

**Evaluation**  
**Of**  
*A Quiet Place*  
**Emotionally Intelligent**  
**Parenting Course**  
**2004**

**Sarah Lowes**

**Introduction**

This report evaluates the 'Emotionally Intelligent Parenting' course pilot. The course was written and devised by Penelope Moon and carried out by Lindsey Caplan, Chris Harvey and Lucyanne Mackie on behalf of The Cheiron Trust. Sarah Lowes carried out assessment, evaluation and monitoring.

The course ran from 24/06/2004 to 11/11/2004 and comprised 10 sessions of 2.5 hours duration, totalling 25 hours in all. It was held in the staffroom at Knotty Ash Primary School, Liverpool.

Eleven parents attended the course. Seven parents completed the Pre and Post self-assessment scales. Nine parents took part in the semi-structured interviews.

## Gender bias

All eleven parents who chose to attend the course were female. This was not intentional, as the course was open to any parent/carer with a child in the school.

## Sources of data

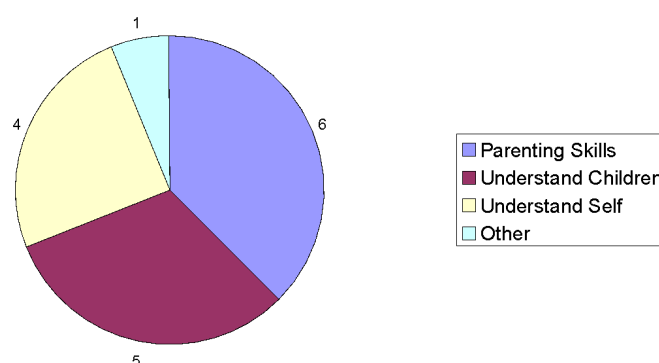
Data was obtained from

- A questionnaire for parents which focussed on the potential for change regarding their view of themselves and also concerning their parenting skills and quality of relationships with their children.
- Semi-structured interviews with the parents.

## Reasons for attending the course

Figure 1 shows that the most common reasons given by parents for attending the course were to improve their parenting skills and to understand their children better. Understanding themselves and their behaviour concerning their children was also frequently mentioned. These three reasons fitted in well with one of the stated aims of the course: '(to) build up self-esteem, confidence and communication skills in parents'. (Moon, P. *Emotionally Intelligent Parenting: A Few Thoughts*, The Cheiron Trust, 2004).

**Reasons for Attending the Course**



*Figure 1: Reasons for Attending the Course.*

Parents were asked to identify three qualities that they liked about themselves. The three most common qualities were: having good listening skills, being friendly and helpful.

Just under half of the parents could not find any positive qualities in themselves or only one. This is a clear indication of the low self-esteem experienced by a large proportion of the group.

<b>Qualities Parents would Like to Change in Themselves</b>	
Feeling stressed	Intolerance
Feeling anxious	Feeling short-tempered
Lack of confidence	Lack of empathy/compassion

*Figure 2: Qualities Parents would like to Change in Themselves*

The qualities in Figure 2 seem to fall into two groups: those that refer to the parents' feelings about themselves e.g. lack of confidence, anxiety, stress; and those that refer to the parents' relationships with their children e.g. intolerance, short temper and lack of empathy. This indicates that this particular set of parents is the ideal target group for an emotionally intelligent parenting course.

<b>Most Common Positive Qualities of Children</b>	
Happy	Polite
Friendly	Loving

*Figure 3: Most Common Positive Qualities of Children*

As Figure 3 indicates all the parents were able to find positive qualities in their children. This suggests that the basic parent/child relationship is healthy and has the potential to respond well to any positive changes and strategies prompted by the parenting course.

<b>Most Common Qualities which Parents wish Children to Change</b>	
Lack of confidence	Lack of appreciation
Propensity for arguing	Not listening to parent

*Figure 4: Most Common Qualities, which Parents wish Children to*

## *Change*

Figure 4 lists three qualities which the parents wish their children to change and *which they also wish to change in themselves*: lack of confidence; arguing/short temper; lack of appreciation/lack of empathy. Although the qualities do not equate exactly in two cases, the meaning of the terms is similar enough to be striking. It is possible that if the parents can be successful in their aim of becoming more self aware - more 'emotionally intelligent' by progressing through the course, then they may have much more likelihood of being able to help their children transform as regards these issues.

