youth know you appreciate the youth agreeing to the solution.
10. Thank the youth for working out the problem.
11. Pay attention to the youth while he/she is talking by saying "mm--hummm".
12. Do not interrupt when the youth is talking.

**Remember:**

Remain calm and try to think of some possible solutions or compromises to the problem.

## Parents: Giving Instruction

1. Face the youth.
2. Keep eye contact.
3. Keep a neutral facial expression.
4. Keep a straight posture.
5. Get the youth's attention (e.g., calling his or her name).
6. State the instruction in the form of a request. Make sure that you are specific about the required behavior involved in the instruction.
7. Give a rationale for the request.
8. Ask the youth if he/she understands the instructions.
9. If the youth does not understand the instructions, explain again.
10. When the youth agrees, state a positive consequence for following the instructions.
11. If the youth agrees, state a positive consequence for following the instructions
12. If the youth does not agree, give a rationale for the youth to follow the instructions. Go back to step 7 and repeat the sequence.

## Remember:

Keep a normal voice tone through out and to remain calm.  
Do not argue with the youth or use a disgusted voice tone.

## Parents: Conversation

1. Face the person during the conversation.
2. Maintain eye contact with the person.
3. Smile during the conversation.
4. Use a pleasant voice tone.
5. Maintain a relaxed conversational posture - not slouched, but not tense.
6. Say words of greeting.
7. Introduce himself/herself if necessary.
8. Ask an open-ended question to elicit information.
9. Ask another open-ended question about the topic of conversation.
10. Ask a third open-ended question about the topic of conversation.
11. Make a statement relevant to the topic of conversation.
12. Make another statement relevant to the topic of conversation.
13. Make another statement relevant to the topic of conversation.
14. End the conversation with some type of closing statement.
15. Wait for the other person to finish before saying anything (do not interrupt).

16. Give the other person an opportunity to talk by being silent after asking a question or making a statement.
17. Give positive feedback through head nods and by saying "MM-humm" and saying "yeah" during the other person's response.



Appendix BASSET Training Checklist - Adolescents

## Adolescents: Giving Positive Feedback

1. Face the person when giving feedback.
2. Maintain eye contact with the person.
3. Smile when giving feedback.
4. Use an enthusiastic voice tone.
5. Maintain a relaxed posture.
6. Give the feedback.
7. Wait for a response.
8. If the response was positive, use the response to lead into a conversation. If the response was negative, restate the feedback and then change the subject.
9. Make sure the feedback was sincere, not sarcastic or dishonest.

## Adolescents: Giving Negative Feedback

1. Face the person when giving feedback.
2. Maintain eye contact with the person.
3. Keep a serious facial expression.
4. Use a serious voice tone.
5. Maintain a straight posture.
6. Ask to talk to the other person for a moment.
7. Initially give a positive statement or compliment.
8. Tell the person how you feel or what you think he or she did wrong.
9. Give the other person a reason for changing.
10. Ask if the other person understands what was said.
11. Clarify the feedback, if necessary.
12. Ask how the other person feels. (What is the other person's side?)
13. Give the other person suggestions for changing or improving
14. Thank the other person for listening.
15. Change the topic to something else.
16. Make a statement of concern or understanding.
17. Don't "put down" the other person.

## Adolescents: Accepting Negative Feedback

1. Face the person during the conversation.
2. Maintain eye contact with the person.
3. Keep a neutral facial expression.
4. Use a normal voice tone.
5. Maintain a straight posture.
6. Stay near the person.
7. Listen closely when the person is talking and remember to give head nods and say "mm-hmm" and "yeah".
8. Ask for clarification, if necessary.
9. If he/she agrees with the feedback, apologizes and either says that he/she understood the feedback or asks for suggestions.
10. If he/she doesn't agree with the feedback, says that he/she understood, then asks permission to tell his/her side and tells it with facts.

11. If the other person is an authority figure, accept the feedback, even if he/she does not agree with it. If the other person is not an authority figure, either accept the feedback or thank the person for his/her concern and say that he/she will think about it.
12. Remain calm and make no angry statements or accusations.
13. Don't interrupt when the other person is speaking.

## Adolescents: Resisting Peer Pressure

1. Face the person during the conversation.
2. Maintain eye contact with the person.
3. Keep a serious facial expression.
4. Use a concerned, serious voice tone.
5. Maintain a straight posture.
6. Maintain a positive statement about the person.
7. Say that he/she will not engage in the proposed act (say no).
8. Give a personal reason for not engaging in the act.
9. Suggest an alternative activity for everyone.
10. If the alternative was not accepted, restate that he/she will not participate and leave the situation.

