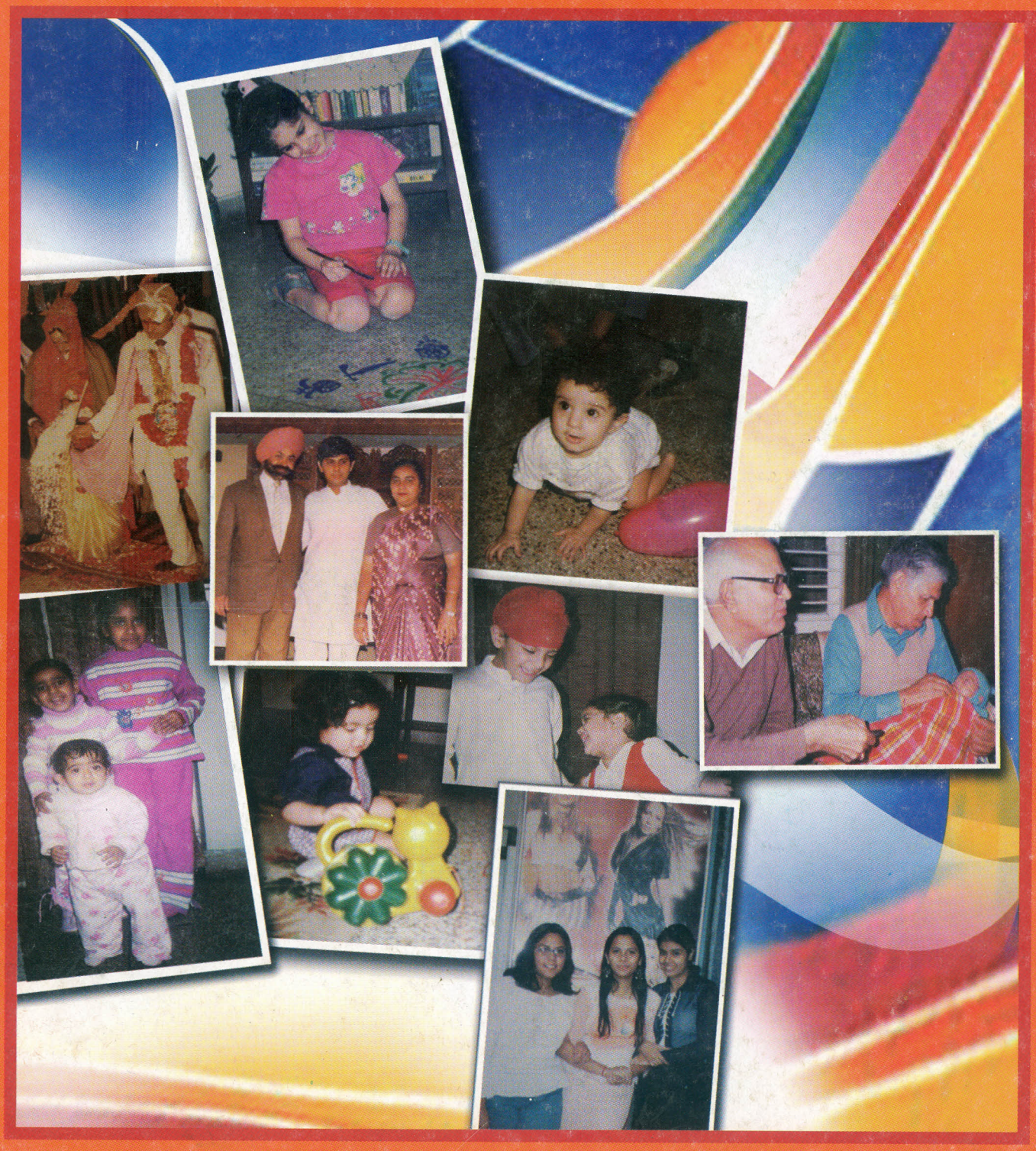
Indira Gandhi National Open University
National Centre for Disability Studies

MCFT-001
Human Development and Family Relationships



FAMILY LIFE CYCLE STAGES - I

3

"शिक्षा मानव को बन्धनों से मुक्त करती है और आज के यग में तो यह लोकतंत्र की भावना का आधार भी है। जन्म तथा अन्य कारणों से उत्पन्न जाति एवं वर्गगत विषमताओं को दूर करते हुए मनुष्य को इन सबसे ऊपर उठाती है।"

– इन्दिरा गांधी

"Education is a liberating force , and in our age it is also a democratizing force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances"

- Indira Gandhi

Indira Gandhi
National Open University
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Block

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FAMILY LIFE CYCLE STAGES - I

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BLOCK 3 FAMILY LIFE CYCLE STAGES - I

In the previous Block we learned about the theoretical approaches to family, various family forms and family dynamics. In Block 'Family life Cycles Stages – I', as the name suggests, we deal with the different this life cycle stages. This Block will help you in understanding the importance and uniqueness of each family life cycle stage. This Block consists of five Units.

