DEMOCRACY AND PARENTING

A Guidebook on Bringing Democracy Into Childhood

Matthew Hiebert

TAVAANA

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Nolte, 1972

Introduction

It's easy for us adults to forget what it is like to be a child. Even those of us who like to think we remain young at heart can never really go back to the experience of things for the first time, the experience of things through the eyes and ears of a three year old, or an eight year old, or a teenager. Yet, looking back, we can see our own childhoods with the insight and wisdom accumulated through a lifetime of reflection and experience. We can see how many little incidents, seemingly significant or insignificant at the time, collectively defined our childhoods, and at the time, defined us. As the poem above so beautifully illustrates, the collective impact of those experiences on our development is immense. We can see connections between the nature of those experiences, the kind of people we have become, and the strengths and challenges we find ourselves with today.

Being a parent isn't always easy. Neither is being a child. Both experiences are full of unexpected turns of events, challenges, and experiences which nobody has prepared us for. Raising a child is among the most personal jobs imaginable. In this job, we can see ourselves at our best and our worst. We are confronted by the need to negotiate between our needs and wishes, and those of our children. We are pushed to our limits, we see our true colors, and we are compelled to keep trying harder. Yet this job is also joyful and exhilarating. We strive to give our children the best chance we

can, and we delight in their progress.

Our children's progress accumulates over time, and we soon start to realize that our role is not a neutral one. We may start to see reflections of ourselves in our children—our good sides and bad! We may observe our children's interactions with others, and find cause to intervene. We may be shocked or mortified by something our child says or does. And as new parents, we likely lack the strategies to address what needs addressing, or to correct what needs correcting. We may be inclined to yell, or to lecture. We may, to our surprise, find ourselves in a power struggle with a two-year-old child, and losing!

This guidebook is has been developed to help parents through these challenges, by drawing guidance from the values and ideals of democracy. Many people have only vague ideas about democracy, as a way of managing affairs by voting. But it is much more than that. Democratic ideals have implications for all forms of human interaction, and from them, we can gain insight into personal development and interpersonal relations of all kinds, including parent-child relationships. This guidebook is about that.

The starting point for this guidebook is a genuine respect and concern for our children, coupled with a concern for the society they live in. Democracy comes into the picture as a rich source of inspiration, and a practical philosophy for safeguarding the best opportunities for our children to reach their potential, alongside other children who are doing the same. While this guidebook cannot address all aspects of parenting and childhood, it is full of examples and suggestions for how to understand childhood and parenting from a democratic perspective, and respond accordingly. It is divided into four sections, as follows:

- Section One: Five Types of Parenting, in which different parenting styles are described and contrasted
- Section Two: Fundamentals of Democracy, in which basic principles of democracy are discussed
- Section Three: Democracy for Parents and Children, in which the principles of democracy are discussed in relation to family life, and the objectives of democratic parenting are described
- Section Four: Democracy and the Theatres of Childhood, in which

different principles and practices of democratic parenting are elaborated on, in relation to different aspects of children's daily experiences.

Section One

Five Types of Parenting

We see all kinds of parents out in the world. We see parents who yell and scream and threaten and menace their children. We even see parents who hit. We also see parent who bribe and beg and indulge their children. And we see parents who are simply inattentive, absent, dismissive, and neglectful. Occasionally, we see parents who are both respectful and respected by their children—parents who seem to be working with their children, rather than against them. This guide is about that kind of parenting.

Each different approach to parenting, and to the parent child relationship, achieves different outcomes. These outcomes are both short-term and long-term. In the short term, it may be effective for a parent to raise their voice or to offer a bribe to a child, in order to have them comply with what the parent wants. But over time, these approaches can be counter-productive. This section describes five different types of parenting: neglectful, authoritarian, manipulative, permissive, and democratic.

Neglectful Parenting

The idea of neglectful parenting contains an inherent contradiction. It is, in fact, the absence of parenting, or rather, the negative consequence of inactive parenting. Neglectful parenting is what happens when parents are too busy to spend time interacting with their children, when they are inattentive to children's needs, when they are constantly distracted around their children, or simply "away.". Neglect can take many forms, and in extreme cases, children of neglectful parents may end up undernourished,

and may suffer trauma similar to that present in cases of physical abuse. In less extreme case of emotional neglect, the consequences can still have a serious impact on the child's wellbeing and development.

Neglectful parents are not necessarily physically absent from their children. A home can be filled with neglect when a child is left on their own too often, or parked in front of a television or computer screen. Children benefit immensely from direct human interaction, particularly with their parents. They strive, unknowingly at first, to develop a sense of self and a sense of belonging, and if they do not develop a sense of connectedness with their parents, and a sense of who they are and what their role is within the family, these fundamental drives often go unmet. Misbehavior such as acting out, throwing tantrums, teasing others, and so on, is often a manifestation of the child seeking to have their basic drive for attention satisfied.

Few parents would intentionally neglect their children, but many do in reality, because of competing demands that may seem to be more urgent or more important at the time. But it is not only urgent and important matters that take parents away from their children. Oftentimes, when parents themselves are not disciplined or not engaged with their family life, they will gravitate towards easy forms of stimulation for themselves—keeping longer hours at the office, or constantly spending time looking at their phones, magazines, televisions, or other sources of entertainment. Other times, parents may be overwhelmed with the responsibilities of parenting, and may feel negatively about the child's demands on them. In these cases, the parents may have never fully adopted the role of caregiver that their child requires. In all of these cases, children suffer the effects, and if parents are regularly neglectful, the children may, over time, escalate their behavior to the point where it becomes very urgent or impossible to ignore.

When a child is regularly neglected, here are some of the consequences:

- **Delayed physical and psychological development:** In extreme cases, especially when there is physical neglect, children may suffer from malnutrition, and may have serious emotional trauma. This type of

abuse can lead to delays in physical and psychological development, and can ultimately cause problems for bone and muscle growth, neurological development, and can lead to chronic health problems.

- **Misbehavior:** They may act out more than others, in order to get attention from their parents. In addition, they may be more likely to get into trouble with authorities, simply because their parents have not been sufficiently engaged to teach them appropriate boundaries or to intervene before bad behavior escalates. Associated with this is a lack of self-discipline, and general lack of propriety, because they may not have had the benefit of regular guidance and correction to develop these behavioral skills.
- **Neediness:** They may be particularly needy, whiny, demanding, or generally persistent, in an attempt to gain attention from others in that way. They may be stubborn about not doing particular things for themselves, simply so that a parent will spend time doing it with them.
- I**nadequacy/low self-esteem:** They may feel inadequate, or undeserving of others' love and attention. Moreover, they may have feelings of guilt, knowing that they only receive attention for their negative behaviors. This may lead the child to be quiet, apathetic, passive, and generally submissive.
- **Depression:** Depression is another potential consequence of neglect, linked with feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and guilt. Depending on the child's resilience, this may be more or less severe, but depression may develop late and carry on into the child's adulthood.
- **Insecurity:** Because they are not well cared for, many neglected children have a sense of insecurity that may even manifest itself as anxiety. Moreover, they tend to display poor coping skills when under stress.
- **Withdrawal:** Teens raised in neglectful homes are often withdrawn, particularly from family life. They tend to have difficulty connecting with others in general, and may be unresponsive to affection. Teens who have been neglected may also be more prone to experiment with drugs, provoke fights, or solicit sexual interactions.

Authoritarian Parenting

Authoritarian parents are those who aim to control their children directly, particularly through the use of top-down or heavy-handed approaches. These are the parents who raise their voices, yell, and threaten their children. Authoritarian parents force children to comply with their wishes through the use of intimidation, threats (often arbitrary ones), humiliation, or even physical force. Other behaviors associated with authoritarian parents include: regularly criticizing and scolding the child; bad temper; belittling the child; bossing them around; intimidation; denial of certain fundamentals, such as not letting the child go to the bathroom, or sending them to bed without dinner; violence or abuse, such as hitting, spanking, yelling, cursing, belittling, and other harsh punishments.

This approach pits the parent against the child, and denies the child his or her own voice and opinion, and yet many parents don't even realize they are behaving in this way. In many cases, they don't want to behave in this way, but lack other skills and strategies, and resort to authoritarian approaches out of desperation when children don't cooperate. Ultimately, however, this makes the situation worse, as this approach undermines the very principles of cooperation, and by regularly exercising external control over children, it does not support the development of internal positive impulses on the part of the child. It creates a dependency on external control, and results in a home environment that is tense, rigid, oppressive, and domineering.

When a child is raised in an authoritarian environment, here are some of the things they learn:

- **Anger:** The spend a lot of their time feeling angry, resentful, scared, powerless, and even hostile towards authoritarian parents. This hostility develops over time, and they learn (through the parent's example) that it is acceptable to use violence or aggression to deal with difficult situations. They learn to express frustration through curses, yelling, tantrums, or hitting. They may be hurtful towards others in order to get what they want.
- **Conformity:** In order to not stand out and become subject to criticism

or worse, children in authoritarian homes will tend to conform or blend in as much as possible, particularly when they are young.

- **Dishonesty:** They live in fear, and work to dodge criticism. They may lie or hide things in order to escape punishment.

A word about hitting:

Being hit as a child is directly associated with symptoms of depression and psychiatric disorders as adults. Children who are hit demonstrate increased rates of delinquent and antisocial behavior, and greater risks of abusing their own children or partners as adults. Moreover, when children are hit as a consequence for antisocial behavior, that behavior tends to *increase* rather than decrease.

- **Low self-esteem:** They often have poor self-image and low self esteem, because they are regularly criticized or humiliated. In turn, they also tend to blame others in order to get out of trouble, rather than accepting responsibility for their own actions.
- **Low social competence:** They lack social competence, because the parent dictates what the child should do and how they should behave, rather than letting them gain experience themselves. They are often uncooperative, and tend to compete against others in order to win approval. They learn to be socially withdrawn, and learn not to try to share their own thoughts or feelings. They look to others to decide what is right, for fear of being wrong themselves.
- **Passivity:** They tend to be passive, and rarely take initiative, because this is consistently discouraged or even punished. They lack spontaneity and curiosity, because decisions are constantly made for them. They often feel powerless or incompetent, and they tend not to develop self-discipline, because they are accustomed to external controls. They obey blindly, without reflection or internal motivation, at least until their drive for autonomy prompts them to start rebelling against authority.
- **Rebelliousness:** As children in authoritarian homes develop into teens, they will tend to rebel against this oppressive environment, often strongly and sometimes aggressively. In an attempt to satisfy

their unmet needs for social belonging, affection, acceptance, security, and autonomy, they are more at risk of troublesome behaviors such as: running away, getting into fights, experimenting with drugs, hanging out with bad crowd, and generally testing boundaries.

Manipulative Parenting

Manipulative parenting is similar to authoritarian parenting in many ways, and has some of the same consequences. Like authoritarian parenting, manipulative parenting is focused on controlling children using external means. However, rather than the intimidating approach of authoritarian parenting, manipulative parenting is more about material and emotional control of children. Rather than overt violence and abuse, manipulative parents make use of rewards and punishments, often in the form of bribes, to get what they want. This approach can be confusing for children, as they are often rewarded for behaviors that should be expected as standard, and tends to result in an unsustainable escalation of both rewards and consequences.

In addition to rewards and punishments, manipulative parents also use emotional control, by demonstrating or withholding affection, in the form of praise, love, attention, hugs, and so on. Manipulative parents use affection as a bargaining tool, and children of manipulative parents learn to associate affection, or lack of affection, with their behavior, rather than being able to expect their parents' love and care unconditionally, as they should. It is easy to see from this how children in this context become emotionally insecure. Other common strategies of manipulative parents include: isolating a child; criticizing or humiliating them; making them feel guilty; arbitrary rewards and punishments; denial of rights and freedoms; and extended lectures.

When a child is raised in a manipulative environment, here are some of the things they learn:

- **Insecurity:** It is traumatic for children when parents' affection is withheld, and over time, they may learn to be distrustful of others and to doubt their sincerity. They may also have trouble making

close friendships because their understanding of affection is corrupted.

- **Resentfulness:** Children who are regularly manipulated often feel misunderstood and confused. This can lead them to develop anxiety over wanting rewards and fearing punishments, and over time, they feel manipulated and develop resentment towards those who manipulate them.

A word about consequences:

Consequences are most effective when they:

- Reinforce positive behaviors rather than punishing negative ones
- Are timely (immediately after an incident)
- Are logically or naturally related to the behavior they are reinforcing
- Are used sparingly, alongside other approaches to behavior management

- **Deviousness:** It is not surprising that children who are manipulated regularly also learn to become manipulative themselves. They pay attention and cooperate only when it serves them. They learn how to lie and deceive in order to avoid punishments and obtain rewards. Ultimately, children of manipulative parents often end up controlling their parents, rather than the other way around, using tactics such as compliance, defiance, or even temper tantrums in order to get what they want.
- **Lack self-discipline:** Children in manipulative homes, like those in authoritarian ones, often lack self-discipline. They are motivated by rewards and punishments, or by promises and fears, all of which are entirely external. As such, they tend to not develop intrinsic mechanisms for managing their own behavior, whether that be working through challenges or avoiding temptations.
- **Emotional withdrawal:** As children in manipulative homes develop into adolescents, they tend to withdraw emotionally, in part because their parents have proven to be unreliable sources of affection and acceptance. They often rebel, and seek attention or affection elsewhere. Communication at this stage becomes challenging, because the child has not learned how to communicate sincerely on emotional matters.

Permissive Parenting

Permissive parenting is at the other end of the spectrum from the controlling approaches of authoritarian and manipulative parenting. While those approaches seek to dominate, manipulate, or otherwise control the child, permissive parents lack control, and often even lack meaningful influence over their child's behavior. In some cases this may be because the parent intentionally allows the child the widest possible scope of behavior, favoring an unrestrictive environment, or they may simply want to be "nice." More commonly, they simply lack the tools to bring the child's conduct into a reasonable range. With permissive parents, chaos prevails. Permissive homes tend to be chaotic and disorderly places, with little consistency in schedules, expectations, or other aspects of daily life. Rules are not enforced, and there is little or no respect for adult authority, for order, or for limits in general. Permissive parents have a hard time saying no to their children, or setting limits. And when they do set limits, their children often ignore it with little or no consequence. The techniques of permissive parents include: begging, pleading, negotiating, nagging, yielding, self-sacrificing, and constantly bending to the child's whims or offering rewards in order to gain some degree of cooperation.