## Adolescents: : Problem Solving

1. Remain calm.
2. Decide exactly what the problem is.
3. Name a possible solution.
4. Name another possible solution.
5. Name another possible solution.
6. Name the positive and negative results for the first possible solution.
7. Name the positive and negative results for the second possible solution.
8. Name the positive and negative results for the third possible solution.
9. Decide on the most desirable results (most positive and least negative).
10. Choose the solution that leads to the most positive and least negative results.
11. Formulate the steps necessary to accomplish this solution
12. If the first solution did not work, pick the second best solution and figure out the steps for achieving it.

## Adolescents: Negotiation

1. Face the person during the conversation.
2. Maintain eye contact with the person.
3. Keep a neutral facial expression.
4. Use a normal voice tone - positive and nonaccusing.
5. Maintain a straight posture.
6. Ask to talk to the other person.
7. State what he/she wanted.
8. Give a reason for the request.
9. Wait for a response.
10. If the response is positive, thank the person. If the response is negative, ask the person if he/she could think of anything the participant could do to get what was wanted.
11. Listen to the other person's response.
12. If satisfied with the solution, agree and thank the person.
13. If the other person agreed with the compromise, thank him/her. If the other person did not agree, ask for another solution and continue negotiating.
14. Pay attention to the other person while he/she is talking by giving head nods and by saying "mm-hmm" and "yeah".

## Adolescents: Following Instructions

1. Face the person when receiving instructions.
2. Maintain eye contact with the person.
3. Keep a neutral facial expression.
4. Use a normal voice tone.
5. Maintain a straight posture.
6. Listen closely, giving feedback with head nods and by saying "mm-hmm" and "yeah".
7. Acknowledge the instruction.
8. Ask for clarification, if necessary.
9. Say that he/she would follow the instructions.
10. Follow the instructions.
11. Give polite, pleasant responses.
12. Don't argue with the person about the instructions.



## Adolescents: Conversation

1. Face the person during the conversation.
2. Maintain eye contact with the person.
3. Smile during the conversation.
4. Use a pleasant voice tone.
5. Maintain a relaxed conversational posture - not slouched, but not tense.
6. Say words of greeting.
7. Introduce himself/herself if necessary.
8. Ask an open-ended question to elicit information.
9. Ask another open-ended question about the topic of conversation.
10. Ask a third open-ended question about the topic of conversation.
11. Make a statement relevant to the topic of conversation.
12. Make another statement relevant to the topic of conversation.
13. Make another statement relevant to the topic of conversation.
14. End the conversation with some type of closing statement.
15. Wait for the other person to finish before saying anything. (Do not interrupt.)

16. Give the other person an opportunity to talk by being silent after asking a question or making a statement.
17. Give positive feedback through head nods and by saying "mm-hmm" and "yeah" during the other person's response.

Appendix CPARI Subscales - Parents

## Parent Form: Global Distress Sub-Scale

1. If I could start over again, I'd pick the same teenager.
2. I want to keep things just the way they are now between my teenager and I.
3. I am generally satisfied with my relationship with my teenager.
4. My teenager and I are about as happy as any other family.
5. I would like to make changes in my relationship with my teenager.
6. There are a lot of things about the way my teenager acts toward me that I like.
7. There are some major disagreements that need to be worked out between my teenager and me.
8. My adolescent and I do not get along well.
9. I would like to change the way my teenager gets along with me.
10. I think my teenager and I need help.
11. There are many things I would like to have changed about the way my teenager and I get along.

12. I have often considered taking my adolescent for family counseling.
13. I would be much happier if I had a different teenager.
14. I often wish my teenager was a member of some other family.
15. My adolescent and I have a close relationship.
16. My teenager and I can enjoy laughing together sometimes.
17. I know I can turn to my teenager for help.
18. My teenager and I have some happy moments together.
19. Living with my teenager is okay.
20. All parents and teenagers should get along as well as we do.
21. My teenager and I get along better than most parents and teenagers I know.
22. I am very happy when I am with my adolescent.
23. My adolescent goes out of his or her way and does things to please me.
24. I am very happy to be living with my teenager.
25. In all honesty, my teenager and I have a great relationship.
26. The best times of my life are the hours that I spend with my teenager.