Unit 10, entitled *"Family Life Cycle"* describes the various stages of family life cycle. The first part of this Unit defines the term family life cycle and acquaints you with the eight life cycle stages. The Unit elucidats the importance of understanding the family life cycle.

Further, the Unit explains, the salient features of each stage in family life cycle. For successful understanding of family life cycle development, it is very important that one understands the importance of every family member. This Unit helps in understanding the importance of respecting individual differences in familial relationships.

Unit 11 is *"Marriages and the Beginning Family"* which describes the beginning family stage in India. The Unit deals with the concept of marriage in India. Further, it explains the roles and responsibilities of a newly wed couple. Marriage requires lots of adjustments. The various domains of adjustments are explained in this Unit. In this Unit, we will discuss the challenges and emerging issues that come across while beginning a family. In the later part of this Unit we will study how a family from a beginning family stage transits to the next stage, that is the child bearing stage.

Unit 12 is named as *"Child Bearing Families"*. It deals with the second stage of the family life cycle. In starting of this Unit we will discuss the family and its functions. We will discover how the face of family is changing with change in time. The child bearing stage starts with the decision of conceiving the first child. We will discuss some important factors that affect the decision of bearing a child in India. Further, we will study the changing trends in the age at which the first child is born. These are number of factors that lead to postponement of child bearing, like personal influences, family influences and societal influences. The Unit also explains the new role of father, mother and other members of extended family and community. The birth of a child not only brings the joy and happiness but it also gives rise to some stressors which are discussed in this Unit. At the end of this Unit, the role of education, women's empowerment and media on child bearing stage is described.

Unit 13 is *"Families with Preschool Children"* which describes the third stage of family life cycle. In the beginning of this Unit the importance of children in a family are explained. The development tasks of different stages of family life cycle will also be discussed. The Unit also explains the different types of parenting techniques and the outcomes. The important domains of adjustment in families with preschool children are explained in this Unit. The Unit will help you in understanding emerging issues and challenges for families with preschool children. It will also acquaint you with some important disciplinary techniques for toddlers and preschool children.

UNIT 10 FAMILY LIFE CYCLE

Structure

10.1 Introduction

10.2 What is Family Life Cycle?

10.3 Family Life Cycle Stages

10.4 Importance of Understanding the Family Life Cycle

10.5 Salient Features of each Stage in a Family Life Cycle

10.6 Acknowledging and Respecting Individual Differences

10.7 Let Us Sum Up

10.8 Glossary

10.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

10.10 Unit End Questions

10.11 Further Readings and References

10.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Block, you read a lot about the institution of family, its different forms and structures, family dynamics and theories related to families. Regardless of the fact that the family is considered the basic institutional element of the society, the experiences, issues and feelings it encompasses are personal and private concerns for most people. A large majority of people grow up in families and gain firsthand familial experiences. It is true that family patterns, structure and functions have changed dramatically, but their persistence, adaptability and importance to individuals are most remarkable and noteworthy even today.

In this particular Unit, you will study about the meaning, importance and significance of family life cycle. You will be briefly oriented to the different stages of family life cycle and some common characteristics of each stage of family life cycle. You will acquire an elaborate understanding of each stage of family life cycle in the following Units of this Block as well as the next Block. At the end of this Unit, you will recognise the importance of acknowledging and respecting individual differences of family members for families to be able to positively face the issues and conflicts of each stage.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the meaning of family life cycle;
- Develop familiarity with all the stages of family life cycle;
- Recognise the importance of studying the family life cycle;
- Know the salient features across family life cycle; and
- Understand the importance of respecting individual differences in familial relationships.

10.2 WHAT IS FAMILY LIFE CYCLE?

Knock on any family door and what will you find within? Can you ever know exactly what that particular family is like? You know that every family is different in one way or the other. According to Duvall, generally if you know three things about a family you can predict with somewhat reliability that what is going on within that family:

- Where a family is in time in its life cycle, within an era of social change, and in a given season, day and hour.
- Who lives in the family?
- How the family rates in the community as seen in its social status.