Not surprisingly, permissive parents often feel exhausted and overwhelmed. They may also feel unappreciated, helpless, and even resentful of their children, who constantly appear to be disrespecting them, even while the parent tries to indulge them! The situation is somewhat counterintuitive, and often ends up in a negative spiral, with permissive parents spoiling their children, smothering them, catering to them, and making excuses for them. In an effort to correct their children's behavior, permissive parents may nag the child (without consequences), or lecture them, or may ultimately become exasperated, and out of frustration or sheer desperation, they may revert to authoritarian approaches such as yelling in order to finally get their child to cooperate. However, any cooperation in this context is usually short lived, because it is based on a kind of negotiated agreement, rather than any internal impulse from the child.

When a child is raised in a manipulative environment, here are some of the things they learn:

- **Selfishness:** When a child's unreasonable demands are consistently indulged, and particularly when this comes at the expense of others, such as parents sacrificing their own comfort or schedule for the child, they do not have the chance to develop real consideration for others.
- **Neediness:** As with the above, children who are indulged in this manner also tend to demonstrate more neediness, including other associated characteristics like whining, demanding, and dependency on others.
- **Rudeness/disrespectfulness:** When there are no clear limits for a child's behavior, they do not get the opportunity to learn and habitualize the norms and conventions of polite behavior. This may also be manifested as disrespectfulness of authority, because they do not develop an appropriate understanding of authority during early childhood.
- **Impulsiveness:** Children who grow up in a context where anything goes and there are no limits or constraints to accepted/ tolerated behavior, will tend to demonstrate more out of control behavior outside of the home. This is because they have not developed and internalized the executive functions of self-control or restraint, and in some cases they may not even be aware of social norms for acceptable behavior.
- **Disorganized/irresponsible:** Not surprisingly children who are not expected to comply with standards of behavior are less likely to

A word about limits:

Children are biologically programmed to want to explore their world. They yearn to know what is okay and not okay, and what will win them smiles. They gain a real sense of security when they know what is expected of them. It is natural that they test limits, because they are constantly growing and exploring and seeking to have their various needs met. But if limits are clearly communicated and patiently reinforced, most children will be quite content to work within them.

internalize attributes such as organization or personal responsibility. Because they are often indulged, even when they fail to meet appropriate expectations for behavior, hygiene, and so on, they may lack basic life skills.

- **Controlling:** Children who are raised in permissive households are also often adept at triggering their parents' emotional buttons, using passive aggressive or manipulative behavior in order to get their parents to comply.
- **Insecure:** Because permissive parents often revert to authoritarian behavior such as yelling or punishing their children, out of sheer frustration, the child may feel insecure or confused by their parents' shifting moods and personalities. The child may also come to feel guilty, and/ or inept, and may come to identify with their weaknesses and insufficiencies as their peers develop autonomy while they themselves remain dependent on others.
- **Dismissiveness:** Teens that are raised in permissive environments may be more dismissive of authority and of any potential consequences for their actions. This is in part because they have grown up with unrealistic perception of the world around them. They are accustomed to freedom, but may be irresponsible with this freedom because they may not have developed an understanding of the responsibilities that come with it. This may ultimately get them into trouble with authorities.

Democratic Parenting

Democratic parenting is unlike the other approaches to parenting discussed above. Rather than trying to manipulate or control children, or just letting them run amuck, democratic parenting establishes order and cooperation in the parent-child relationship through developing strong and respectful relationships, by maintaining a sense of connection and understanding, by establishing clear and reasonable expectations, and through empathic communication. When there are strong connections between parents and children, this makes it possible to understand the underlying reasons for their behaviors, and ensures that the child feels included. Children who feel

included, respected, and listened to, are far less likely to be uncooperative.

Democratic parenting allows the home environment to be relaxed, open, trusting, orderly, and flexible. In this approach, parents' love and displays of affection for their children are unconditional, and are not used as rewards or withheld as punishments. Their love is unconditional, and is provided alongside role modeling, coaching, encouragement, listening, and conversation with their children. When children misbehave, the parents seek to understand the reasons for the misbehavior in terms of the child's basic physical and emotional needs before responding. When there are consequences for misbehavior, they tend to be logical ones, related to the behavior itself.

When a child is raised in a democratic environment, here are some of the things they learn:

- **Self-discipline:** Because they are not controlled externally, but are still expected to uphold standards of behavior, they internalize these standards.
- **Self-control:** They develop an awareness of appropriate parameters for behavior, and the self-control/ self-monitoring skills necessary to overcome impulsiveness.
- **Personal responsibility:** They learn to own their own actions, and take responsibility for what they say and do.
- **Respect:** They develop a sense of respect that is not based on fear, but rather, on consideration for the needs, perspectives, and experiences of others.
- **Communication skills:** Because of the kind of communication that democratic parents model, children learn to communicate honestly and openly, with an assertive (as opposed to aggressive, aloof, or complacent) tone.
- **Gratitude:** Because they become more attuned to others' needs, perspectives, and contributions, children raised in democratic homes will tend to show more gratitude and appreciation for others, rather always demanding more.

- **Rhetorical skills:** Children will learn how to discuss different topics in a fair and open (non-manipulative, non-aggressive) way.
- **Trust and respect for parents:** Teens who are raised in democratic contexts learn to trust their parents' guidance and direction. Because they have developed healthy, open communication patterns with their parents, and they feel respected and included in family matters, they will be less inclined to rebel, to withdraw, or to seek attention in inappropriate ways. In short, they learn to value and trust the guidance provided by their parents.

Comments

The five types of parenting presented in this section have some areas of overlap, and in reality, most parents are likely to dance between two or more styles depending on where they are, what the situation is, and how they are feeling in that given moment. This is natural. We may be more permissive when we are in a good mood, and more authoritarian when we are tense or tired. This can lead children to feel confused and insecure-forever unsure about expectations and consequences, because they are dependent on the emotional state of the parent. It is important to think about this from the perspective of the child. They are entirely dependent on their parents for survival, and they have an intense need to feel connected to their parents because of that. They need to feel as if they belong, and hold status in the eyes of their parents. And they need to be able to trust and rely on their parents' judgment.

This guidebook pursues the idea of democratic parenting as the most attractive of the alternatives presented above, both in terms of the developmental outcomes for the child, and the sense of satisfaction afforded to the parent during the process. Ultimately, authoritarian parents will run out of power in the face of rebellion, permissive parents will be exhausted and overrun, manipulative parents will be out-manipulated by their children, and neglectful parents will miss the entire process. Democratic parents, on the other hand, help their children develop into responsible citizens, and they reap the rewards of this as parents as well. Democracy, it turns out, is a very humane ideal. It works well with people's

natural drives and instincts, and creates the best opportunities for mutual benefit when there are competing interests at stake. The next section of this guidebook will discuss the idea of democracy in more detail, in order to provide a solid foundation for further discussion of democratic parenting.

Section Two

Fundamentals of Democracy

What is Democracy?

Defining democracy in simple terms can be difficult, because it has many meanings, and these meanings are vibrantly debated. Democracy can be, at the same time: a style of government; a mode of decision-making; an ideology; a set of values; or an understanding of rights, responsibilities and relationships. Fundamentally, democracy refers to the idea of social equality, but a number of other principles are highly interrelated with this, including rights and responsibilities, political freedoms, and the rule of law, as well as other norms and conventions that can help hold together a society of free and equal citizens. Democracy finds its political expression in the many ways in which the members of an organizational group are able to both balance and exercise influence and control over that organization. In general, this results in a style of governance in which those affected by decisions participate meaningfully in making them.

The following points may be helpful in developing a frame of reference:

- Democracy is not a linear sequence of events but, rather, a never-ending process;
- Democracy is complex, and involves diverse interests, concerns and practices;
- Democracy relates to power, and the issue of social inequalities must be factored into any analysis of democracy;

- Democracy requires the participation and engagement of citizens at all levels;
- Democracy is much more than elections and voting.

While elections and referenda may be conspicuous features of most democracies, the idea of democracy is by no means limited to elections. In fact, if discussion of democracy focuses too much on elections, it can marginalize other fundamental components of most democracies, including: individual rights and responsibilities, such as free speech; open/independent media; judicial independence; mechanisms for addressing socio-economic concerns such as poverty and discrimination; rule of law; and fair and transparent processes of lawmaking and enforcement. In a healthy democracy, participation in democratic life should be understood to be much more than participation in elections.

Types of Democracy

Democracy takes many different forms around the world in different countries and organizations, and there is no specific set of policies or practices that fully operationalizes the ideal. Critical observers will note that in many "officially" democratic systems, undemocratic elements may be present, just as some highly democratic practices may be present in relatively autocratic systems. The following variations on the term help to describe the variety of practices associated with democracy, recognizing the they are very much overlapping and interrelated:

- **Representative democracy** involves the democratic selection, through voting or another participatory process, of representatives who make decisions on behalf of the larger group
- **Electoral democracy** refers to the process of electing leaders or representatives through some kind of voting system
- **Liberal democracy** is a representative form of democracy with protection of individual liberty and property by the rule of law
- **Constitutional democracy** is governed by a constitution which gives parameters to the political activities, such as those of elected

representatives

- **Parliamentary democracy** is a type of representative democracy in which executive decisions are taken by the elected membership of a parliament
- **Direct democracy** involves the direct involvement of citizens in decision-making, rather than the election of intermediary representatives
- **Participatory democracy** refers to systems in which citizens participate in diverse forms of decision-making and deliberative processes
- **Consensus democracy** involves decision-making based on consensus rather than majority rule

Democratic Citizenship

In the context of most established democracies, the term refers to a political system in which decisions are made either directly by citizens through referenda, or by representatives elected by those citizens. However, the concept of democracy also extends beyond formal political systems, and into the civil society, where citizens are able to express their ideas and participate in deliberative processes that ultimately contribute to decision-making and development. It also involves many other institutions which are necessary for the maintenance of democratic control, including a strong education system to cultivate citizens who are informed, engaged, and critically-minded, as well as an independent media, some separation of powers at the state level, and so on.

Democracy is predicated on the assumption of informed, active participation of citizens in the decisions that affect them. This includes participating in formal processes like elections and referenda. Voting is so fundamental that in some democracies there is a legal requirement for this aspect of democratic participation. However, as alluded to above, the expectation for citizens to participate in democracies goes well beyond these formal processes. The rights and freedoms enjoyed by democratic citizens are contingent upon those citizens taking up additional responsibilities beyond the basic minimum of acting in accordance with

the law. In healthy democratic societies, citizens from all walks of life are engaged in public deliberation over new laws and policies, in organizing themselves so that their collective needs will be noticed and addressed, in peaceful protests, in monitoring their government and private companies to ensure accountability, and so on. Civic participation, in a variety of forms, is fundamental to the healthy functioning of a democracy, and to the democratization process in general.

Human Rights and Child Rights

Human rights are among the most strongly defended principles associated with democratic ideals. While the idea of human rights is not inherently bound to the idea of democracy, the denial of certain human rights in non-democratic countries is so widespread that the defense of human rights has been taken up as a leading cause in the democracy movement.

Human rights cover a wide range of areas, and in the context of families, issues related to the rights of children come into play. In general, children should be understood to have the same fundamental rights as adults, although some human rights are dormant until they are an appropriate age, such as the right to marry.

One of the consequences of the idea of child rights is the understanding that parents do not have absolute power of their children. Children are not chattel, and from this viewpoint, parents who deny their children human rights are subject to criminal laws such as those related to abuse and neglect. The specific laws and social norms in each country differ, but from the standpoint of democracy, human rights, child rights, and the related responsibilities of duty bearers (those who have the obligation to safeguard the rights of others) are considered universally applicable.

Because children are particularly vulnerable, they have special rights intended to safeguard their development by duty bearers, including their parents, and if necessary, the state. These include rights to protection, which place a claim on parents and society at large for protection from harms perpetrated on the child because of their dependency. They also include the right to empowerment, including a range of conditions that are understood to contribute positively to their development as autonomous

persons. It may be surprising to some, but these rights include fundamentals like the right to a name (Article 7) and identity (Article 8), as well as the right to express opinions on matters that are important to them and have that opinion taken seriously (Article 12), and even the right to play and to rest (Article 31). The full text of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is provided in Annex A for the reader's reference.

Democracy and Family Life

In the context of social life that is not overtly political, such as family interactions, democratic ideals are expressed in different ways. The ideal of equality is expressed through the ways in which family members treat one another, the way decisions are made, and the way authority is enacted. The ideals of freedom and autonomy are expressed in the kinds of trusting and respectful relationships that are established, through which family members learn to express their own individuality without infringing on others' right to the same. At times this requires flexibility, open-mindedness, and patience, which all have their place in democratic societies. Still other ideals, such as civic engagement, participation, and dialogue, are reflected in the ways families spend their time, the kinds of conversations they have, and the way in which media is consumed.

In short, while discussions about democracy are usually focused on political structures and overtly political issues, democratic ideals themselves have application to all human interactions. Family life may not be overtly political, but it if we look at it through a political lens, it is easy to see how some families function as democracies, while others function as repressive regimes. Moreover, when we consider the children growing up in those families, and the socialization process of those children through adolescence and into adulthood, the political consequences of family life become increasingly apparent.

Section Three

Democracy for Parents and Children

The Democratic Approach

Democracy can be characterized as a form of social organization and interaction that emphasizes a balance between social equality and individual autonomy. This guidebook takes the position that the application of democratic ideals to family life can bring enormous benefits to both parents and children, and to families in general. While democracy may have inherent value, its value is also in its practical applications. The democratic approach happens to be a highly effective way of establishing well functioning social relationships. This guidebook embraces the democratic approach not (at least not only) because of its philosophical attractiveness, but also, because of its pragmatic value. Democratic approaches have a proven track record of effectively balancing individual and collective needs and interests, on both the small scale (strong friendships based on reciprocity, trust, fairness, and caring), and large scale (successful world economies with free and engaged citizens). Below are some of the benefits that can be associated with the application of democratic approaches in family life.

Benefits to parents:

- Children become easier to manage, and more cooperative
- Increased and more genuine forms of respect
- Communication becomes more open and sincere

- Minimize sources of conflict, and defuse issues
- Sense of security knowing that your children's internal needs and motivations are being satisfied
- Sense of empowerment, and feeling more secure about what parenting skills
- Satisfying family relations based on trust, fairness, respect, and personal responsibility
- Satisfaction witnessing the development of your children into sincere, communicative, autonomous individuals

Benefits to children

- Well-rounded development, including social and psychological aspects, as well as physiological and intellectual
- Feelings of being treated fairly and respected as individuals
- Developing a healthy sense of respect for authority, and in turn, a sense of justice
- Developing a sense of responsibility and ownership for their actions
- Gaining a sense of propriety, including internalizing social norms and expectations which will help them get along with others and succeed in life outside of the family unit
- Developing a strong personal identity, including cultivation of their own individual thoughts, feelings, and perspectives
- Developing a healthy self-esteem, including feelings of self-efficacy
- Becoming autonomous individuals with a sense of control over their own actions, thoughts, and feelings

Benefits to families:

- Effectively balancing the needs of different individuals within the family
- Defusing stress and minimizing conflict, while promoting fairness and positive interactions

- Enabling authentic communication and the development of satisfying relationships

Objectives of Democratic Parenting

While the above list of benefits is a good starting point for thinking about the objectives of democratic parenting, a more specific list of objectives is helpful in focusing our thinking and developing systematic approaches that will work towards achieving these objectives.