It is unclear as to whether the parents were conscious that they were identifying undesirable qualities in their children which matched those in themselves, but the likelihood is that they were not.

### **Specific parenting Issues**

Three main issues were highlighted prior to the course: consistency, anger management, and communication. Consistency was broken down into three further areas: bedtimes, mealtimes, and going out.

Parents were asked to rate themselves on a separate numerical scale for each issue. They completed this task twice: once at the beginning of the course and once at the end. The scale measured from 0 -10, where 0 = poor and 10 = excellent. Eleven parents attended the course and seven returned questionnaires with completed numerical scales.

# Consistency

## Bedtimes

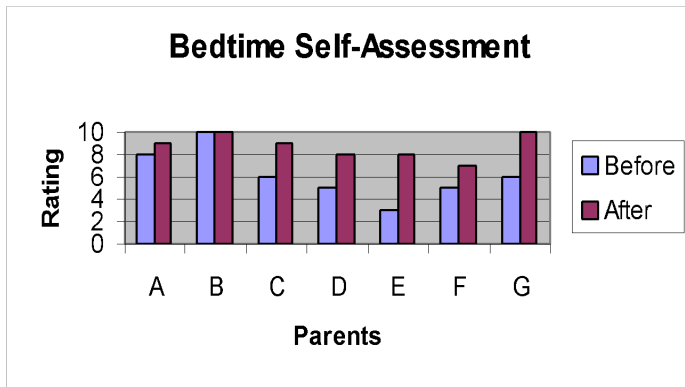


Figure 5: Bedtime Self-Assessment.

Figure 5 shows that 6 out of 7 parents experienced an improvement in the consistency with which they were able to deal with their children's' bedtimes. Parent B did not improve as she had already rated herself as a 10. Parent E experienced the most benefit and rated herself as moving three points up the scale.

## Mealtimes

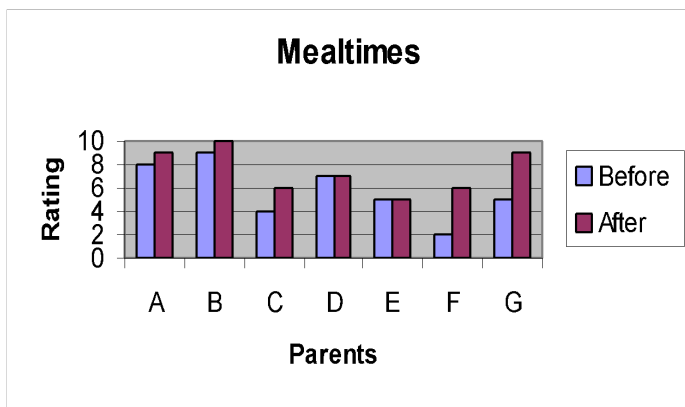
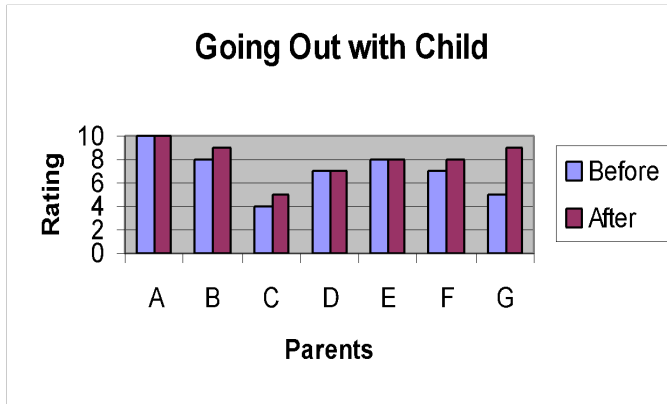


Figure 6: Mealtimes Self-Assessment.