If you know these three things, you can tell even before you meet the family that what the important elements to look for are and what forces you may find in action. Families have a developmental history which is marked by periods of dynamic action and relative calm. These periods of action and calmness are experienced by all families across the world within a day, week and season. Each family grows through the years in its own particular way. Just as the individual is born, grows, develops, matures, ages and undergoes the successive changes and development from conception to death in her or his own way, each family lives out its life cycle in its own unique fashion. So, what then is the meaning of the term family life cycle?

The *family life cycle* is the fundamental concept in understanding how families change over time. The family life cycle can be divided into stages that are conceptually distinct and that typically occur in a given sequence (Aldous, 1978 in Duvall & Miller, 1985). There is a predictability about family development that helps you know what to expect of any family at any given stage, regardless of who are its members or where it is located. The family life cycle, as a frame of reference, is a way of taking a long look at family life. It is based upon the recognition of the successive patterns within the continuity of the family living over the years. It opens the way for study of the particular problems and potentials, rewards and hazards, vulnerabilities and strengths of each phase of family experience from beginning to end (Duvall, 1985).

In each stage, one faces challenges in one's family life that cause one to develop or gain new skills. Developing these skills helps the individual work through the changes that nearly most families go through.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) What is family life cycle?

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2) List the three things that will help you fairly predict about what is going on within a family.

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10.3 FAMILY LIFE CYCLE STAGES

The family life cycle may be divided into few or many stages on the basis of several factors. We can broadly divide the family cycle into two stages:

1) **The expanding family:** This stage includes inception of the family to the time its children are born.

2) **The contracting family:** During this stage children are being launched by the family into lives of their own and in which the family contracts through the later years with one or both of the original pair still at home.

For a purpose of definite and specific study of family or its members the above two stages are very broad in nature.

Duvall has recognised eight stages of family life cycle. These are:

1) The beginning families, that is, the married or cohabiting couple without children,

Fig. 10.1: The Beginning family

2) Child bearing families,

3) Families with preschool children,

4) Families with school going children,

5) Families with teenagers,

6) Families as launching centres,

7) Families in the middle years, and

8) Aging families.

A typical Indian family begins with marriage. Marriage forms an early establishment of family for the newly married couple who might stay alone or with other family members. Do you recall reading about the family structure

in the Unit on 'Diversity in Family Forms'? The family in the beginning stage develops fast with the coming of the first child and the married couple now playing the role as father and mother. The family continues to expand as successive children are born and parents continue to play additional roles. Each addition to the family brings along with it a need for reorganisation of various aspects of family living, new sets of roles and responsibilities, new domains of adjustments, and newer issues and challenges to be dealt with. As children grow older, so do their parents. Change is a constant factor in the life cycle of every family. Everything changes, such as the needs, desires, hopes, expectations as well as responses to the demands and pressures of growing children. As time passes the relationship of children with their parents, siblings and other relatives too change. Families mature and grow along with children. The families which once upon a time expanded to accommodate the needs and requirements of growing children, contract later to launch the children as young adults. The active and bustling long years of the family which ran at hectic pace now slow down and give way to slow moving long years when the middle aged and aging parents face the later half of their marriage together as a pair or with married children who may also have become parents. The later years of life come with new opportunities and problems.

In the following Units, in this Block and the next Block, you will study in detail about the different stages of family life cycle. But before you study each life cycle stage of family in depth, it is very essential to know why we need to understand the family life cycle.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) List the two broad stages of family life cycle with a brief explanation of each.

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2) List the eight stages of family life cycle given by Duvall.

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10.4 IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE FAMILY LIFE CYCLE

Every family does not pass through the stages of family life cycle smoothly. Situations such as severe illness, financial problems and crisis, death of a loved one and failure can have an effect on how well a family passes through the stages. Further, research studies indicate that husbands and wives are influenced in very different ways by stage of family life cycle experiences.