Setting aside the idea of democracy for a moment, it is worthwhile to start with first principles-what kinds of things would we like to see develop in our children? The list would likely include things like: a sense of security; self-efficacy and a healthy self-esteem; good communication skills; a sharp mind; the ability to take care of themselves, and so on. Interestingly, these also happen to be things that are good for democratic societies. The same is true if we were to add more things to the list of what we want for our children—a satisfying life; meaningful relationships; a good sense of what is right and wrong; and involvement in community life. What is good for individuals, in terms of helping them realize their potential and live well alongside other people, tends to also be good for society in general, and this is the basic underpinning of liberal democratic values.

When parents embrace democratic values themselves, there tends to be considerable overlap between the kinds of things they want for their children, and the kinds of things that the democracy itself needs in order to function well. It is worthwhile to note that it is focused on relatively deep aspects of children's personalities and character. We could call these character traits, personal attributes, or dispositions. Democratic parenting recognizes that the development of these aspects of a person's character begins at home. Of course, as children get older, different social spheres such as school will also exert an influence, but for most children, the home is the center point of their lives, and the relationships they have with their parents are the most significant to their development. While children also learn about their world (knowledge) and how to do things (skills) at home, the focus of democratic parenting is on this deeper level of development—their character—because it is much more formative and impactful in the

long run.

The discussion above touches on some of the dispositions that are relevant to discussion of character development in a democratic society, but the discussion is quite informal. In order to have a clear focus for discussion about what democratic parenting hopes to achieve, and what kinds of strategies might help in the process, it is necessary to provide a more systematic set of objectives. Below, is a set of eight dispositions that can be considered, collectively, the objectives of democratic parenting. The list is not a comprehensive description of everything that democratic parenting hopes to achieve. This is just one way of looking at the issue, with the hope of clarifying what democratic parenting aims to achieve in order that we might become more systematic and intentional in they way we structure our interactions at home. The objectives are as follows:

- Autonomy
- Sense of Justice and Care
- Integrity
- Reciprocity
- Reasonableness
- Civic Respect
- Civic Engagement
- Sense of Community

Autonomy

Autonomy is fundamental to the individual's right to live a meaningful life as well as to many social or collective goods, because it implies both a capacity for choice regarding one's life, and a capacity to understand and respect the lives chosen by others. Autonomy involves gaining the individual capacities to critically decide for oneself about what is important and meaningful, as well as the capacities to follow through and enact those decisions. Parents want their children to become autonomous so that they are able to choose their path in life, and are not dependent on or servile to others. Moreover, children, and especially teens, have an innate drive towards autonomy, and if corresponding opportunities are not provided for

them, this will likely become a source of conflict.

When discussing the idea of autonomy in the context of parent-child relationships, it is important to also consider the idea of ethical servility. Ethical servility is the condition of being unable to seriously consider alternatives to one's own values and beliefs. It may come from lack of awareness of other ways of thinking, or from lack of critical reflection on one's beliefs and values (particularly when coupled with heavily biased views on other ways of thinking). If a child grows up indoctrinated in a given belief system, they are ethically servile to those who have raised and educated them, because they have never had reasonable opportunities to seriously consider other beliefs or critique their own. Overcoming ethical servility is a precondition to full autonomy, and it is one of the points of tension for parents who (reasonably) would like to see their children grow up with similar values and beliefs to their own.

Sense of Justice and Care

A sense of justice is a basic requirement for moral reasoning, and refers to non-universalized concepts of what is fair, what is right, and what is good in social life. Parents want their children to develop a sense of justice and to be caring individuals, because these are preconditions to meaningful and trusting relationships, and a fair, lawful lifestyle. There is an element of subjectivity to the notion of justice, and, as such, the development of a sense of justice must also take into consideration reasoning around diverse perspectives and interpretations in different social contexts. This is particularly important in the context of pluralism or global citizenship where dialogue around justice issues is often cross-cultural. Justice and care go hand in hand, because while justice can seem somewhat impersonal, the notion of care underscores the need for empathy and understanding.

Integrity

Integrity refers to the coherence between a person's beliefs and actions, with the precondition that those beliefs and actions are reasonable. It is natural to be somewhat distrustful of someone who says one thing and does the opposite, or who acts in ways that contradict one another in

different contexts. Democratic societies provide the space for individuals with different moral perspectives to express themselves both verbally, and through political action, within the confines of reasonable or at least tolerable speech and behavior. Integrity is considered virtuous in this context because when citizens are guided by dispositions such as justice and care, and work within a reasonable moral framework, they contribute to the betterment of society.

Reciprocity

Children from cultures around the world grow up hearing the "golden rule"—that we should treat others the way that we want to be treated. The idea of reciprocity, however, is not as simple as it initially seems. Moral reciprocity is essentially the voluntary balancing of one's own self-serving interests with the recognition of the rights of reasonable others to pursue their own interests. Democratic citizens need to develop the disposition of balancing their interests with those of others, and fixing rules for fair cooperation. Parents want their children to develop reciprocity because it is fundamental to developing fair and healthy relationships, avoiding being taken advantage of (or cheating others), and a more general understanding of implied social contracts.

Reasonableness

In a free and democratic society, one of the constraints placed on autonomous individuals is that they will act in a manner that is non-objectionable to others. The notion of what is reasonable is subjectively defined and contextually dependent, and, as such, the limits to reasonable behavior will vary dramatically from place to place. It is important for children to begin developing an understanding of what is reasonable and what is unreasonable in a variety of contexts, so that they are able to navigate those contexts without conflict.

Civic Respect

In a free society, reasonable individuals might disagree based on different values and experiences, but must be respectful of the different moral and

political viewpoints of other reasonable individuals. This includes respect for diverse cultural values, practices, and moral frameworks. However, no matter what limits we set to reasonableness, there will always be a zone between what is considered reasonable and what is outright intolerable. How we behave towards individuals in this zone is the subject of mutual civic respect. This virtue goes beyond tolerance, meaning that we do not merely refrain from coercing those with whom we disagree, but that we take them and their ideas seriously. Simply "tolerating" another person or group, while harboring resentment or other negative feelings towards them, can be a mutually damaging position, leading to various forms of subtle or explicit discrimination, and, ultimately, to individual and collective harm.

Civic Engagement

Healthy democracies have vibrant civil societies in which individuals give expression to their political views as part of the formal and/or informal deliberative process through which societies and democratic institutions themselves evolve. In the context of children in the family and community, civic engagement is principally about feeling empowered to have and share their perspectives on matters that affect them, to feel like their voices matter, and to have the confidence and ability to have a positive effect on the world around them. At a young age, this might include simple behaviors such as helping out around the house. As children get older, the level of engagement will become greater.

Sense of Community

Just as children have a drive towards autonomy, they also have a drive to develop a sense of identity and belonging, and part of childhood is about finding a healthy balance between independence and dependence. The preceding dispositions form a basis for community building, but do not directly address the sense of unity and camaraderie that most families would find desirable. A sense of belonging within the family, and a sense of identity as a member of the family, are important to children's development because they address some of the their fundamental interests. This is also highly consistent with the ideal of democracy, because democracy itself

is a collective pursuit in which individuals with unique identities come together through shared underlying values. Each family is unique, with its own history, values, and shared experiences, and by developing a sense of what makes their family special, and their role within the family, children's urges for identity and belonging are satisfied, while at the same time satisfying parents' interests for cohesion and understanding between generations. As children become older, and more autonomous, and as their social circle expands, this sense of community will also grow in breadth, but its foundation is established in the family during early childhood.

Child Development and the Development of Character

Child development is a remarkable process. In the space just a handful of years they go from being newborn babies, completely dependent on others and incapable of meeting even their most basic needs, to autonomous, walking, talking individuals, with distinctive personalities, perspectives, and opinions. As adults, it is easy for us to forget the immense pressure and confusion that can come about as children to make sense of the overwhelming onslaught of new experiences and information that bombard them each day.

Food and Love

"The first hurt we know is the hurt of hunger. It makes us cry. Each time someone makes that hurt go away, we feel fortunate. Little by little the sights and sounds of the person who feeds us become comforting. Knowing deep within us that when we are hungry someone is going to feed us is how love and trust begin to develop"

- Fred Rogers, Child Advocate

As the child grows, so does their world. In the beginning, their world is formless, but over time they begin to associate shapes, sounds, and smells, with food, with warmth, and so on. Over time, they gain muscle control, and begin to use facial expressions, and then language, to convey their feelings with increasing sophistication. They learn to crawl, and then walk, and begin to explore the world around them. They are curious about everything, and experiment and explore naturally, often in ways their parents disapprove of. And over time, they learn increasingly refined ways of exploring, of solving problems, of gaining new knowledge and skills,

and so on.

The development of a child's character is a complex process that takes place alongside the more general development of their cognitive and physical capacities. Each child is born with their own unique characteristics, but that is just the start of things. Different factors in their environment have a major influence on this aspect of their development, just as their diet affects their physical development. Through their interactions with their environment, they experience certain frustrations, gain stimulation, or are rewarded in various ways in their quest to have their needs met. Throughout this process, their personalities gradually take shape. Certain aspects of their behavior become habits and are slowly internalized, as are certain perspectives, strategies, and assumptions, with ever-increasing complexity.

Section Four

Democracy and the Theatres of Childhood

Overview

A wide range of factors affects child development. These factors relate to the child's physical environment, their social context, the kinds of routine activities they engage in, and much more. This section attempts to delve into some of these different areas, and explore how they relate to democracy and the development of democratic citizenship, and to provide some recommendations about how parents might incorporate democratic values and principles into these aspects of their children's experiences. We can think of these aspects of children's experiences as the theatres of childhood—those areas, activities, and other aspects of their lives that have significant meaning or importance.

The focus of the discussion in this section is what takes place inside the home. Within the home, children learn the most essential lesson of their life, which is how to live and get along with other people. The section is structured around five different aspects of children's experiences, as followings:

- Children's Internal Thoughts and Feelings
- Social Aspects of Children's Experiences
- Physical Aspects of Children's Experiences
- Institutionalized Aspects of Children's Experiences
- Explicit Learning In Children's Lives

Children's Internal Thoughts and Feelings

The first set of factors to consider is the internal set—those related to children's thoughts and feelings, and their internal needs and impulses. In their early years, children are little bundles of impulses. New experiences are the norm for them, and this results in new feelings that can be confusing and overwhelming. They have not yet had the benefit of your guidance, and have not had opportunities to develop self control. Empathy and understanding of this is very important in democratic parenting. This section discusses some of these internal factors, with a focus on how parents can support their children's development in a nurturing and democratic manner.

Children's Underlying Needs

Children come into this world biologically equipped and programmed to learn, to mimic, and to demand that their parents take care of them! There is a reason why the sound of a baby crying is so hard to hear—it is the baby's perfectly adapted instinct to ensure they are not ignored or forgotten. They are saying, "I am here, and I have needs!" As they develop, they learn other, more refined ways of communicating and ensuring they get what they need, but their underlying needs are a consistent theme throughout their childhood.

Democracy requires that people respect one another enough to understand different perspectives and viewpoints. Democratic parenting extends this to the realm of childhood, and recognizes the importance of understanding children's needs and motivations as well. These needs can be depicted in a variety of ways, but tend to cover at least five main categories: physiological needs; safety needs; love and belonging; self-esteem; and self-actualization.

Physiological needs: Physiological needs are the physical requirements for the child to survive, such as food, water, air, sleep, and even clothing in many climates. Without these, the human body cannot function properly and will slowly deteriorate and shut down.

Safety needs: If the child's physiological needs are basically satisfied, the drive for safety and security tends to dominate their behavior. Safety

and security can mean different things at different ages and stages of development, generally becoming more complex and abstract as the child gets older. In young children, safety needs may be closely associated with the next category, love and belonging, because young children are entirely dependent on adults for their safety and survival. When a sense of safety and security are not achieved, children may exhibit anxiety, stress, sleeplessness, and other related behaviors.

Love and belonging: If the child's more basic needs are met, their focus shifts towards interpersonal feelings of affection and belonging. When a child does not feel loved, or does not feel they belong, they may act out in order to get attention, or in an attempt to fit in. They may also seek affection in unhealthy or inappropriate ways, or may attempt to fit in with a group of peers who parents consider undesirable.

Self-esteem: Self-esteem is related to the basic desire to be accepted and valued by others—to feel respected and to have self-respect. The absence of self-esteem may manifest itself as apathy, passiveness, or submissive behavior, or depression. The drive to be respected by others and to feel like they are good at something may lead children who do not get validation in other areas of their life (such as academics) to misbehave, to provoke fights, to make jokes, or other behaviors that may garner some form of validation from a select group of peers.

Self-actualization: Self-actualization is about reaching one's potential, and being the most that one can be. For youngsters, this begins with the idea of autonomy. Children who grow up in restrictive, oppressive, or authoritarian homes may struggle against this because of their drive to be autonomous individuals themselves, to develop their own potential, to do things for themselves, to take risks, and to learn their limits. This struggle can lead to rebellious behavior or conflict at home.

These needs and motives can be understood as a kind of hierarchy, with the strongest drive to meet the most basic, foundational needs—the physiological ones. When one set of needs is being satisfied, the focus of the child will generally shift to satisfying the next level. This is not necessarily a linear process. The important consideration is that there are

biological and psychological urges associated with each need, and when they are not being met, there are likely to be consequences in terms of the child's behavior, as they seek (by appropriate or inappropriate means) to have these needs met.

Reasons for Misbehavior

Many of the most troubling misbehaviors, and many childhood disorders, can be understood through the lens of the hierarchy of needs presented above. Parents who are struggling to understand their child's behavior and emotions may be well advised to think in terms of these needs in their search for clues. Other clues may lay in the other principles and approaches discussed in this section. The important principle for parents to bear in mind when they are confronted with an uncooperative child is to assess the situation first, and respond second. This means not reacting immediately. Instead, first consider what the child may be experiencing that has led to their behavior. Trying to fix the behavior on the spot with threats, bribes, intimidation, or negotiation may work in the short term, but it will be counter-productive in the long term unless the underlying reasons for the misbehavior are addressed.

Therefore, the first step in democratic parenting is to develop the habit of assessing what is going on in a given situation, or in the time leading up to the present situation, that may have contributed to the misbehavior. And as the primary caregivers, we, as parents, need to be willing and ready to look critically at ourselves, and how we may have been at fault.