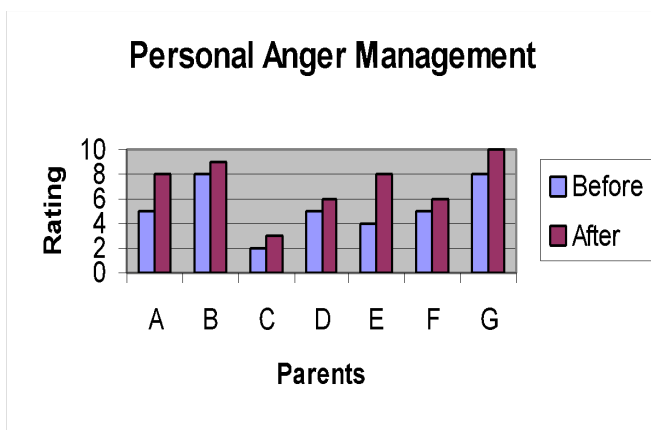
Figure 6 shows that 5 out of 7 parents experienced an improvement in their consistency when managing their children's' behaviour at mealtimes. Parents D and E did not improve but had already rated themselves as average or above average. Parents F and G experienced the most benefit and rated themselves as moving four points up the scale respectively.



### Going out with Child

*Figure 7: Going Out Self-Assessment*

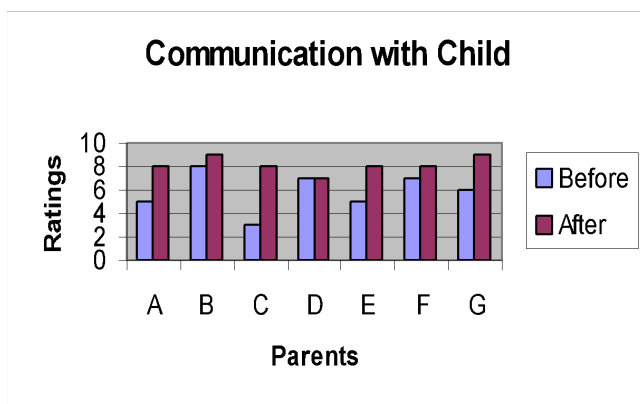
Figure 7 shows that 4 out of 7 parents experienced an improvement in their consistency when dealing with their children's behaviour outside the home environment. Parents A, D and E did not experience any improvement in this area and had already rated themselves as being above average. Parent G experienced the greatest benefit and rated herself as having moved four points up the scale.



### Personal Anger Management

*Figure 8: Anger Management Self-Assessment.*

Figure 8 shows that every parent experienced an improvement in their ability to manage their anger with their children. Parent E experienced the greatest benefit with a four-point move up the scale.



### Communication

Figure 9: Communication Self-Assessment.

Figure 9 shows that 6 out of 7 parents experienced an improvement in their ability to communicate effectively with their children. Parent D did not experience any benefit and had already rated herself as being above average in this respect. Parent C experienced the greatest benefit with a five-point move up the scale.

### General Parenting Skills

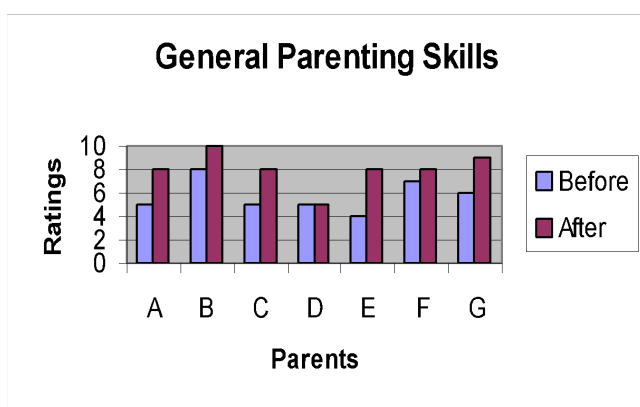


Figure 10: Parenting Skills Self-Assessment.

Figure 10 shows that 6 out of 7 parents felt that they had experienced an overall improvement in their parenting skills as a whole. Parent D claimed not to have experienced any overall improvement and rated herself as remaining at point 5 on the scale. She had, however, rated herself as having experienced a 3-point improvement in the consistency with which she handled bedtimes and a 1-point improvement in her ability to manage her anger.