It is also important to note that all families do not move through the family life cycle in the same way. Each family grows through the years in its unique and particular way. Rich or poor, large or small, living in the city or village, class, caste, nuclear or joint all families have different experiences. The stages discussed earlier are what the majority of families experience. But the life experiences of some individuals do not follow the family life cycle mentioned earlier. There are people who may never marry. They may continue to live with their family of orientation or may live alone. There may be couples who cohabitate but do not form families of procreation. Some couples voluntarily or involuntarily never bear or rear children and some may choose to adopt. Some family may be grieving the loss or death of the child. Some people may marry earlier or later or bear children earlier or later or over a longer period of time. A family might have a child(ren) with special needs which may alter the family's needs and characteristics to a great extent. Read the vignettes given below:

Pranav and Nandini were formally engaged but had no plans to get married for the next five years. Their priority was career. They were extremely intimate with each other. Pranav had to go abroad for an important project for a period of one year. Two months later Nandini discovered that she was pregnant. It was not possible for Pranav to come back to India in a short time. She delivered the baby. When they got married after a year they were already parents. For this couple the beginning family started with the presence of a child.

Ashok's wife died in an accident leaving behind their two school going children. It was difficult for Ashok to manage business and rear children single handedly. He was compelled to marry again. He got married to Priti who was divorced with a young child. For Ashok and Priti the beginning family involved so many complexities of relationships, roles and adjustments.

One must also take into account the different forms of families such as those formed through divorce and remarriage, single parent families, step-families, migrant families and dual-earner families. Alternative lifestyle like same sex marriages, homosexual pairs, group marriages, communes and other family like households also need to be considered. Domestic violence and mental disorders of a family member have complex set of issues associated with it.

You have read earlier that the challenges you face at each stage help you to develop and gain new skills. Mastering the skills and milestones of each stage is important to successfully move to the next stage. Successful transitioning may help prevent disease and emotional or stress related disorders. Not being able to master the skills does not mean that the family will be stagnant at one

stage. The family will still move on to the next phase but its members are more likely to have difficulty with relationships and future transitions. The missed skills can be learnt and improved at any stage to improve the quality of family life.

Whether you are a parent or child, husband or wife or live-in partner, brother or sister, or you are bonded by love or blood or contract, your experiences through the family life cycle will affect who you are and who you become. The more you understand the challenges of each stage, the more likely you are to successfully move on. Further, understanding the family life cycle is useful for counsellors, family therapists, doctors, nurses, home economists, teachers, social workers and other professionals and paraprofessionals who work with families; as well as for parents and family members for whom life cycle management is relevant.

Knowing where a family is in its life cycle makes it possible to anticipate a number of vital factors.

Being cyclical by definition, the family life cycle and each of the stages within it has no beginning and no end. No matter where you start to study the family life cycle, there are always relevant roots in the near and distant past that must be considered!

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) Give four reasons as to why it is important to understand a family life cycle.

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10.5 SALIENT FEATURES OF EACH STAGE IN A FAMILY LIFE CYCLE

You must have understood by now that all stages of family life cycle are very different from each other and yet closely connected. We will now discuss some features which are common to each stage. All stages of family life cycle have the following features in order to successfully transit to the next stage.

- **Roles and responsibilities of each family member:** Roles refer to behavioural expectations of individuals at any given time. Members of the family are expected to play certain specific roles based on socially shared expectations. In most cases roles are guided by the culture and

society in which the family lives. Every family member is faced with a different set of roles and responsibilities as the family progresses in the family life cycle. In daily life, family members make efforts to conform with the roles that they are expected to play.

Fig. 10.2: Every member of the family has a specific role to play, as mothers are expected to play the role of the primary caregiver for the infant

- **Domains of adjustment:** Domains of adjustment are the areas where a family needs to make adjustments for the wellbeing of its members. Adjustments may be big or small, frequent or rare. Each stage of a family life cycle brings along different domains of adjustment.

- **Challenges and emerging issues:** Each of the roles, responsibilities and domains of adjustment involved in establishing a marital or any other familial relationship has challenges and issues that must be met successfully if the family is to develop and grow satisfactorily. Success in performing one's roles, responsibilities and working towards adjustments in different domains does not come suddenly but must be achieved if the family intends to find happiness together.

Fig.10.3: Extended family members play a role in caregiving

- **Transitioning to the next stage:** While you attempt to understand the process of transition from one stage to another in a family life cycle, in the following Units, you should keep in mind that transition from one stage to another is not like a water tight compartment. Overlapping of stages is bound to occur for most families. For example, in families with more than one child there will be several years of stage overlapping. Thus while a family may be seeing it's first born into school, a younger sibling may arrive into a preschool family rather than a childbearing family (in which the first child arrived). A family does not transit abruptly from one stage to another but does so smoothly.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) Which are the four features common across all stages in the entire family life cycle and why?