Some of the common reasons for misbehavior are as follows:

- **Unmet needs:** The first step in looking at misbehavior should always be to consider whether there is a legitimate unmet need. Sometimes when children have an unmet need they may not even be explicitly aware of it, or may be unable to tell you. The hierarchy of needs presented above is a good start for thinking about this. Other related needs include things like the need for attention, affection, autonomy, rest, healing, healthy nutrition, appropriate stimulation, or creative expression. If a child is over-stimulated or has had a long exciting day,

they may simply need a bit of space or quiet time to decompress. With older children and teens, there may be a need for more information—for example, they may not have been properly informed about expectations or procedures.

- **Stress:** If a child has accumulated physical or emotional pressure, tension, or pain, these things may make it difficult for the child to think clearly. Misbehavior and general uncooperativeness are common when a child is experiencing strong emotions such as fear, anger, sadness, resentment, disappointment, guilt, or loneliness. This relates to the issue of unmet needs discussed above, but bears mentioning on its own, because emotional and psychological stress are serious issues in childhood, as children work through challenging situations and difficult experiences for the first time, and have not yet developed the coping mechanisms that most adults take for granted.
- **Modeling:** Children learn through example. Their first role models are likely to be their parents and siblings.As they get older, their friends, classmates, and teachers begin to exert an influence, as do characters in stories, television shows, and so on. It is worthwhile to look around and try to identify potential models for misbehavior, and of equal importance, to ensure there is an ample supply of models of positive behavior for the child to emulate.
- **Training:** While the idea of training children is not fashionable, we must admit that there is an element of training involved in the way children develop habits and learn to respond in different situations. Without realizing it, parents may be inadvertently reinforcing poor habits or failing to establish norms and routines for positive behavior. It is worthwhile to think about the child's daily experiences as a kind of training and norming process, as if the way we conduct each day is being internalized by the child—because often, it is.

This discussion is not intended to reduce or trivialize the issue of children's behavior, but rather, to provide a reference point for thinking about their needs and perspectives, and some of the potential explanations for their behavior—both good and bad.

Impulses

Children aren't born with self-control—quite the opposite in fact. In their early weeks and months, they operate primarily on instinct. They are full of needs, and have very few ways of letting their parents know about them, except to cry. As they get older, the situation changes. Their personalities develop, as do new behaviors, and new needs. Young children are full of feelings. These feelings can be confusing and overwhelming, particularly when they don't have the experience to understand them, or even the language to express them. Children need a lot of help as they try to find appropriate ways to express their feelings and have their needs met.

It is a normal part of development for children to be demanding, fearful, and sometimes even aggressive. These are the child's ways of exploring and experimenting with social interaction. They are problem-solving and trying to find ways of addressing or satisfying or working out what is going on inside of them. How parents respond to these impulsive behaviors is critical for the child's learning and further development. With each response from a parent, whether that be a smile or a hug, a soft word, or a stern look, the child takes note. They learn what kinds of behaviors on their part will solicit different kinds of behaviors on your part, and in turn, how that makes them feel inside. The parent's response in each case should be to gently and patiently guide the child towards appropriate behaviors and ways of thinking in that situation. It is not always easy to remain calm in such situations, but remind yourself that the child is just doing what children do, and that this is an opportunity for them to learn something new.

Defiance

Defiance is closely related to the desire for autonomy. It can begin when children are just a couple of years old, and may persist into adulthood, or as long as the desire for freedom and independence are unmet. Saying "No" to things is the easiest and most natural way of exercising one's personal power in a social exchange. When a toddler says "No" to a parent, it is part of their own struggle to be their own self. They are developing their own sense of identity, and are beginning to understand themselves as

autonomous agents. When they say "No", it is one way of saying, "I am my own self". They are experimenting. One day they may be agreeable to something, and the next day they may refuse it, because they are tired or hungry or over-stimulated, or simply because they want to experience what it feels like to say "No".

In children's early years, it is important to understand what this defiance represents, and to be patient with it. The child is beginning to develop their own thoughts and perspectives, and is asking for input into the things that matter in their life. In democratic parenting, we don't want to over-indulge our children, by bending to their every will, and we don't want to shut them down completely by overpowering them. Both of those approaches will tend to exacerbate the situation.

Here are some tips for dealing with defiance in a democratic manner:

- Acknowledge and show respect for the "No". Sometimes this is all the child wants. Keep in mind their defiance is partly just them exercising their individuality.
- Be proactive. Since defiance is related to the need for autonomy, try to give children opportunities to make choices, to participate in decisions, and to select between alternatives.
- Use language that is gentle, but firm. Repeat calmly. And use logical consequences, as required. Don't let a child's simple refusal deteriorate into a power struggle or a negotiation—both are losing battles.
- It is okay and, in fact, important to be the authority in many situations. Particularly with younger children, it is perfectly okay to calmly say, "I understand how you feel, but this is what we need to do". While it is healthy for children to exercise their autonomy through acts of defiance, it is also necessary for them to understand that the world does not revolve around them.

Fears

Fears are very common in childhood. They relate to children's need for safety and security, and they relate to the child's perspective on the world.

As adults, it is easy to forget about what the world looks like through the eyes of a child. For young children, there are so many mysteries and so many unknowns. They do not yet know the difference between what is real and what is imaginary.

Children's fears can come from many different places. They may be afraid of something unknown, such as new and unfamiliar places, or what might be under their bed when they are not looking. They may have fears based on new experiences that they are trying to interpret. For example, after hearing sirens, they may have fears related to crime, fires, or injury to loved ones. They may have fears based on scary things they have seen or heard about in movies or stories. Or they may have very real or legitimate fears based on dangerous situations. Despite their drive for autonomy, children are usually acutely aware of vulnerabilities.

Here are some suggestions for helping children with their fears:

- Acknowledge the child's feelings gently and patiently, by listening to them and letting them know you understand they are afraid. Don't discount their feelings by teasing them or telling them there is nothing to be afraid of. For the child, the fear is real.
- Help them to feel safe, by letting them know that you are nearby or watching them. Reassure them, and if the source of their fear is imaginary, tell them so. Make it clear to them that you are confident that they needn't fear it.
- Let them know they are not alone in feeling this way, and that many children (and even adults) are afraid of things, even if they don't say so
- Minimize potential sources of fear, particularly in early childhood, such as exposure to scary stories, or adult-oriented news and movies which may depict scary events.
- Avoid forcing them to do things that are scary for them. Persistence and encouragement are warranted, to help them incrementally overcome their fears, but forcing them to do something scary may be counterproductive.
- Teach them coping mechanisms and strategies for overcoming their

fears, such as repeating reassurances in their heads, slowing their breathing, turning on the lights to check if there really is a monster under the bed, and so on.

- Give them practice overcoming fears and taking small risks while you are on-hand to help them if they fail. They will gain confidence this way.

Social Aspects of Children's Experiences

Social aspects of childhood are highly formative for children, as well as being highly informative for them. Children come into this world without language, without understandings of social norms, and without a concept of how to relate to others. In a very short space of time they become highly interactive, exchanging looks, actions and, soon, words with those around them. This section discusses some of the important aspects of children's social environment, and makes recommendations from the standpoint of democratic parenting.

Caring, Connective Communication

While communication of some sort is a given in any family situation, the nature, and the amount of communication between children and their parents varies substantially. Some families are warm and gregarious, while others are rather quiet and aloof. Aspects of family life such as hierarchies, mutual respect, affection, and stress, are all reflected in the style of communication. The dominant type of communication in a family will have a tremendous impact on the way that children learn to communicate. Not only do they adopt the style and patterns of speech they hear at home, but also, they are profoundly affected by the nature of the relationship with their parents that the style of speech characterizes.

The capacity to empathize with others is foundational to a functional democracy, and empathy, in turn, is a key aspect of communication in democratic parenting. This can be thought of as caring communication, or connective communication, because it emphasizes the continual building of bonds with others. Connective communication involves empathy, and communicating in a way where your words, body language, and tone of

voice create a bridge that shows your child you are making and effort to understand them. Children are highly sensitive to the world around them, and having a solid connection, through communication, can provide them with a safe haven, and an outlet through which they can express their reactions, process and interpret new experiences, and decompress.

Connective communication is underpinned by empathy. It involves the following:

- Giving them undivided attention
- Listening actively, by nodding and paraphrasing to check understanding
- Using kind and gentle words
- Being considerate and patient
- Using a loving and respectful tone

The role of empathy in this process is quite important, because we want children to feel safe and secure in communicating with us. This means we need to try to feel their state of being, and respond to them in a way that helps create a connection and show that you understand them. The child should feel your empathy, and should feel secure in your presence. Consider the following:

- If your child is happy, be happy with them
- If your child is curious, ask questions that show your own curiosity
- If your child is afraid, be reassuring
- If your child is excited, be interested
- If your child is angry, be patient
- If your child is hyperactive, concentrate calmly
- If your child is having a tantrum, be patient and calm, but firm

The commonality in all of the above is that you, as a parent, are making connections with the child's own emotions, and demonstrating your empathy through your words and body language. The opposite would be to show disengagement from the child's emotions, or to contradict them.

While we may have an interest in turning a child's emotions around if they are angry or sad, for example, it is usually counterproductive to contradict such emotions head on. Instead, it is important to first honor the child's experiences, to let them experience their emotions, and to patiently unpack those experiences with them.

The mechanics of connective communication are not complicated. They involve sending a consistent message through your tone of voice, your body language, and your words. The specific message can be quite nuanced, and can include elements of humor, firmness, sadness, or any other emotion warranted in the situation. In addition, some specific words and phrasing can help immensely in establishing connections with your children. Try to avoid using language that blames or isolates the child, and instead, use language that maintains the close bond you are looking for.

There is no script or recipe for caring communication. Each child and each parent is unique, and what works in one situation may not work in another. Nevertheless, the important first step in any kind of caring relationship involves just being present and attentive to the child. Regardless of what the child is saying or doing, if we are there, and we care, then we can listen, and build outwards from there.

In order to set a tone for the kind of communication that we are referring to in this section, a few examples are warranted.

- **Using terms of endearment:** When appropriate, and particularly with younger children, you can use terms such as "darling", "dear", or "sweetie" when addressing your child. This is a simple way of reminding them of your love for them, regardless of what other message needs to be conveyed.
- **Deferment rather than rejection:** Using phrases like "Not right now" are gentle alternatives to saying "No" directly when your child asks for something. This type of deferment reflects the flexibility of the democratic parenting approach, and inherently acknowledges that there may be a time for what the child is asking for, but that now is not an appropriate time.
- **Showing togetherness:** By using pronouns like "We" or "Us" when speaking with a child, rather than "You", we build a feeling

of inclusiveness and togetherness with them. This helps to reduce argument and defiance, and to enhance cooperation, because it positions you and your child together with one another.

- **Using "And" instead of "But":** When an adult uses the word "But" in a sentence with a child, the child has a tendency to ignore everything that came before that word. The word "But" has the effect of negating what came before it. Much more can be gained by using the word "And". If a child makes a suggestion, you can validate that suggestion without shutting down communication by using a phrase like "That's a great idea, and I think..." followed by your explanation of why you are taking a different action from what they suggested.

The role of connective communication in a democracy is quite important, and while communication between family members is usually more personal and intimate than that which takes place outside of the home, the importance of empathy is the same. It is important that children have experiences with trying to relate to others' feelings, and communicating their own perspectives openly and honestly. This begins at home, and as they get older, they will be able to apply similar principles in order to understand different perspectives and viewpoints on a wider range of different issues.

Role Models

Children learn through example, and in their early life, nearly everything is learned this way. They learn to walk, talk, and relate to others through role modeling. And of course, the primary role models for children, particularly in their early years, will be their parents and siblings—those they spend the most time with them. We are role models for our children, for good or for bad, and whether we want to be or not. They see us, they hear us, the admire us and yearn for our affection. This means we have a considerable responsibility to them, and considerable power to influence them, simply by living in a way that we would be happy to see them live.

In terms of the objectives of supporting democracy and child development, we should spend considerable time thinking about how we

ourselves embody democratic values and principles in the way we conduct ourselves and interact with others. It would be a worthwhile exercise to consider each of the democracy-related dispositions discussed above—autonomy, sense of justice and care, integrity, reciprocity, reasonableness, civic respect, civic engagement, and a sense of community—and to consider how each of these, in turn, is reflected in the way we, as parents, interact with our children and family members, and in the way we conduct ourselves. Consider the following questions, what these things might tell your children about you, and whether you would like to see your children emulate them:

- How do you spend your time? Are you always at work? Do you volunteer in the community? Do you have hobbies? Do you watch too much television? Do you socialize with others?
- How do you manage your affairs? Are you organized and well planned? Do you do things with care and intention, or haphazardly just to get the job done? Are you always rushing, or always losing things?
- What is your usual state of mind? What is your most common psychological or emotional condition at home? Are you distracted and stressed out, happy and energetic, or lethargic and disengaged?
- How do you interact with others? What do you model in your interactions with family members? Who do you socialize with apart from the family? Do you have friends and colleagues from different ethnic groups, professions, and walks of life? What do you model in your interactions with others from different walks of life outside the home? Do you inadvertently reinforce certain stereotypes related to gender, social class, or ethnicity?
- How do you talk about the world? Are you positive and optimistic? Are you enthusiastic, curious, and interested? Do you seek out new information? Do you model critical thinking—questioning sources and looking for other perspectives on an issue?
- How do you cope with stress? In stressful situations, do you get frustrated or angry? Do you keep your cool and persevere?

These questions are just a start for thinking about what our children may observe in us, and what they may begin replicating. Keep in mind that children, especially young ones, have very few other reference points for what it means to be a person, or how people are supposed to talk, act, and think. And in most cases, no other model will be as important or influential as the parents—particularly during the most formative years of early childhood. Human emotions are contagious, as are human perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors. This is the nature of socialization, and as the primary agents of socialization, parents can do a lot to inculcate democratic values in their children. This doesn't mean that parents should put unnecessary pressure on themselves to be perfect, but more simply, that it is worth making that little bit of extra effort to be the kind of person you hope your child to become, whether that means being a little bit more patient when you're caught in traffic, smiling a little bit more, or putting your work away a bit sooner to spend more quality time with them.

On the subject of role modeling, it is also important to consider other potential influences on your children. As they get older, other influences will rise in prominence. These include other family members, their friends and classmates, their teachers and coaches, sports or media icons, as well as characters they encounter in stories, comic books, television programs, movies, and so on. Parents can do their children a service by proactively managing their exposure to different influences, ensuring good amounts of exposure to positive influences, and limiting exposure to negative influences. This can be as simple as prohibiting certain television programs or certain types of movies that include offensive or age-inappropriate material. As children grow older, they will want to have more say in their peer group, but parents can still play a role in encouraging and cultivating certain friendships, and talking with their children openly about potentially negative influences. It is unrealistic and counterproductive for parents to try to prevent exposure to any negative influences. It is much more useful for parents to discuss the related issues openly with their children, to help them understand the challenges that people may encounter when they act or talk or dress in a particular way, and ultimately, to give children a safe amount of space to let them figure things out for themselves.

