

Together We Can: The Important Role of Co-parenting for Expectant and Parenting Teens and Young Adults



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1. Describe both positive and negative dimensions of co-parenting
2. List at least three ways in which co-parenting can benefit teen parents and their children
3. Identify links between positive co-parenting relationships and teen father engagement
4. Describe the content of common co-parenting program approaches

What is co-parenting?

The degree of clarity or sharpness of resolution and contrast of which a televised image or broadcast signal is received.

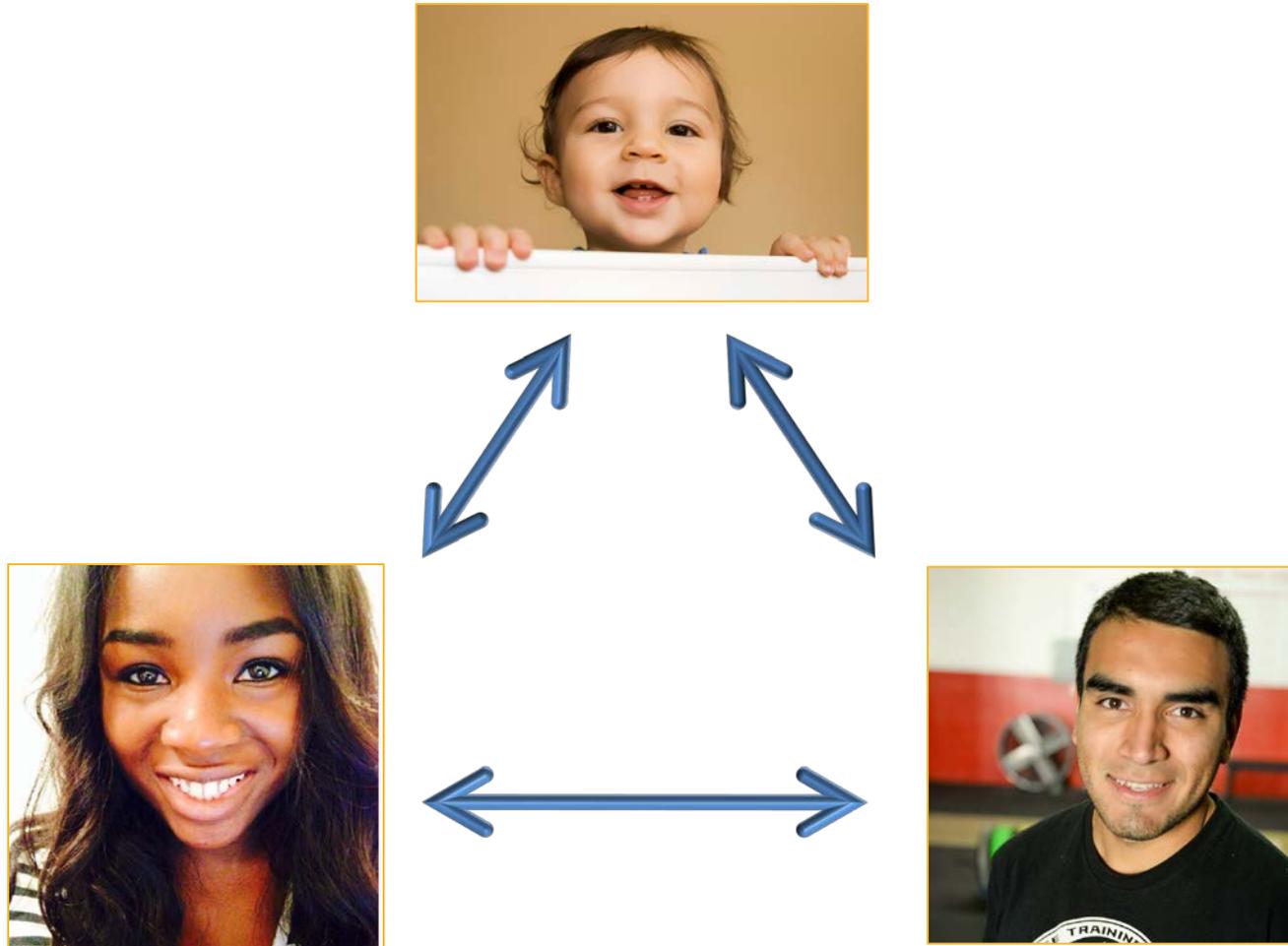
def·i·ni·tion n. 1.
The teacher gave definitions of the new words.
The clarity of the image (picture) on the TV screen.