27. I envy the way other parents and teenagers get along with each other.
28. My teenager embarrasses me in front of other people.
29. My friends notice how poorly my teenager treats me.
30. I don't enjoy being with my teenager.
31. Sometimes my teenager gets angry enough to hit me.
32. There is conflict between my teenager and I.
33. I get upset when I realize how bad things are between my teenager and me.
34. I have wished I could get away from my teenager.
35. At least three times per week, we get angry at each other.
36. My adolescent and I hold grudges against each other for a long time.
37. My adolescent and I often get angry at each other.
38. There is a lot of fighting between my teenager and I.
39. My teenager and I do a lot of yelling and screaming at each other.
40. There could be a lot less conflict between my adolescent and me.
41. My adolescent and I often don't talk to each other.
42. My teenager is easy to get along with.
43. My teenager often doesn't do what I ask.

44. My teenager tells me that I am unfair.
45. At least once a day, we get angry at each other.

Parent Form: Warmth/Hostility Sub-Scale

1. When I feel sad, my adolescent can help me feel better.
2. I frequently experience strong feelings of hostility towards my teenager.
3. Sometimes I feel as though my adolescent doesn't care about me.
4. My adolescent and I feel a great deal of warmth and affection towards each other.
5. My teenager does many different things to show me that he/she loves me.
6. It is unusual for my adolescent to express feelings of warmth and affection.
7. Sometimes I wonder whether my teenager hates me.
8. I am not sure my teenager has ever loved me.
9. Even though we may not always express it, my adolescent and I really do love each other.
10. Quite honestly, I hate my teenager.
11. I cannot forgive my adolescent for the horrible things he/she has done.
12. I do not trust my teenager.
13. I often feel rejected by my adolescent.

14. Things have reached the point where my adolescent and I can never repair our ruined relationship.
15. My adolescent often acts in a hostile way towards me.
16. My adolescent is very accepting of my faults.
17. Even though we argue, my teenager and I basically feel good about our relationship.
18. I am proud of my teenager.
19. My teenager and I accept each other as we are.
20. I envy families with good parent-teen relationships.
21. My teenager often hurts my feelings.

## Parent Form: Cohesion Sub-Scale

1. There are few secrets in our family.
2. If members of our family need time alone, they can usually take it.
3. People can go their own way in our family.
4. There is little feeling of togetherness in our family.
5. We try to give each other a lot of support.
6. There is a lot of spirit in our family.
7. It is easier to discuss my problems with friends than family.
8. In our family we do a lot of things together.
9. Our family has problems thinking of things to do together.
10. Family members rarely spend their free time at home.
11. Our home is the center of family activities.
12. We are an extremely close-knit family.
13. In our home, we have very little private space.
14. I usually see my entire family at least once per day.
15. In our family, time alone is very important.
16. We usually know what everybody is doing in our family.
17. I have gone several days without spending time with my entire family.
18. Independence is encouraged at home.



19. We respect each other's privacy.
20. We do not spend enough time together.
21. We encourage each other to develop in his\her own way.
22. Decisions frequently are forced upon me by other family members.
23. I rarely have any idea what others in this family are thinking.
24. When somebody gets upset in our family, we all try to be supportive.
25. When somebody gets physically hurt in our family, we all try to be helpful.
26. At home we go out of our way to do things for each other.
27. I feel alone in our family.
28. This family shows little concern for me.
29. In our family people feel alienated from each other.
30. My adolescent is more like a brother or sister to me than a son or daughter.
31. We don't usually close our bedroom doors at night.
32. We understand each other's feelings without having to talk.
33. We feel a very strong sense of loyalty to each other in our family.
34. It's a family rule that we have to go on vacations together.

35. My spouse and I rarely go out together and leave our teenager at home alone.
36. When my spouse and I go out together, my teenager feels left out.

## Parent Form: Conflict Over School Sub-Scale

1. My teenager and I do not argue a lot over school work.
2. I can't make my teenager realize the importance of school success.
3. My teenager is capable of doing better in school.
4. I frequently have to tell my daughter when, where, or how to study.
5. When I offer to help my teenager with school work, we end up arguing.
6. Sometimes my teenager does poorly in school just to spite me.
7. My adolescent complains that I criticize him\her for not doing as well as others.
8. If I apply pressure, my teenager will do better in school.
9. My teenager says I'm nagging when I try to help with school work.
10. My adolescent and I enjoy talking about his/her school life.
11. I don't take it personally if my teenager does poorly in school.
12. My teenager and I do not argue over teachers.
13. My teenager and I often have disputes about getting to school on time.