Friendships

Friendships are an immensely important part of childhood social life. Apart from their parents, children's friends are likely to be the strongest influences on their behavior, mannerisms, and thinking. As children get older, the importance of friendships will increase, and friends may even, at times, eclipse parents in a child's thinking.

But when children are just starting out in life, they don't know what it means to be a friend. They are still egocentric and the expectations of them in their relationships with their siblings or parents are quite different from how friends relate to one another. They will look for help, and examples, in order to understand their new social world, their relations, and the confusing inner feelings that accompany this new kind of relationship.

Here are some suggestions for supporting children in their friendships, in line with the principles of democratic parenting:

- Be emotionally available to your child. Reassuring your child that their feelings are normal is one of the most important things that you can do.
- Keep open lines of communication with your child about their friends, ask them questions and show genuine interest.
- Coach, but don't meddle. There is a delicate balance between supporting the child through coaching, and meddling in their affairs. It is important that children have the opportunity to work through some things themselves.
- Teach your child how to converse in a polite way. This begins at home in their very early life, and involves taking turns speaking, not interrupting, asking questions to show interest in others, and so on.
- Emphasize cooperative games and play at home, rather than competitive ones.
- Help your child to understand facial expressions and body language, and coach them in how to respond to others depending on how they are feeling.
- Foster empathy and concern for others. Good friends have genuine concern for others, and this kind of empathy needs to be cultivated

over time. You can support it by modeling it yourself, by coaching them to ask others how they are feeling, and by encouraging them to imagine what others might feel in a given situation, and why.

- Avoid making harsh judgments against certain friends, unless you're sure it is warranted. When a parent criticizes someone that a child cares about, it tends to alienate the child. Instead of directly criticizing the friend, talk genuinely with your child. It is okay to share your feelings, but as with disciplining your own child, direct any negative feelings towards the specific behaviors that are problematic, rather than labeling the other child directly as "rude" or "bad". If you have concerns, share them honestly and talk with your child about how you might, together, alleviate them.
- Provide opportunities for your child to make positive friendships. While it may be inappropriate to try to pick your child's friends for them, you can certainly support and encourage certain friendships that you see as positive and healthy, by creating more opportunities for your children to interact. For example, you might coordinate with another parent so that your children can be on the same sports team, or to meet together at the playground occasionally.

Authority

Authority has a special place in the context of democracy, and particularly so in the context of democratic parenting. While democracy is grounded in the idea of social and political equality, certain agreements have been found necessary, in most cases, in order to exercise that equality, and those agreements create the requirement for authority, for enforcement, and so on. Democratic societies and organizations have rules and leaders, in one form or another, and authority has a significant role in democratic homes as well. In fact, it is particularly important in parent-child relationships, because parents have a responsibility to support their children's development by coaching and guiding the child, by sharing the lessons they have learned through their own experience, and so on. Moreover, the presence of authority figures during childhood is also important in the development of other aspects of democratic citizenship, such as a sense of

justice, because it is through authority that children gain their first insight into what is considered right and wrong. In the absence of authority, it can be very confusing for a child to determine what is right and wrong. While oppressive forms of authority will eventually lead to resistance and rebellion from the child, the underlying importance of authority during childhood is not undermined by such cases.

To get to an appropriate understanding of authority in democratic parenting, it is important to differentiate between authority that is authoritative, and that which is authoritarian. As discussed above, authoritarian approaches are those which are heavy handed and inflexible. Authoritative approaches, on the other hand, still value the insight, wisdom, and experience of the adult authority figure, but do not impose it in this inflexible manner. Instead, the authoritative adult uses the principles of connective communication discussed above, in order to relate to the child with warmth and understanding, and to shape their behavior and perspective through rational discussion. An authoritative adult can accept that others may hold dissenting viewpoints, while maintaining the integrity of their own, and being open to the possibility that they themselves may ultimately be wrong.

Here are some suggestions for helping children to develop a healthy sense of respect for authority:

- Acknowledge that you don't have all the answers, and that you sometimes make mistakes. This will increase rather than decrease your credibility.
- When you and your child have different perspectives on a subject, welcome the opportunity to discuss with them, and to seek out evidence to see which perspective is more valid, practical, or desirable.
- Encourage your child to ask questions about rules, and about what is right and wrong, in order to develop their own understanding about why things are the way they are, and how they might be improved.
- Talk to your children about which kinds of figures are appropriate authorities in which kinds of contexts, for example, doctors, police officers, teachers, and so on. Encourage them to maintain a healthy skepticism until sufficient evidence of genuine authority is presented.

- Remind them that respect and good manners are warranted in dealing with others, regardless of their level of authority.

Physical Aspects of Children's Experiences

While the influence of the social world on children is quite obvious, the physical world around your child can also be very influential in their development. The places, spaces, and things they come into contact with provide structure to their developing understanding of the physical world, and have a major impact on their experiences. This section discusses some of these physical factors, with suggestions about how parents might help infuse them with democratic principles and support their children's development.

Common Spaces

Every home has common spaces-those spaces that families share and regularly spend time in together. These may include a dining area, a living room or sitting area, or other similar spaces in the home. These tend to be comfortable social places, where all family members feel relatively free and at ease. For children to feel like part of the family, it is important that they too feel a sense of belonging in these common spaces.

Here are some suggestions for common spaces in the home:

- Ensure that there is sufficient space for each family member to sit comfortably and spend time together.
- Reinforce that these are shared spaces, and spaces for sharing—eating meals together, joining in conversation, and just spending time together.
- Cultivate the understanding that in shared spaces, rules are sometimes necessary in order to make sure that each person is equally able to enjoy the space.
- Establish clear expectations around using the space, cleaning up after oneself, what noise levels are acceptable, and so on.
- Involve children in maintaining, tidying, and cleaning shared spaces. Because they are shared, it is reasonable that everyone using such

spaces take part of the responsibility for them. Children's contributions may be small at first, and they may not do a very good job, but this is an important part of helping them develop a sense of responsibility, as well as feeling a sense of ownership and empowerment at home.

Partially Shared or Private Spaces

Homes also have spaces that are not shared equally, as well as spaces that may be off limits to children for reasons of safety or privacy. These are spaces where expectations are quite different from those in common spaces. They include bathrooms, bedrooms, offices, and perhaps even a kitchen or workshop where there may be tools.

Each family, and each home, is different, and there are no fixed guidelines regarding what rules should or shouldn't apply in a given home, but here are some considerations for partially shared or private spaces:

- In the home, it is important for children to learn that there are different kinds of spaces, with different expectations, including spaces with certain conditions, spaces where they should ask permission before entering, spaces where people are entitled to privacy, spaces where it is important to be quiet, and so on.
- It is okay to have different expectations for different spaces, for example, to tell a child "If you are going to go in here, then you will need to…"
- Respect for privacy should go both ways, and it is a good idea to ask children, particularly as they get older, whether they would like privacy, whether they would like their door to be left open or closed, and so on. While it is important for parents to monitor their children's activities, this must also be balanced with other considerations as children get older.
- Not every child in every home has their own bedroom, but it is important that they have spaces in the home where they can feel safe and secure, where they can take refuge, where they can have private time and keep to themselves, and where they can have some privacy when then want it.
- From an early age, involve children in helping to clean and tidy the

spaces they use most. If they have their own room, or a room they share with another sibling, this is an ideal place for them to start learning responsibility. This can begin with simple tasks like making their beds and organizing their clothing.

Playthings

Play is some of the most important work that children do, and their playthings are some of the first physical things that they spend any serious amount of time interacting with. The types of playthings they have will shape and structure the kind of play that is undertaken, and this will affect the way in which they develop. But children's play also depends a lot on what they are thinking about and dealing with internally at a given time. Their play is a form of expression. They play different roles, invent different worlds, and work through different feelings or concerns.

For these reasons, the best kinds of playthings are open-ended—toys that do not dictate a certain kind of play or a certain course of action. These include things like blocks, modeling clay, art supplies, or even stuffed animals and figurines. These are world-building playthings, which give the child a free range of expression, to make up their own scenarios. Children can do whatever they want with these kinds of toys, depending on what is on their mind at the time. Coming up with their own ideas during play is tremendously important to the development of their thinking skills, their imagination, and their autonomy. If most of their playthings are single-action or closed toys, they are robbed of the opportunity for their own creative expression in play, and their activities are limited to a formula developed by the manufacturer.

Here are some considerations for linking playthings with democracy and child development in mind:

- Avoid toys that have excessive stimulation such as blinking lights and loud noises. Play should be stimulating, but most of the stimulation should come from within the child, not from the toy itself.
- Avoid toys that encourage violent or aggressive forms of play.
- Look for toys that can be played with in a variety of ways.
- Look for toys that are well made, from good quality materials,

rather than easy to break disposable toys. Having a small number of toys made from good materials will help children to develop a sense of respect for their belongings, rather than a consumptive disposable orientation.

- Consider how gender roles and stereotypes are reflected in the toys.
- Encourage children to respect their toys, to treat them gently, to take care of them and put them away. If a toy breaks, see if you and the child might work together to repair it.

A word about sharing:

Young children are egocentric and don't learn to share overnight. You can support them by:

- Model sharing and having older siblings do the same
- Play cooperative games
- Talk with them, coach them, and explain why sharing is important
- Practice sharing with them, using things they don't mind sharing
- Practice turn taking
- Point out other good sharers
- Make sure there is enough to go around (make sharing realistic)
- Reward sharing rather than punishing stinginess, but don't over-praise (sharing is expected behavior)

Clothing

While young children may be oblivious to how they are dressed, clothing and appearance can become a significant preoccupation, and a significant source of conflict, as children get older. This will provide lots of material to engage with your children (and teens) in conversations about topics like: how appearances will affect people's judgments, about materialism, about modesty, and about vanity. While each family will have their own standards and values related to clothing and appearances, a few points are warranted:

- Learning how to dress oneself is one of the early ways in which children gain a sense of autonomy and individuality. Allowing children to select their own clothes, while at the same time providing guidance and feedback related to their choices, is a good way of supporting this process.

- Insisting that children wear clean clothes, and regularly laundering dirty ones, is an important part of helping them develop a sense of dignity and self-respect.
- Be aware of what tendencies might be developing in the way your child is dressing, and engage them in conversations about these topics early on, opening up constructive and two-way conversation about issues like identity, self-respect, modesty, vanity, materialism, and so on. This is far easier and more constructive when children are younger, and can help prevent more serious conflicts when children are older.
- It is okay to have rules about what ways of dressing are acceptable, but it is also important to be flexible with these rules in order to strike a balance between adult authority, and children's autonomy. One good approach is to give children choices between certain items, where the adult provides the choices, and the child still has the opportunity to exercise their own will between those choices.

Institutionalized Aspects of Children's Experiences

While the social and physical aspects of children's experiences are easy to spot, there is another important set of factors that provide structure to their daily experiences. These are the hidden structures established through things like daily routines, family rules, norms, procedures for doing things, and so on. These aspects of children's lives are often taken for granted, but are very important, in part, because they are so easily overlooked. These factors, which we can think of as "institutionalized" aspects of children's lives, are often internalized by children, and are often unquestioned, even well into adulthood. This section discusses some of the key institutionalized aspects of children's lives, along with some suggestions for infusing them with democratic principles, and thereby, supporting their development as citizens.

Habits, Norms, and Routines

This guidebook takes the perspective that democracy, just like positive character and a good temperament, is not learned simply by preaching to children but by providing them with a context which promotes it.

An important part of the socialization process is the development of habits, norms, and ways of looking at things.In democratic parenting, the aim is to establish this baseline for children in line with the objectives outlined in the preceding section. We want children grow up with the sense that it is normal to be respectful of others, to listen to them and acknowledge their perspectives, even if they are different from our own. We want them to grow up with the expectation of fairness, transparency, and reasonableness. We want them to grow up treating others in the manner that they themselves expect to be treated.

Norming Democracy:

Consider what democracy means to you, and how you can make it normal in your home. Things like:

- Transparency in decision-making
- Fair and equal treatment of individuals
- Involvement of others in decisions that affect them
- Personal responsibility
- Respect for everyone, at all times
- Following rules without threat of punishment
- Discussion and debate
- Lively interest in what is going on in the world
- And so on, and so on…

What we can do as parents in this regard is to make these things normal ourselves, in the way we interact with children and with others, and to have our children practice these approaches as well until they become internalized as norms and expectations. These can include simple actions, like encouraging our children to greet guests politely, to offer help, to thank others when appropriate, and so on. All of these kinds of little actions collectively comprise a bigger picture which takes shape in children's minds and hearts as they grow up, eventually coalescing into their understanding and expectation of appropriate forms of interaction. In terms of democratic values and principles, we can reinforce principles of fairness and justice, of reciprocity, of transparency, and so on throughout their childhood, simply by modeling them and discussing them with our children. In so doing, we help to develop these concepts for them, and they slowly internalize them as normal and expected forms of behavior.

Other types of positive habits are much simpler (and of more immediate

practical value to parents) as they relate to simpler norms and routines. Almost any aspect of daily life that is repeated regularly can benefit from the introduction of standard and expected routines or procedures. This is part of the way in which chores (which take work and often create conflict) can be transformed into habits (which are just taken as the normal way of doing things). The beauty of habits and routines is that they are automatic and don't require much effort. The opposite of this is the frustration of having to negotiate every step of every process, day after day, which is exhausting to even think about.

Some simple things like taking off one's shoes when entering the home, or brushing one's teeth before bed, can simply be practiced a few times until they become automatic and expected. Other more complicated tasks, like nightly routines of homework and bedtime, or getting up and getting ready for school in the morning, take a bit more forethought as they involve multiple steps, and sometimes involve unexpected twists. In these cases, it is worthwhile for parents to think through the process, and come up with the most efficient and effective sequence of steps, and then to communicate these explicitly to their children, and reinforce them. Certain aspects of the process can be engineered to make them easier as well, for example, we can avoid last minute frustrations when leaving the house if we keep coats and school bags by the door, if we have a designated spot where children can sit to tie their shoes, and so on.

Expectations and Limits

Related to the above point on habits and norms, is the idea of setting positive expectations and limits for children's behavior. Limits are the borders between appropriate and inappropriate, or acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Whether they realize it or not, children want and need to know the limits for acceptable behavior. Misbehavior often results when children who are uninformed about these limits test boundaries to see what they are able to get away with. One of the major problems with permissive parenting is that the parents do not proactively satisfy children's need for this information, and as a result, their children will tend to push the limits further and further until the parents finally react (or overreact) in frustration.