- **Shared decision making** or the degree of **support and collaboration** between parents and/or caregivers **regarding the well-being of a child**

- An enterprise undertaken by two or more adults who **together take on the care and upbringing of children** for whom they **share responsibility**

- **The interaction of two individuals who share decision making regarding the well-being of a child and are responsible for a child in a way that promotes the child's well-being and positive development**

Co-parenting as part of a family system



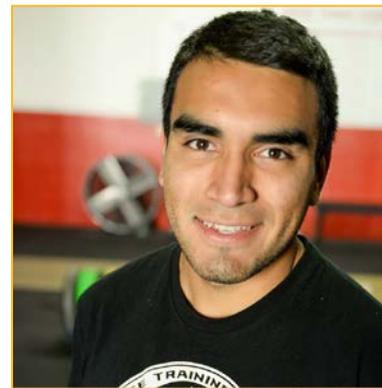
Co-parenting as part of a family system



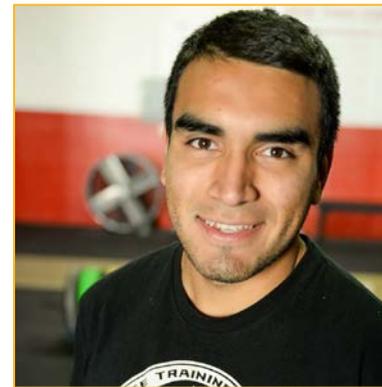
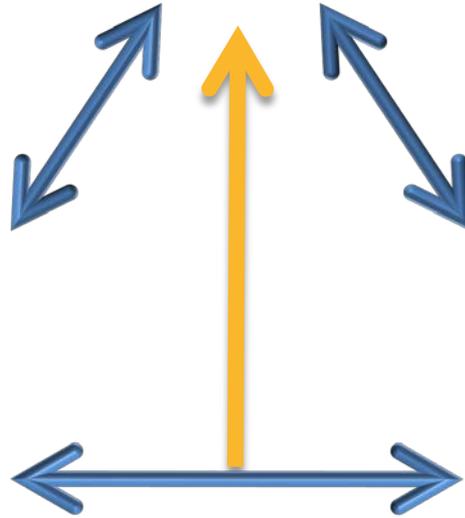
Co-parenting as part of a family system



Co-parenting as part of a family system



Co-parenting as part of a family system



- Positive and negative dimensions of co-parenting



- Positive dimensions:
 - Co-parenting support
 - Co-parenting cooperation
 - Shared decision-making
 - Communication
 - Conflict management
- Negative dimensions:
 - Conflict/disagreement
 - Undermining behaviors

Do you address co-parenting in your program?

Yes

No

- Co-parenting can benefit teen parents and their child.



- Implications for child well-being
 - Negative co-parenting can lead to:
 - Lower cognitive ability
 - Lower social skills
 - Increased behavior problems
 - Insecure attachment
 - Positive co-parenting can lead to:
 - Better social skills
 - Fewer behavior problems

- Implications for parents
 - Positive co-parenting can lead to:
 - Increased confidence in parenting ability
 - Increased confidence in relationship skills
 - Reduced parenting-related stress

- Positive co-parenting and father engagement



- Parenting Alliance Inventory (Abidin, 1988)
 - 20-items
- Sample items:
 - My child's other parent enjoys being alone with our child.
 - During pregnancy, my child's other parent expressed confidence in my ability to be a good parent.
 - When there is a problem with our child, we work out a good solution together.
- Response categories: Strongly agree, Agree, Not sure, Disagree, Strongly disagree

- Parenting Convergence Scale (Ahrons, 1981)
 - 6-items
- Sample items:
- *Please indicate how often these questions are true for you.*
 - When you and your child's other parent/guardian talk about how to raise the child, how often is the conversation hostile or angry?
 - When your child complains about his/her other parent/guardian, how often do agree with him or her?
 - How often do you and your child's other parent/guardian have different ideas as to how to raise him/her?
- Response categories: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always