14. I sometimes do my adolescent's homework for him/her.
15. If my teenager cuts class, I help by giving him/her an excuse.
16. I reward my adolescent for good grades.
17. I punish my adolescent for bad grades.
12. I often tell my son/daughter the importance of becoming involved in many school activities.
19. My adolescent and I don't argue about being accepted into the right social group at school.
20. I am happy with my teenagers attitude about school.
21. My adolescent and I fight when I ask to see his/her assignments.
22. My teenager complains that I put too much pressure on him/her to get high grades.
23. My adolescent rarely lies about school.
24. When my teenager brings home a low test score, we have a fight.

## Parent Form: Conflict Over Siblings Sub-Scale

1. My children have as good a relationship with each other as most children.
2. To be honest, I treat one of my children better than the others.
3. My children have a trusting relationship with each other.
4. My children fight too much.
5. I find myself taking sides when the children fight.
6. The relationship between my children is so poor that I wish I only had one child.
7. One of my children feels inferior to the others.
8. My adolescent accuses me of comparing him/her to the other children.
9. My children are frequently jealous of each other.
10. My children can settle their disputes without my help.
11. My children are good friends.
12. My children compete with each other in a destructive way.
13. My children defend each other.
14. My children frequently put each other down.
15. My children are very different from each other but still get along.
16. My children sometimes hurt each other physically.

17. My adolescent accuses me of spending more time with the other children than with him/her.
18. Quite honestly, I find myself disciplining my adolescent more harshly than the the other kids.
19. My adolescent accuses me of buying more things for the others than more him/her.
20. I treat all of my children fairly.
21. My children enjoy playing games together.
22. When my children try to do things together, they end up in a big fight.
23. My children frequently argue about what shows to watch on television.
24. The kids tattle on each other.
25. When the family goes for a ride in the car, the kids end up fighting.
26. My children can share things without a fight.

Appendix DPARI Subscales - Adolescents

## Adolescent Form: Global Distress Sub-Scale

1. I am generally satisfied with my relationship with my parents.
2. There are very few things that I wish to change between my parents and me.
3. There are a lot of things about the way my parents act toward me that I like.
4. There are some major disagreements that need to be worked out between my parents and me.
5. In general, I don't think we get along very well.
6. I think my parents and I need help.
7. There are many things I would like to have changed about the way my parents and I get along.
8. I would be much happier if I had different parents.
9. My parents compliment me when I have done something well.
10. I know I can turn to my parents for help.
11. I am very happy when I am with my parents.
12. In all honesty, my parents and I have a great relationship.

13. I envy the way other parents and teenagers get along with each other.
14. My friends have noticed how poorly my parents treat me.
15. I don't enjoy being with my parents.
16. Sometimes my parents get angry enough to hit me.
17. I get upset when I realize how bad things are for my parents and me.
18. I have thought about running away from my parents.
19. At least three times per week, we get angry with each other.
20. My parents and I hold grudges against each other for a long time.
21. My parents and I often get angry at each other.



## Adolescent Form: Warmth\hostility Sub-Scale

1. When I feel sad, my mother helps me feel loved and happy again.
2. I frequently experience strong feelings of hostility towards my mother.
3. Sometimes I feel as though my mother doesn't care about me.
4. There is a great deal of love and affection felt between my mother and me.
5. My mother does many different things to show me she loves me.
6. It is unusual for my mom to express feelings of warmth to me.
7. Sometimes I wonder whether my mother hates me.
8. I am not sure my mother has ever loved me.
9. Even though we may not always express it, my mom and I really do love each other.
10. Quite honestly, I hate my mother.
11. I am proud of my mother.
12. I can't forgive my mother for the horrible things she has done to me.
13. I do not trust my mother.
14. My mother rarely trusts me.
15. I often feel rejected by my mother.

16. Even when my mother says she loves me, I know she doesn't really mean it.
17. Things have reached the point where my mother and I can never care for each other again.
18. My mother is unable to accept me as I am.
19. I wish my mother and I could have a close, warm relationship like other parents and teenagers.
20. When I feel sad, my father helps me feel loved and happy again.
21. I frequently experience strong feelings of hostility towards my father.
22. Sometimes I feel as though my father doesn't care about me.
23. There is a great deal of love and affection felt between dad and me.
24. My father does many different things to show me he loves me.
25. It is unusual for my dad to express feelings of warmth to me.
26. Sometimes I wonder whether my father hates me.
27. I am not sure my father has ever loved me.
28. Even though we may not always express it, my dad and I really do love each other.
29. Quite honestly, I hate my father.
30. I am proud of my father.