Having expectations and limits to guide behavior is a necessary part of the social agreement that allows free and autonomous people to live and get along together. Democracies have constitutions and laws, as well as social conventions. These are not rules for the sake of rules, nor are they rules in the sense used by authoritarian regimes. Rather, they are agreements regarding the limits and responsibilities we have towards one another, in order to minimize conflict and injustice. It is in this very sense that democratic parents establish expectations and limits to guide their children's behaviors.

A word about saying "No"

Saying "No" is essentially setting a limit for your child. For some parents, this is hard to do.

- In most other cases, saying "No" with kindness, respect, and consideration will achieve the best results
- In emergencies, and to keep your child safe, saying "No" forcefully may be imperative.
- A "No" does not always require an explanation as to why (you are an adult, and that is sufficient reason) but sometimes an explanation is helpful in making the child understand and comply
- Some helpful alternatives to "No" include: no dear; not right now; I don't think that's a good idea, and here's why; not this time; let's talk about it; let's negotiate (yes, it's okay to negotiate, provided it is on your terms)

Expectations and limits may be established in the form of rules, and may or may not involve consequences, but the important thing is to communicate expectations and limits to children in advance. This satisfies their need for information, and establishes their baseline reference point for acceptable behavior. Parents may still find that their children test the limits to see what will happen if they go beyond them. It is natural for children to test limits; it is their way of exploring their reality, developing self-confidence, and making sense of expectations. Parents will need to decide for themselves what to do in that event, but the boundary testing behavior when expectations are clear in advance will seldom be as serious as the behavior that results when expectations are not communicated at all. In all cases, it is equally important to convey feedback to children

regarding whether or not they have met expectations, and what they may do differently in the future.

In democratic parenting, another important aspect of expectations and limits is that they are not static, and are not imposed in a heavy-handed top down manner. Authoritarian parents are often too rigid and dominating with rules, and the child grows to resent them and rebel against them. With democratic discipline, there is a balance between firmness and flexibility, and children learn to respect and appreciate those limits because they don't feel like they are imposed on them. Rather, they are communicated, along with the reason for the limit, in a way that the child can understand based on their age.

Just as laws evolve and constitutions are amended, expectations and limits regarding children's behavior may change over time. Particularly as children get older, they may find certain expectations (such as bedtimes and curfews) to be restrictive, and this starts to conflict with their drive (and capacity) for increased autonomy. At the same time, their reasoning capacity is also developing, and parents may find it worthwhile to discuss expectations with their children, including what consequences might be appropriate if expectations are not met, and to adjust those expectations accordingly.

Reinforcement and Consequences

The above discussion on expectations and limits begins to touch upon the idea of consequences, particularly in relation to providing feedback about whether expectations have been met, and the potential consequences when they have not been met. Many progressive parenting guides steer away from the idea of reinforcements and consequences, because of the clear connection to bribes and punishments. Progressive parenting approaches strive to get away from external controls over children's behavior (extrinsic motivation), and to work instead to develop their internal (intrinsic) motivations.

Democratic parenting accepts that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are highly interrelated, and that consequences of some sort or another are a natural part of social life. However, rather than bribes and coercive

consequences, the emphasis is on natural consequences, both positive and negative. In democratic societies there are certainly consequences when individuals break laws, and it is important for children to develop a sense, from an early age, that their actions result in consequences (either positive or negative), because this helps to shape their moral development and social aptitude. The idea, however, is that both positive consequences (rewards) and negative consequences (punishments) should be moderate, timely, and logically related to the child's behavior and circumstances.

Positive consequences may be a simple as a smile, a hug, or words of praise from a parent. These are simple and natural rewards, and they are consistent with the kinds of rewards that will be provided by others in the child's life, at school, with friends, and at work in the future, when behavior is positive. When offering praise, it is important to be specific, so that the child sees the connection to their behavior. They will be encouraged to replicate that behavior in the future. Provided the praise is specific and tied to the child's behavior, parents can be quite liberal in their praise without fear of inflating the child's ego. One important point to keep in mind with regards to positive consequences, however, is that decent, appropriate behavior on the part of the child should be established as an expectation. Parents will soon run into trouble if they begin providing tangible rewards like candies for behavior that should be expected as standard.

In administering negative consequences, preference should be given to natural or logical consequences—those that are the inevitable result of the child's own action. For example, a child who is being disruptive during mealtime may be asked to spend some time alone in the next room until there are ready to rejoin the meal in a non-disruptive manner. As another example, a child who refuses to wear their coat when going outside may not be permitted outside. The consequence is framed as the result of the choice made by the child, not the imposition of a rule. Always, parents have the responsibility of ensuring their children's safety, and in cold weather, it would not be appropriate to have the child in this example go outside without their coat, and potentially suffer the natural consequence of freezing or getting sick. Parents must be vigilant and consider the most logical way of allowing the child to develop their sense of responsibility, without coming to harm.

When it is necessary to provide critical feedback to a child, it is important that the criticism be directed at the behavior, and not at the child as an individual. This becomes a coaching exercise, providing feedback on how the child may improve in this specific area. We don't want the child to feel they are being labeled as a bad person, because soon they will begin to adopt such a label themselves. It is important, therefore, to isolate the behavior in question, and contrast it with the positive behaviors that are more representative of who the child is. A parent's love for their child should be unconditional, but this does not mean that inappropriate behaviors will be embraced.

Responsibilities At Home

Children can learn a lot of things through observation and coaching, but a lot of the deeper kinds of learning that we are interested in with democratic parenting are best learned and internalized through practice. Children don't develop a sense of responsibility just by hearing about it or watching others take responsibility. They need practice doing it themselves. In short, parents can teach children responsibility by giving them responsibilities.

Taking responsibility begins with personal responsibility, and some of the first responsibilities that children should learn to take on are those related to meeting their own needs. These include things like feeding themselves, dressing themselves, brushing their teeth, going to the toilet on their own, and cleaning up after themselves. In all cases, these are not things they learn overnight, and they will look to you for help and guidance. Some children may be very eager to learn to do things by themselves, and may get very frustrated when they are unable, or when they make mistakes. Other children are quite resistant, and find (rightfully) that it is easier to have others do things for them. Both extremes are quite normal, and the important thing is to work with children from where they are at, knowing that you have a shared interest in their autonomy and personal responsibility.

Having children take on additional responsibilities at home, such as chores, works best when it starts with simple responsibilities at an early age. Initially, children may be unable to perform tasks on their own, and

it is appropriate to start out by having them help you with tasks such as making their bed, folding their clothes, preparing meals, setting the table, and so on. Initially, this will probably take more time than it would take if you were to do it on your own, but persevere. The objective is to have them start taking responsibility, not (at least not initially) to lighten your own workload. However, as time goes on, they will be able to complete these tasks on their own, and you will both find that they are making meaningful contributions to the household.

Below are some suggestions for helping children take on responsibilities in different aspects of their daily life.

General:

- Avoid letting responsibilities be perceived as punishments. It should be considered normal, from an early age, that each family member will contribute in the way that they are best able.
- Think about what kinds of responsibilities are most natural for your child to take on. They should be safe and age appropriate. Initially, it makes sense to have them take responsibilities connected most directly with them, their lives, and their interests around the home.
- If a responsibility becomes a source of conflict, avoid negotiating with the child or bearing down on them. Maintain patience and steady insistence, and think about appropriate (natural or logical) consequences if they do not follow-through.

Handling homework:

- Have a designated space where your child can do homework, free of distractions, and with all necessary materials nearby.
- Allocate a time for doing homework in the evening, when the child won't feel they are missing out on something else.
- If possible, make homework time a time that family can share, by taking the time to read quietly near your child, or work on your own nearby. This helps them to feel they are not alone, and not missing out.
- Maintain open communication with your child about their schoolwork,

including tests and projects that are coming up, so that you can help ensure they are on schedule to avoid last minute stress.

- If your child's school does not provide them with a day planner or agenda, consider purchasing or making one for them. Having them write reminders and to-do lists in their planners, and noting important dates in their calendars, are immensely helpful in keeping their work on track, as well as helping them to develop time management skills.

Morning routines:

- Ensure that you allocate enough time before school to avoid rushing and last minute stress.
- During the breakfast time, help keep children on track, by letting them know periodically how much time is left before they need to leave the home.
- Plan lunches the night before, so that nobody needs to think about it or prepare food from scratch in the morning.
- Have children pack their schoolbags the night before, and if necessary, check their bags with them as part of the evening routine.

Evening routines:

- If the child is doing something fun, be sure to let them know a few minutes before it is time to get ready for bed. This gives them time to prepare mentally, and helps avoid a confrontation that may occur if a child is asked to shut down a fun activity immediately.
- Be sure to start the process of cleaning up and getting ready early enough so that the child is not overtired during the process. We all become cranky when we are too tired.
- If your child has trouble with cleaning up and brushing their teeth on their own, help them and coach them, but work towards them taking responsibility for this themselves.
- Many families enjoy reading together in bed before the child sleeps. This is a great way to finish the day by spending quality time with your child, and gives them something to look forward to when all of

their work is done.

- Establish a routine where the child is in bed sleeping before your own bedtime. This gives the adults in the house a chance to decompress and have time together alone, which is important for maintaining your own stability and relationships.

Mealtimes

Mealtimes are family times. In our busy lives, the evening meal is one of the rare occasions when family members will generally be together in the same room, without the pressure of needing to rush off to somewhere when the meal is done. At the end of a busy day, it can be hard to make the effort to prepare a meal, and sit down together. People may be tired, or excited. But mealtimes present a precious opportunity, in which so many of our individual needs can be met at the same time—needs for food, for affection, for belonging, and for sharing thoughts and feelings.

Just as important as the food on the table, is the everyday conversation and family time that takes place during mealtimes. It is during these times that children learn about conversation, how to take turns talking and listening, putting their ideas into words, and broadening their awareness as they overhear others talking about things they have not experienced themselves. During mealtimes children also learn about sharing, about manners, and about ways of interacting that are not centered directly around them. Below are some suggestions to help make mealtimes smooth and enjoyable.

- Involve children in planning meals by soliciting their ideas, and in preparing meals by involving them in small tasks. This will give them a sense of ownership for the meal, and a sense of pride when others show appreciation for it. It will also reduce the likelihood of their rejecting the food.
- Let children know in advance of mealtimes, so that they have time to finish what they are doing and prepare themselves.
- Give small servings of different food items to your child, and encourage them to finish each of them before they take more of any item.

- If a child is particularly fussy or resistant to a given food item, it may be worth consulting a doctor to see if they may have an allergy to it.
- Try to avoid a power struggle with your child. Instead, consider logical consequences.
- Offer healthy food choices, knowing that these are important for your child's physical and cognitive development. Unless there is some kind of health issue involved, most children should eat enough food when they are offered healthy choices.
- Establish rules and procedures around mealtimes. These will depend on each family's preference, but may include things like:
    - Everyone must wash hands before coming to the table
    - Nobody should start eating until everyone is sitting down
    - Even if you don't like the food, you still need to be kind and polite
    - Ask to be excused before leaving the table
    - Many families also have rules about trying new foods, or trying every food on the table, at least a little bit

Playtime

Play should be considered the major work of childhood—the major vocation of the child. The impulse to play is part of children's innate biological programming, which leads them to want to explore, to experiment, and to imagine. The developmental benefit of play is enormous, and covers all domains from cognitive, to physical, to emotional. There are many different kinds of play, and different ways of thinking about it: indoor and outdoor; individual and cooperative; creative or closed; imitative; dramatic; constructive; physical, and so on.

While different kinds of play and different playthings afford different experiences and benefits to the child, here is a short list of some of the benefits that come from creative play:

- Perspective taking
- Creativity and imagination

- Cooperation and sharing
- Rule setting
- Turn taking
- Decision making
- Gross-motor and fine motor skills

Given the value of play in early childhood particularly, it is important to allocate time for this important work. The following are some suggestions for helping your child to get the most out of playtime.

Designate a clear time block: It is good to designate a solid block of time for children to play. They may want more or less, and it is not important to follow any particular schedule, but rather to ensure that a substantial period of time is allocated for this important activity, when they won't be interrupted. If your child is engrossed in an activity, it is worthwhile to extend the playtime for a little while, in order to let it come to a natural close—this will help to cultivate their ability to maintain focus and concentration, which are important attributes later in life.

Give your child attention: Part of your child's playtime should involve you, as parents. When you play together with your child, give them your undivided attention, and let them take the lead in the play. Listen carefully to them, and pay attention to their cues. It is okay that they solicit your input and ideas, but it is important to encourage them to take the lead, to generate ideas, to imagine, and to direct. This has direct benefits to the child, and also helps to establish a strong connection between you and them.

Give your child space: While play with your child is important, it is also important that they engage in self-directed play. When they play on their own, they have the space to imagine without the limits of their language skills. Making a variety of open-ended playthings available to them, and staying nearby yourself, will encourage them to play independently.

Give opportunities for your child to play with, and beside, others: Children learn a lot from solitary play, and from playing with their parents. But they will also derive great benefits from playing with other children near their own age. Cooperative play involves playing together with others on a shared task. This could include things like working on

Easing Transitions:

It is natural that children want to continue doing things that they enjoy doing, and many of the most intense battles between parents and children come when it is time to stop something that a child is enjoying.

- Parents can make this process much easier by preparing children in advance, and letting them know the timeframe for when the activity will end.
- As the ending time approaches, let your child know, for example, first 10 minutes in advance, and then five, and then one.
- When the time is up, be calm but firm. If you let your child negotiate for more time at the very end, you are inviting a power struggle each time in the future as well.
- If you want to give them more time (for example, if they are highly concentrated and you don't want to interrupt them), let them know you are giving them a fixed amount of additional time. Let them know that this is on your terms, not theirs. And don't wait until the last second to do so.
- Plan ahead, and as you are counting down the time, let them know what is coming next. That way they are not simply ending one activity,they are also waiting for the next. If you anticipate challenges, consider planning something they will look forward to, such as a snack when the activity is over.

puzzles together, playing "house", or outdoor games, and is very important in helping your child to develop and hone their social skills. For younger children who may not be quite ready to understand about cooperation, it is still worthwhile for them to play alongside others. This may be considered as "parallel" play, because the children are playing on their own, beside one another. This parallel play exposes children to new ideas, and gives them a chance to socialize innocently in their own way, as they slowly and incrementally become aware of others around them.