Parent E rated herself as having experienced the greatest overall improvement with a 4 point move up the scale, whilst parents A, C

and G all rated themselves as having moved 3 points up the scale. None of the parents rated themselves as having slipped down the scale in any of the categories. By the end of the course 6 out of 7 rated their parenting skills as well above average with 1 at average.

## Interview Questions

Nine parents out of the eleven attending the course were asked a series of five interview questions. Two parents were unable to attend due to illness and work commitments.

**Question One:** *Did you find any of the following techniques effective: anchoring, breathing techniques, guided Guardian Angel relaxation, relaxation CD?*

<b>Most effective relaxation techniques</b>			
anchoring	Breathing techniques	Angel relaxation	Relaxation CD
2	5	2	5

*Fig.11: Most Effective Relaxation Techniques*

Here is a selection of parents' comments concerning question one:

<b>Parents' comments on course relaxation techniques</b>
"The more I got into the anchoring, the more it worked."
"You've got to work on these techniques yourself at home."
"The Guardian Angel relaxation was really good."
"Feeling safe and secure is important. I got used to that particular room."
"Every time we did a relaxation, I felt I was sinking and shrinking - it was lovely."
"The chakra one had too much information in it. I couldn't remember the colours."

*Fig, 12: Parents' Comments on Course Relaxation Techniques.*



The parents have highlighted breathing techniques and the relaxation CD as being the most effective. They refer to this again in Figures 16 and 17. It seems that the breathing techniques provide an immediate strategy for stressful situations while the thrice-weekly use of the relaxation CD creates long-term effects of general calmness.

**Question Two:** *Which homework sessions worked best for you?*

<b>Most effective homework sessions</b>			
Reading with child	Smiling/benefit of doubt	Baking with child	Relaxation CD
2	4	4	2

<b>Most effective homework sessions</b>			
Looking at nature with child	Finding a personal treasure	Space Journey relaxation CD with child	Swimming and/or walking with child
1	2	1	1

*Fig.13: Most Effective Homework Sessions*

Here is a selection of parents' comments concerning question two:

<b>Parents' comments on homework sessions</b>
"I enjoyed most of the homework sessions."
"I liked the smiling one – I got a lot of positive results."
"I liked ones where you didn't have to write anything down."
"I liked the benefit of the doubt/smiling one – it was funny!"

*Fig.14: Parents' Comments on Homework Sessions*

Baking a cake and smiling and giving others the benefit of the doubt were chosen as the most effective homework sessions. As this group began with a noticeable lack of self-esteem, (see discussion of Fig. 2), it seems that the quick and simple act of giving and receiving smiles has had the general effect of increasing their confidence.

**Question three:** *Which parts of the course worked best for you as regards helping you to develop a positive relationship with your child?*

<b>Most effective parts of course re parent/child relationship</b>	
Learning to relax	Learning to understand self
5	4

*Fig.15: Most Effective Parts of Course re Parent/Child Relationship*

Here is a selection of parents' comments concerning question three:

<b>Parents' comments on most effective parts of course re parent/child relationship</b>
"Taking a closer look at what we eat and how it can affect how we feel really helped me."
"I learned to step back a bit when I was having a really difficult situation with the children."
"I don't shout any more. I liked the bit which helped me to realise which mode I was in – Parent, Adult or Child."
"Looking at my recollections from childhood helped me to see what I was putting onto my own children."
"I took a good look at myself."
"I learned to walk away and count and then sort the children out one by one."

“Learning to breathe deeply relaxed me and made me more able to deal with the problem/circumstance.”
“I learned to calm myself down and walk away instead of screaming at the children.”
“I’ve started trying to step back and stay calmer.”

*Fig.16: Parents’ Comments on Most Effective Parts of Course re Parent/Child Relationship.*

The parents’ replies to this question prioritised learning to relax and understand themselves as having had the greatest beneficial effect on their relationships with their children. This course has a sustained and varied weekly emphasis on relaxation which has added greatly to the participants’ success in improving their parenting skills. This can be evidenced by their comments (see Fig.17).