31. I can't forgive my father for the horrible things he has done for me.
32. I do not trust my father.
33. My father rarely trusts me.
34. I often feel rejected by my father.
35. Even when my father says he loves me, I know he doesn't really mean it.
36. Things have reached the point where my father and I can never care for each other again.
37. My father is unable to accept me as I am.
38. I wish my father and I could have a close, warm relationship like other parents and teenagers.

## Adolescent Form: Conflict Over School Sub-Scale

1. My mother and I do not argue a lot over school work.
2. My school achievement is more important to mom than me.
3. Even when I try very hard in school, my mother tells me I could do better.
4. My mother nags me about where, when, or how to study.
5. When I ask my mom for help with schoolwork, we end up in an argument.
6. Sometimes I do poorly in school to get even with my mother.
7. My mother criticizes me for not doing as well in school as others.
8. My mother rarely pressures me to get high grades.
9. My mother and I enjoy talking about school life.
10. My mother doesn't take it personally if I do poorly in school.
11. mom often hassles me about getting to school on time.
12. If I cut classes, my mom gives me an excuse.
13. The better I do in school, the more my mother will love me.
14. My mother punishes me for bad grades.
15. My mother rewards me for good grades.
16. My mother does not push me to become involved in school activities.

17. My mother pressures me to be popular in school.
18. My mom and I fight when she demands to see my assignments.
19. My mom often accuses me of lying about school.
20. When I bring home a low test score, my mom and I have a fight.
21. My father and I do not argue a lot about school work.
22. My school achievement is more important to dad than to me.
23. Even when I try hard at school, my father tells me I could do better.
24. My father nags me about where, when, or how to study.
25. When I ask my dad for help with school work, we end up in an argument.
26. Sometimes I do poorly in school to get even with my father.
27. My father criticizes me for not doing as well in school as others.
28. My father rarely pressures me to get high grades.
29. My father and I enjoy talking about my school life.
30. My father doesn't take it personally if I do poorly in school.
31. Dad often hassles me about getting to school on time.
32. If I cut classes, my dad gives me an excuse.

33. The better I do in school, the more my father will love me.
34. My dad punishes me for bad grades.
35. My dad rewards me for good grades.
36. My father does not push me to become involved in school activities.
37. My father pressures me to be popular at school.
38. My dad and I fight when he demands to see my assignments.
39. My dad often accuses me of lying about school.
40. When I bring home a low test score, my dad and I have a fight.

## Adolescent Form: Conflict Over Siblings Sub-Scale

1. My parents like the other kids more than me.
2. I do not trust my brothers and sisters.
3. I hate at least one of my brothers and sisters.
4. My brothers, sisters and I fight a lot.
5. My parents usually take my brothers' and/or sisters' sides against me.
6. I wish I were an only child.
7. My parents frequently compare me with my brothers or sisters.
8. My brothers and/or sisters are jealous of me.
9. My parents are stricter with me than with the other kids.
10. I consider my brothers and/or sisters good friends.
11. I don't feel like I have to compete with the other kids in my family.
12. I defend my brothers and sisters.
13. My brothers and/or sisters frequently put me down.
14. My brothers, sisters, and I are very different, but we still get along.
15. My brothers and/or sisters have sometimes hurt me physically.
16. My parents buy my brothers and/or sisters more clothes, records, and other things than they buy me.

17. When my brothers, sisters, and I try to do things together, we end up in a big fight.
18. When the family goes for a ride in the car, we kids end up fighting.
19. My brothers and/or sisters often accuse me of tattling on them.
20. We kids can settle fights between us without our parents' help.



## Adolescent Form: Cohesion Sub-Scale

1. There are few secrets in our family.
2. If members of our family need time alone, they can usually take it.
3. There is little feeling of togetherness in our family.
4. We try to give each other a lot of support.
5. It is easier to discuss my problems with friends than with family members.
6. In our family we do a lot of things together.
7. Our family has problems thinking of things to do together.
8. Family members rarely spend their free time at home.
9. Our home is the center of family activities.
10. We are an extremely close-knit family.
11. We usually know what everybody is doing in our family.
12. In our family, time alone is very important.
13. I usually see my entire family at least once per day.
14. I have gone several days without spending time with my entire family.
15. Independence is encouraged at home.
16. We respect each others privacy.

17. We encourage each other to develop in his or her own way.
18. I rarely have any idea what others in this family are thinking.
19. At home we go out of our way to do things for each other.
20. I feel alone in our family.
21. This family shows little concern for me.
22. We feel a very strong sense of loyalty to each other in our family.
23. It's a family rule that we have to go on vacation together.
24. When my parents go out together, I feel left out.