Consider both structured and unstructured play: There is value to both structured and unstructured play. Unstructured play is the kind of open-ended activity discussed above, where children are using their imaginations, constructing things, taking different perspectives, and so on. Structured play, involves games, usually with rules and specialized equipment. This can include sporting activities, as well as board games,

card games, and a host of other activities. There is value to both kinds of play, and it is worthwhile to consider both in planning playtime. Naturally, younger children tend to favor unstructured play, and derive more benefit from it. Structured play tends to be more appropriate for somewhat older children who have learned about rules and turn taking, and who are able to understand games without frustration. However, there is plenty of space in between for semi-structured activities that families of all ages can play together.

Differentiate between play and entertainment: In many homes, play is almost a lost art. The biological drive that fuels play is the drive for stimulation and exploration, but in many homes, the television occupies such a prominent role that children are being constantly stimulated. Naturally, if a child is being stimulated by the television, they may be disinclined to get up and go create their own stimulation. It is easier to sit and do nothing, but this is akin to feeding them a diet of sugar. They may not appear hungry at first, but their development will be affected in serious ways. For the sake of the child's development, it is important to balance television and other screen time, with unplugged playtime. And of equal importance, this playtime should be genuine, not simply entertainment in another form. The idea is to have the child in an active role, making decisions and taking action. Ideas for the kinds of playthings that encourage this kind of play are provided in the section above on "Playthings".

Explicit Learning in Children's Lives

Most of the discussion above, related to children's inner thoughts and feelings, and to the social, physical, and institutional aspects of their experiences, is focused on tacit aspects of their development. They are things that we would not normally call "educational"; rather, we would consider them to be part of a child's socialization and development more generally. This section focuses on the more overtly educational aspects of their home environment, and the kinds of explicit learning that inform childhood. The general message in this section relates to the importance of parents monitoring and regulating (to an extent) the kind of information and messages that their children are exposed to, and discussing openly with them about it.

Exposure From Parents

The most important sources of information and ideas in a child's life, particularly in their early years, are likely to be their parents. What information, information sources, and ideas you expose your child to, and the way in which you do it, will have a major bearing on their interests as they develop. The impact is two-fold. First, the content they are exposed to is the content that they are aware of and come to think about. The scope of their world is quite small in their early years, and their awareness of ideas is limited to those that they are exposed to (or imagine based on what they are exposed to). Second, as important role models in their children's lives, what their parents expose them to comes with a kind of tacit endorsement. If a parent talks a lot about cars, or horses, or carpentry, the child will develop a sense that those things are important or significant. This applies to what parents discuss directly with their children, as well as what they discuss in the presence of their children.

From the standpoint of democracy, it is worthwhile to consider the following:

- Reading to, or with your child is one of the best investments of time that you can make, giving them exposure to age appropriate stories and information, in a context that facilitates conversation about the topics being discussed.
- Be intentional about what kinds of things you discuss with, and in the presence of, your children. Give them age appropriate exposure to things that matter to you, and to your community.
- Model an interest in civic life, in current events, in politics, and so on. Where appropriate, explain issues to your children and make an effort to invite your child to share their perspective on things.
- Protect your young children from things that might scare them unnecessarily. If there are scary things that you feel they should be aware of, discuss them carefully with them, and take the time necessary to alleviate their concerns.

Formal Education

Once your children are of school age, this will become another major new

source of information and ideas for them. Their awareness of the world will expand dramatically, not only through the ideas introduced in the school curriculum, but also through their sustained contact with peers at school day after day. Once a child is of school age, parents quickly lose any perceived control over what information will be available to children, and the role of parents shifts from that of information gatekeeper, to that of information commentator.

The other role of parents, of course, is to support their children's academic learning. While they are not directly involved, parents can still facilitate their children's learning at school by discussing and reinforcing the concepts they are learning, by structuring routines that help them stay organized and complete homework, helping them where appropriate, and so on. It is also very important for parents to reinforce the importance of academic learning, and working hard at school. Children are much more likely to work hard in school, respect their teachers, and so on, if they perceive that their parents value formal education. This will be reinforced even further when parents participate in school life themselves, maintaining communication with teachers, attending parent and family events, volunteering at the school, and so on.

From the standpoint of democracy, it is worthwhile to consider the following:

- In conversations with your children, help them to make connections between what they are learning about in school, and their lives outside of school
- Ask children questions about the things they show an interest in, in order to give them practice thinking through and explaining things. Where appropriate, particularly with older children, offer alternative perspectives and ask your child's opinion about them.

Spirituality and Morality

In many families, another important source of ideas is through spiritual life, whether that be through organized religious activities and religious texts, or more informal spiritual pursuits. The ideas, stories, and information

related to spirituality is often quite heavy with moral content, and may have a significant bearing on how children come to understand morality, and principles of justice, good and bad, and so on. Even if your family does not have spiritual inclinations, your children will no doubt be exposed to related ideas in school or through contact with their peers. There is no inherent conflict between democratic ideals and spirituality. In fact, the two can be very complementary, insofar as they tend to share a common interest in the betterment of ourselves and our societies.

From the standpoint of democracy, it is worthwhile to consider the following:

- Help your children to understand that spirituality is immensely important for some people, and not for others, and that there are a wide range of different forms of spirituality.
- From an early age, maintain ongoing conversation with your children about moral issues, and expose them to different perspectives. Help them to understand the idea of moral reasoning, and the fact that two reasonable people might disagree, and yet both have valid positions.
- Help them to identify similarities and shared attributes between things, rather than focusing on differences.
- Encourage them to be curious about morality, and to identify their own values and perspectives on moral issues, while stressing the importance of being open and respectful of others' ideas as well.

Critical Literacy

Critical literacy involves the understanding that any story or source of information is the work of authors and others, each of whom makes decisions about what ideas are presented, what information is included, what is left out, and how the ideas are portrayed: as fact or theory, as good or bad, as normal or deviant etc. All media reflect series of decisions, and are, therefore, not neutral. Critical literacy means consuming media with a critical eye for uncovering the perspectives, motivations, and intentions of the authors, and considering other perspectives that might help to provide a more complete or well-rounded picture. Critical literacy can thus be thought of as intellectual self defense.

Parents can help children to understand and recognize this by asking questions about stories, books, movies, and other media that the children are consuming, and by wondering with the child about why they are presented in this manner and not another, why certain characters are the way they are, why certain information or perspectives were not included, and so on.

From the standpoint of democracy, it is worthwhile to consider the following:

- When children are young, encourage them to ask questions about the stories they are exposed to, and ask questions to them yourself about what lessons might be embedded in the story.
- Encourage children to look for alternative perspectives or imagine alternative scenarios to what is being described in the media they consume.
- As children get older, introduce them to ideas such as bias, stereotyping, evidence base, and so on.
- Try to identify logical errors, omissions, and inconsistencies in the media your child is consuming, and when you do, ask your child questions to help them identify them as well.

Age-appropriateness and Troubling Content

Parents have a responsibility of mediating the types of media that their children have access to, and ensuring that their exposure to troubling content is age appropriate. Troubling content is content that contains information, themes, or descriptions that may be unsettling or inappropriate for children. This includes content that may be scary for them, or that which is emotionally intense and may be traumatic for them. It also includes content with graphic imagery, violence, adult intimacy, abuse, bad language, humor with poor taste, rudeness, negative role models, and so on.

While different families will have different values and perspectives with regards to what type of content is acceptable for their children at a given age, there is good reason for parents to air on the conservative side in what

they expose their young children to. Troubling content can be extremely upsetting for young children. It can lead them to be anxious, afraid, confused, and can induce physical symptoms such as trouble sleeping, trouble eating, and even psychosomatic reactions like rashes. As children get older and develop in their emotional stability and their capacity for abstract reasoning, they will be better able, with their parents' support, to process increasingly sensitive content.

However, even with parents' best efforts to mediate the content their children are exposed to, most children are likely to be exposed to troubling content of one sort or another on many occasions throughout childhood. While it is good to be vigilant, it is even more important to be prepared, and to prepare your child, for situations in which they may encounter something troubling. Even many age appropriate materials like children's stories and fairy tales contain issues, themes, characters, and incidents that will be unsettling for some children. Emotional reactions to such materials are natural for children, and when such content is introduced in a gradual and incremental manner, it can be a healthy part of their emotional development. More troubling to many children will be glimpses they may catch on the Internet, in the news, or on adult-oriented television programs, of anger, violence, tragedy, or other troubling themes. Below are some things you can do to help your children manage in a world filled with troubling content.

- Let your children know about the potential to encounter troubling content, and advise them to stick with trusted child-friendly sources (channels, websites, book series, and so on).
- Ensure your child knows what you would like them to do if they encounter troubling content. For example, you can ask them to come and tell you immediately, and show you where they found it (so you can prevent a recurrence).
- Be around your child while they are consuming media, particularly on the internet, in order to monitor their activity and discuss anything that needs discussing with them.
- Provide plenty of high-interest, age-appropriate materials for your child to read, view, and consume. This will help preclude the

temptation for them to look for new outside sources.

- Get in the habit of discussing media and content with them, whether you are consuming it together, or they are consuming it alone. Ask them about the stories they are reading, and what feelings they evoke. This opens up a connection for you to talk with them more deeply when and if they encounter troubling themes or ideas.
- Keep in mind that ultimately, your goal should be to help equip your child, emotionally and cognitively, to handle challenging content themselves. Work with them towards this goal, by gradually increasing the range of content they have exposure to as their maturity warrants.

Final Thoughts

This guidebook has provided an overly complicated look at the connections between child development and democratic citizenship, and the role that parents can play in helping their children achieve their potential in the context of democracy. At this point, it is important to pause, to step back, and to remind ourselves that things do not have to be complicated. While we might debate whether the chicken came first or the egg, it is obvious enough that parents have been parents and children have been children since the beginning of our species. The vocation of a parent is a natural one, and while that doesn't mean it is easy, it does mean that each of us is well equipped for it. One of the most beautiful things about people is their resilience, and given the right basic environment, children are exceptionally so. If we face challenges one day, we get the chance each new day to try again.

So relax, and enjoy the process. Parenting is a journey, and there will be ups and downs, no doubt, just as there are in childhood. But if we can accept ourselves, and our shortcomings, while each day striving to improve upon them, then we will be much farther ahead in the process. If we can accept the same in our children, we will be even farther ahead. Children grow up quickly, and very soon they will be grown-ups themselves, starting families of their own. Now is the time to enjoy their energy and curiosity, their innocence, their sweetness, and to make the most of the times you have together.

Annex

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989

entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49

Preamble

The States Parties to the present Convention,

Considering that, in accordance with the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Bearing in mind that the peoples of the United Nations have, in the Charter, reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person, and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Recognizing that the United Nations has, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenants on Human Rights, proclaimed and agreed that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social

origin, property, birth or other status,

Recalling that, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations has proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance,

Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community,

Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding,

Considering that the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity,

Bearing in mind that the need to extend particular care to the child has been stated in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924 and in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly on 20 November 1959 and recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (in particular in articles 23 and 24), in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (in particular in article 10) and in the statutes and relevant instruments of specialized agencies and international organizations concerned with the welfare of children,

Bearing in mind that, as indicated in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, “the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth”,

Recalling the provisions of the Declaration on Social and Legal Principles relating to the Protection and Welfare of Children, with Special Reference to Foster Placement and Adoption Nationally and Internationally; the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (The Beijing Rules); and the Declaration on the Protection

of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict, Recognizing that, in all countries in the world, there are children living in exceptionally difficult conditions, and that such children need special consideration,

Taking due account of the importance of the traditions and cultural values of each people for the protection and harmonious development of the child, Recognizing the importance of international co-operation for improving the living conditions of children in every country, in particular in the developing countries,

Have agreed as follows:

PART I

Article 1

For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Article 2

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

Article 3

1. In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

2. States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and

duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.

3. States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision.

Article 4

States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation.

Article 5

States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention.

Article 6

1. States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.

2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

Article 7

1. The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and. as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.

2. States Parties shall ensure the implementation of these rights in accordance with their national law and their obligations under the relevant international instruments in this field, in particular where the child would

otherwise be stateless.

Article 8

1. States Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference.

2. Where a child is illegally deprived of some or all of the elements of his or her identity, States Parties shall provide appropriate assistance and protection, with a view to re-establishing speedily his or her identity.

Article 9

1. States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child. Such determination may be necessary in a particular case such as one involving abuse or neglect of the child by the parents, or one where the parents are living separately and a decision must be made as to the child's place of residence.

2. In any proceedings pursuant to paragraph 1 of the present article, all interested parties shall be given an opportunity to participate in the proceedings and make their views known.

3. States Parties shall respect the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child's best interests.

4. Where such separation results from any action initiated by a State Party, such as the detention, imprisonment, exile, deportation or death (including death arising from any cause while the person is in the custody of the State) of one or both parents or of the child, that State Party shall, upon request, provide the parents, the child or, if appropriate, another member of the family with the essential information concerning the whereabouts of the absent member(s) of the family unless the provision of the information would be detrimental to the well-being of the child. States Parties shall further ensure that the submission of such a request shall of itself entail no adverse consequences for the person(s) concerned.

Article 10

1. In accordance with the obligation of States Parties under article 9, paragraph 1, applications by a child or his or her parents to enter or leave a State Party for the purpose of family reunification shall be dealt with by States Parties in a positive, humane and expeditious manner. States Parties shall further ensure that the submission of such a request shall entail no adverse consequences for the applicants and for the members of their family.

2. A child whose parents reside in different States shall have the right to maintain on a regular basis, save in exceptional circumstances personal relations and direct contacts with both parents. Towards that end and in accordance with the obligation of States Parties under article 9, paragraph 1, States Parties shall respect the right of the child and his or her parents to leave any country, including their own, and to enter their own country. The right to leave any country shall be subject only to such restrictions as are prescribed by law and which are necessary to protect the national security, public order (ordre public), public health or morals or the rights and freedoms of others and are consistent with the other rights recognized in the present Convention.

Article 11

1. States Parties shall take measures to combat the illicit transfer and non-return of children abroad.

2. To this end, States Parties shall promote the conclusion of bilateral or multilateral agreements or accession to existing agreements.

Article 12

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Article 13

1. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

2. The exercise of this right may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

(a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others; or

(b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.

Article 14

1. States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

2. States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

Article 15

1. States Parties recognize the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly.

2. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of these rights other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

Article 16

1. No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation.

2. The child has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 17

States Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

To this end, States Parties shall:

(a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of article 29;

(b) Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources;

(c) Encourage the production and dissemination of children's books;

(d) Encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous;

(e) Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of articles 13 and 18.

Article 18

1. States Parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern.

2. For the purpose of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present Convention, States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children.

3. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities for which they are eligible.

Article 19

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.

Article 20

1. A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State.

2. States Parties shall in accordance with their national laws ensure alternative care for such a child.

3. Such care could include, inter alia, foster placement, kafalah of Islamic law, adoption or if necessary placement in suitable institutions for the care of children. When considering solutions, due regard shall be paid to the desirability of continuity in a child's upbringing and to the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background.