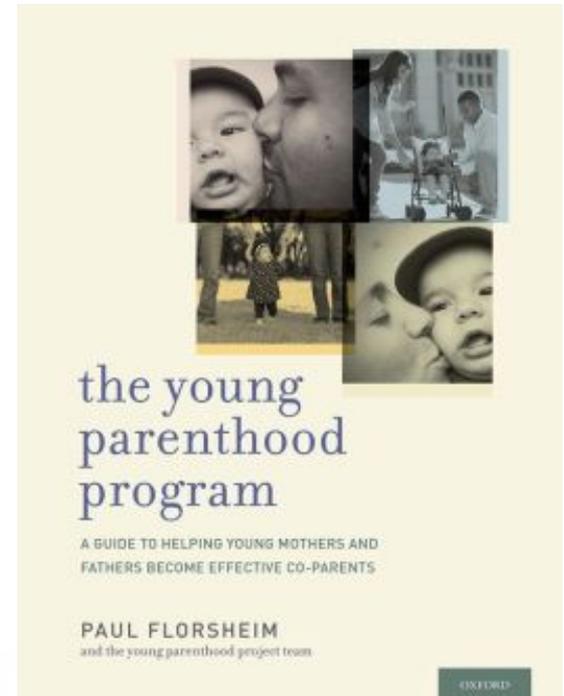
- Supportive co-parenting (Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study)
 - 6-items
- Sample items:
 - When father/mother is with the child, he/she acts like the father/mother you want for your child.
 - You can trust father/mother to take good care of the child.
 - He/she respects the schedules and rules you make for the child.
- Response categories: Never true, Rarely true, Sometimes true, Always true

- Shared decision-making (The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort, ECLS-B)
 - When it comes to making major decisions about your child, please tell me if your spouse/partner has *No Influence, Some Influence, or a Great Deal of Influence* on such matters as discipline, nutrition, healthcare, and childcare.
- Co-parenting conflict (ECLS-B)
 - Do you and your spouse/partner *often, sometimes, hardly ever, or never* have arguments about your children?

Challenges to promoting co-parenting skills

- Few curricula are available
- Until recently, most targeted divorced couples
- Few programs target teen parents

- Promising co-parenting programs and their content



Promote a child-focused relationship





Increase problem solving skills

What is the most challenging barrier to addressing co-parenting relationships in your program?

- Lack of appropriate curricula for teens
- Difficulty recruiting teen fathers
- Too much conflict between parents
- Other

Two programs that have been rigorously evaluated with positive results

Family Foundations

- Group format
- 2-hour sessions
- Consists of two parts
 - 4 prenatal sessions
 - 4 postnatal sessions
- For expectant couples

Young Parenthood Program

- Individual couples
- 60-minute sessions
- Total of 10-14 weekly sessions
- Developed for adolescent and young adult expectant mothers and fathers

Results from a 4-year longitudinal study



Parent outcomes

- ↑ co-parenting
- ↑ parenting efficacy
- ↓ parenting stress
- ↓ physical punishment

Child outcomes

- ↑ social competence
- ↓ problem behaviors-
mainly for boys

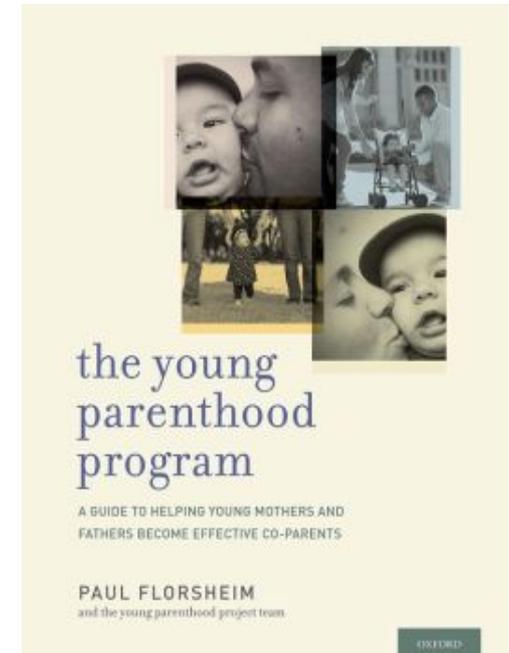
Results from an 18 months longitudinal study

Father outcomes

- ↑ engagement at 18 months*
- ↑ relations with parenting partner

Mother outcomes

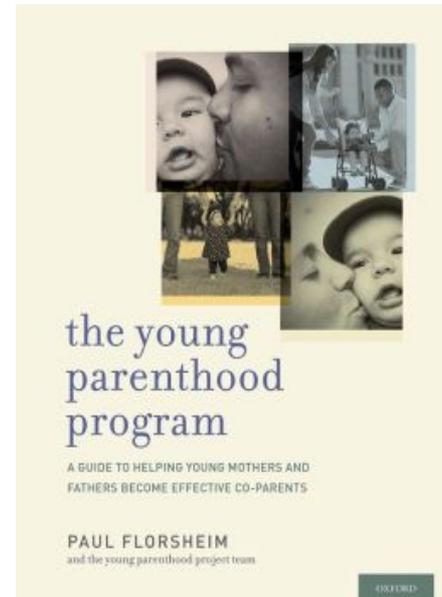
- ↑ relationship competence



* *Improvements in father engagement were related to improvements in the co-parenting relationship*

