

Listening and Engaging in Dialogue in a Supervised Visitation Center

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Paulo Freire, Brazilian Educator - “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”

Paulo’s teaching helped us:

- Understand **mythical** structures of thinking (nature vs. culture)
- Understand that to **change our world view** (entitlements), we need to know our myths (beliefs), be conscious of them, look at the consequences and know we have other choices
- Make the shift away from the banking system and toward a problem posing one

Monitor as “Banker of Knowledge”

- Monitor believes s/he is superior to parents using a SVC
- Monitors believes s/he holds all the knowledge that they need to share with the parents
- Monitor does not model caring and nonviolence
- Participants of SVC suppress parts of themselves to conform to the monitor’s imposed ideas of what fathers and mothers should be like
- Believes that abusive parents can not be trusted so creating a relationship with them is pointless and is seen as collusion
- Believes the SVC service needs to be controlled in a rigid manner
- Parents using an SVC aren’t encouraged to directly express themselves
- Monitor tries to force parent behavior in an SVC
- Monitor does not look for the “humanness” in parents using the SVC
- Monitor believes they need to be in total control of how the supervised visit or exchange unfolds
- Fosters defensiveness by parents
- One-way conversation

Monitor Engaged in Dialogue

- Monitor sees themselves and participants as equals
- Monitor has as much to learn from participants as they have to teach
- Monitor embodies caring and nonviolent qualities
- Parents through interaction with monitor gain insight into what kind of parent they are and want to be
- Belief that abusive parent has the capability to flourish in their life and community despite their overwhelmingly abusive history
- Allows room for organic conversation to be the focal learning moments
- Parents feel motivated to learn
- Monitor works to convey unconditional acceptance-not of the abusive behavior-rather of the person behind the behavior
- Monitor allows organic conversation to happen
- Reduces defensiveness
- Encourages two way conversation deepening the understanding of both parent and monitor
- Experience relationships with caring adults, explore their beliefs, and decrease their use of abusive behaviors.



Paulo Freire

Dialogue is central – conversation where we seek to understand contradictions, seek truth and instill doubt which is the beginning of change.

“The end is the means in process.”



Paulo Freire

The process of Dialogue:

Involves **Problem Posing** questions

Exposes **Interrelationships and connections**
between our personal and cultural beliefs

Exposes the dehumanizing **Consequences** of our
world view on ourselves and others

Creates **alternative views** of reality – other ways
of understanding our world



Four Pillars of Paulo Freire's Work

1. Be concrete – start with the lives of people
2. Dialogue is the medium of learning
3. Education is never neutral – conversations with oppressed people either function to domesticate or liberate
4. Liberated consciousness is borne out of love, not hatred

The Role of the Educator



- Be authentic
- Promote dialogue without collusion
- Work with lived experience rather than theory
- Challenge without judgment
- Make connections and expose contradictions
- Encourage critical thinking
- Simultaneously see the beauty the men bring to the world and the threat they pose

Examples of Commonly Held Beliefs of Men Who Batter

- My children are my possession that I can do with them whatever I want.
- I know what is best for my children because they are mine.
- I get to tell the mother of my children how to discipline, interact with, and behave towards our children.
- When I pay child support for my children I should get to see them whenever I want.
- My dad disciplined me that way and I turned out just fine.
- You need to yell at kids to get them to listen.
- Children must have some level of fear of their parents in order to respect them.
- I have the right to tell my children what to do and not to do.

Sample Exercise: Dialogue on one of the beliefs

- Role-play: one person role-play the abusive parent and the other the SVC monitor
- Have the abusive parent state one of the belief statements in “common language”
- Example:

Belief: For your children to respect you they must fear you.

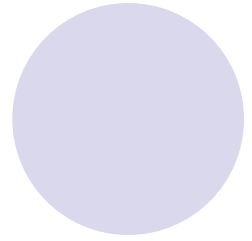
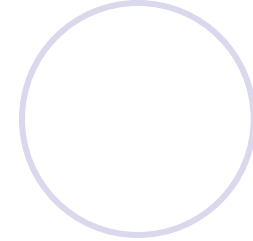
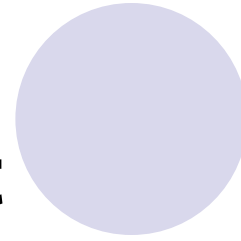
Common language: Kids these days don't respect their parents. I want my kids to respect me. If I would have ever talked to my dad like that he would have “whooped” me.



During role play practice dialogue by:

- 1) Gaining a **deeper understanding** of the men's reality and worldview
- 2) Using **problem posing questions**
- 3) **Exposing the connections** between our personal and cultural beliefs
- 4) **Exposing the consequences** of our worldview on ourselves and others
- 5) **Describing another way to view the world**
– alternative thinking – i.e. equality wheel, nurturing children wheel

Sample Exercise: Dialogue on Respect



What does it mean to respect your child? Partner?

What does respect look like when disciplining a child?

What beliefs make respect for your partner possible?

Can respect and fear coexist in a relationship between a parent and a child? Between a two adults in an intimate relationship?

How Supervised Visitation Center Staff Can Create an Atmosphere for Dialogue

- Male and female monitors in the SVC
- Dialogue without judgment
- Exposing contradictions
- Facilitate men 'reading their world'
- Spend 75% of dialogue exploring themes on the Equality Wheel of the DAIP
- Provide culturally specific programs for men

Wrap-up and Closing