Article 21

States Parties that recognize and/or permit the system of adoption shall ensure that the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration and they shall:

(a) Ensure that the adoption of a child is authorized only by competent

authorities who determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures and on the basis of all pertinent and reliable information, that the adoption is permissible in view of the child's status concerning parents, relatives and legal guardians and that, if required, the persons concerned have given their informed consent to the adoption on the basis of such counselling as may be necessary;

(b) Recognize that inter-country adoption may be considered as an alternative means of child's care, if the child cannot be placed in a foster or an adoptive family or cannot in any suitable manner be cared for in the child's country of origin;

(c) Ensure that the child concerned by inter-country adoption enjoys safeguards and standards equivalent to those existing in the case of national adoption;

(d) Take all appropriate measures to ensure that, in inter-country adoption, the placement does not result in improper financial gain for those involved in it;

(e) Promote, where appropriate, the objectives of the present article by concluding bilateral or multilateral arrangements or agreements, and endeavour, within this framework, to ensure that the placement of the child in another country is carried out by competent authorities or organs.

Article 22

1. States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedures shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international human rights or humanitarian instruments to which the said States are Parties.

2. For this purpose, States Parties shall provide, as they consider appropriate, co-operation in any efforts by the United Nations and other competent intergovernmental organizations or non-governmental organizations co-operating with the United Nations to protect and assist such a child and to trace the parents or other members of the family of any refugee child

in order to obtain information necessary for reunification with his or her family. In cases where no parents or other members of the family can be found, the child shall be accorded the same protection as any other child permanently or temporarily deprived of his or her family environment for any reason , as set forth in the present Convention.

Article 23

1. States Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.

2. States Parties recognize the right of the disabled child to special care and shall encourage and ensure the extension, subject to available resources, to the eligible child and those responsible for his or her care, of assistance for which application is made and which is appropriate to the child's condition and to the circumstances of the parents or others caring for the child.

3. Recognizing the special needs of a disabled child, assistance extended in accordance with paragraph 2 of the present article shall be provided free of charge, whenever possible, taking into account the financial resources of the parents or others caring for the child, and shall be designed to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development

4. States Parties shall promote, in the spirit of international cooperation, the exchange of appropriate information in the field of preventive health care and of medical, psychological and functional treatment of disabled children, including dissemination of and access to information concerning methods of rehabilitation, education and vocational services, with the aim of enabling States Parties to improve their capabilities and skills and to widen their experience in these areas. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

Article 24

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the

highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.

2. States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures:

(a) To diminish infant and child mortality;

(b) To ensure the provision of necessary medical assistance and health care to all children with emphasis on the development of primary health care;

(c) To combat disease and malnutrition, including within the framework of primary health care, through, inter alia, the application of readily available technology and through the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution;

(d) To ensure appropriate pre-natal and post-natal health care for mothers;

(e) To ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breastfeeding, hygiene and environmental sanitation and the prevention of accidents;

(f) To develop preventive health care, guidance for parents and family planning education and services.

3. States Parties shall take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.

4. States Parties undertake to promote and encourage international co-operation with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the right recognized in the present article. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

Article 25

States Parties recognize the right of a child who has been placed by the competent authorities for the purposes of care, protection or treatment of his or her physical or mental health, to a periodic review of the treatment provided to the child and all other circumstances relevant to his or her

placement.

Article 26

1. States Parties shall recognize for every child the right to benefit from social security, including social insurance, and shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realization of this right in accordance with their national law.

2. The benefits should, where appropriate, be granted, taking into account the resources and the circumstances of the child and persons having responsibility for the maintenance of the child, as well as any other consideration relevant to an application for benefits made by or on behalf of the child.

Article 27

1. States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

2. The parent(s) or others responsible for the child have the primary responsibility to secure, within their abilities and financial capacities, the conditions of living necessary for the child's development.

3. States Parties, in accordance with national conditions and within their means, shall take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing.

4. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to secure the recovery of maintenance for the child from the parents or other persons having financial responsibility for the child, both within the State Party and from abroad. In particular, where the person having financial responsibility for the child lives in a State different from that of the child, States Parties shall promote the accession to international agreements or the conclusion of such agreements, as well as the making of other appropriate arrangements.

Article 28

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal

opportunity, they shall, in particular:

(a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;

(b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;

(c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;

(d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;

(e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.

3. States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

Article 29

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;

(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

(e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

2. No part of the present article or article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principle set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.

Article 30

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

Article 31

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

Article 32

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

2. States Parties shall take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the implementation of the present article. To this end, and having regard to the relevant provisions of other international

instruments, States Parties shall in particular:

(a) Provide for a minimum age or minimum ages for admission to employment;

(b) Provide for appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment;

(c) Provide for appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of the present article.

Article 33

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances as defined in the relevant international treaties, and to prevent the use of children in the illicit production and trafficking of such substances.

Article 34

States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

(a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;

(b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;

(c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

Article 35

States Parties shall take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form.

Article 36

States Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare.

Article 37

States Parties shall ensure that:

(a) No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release shall be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age;

(b) No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time;

(c) Every child deprived of liberty shall be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, and in a manner which takes into account the needs of persons of his or her age. In particular, every child deprived of liberty shall be separated from adults unless it is considered in the child's best interest not to do so and shall have the right to maintain contact with his or her family through correspondence and visits, save in exceptional circumstances;

(d) Every child deprived of his or her liberty shall have the right to prompt access to legal and other appropriate assistance, as well as the right to challenge the legality of the deprivation of his or her liberty before a court or other competent, independent and impartial authority, and to a prompt decision on any such action.

Article 38

1. States Parties undertake to respect and to ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable to them in armed conflicts which are relevant to the child.

2. States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities.

3. States Parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of fifteen years into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years, States Parties shall endeavour to give priority to those who are oldest.

4. In accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect the civilian population in armed conflicts, States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict.

Article 39

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

Article 40

1. States Parties recognize the right of every child alleged as, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child's sense of dignity and worth, which reinforces the child's respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others and which takes into account the child's age and the desirability of promoting the child's reintegration and the child's assuming a constructive role in society.

2. To this end, and having regard to the relevant provisions of international instruments, States Parties shall, in particular, ensure that:

(a) No child shall be alleged as, be accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law by reason of acts or omissions that were not prohibited by national or international law at the time they were committed;

(b) Every child alleged as or accused of having infringed the penal law has at least the following guarantees:

(i) To be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law;

(ii) To be informed promptly and directly of the charges against him or her, and, if appropriate, through his or her parents or legal guardians, and to have legal or other appropriate assistance in the preparation and presentation of his or her defence;

(iii) To have the matter determined without delay by a competent, independent and impartial authority or judicial body in a fair hearing

according to law, in the presence of legal or other appropriate assistance and, unless it is considered not to be in the best interest of the child, in particular, taking into account his or her age or situation, his or her parents or legal guardians;

(iv) Not to be compelled to give testimony or to confess guilt; to examine or have examined adverse witnesses and to obtain the participation and examination of witnesses on his or her behalf under conditions of equality;

(v) If considered to have infringed the penal law, to have this decision and any measures imposed in consequence thereof reviewed by a higher competent, independent and impartial authority or judicial body according to law;

(vi) To have the free assistance of an interpreter if the child cannot understand or speak the language used;

(vii) To have his or her privacy fully respected at all stages of the proceedings.

3. States Parties shall seek to promote the establishment of laws, procedures, authorities and institutions specifically applicable to children alleged as, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law, and, in particular:

(a) The establishment of a minimum age below which children shall be presumed not to have the capacity to infringe the penal law;

(b) Whenever appropriate and desirable, measures for dealing with such children without resorting to judicial proceedings, providing that human rights and legal safeguards are fully respected. 4. A variety of dispositions, such as care, guidance and supervision orders; counselling; probation; foster care; education and vocational training programmes and other alternatives to institutional care shall be available to ensure that children are dealt with in a manner appropriate to their well-being and proportionate both to their circumstances and the offence.

Article 41

Nothing in the present Convention shall affect any provisions which are more conducive to the realization of the rights of the child and which may be contained in:

(a) The law of a State party; or

(b) International law in force for that State.

PART II

Article 42

States Parties undertake to make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike.

Article 43

1. For the purpose of examining the progress made by States Parties in achieving the realization of the obligations undertaken in the present Convention, there shall be established a Committee on the Rights of the Child, which shall carry out the functions hereinafter provided.

2. The Committee shall consist of eighteen experts of high moral standing and recognized competence in the field covered by this Convention.1/ The members of the Committee shall be elected by States Parties from among their nationals and shall serve in their personal capacity, consideration being given to equitable geographical distribution, as well as to the principal legal systems.

3. The members of the Committee shall be elected by secret ballot from a list of persons nominated by States Parties. Each State Party may nominate one person from among its own nationals.

4. The initial election to the Committee shall be held no later than six months after the date of the entry into force of the present Convention and thereafter every second year. At least four months before the date of each election, the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall address a letter to States Parties inviting them to submit their nominations within two months. The Secretary-General shall subsequently prepare a list in alphabetical order of all persons thus nominated, indicating States Parties which have nominated them, and shall submit it to the States Parties to the present Convention.

5. The elections shall be held at meetings of States Parties convened by the Secretary-General at United Nations Headquarters. At those meetings, for which two thirds of States Parties shall constitute a quorum, the persons elected to the Committee shall be those who obtain the largest number of votes and an absolute majority of the votes of the representatives of States Parties present and voting.

6. The members of the Committee shall be elected for a term of four years. They shall be eligible for re-election if renominated. The term of five of the members elected at the first election shall expire at the end of two years; immediately after the first election, the names of these five members shall be chosen by lot by the Chairman of the meeting.

7. If a member of the Committee dies or resigns or declares that for any other cause he or she can no longer perform the duties of the Committee, the State Party which nominated the member shall appoint another expert from among its nationals to serve for the remainder of the term, subject to the approval of the Committee.

8. The Committee shall establish its own rules of procedure.

9. The Committee shall elect its officers for a period of two years.

10. The meetings of the Committee shall normally be held at United Nations Headquarters or at any other convenient place as determined by the Committee. The Committee shall normally meet annually. The duration of the meetings of the Committee shall be determined, and reviewed, if necessary, by a meeting of the States Parties to the present Convention, subject to the approval of the General Assembly.

11. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall provide the necessary staff and facilities for the effective performance of the functions of the Committee under the present Convention.

12. With the approval of the General Assembly, the members of the Committee established under the present Convention shall receive emoluments from United Nations resources on such terms and conditions as the Assembly may decide.

Article 44

1. States Parties undertake to submit to the Committee, through the Secretary-General of the United Nations, reports on the measures they

have adopted which give effect to the rights recognized herein and on the progress made on the enjoyment of those rights

(a) Within two years of the entry into force of the Convention for the State Party concerned;

(b) Thereafter every five years.

2. Reports made under the present article shall indicate factors and difficulties, if any, affecting the degree of fulfilment of the obligations under the present Convention. Reports shall also contain sufficient information to provide the Committee with a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the Convention in the country concerned.

3. A State Party which has submitted a comprehensive initial report to the Committee need not, in its subsequent reports submitted in accordance with paragraph 1 (b) of the present article, repeat basic information previously provided.

4. The Committee may request from States Parties further information relevant to the implementation of the Convention.

5. The Committee shall submit to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, every two years, reports on its activities.

6. States Parties shall make their reports widely available to the public in their own countries.

Article 45

In order to foster the effective implementation of the Convention and to encourage international co-operation in the field covered by the Convention:

(a) The specialized agencies, the United Nations Children's Fund, and other United Nations organs shall be entitled to be represented at the consideration of the implementation of such provisions of the present Convention as fall within the scope of their mandate. The Committee may invite the specialized agencies, the United Nations Children's Fund and other competent bodies as it may consider appropriate to provide expert advice on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their respective mandates. The Committee may invite the specialized agencies, the United Nations Children's Fund, and other

United Nations organs to submit reports on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities;

(b) The Committee shall transmit, as it may consider appropriate, to the specialized agencies, the United Nations Children's Fund and other competent bodies, any reports from States Parties that contain a request, or indicate a need, for technical advice or assistance, along with the Committee's observations and suggestions, if any, on these requests or indications;

(c) The Committee may recommend to the General Assembly to request the Secretary-General to undertake on its behalf studies on specific issues relating to the rights of the child;

(d) The Committee may make suggestions and general recommendations based on information received pursuant to articles 44 and 45 of the present Convention. Such suggestions and general recommendations shall be transmitted to any State Party concerned and reported to the General Assembly, together with comments, if any, from States Parties.

PART III

Article 46

The present Convention shall be open for signature by all States.

Article 47

The present Convention is subject to ratification. Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 48

The present Convention shall remain open for accession by any State. The instruments of accession shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 49

1. The present Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day following the date of deposit with the Secretary-General of the United

Nations of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession.

2. For each State ratifying or acceding to the Convention after the deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession, the Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the deposit by such State of its instrument of ratification or accession.

Article 50

1. Any State Party may propose an amendment and file it with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Secretary-General shall thereupon communicate the proposed amendment to States Parties, with a request that they indicate whether they favour a conference of States Parties for the purpose of considering and voting upon the proposals. In the event that, within four months from the date of such communication, at least one third of the States Parties favour such a conference, the Secretary-General shall convene the conference under the auspices of the United Nations. Any amendment adopted by a majority of States Parties present and voting at the conference shall be submitted to the General Assembly for approval.

2. An amendment adopted in accordance with paragraph 1 of the present article shall enter into force when it has been approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations and accepted by a two-thirds majority of States Parties.

3. When an amendment enters into force, it shall be binding on those States Parties which have accepted it, other States Parties still being bound by the provisions of the present Convention and any earlier amendments which they have accepted.

Article 51

1. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall receive and circulate to all States the text of reservations made by States at the time of ratification or accession.

2. A reservation incompatible with the object and purpose of the present Convention shall not be permitted.

3. Reservations may be withdrawn at any time by notification to that effect addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall then inform all States. Such notification shall take effect on the date on which it is received by the Secretary-General

Article 52

A State Party may denounce the present Convention by written notification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Denunciation becomes effective one year after the date of receipt of the notification by the Secretary-General.

Article 53

The Secretary-General of the United Nations is designated as the depositary of the present Convention.

Article 54

The original of the present Convention, of which the Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts are equally authentic, shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In witness thereof the undersigned plenipotentiaries, being duly authorized thereto by their respective Governments, have signed the present Convention.

The General Assembly, in its resolution 50/155 of 21 December 1995 , approved the amendment to article 43, paragraph 2, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, replacing the word "ten" with the word "eighteen". The amendment entered into force on 18 November 2002 when it had been accepted by a two-thirds majority of the States parties (128 out of 191).


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