Dr. Paul Florsheim

- Primary Investigator for the Young Parenthood Study at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee



1. Introduction & Engagement

2. Identify Strengths & Goals

3. Interpersonal Skill Development

4. Role Transitions

5. Summary and Preparation

6. Parenting Support and
Booster Sessions

YPP Phase 3: Menu of Interpersonal Skills

Reflective Listening Skills. Couples learn to be quiet and listen, to speak more directly and clearly, to “take in” their partner’s thoughts and feelings.

Support Skills. Helps both partners learn how to provide support, ask for support and receive support...and to recognize when support is needed.

Problem Solving Skills. Couples learn to brainstorm solutions to ongoing conflicts. Focus is on finding compromises that work for both partners.

Stress Management Skills. Couples learn how to help each other calm down when stressed out or anxious.

Acceptance Skills Partners learn to appreciate each other “as is,” including flaws.

Expressive Skills. Couples learn to express feelings positive, respectful ways.

Family Planning Skills Couples discuss if and when to have another child and how to avoid pregnancy in the meantime.

Minimizing Negativity High-conflict couples learn to communicate productively from a distance and avoid fights that could upset or harm their child.

New infographics about the important role of young fathers from OAH

Setting the Record Straight about YOUNG FATHERS
Get the facts. Help young fathers be heroes in their child's life.

FACT: While most births to teen mothers involve a father over the age of 20, most births involving teen fathers are to teen mothers.

FACT: Young men are typically in a relationship with the mother of their child for at least 18 months before becoming a father.

FACT: While young fathers tend to be engaged with their child in the first year, they often become less involved over time – especially after a break up.

FACT: While less than one in five young fathers provide formal child support, they often provide financial support in other ways.

YOUNG FATHERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE
When They are Positively Involved in Their Child's Life

Positive father involvement is characterized by a close, supportive and consistent relationship with the child. Relationships that expose the child to abuse and/or are inconsistent are generally harmful for the child.

Mother Benefits
More likely to get prenatal care
Experiences less stress, which can lead to better parenting

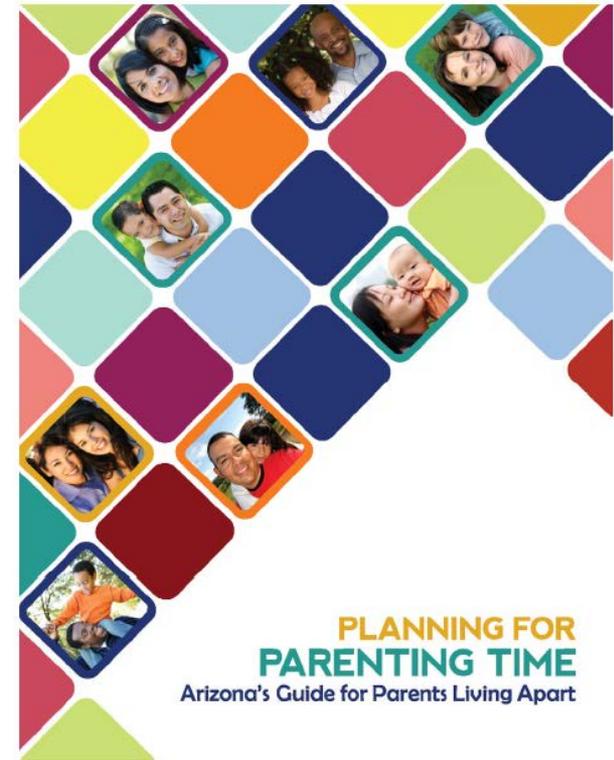
Father Benefits
More motivation to make responsible choices
Increased self-esteem

Child Benefits
Better prepared for school
Fewer behavior problems at school

Get the facts. Help young fathers be heroes in their child's life.

Parenting plans

- Developed to promote custody arrangements that benefit the child
- Provide developmentally appropriate considerations for non-cohabitating parents
- AZ, MA, TX



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Questions?



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