**Question Four:** *Which parts of the course did you enjoy most or find most useful for yourself?*

<b>Most enjoyable/useful parts of course for self</b>			
Massage	Time for self	Sharing with other parents	Relaxation techniques
2	4	2	1

*Fig.17: Most Enjoyable/Useful Parts of Course for Self.*

Here is a selection of parents’ comments concerning question four:

<b>Parents’ comments on most enjoyable/useful parts of course for self</b>
“Just the fact that Thursday morning is <i>our</i> time – I liked all of it.”
“Every session because that was my time for myself.”
“All of it – it’s been fabulous.”
“Having time for ourselves, guaranteed for ten weeks.”

“Being with people who are all in the same boat, having a laugh and a cry.”

“If you’ve had a bad day with the kids, you find out that you’re not the only one who’s shouting at them at 7 o’clock in the morning!”

“We would never have spoken to each other normally and now we know each other well and we’ve found things in common that we never knew about.”

*Fig.18: Parents’ Comments on Most Enjoyable/Useful Parts of Course for Self.*

Parents’ replies indicate that having time for themselves, (involving massage, relaxation etc), and sharing their problems and feelings with other parents have been of the greatest value as regards personal development. The course facilitators must have carefully created the opportunity for these intimate exchanges to take place, as an atmosphere of trust and acceptance would be essential.

**Question Five:** *What would you like to change about the course?*

Eight out of the nine parents said that they did not wish to change anything about the course. One parent complained that a particular session had encompassed such varying activities that she had found it “a rollercoaster of emotions.”

Here is a selection of parents’ comments concerning question five:

<b>Parents general comments concerning the end of the course</b>
“It was a great balance. We just wish it would carry on every week.”
“I loved all of it – I wish it was running for longer.”
“It was a brilliant ten weeks.”
“I don’t want to change anything about the course except that I’d like it to carry on!”

“It was great to know that for ten Thursdays I had ‘my time’ and that it was a time that benefited my children and family too – it was something to look forward to.”

*Figure 19: Parents’ Comments Concerning the End of the Course*

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this course was to produce more emotionally intelligent parents, raise the participants’ confidence and self esteem and improve their communication skills with their children.

The parents themselves identified their problems as lying in these particular areas at the beginning of the course (see Fig.2 below).

<b>Qualities Parents would Like to Change in Themselves</b>	
Feeling stressed	Intolerance
Feeling anxious	Feeling short-tempered
Lack of confidence	Lack of empathy/compassion

*Figure 2: Qualities Parents would like to Change in Themselves*

Figure 16 (see below), from the end of the course, provides a contrast with the initial self-assessment of Figure 2 and suggests that the aims have been realised.

<b>Parents’ comments on most effective parts of course re parent/child relationship</b>
“Taking a closer look at what we eat and how it can affect how we feel really helped me.”
“I learned to step back a bit when I was having a really difficult situation with the children.”
“I don’t shout any more. I liked the bit which helped me to realise which mode I was in – Parent, Adult or Child.”
“Looking at my recollections from childhood helped me to see what I was putting onto my own children.”
“I took a good look at myself.”

“I learned to walk away and count and then sort the children out one by one.”
“Learning to breathe deeply relaxed me and made me more able to deal with the problem/circumstance.”
“I learned to calm myself down and walk away instead of screaming at the children.”
“I’ve started trying to step back and stay calmer.”

*Fig.16: Parents’ Comments on Most Effective Parts of Course re Parent/Child Relationship.*

Hard evidence can be found in the results of the Pre and Post self-assessment scales:

- 6 out of 7 parents improved the consistency with which they dealt with their children’s bedtimes (see Fig.6)
- 5 out of 7 parents improved the consistency with which they managed their children’s behaviour at mealtimes (see Fig.7)
- 4 out of 7 parents improved the consistency with which they dealt with their children’s behaviour outside the home environment (see Fig.8)
- 7 out of 7 parents improved their ability to manage their own anger with their children (see Fig.9)
- 6 out of 7 parents improved their ability to communicate effectively with their children (see Fig.10)
- 6 out of 7 parents experienced an overall improvement in their general parenting skills (see Fig.11)

A consistently high rate of improvement has been evidenced in each area. On this basis it becomes clear that the course facilitators have achieved their aims of creating more emotionally intelligent parents.