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10.6 ACKNOWLEDGING AND RESPECTING INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

For a successful understanding of family life cycle development, it is very important that one understands the uniqueness of every family member and respects it. All family members are individual persons with individual differences. In various familial relationships like husband and wife, brother and sister, children and parents, in-laws and other relatives; each one brings along different recipes of life, with different ingredients. What do you think, are the ingredients? Let us find out the individual differences that exist among individuals and families.

1) **Values:** A value is an assumption upon which an implementation can be extrapolated. A *value system* is a set of consistent values and measures. A *principle value* is a foundation upon which other values and measures of integrity are based. A value is always important to the person who holds it. It is desirable and satisfying. Values are subjective and vary across people and cultures. Personal values evolve from circumstances and interactions with the external world and can change over time. The sources of values are family, society, religion, culture, education, political party, mass media, historical environment etc. Each individual possesses a unique conception of values. Values are related to the norms of a culture, but they are more general and abstract than norms. Norms are rules for behaviour in specific situations, while values identify what should be judged as good or bad.

For example, hoisting the national flag on Independence Day is a norm but it reflects the value of patriotism. Do you think that, any analysis for family therapy or counselling can be undertaken without considering the role of value systems of the individuals concerned?

2) **Attitudes:** Attitudes are composed of feelings, emotions and convictions that come from heredity, environment, experience and present purpose. Attitudes are hypothetical constructs that represent an individual's likes or dislikes for an item. They are thoughts or behaviour patterns formed by past and present experience and form a conscious set of readiness of the mind to react to objects and situations in a given way. Values are governing factors and play a role in determining attitudes. Attitudes change more readily than values. Attitudes are positive, negative or neutral towards a person, behaviour or event. At times individuals experience ambivalence in attitudes. Attitudes are composed from various forms of judgement. After failed marriage an individual may feel that all marriages are failing. This reflects negative attitude towards the institution of marriage.

3) **Standards:** Standards are a set of measures of values, stemming from our value patterns. Standards determine the amount and kind of interest we have in something and the satisfaction we receive in doing things. Standards serve as a measure or criteria for measurement of objects, ways of doing things and ways of living. They are what individuals and families accept as adequate and consider it worthy in working towards achieving them. For example, an individual may believe that possessing a post graduate degree is a must or owning a car is very important for an adequate standard of living.

4) **Goals:** A goals is an objective condition or something one strives to attain or achieve at any given point. Goals can be short term, intermediate or long term. Values and goals are closely interlinked. Values produce goals and become the foundation for achieving them. A person having high regard for education may have a long term goal to become an academician or a professor.

5) **Beliefs:** A belief is a statement, assertion or theory of what you accept as true. It becomes your basis for deciding, choosing and acting. Beliefs vary considerably from one person to another. It is possible that you might have other values and believe something else. A form of an unfounded belief is an 'assumption'. Assumptions are unchallenged, unquestioned, unexamined and very often untrue. Every individual approaches a new idea, information, rumour, proposal or explanation with a pre-assumption. The pre-assumption can range from a very unlikely, dismissive and skeptical stance to a very likely and accepting stance. For example, a mother-in-law is always a problem creator or a daughter-in-law is too modern to adjust in family.

6) **Expectations:** Expectations are mental constructs. It is looking forward to or anticipating something. Expectations may be realistic or unrealistic. Expectations are closely related to values, standards, goals, beliefs, attitudes etc. Sometimes the clash of expectations causes problems in a marital relationship especially if they are unvoiced. Consider this:

Reshma has a postgraduate degree in life sciences and has high value for education. Due to difficulty in finding a suitable match she had to marry a man with much less education than her. Influenced by the contemporary conception of husband-wife relationship she had no issues with her husband being less educated. She aspired to pursue her career after marriage and looked forward to a supporting husband. Whereas the husband still thought of a wife as playing the same role as his mother did in relation to his father. A typical traditional homemaker who would greet him with a smile and a cup of tea when he comes home.

Do you think that the two could live in relative harmony with each other?

7) **Habits:** Habits are automatic routines of behaviour that are repeated regularly without thinking. They are learned behaviours and occur automatically without the explicit intention of the person. An individual may not be paying attention to or be conscious or aware of the behaviour. When the behaviour is brought to the person's attention, she or he may be able to control it only if there is an intention to do so.

8) **Skills:** A skill is the learnt capacity or talent to carry out tasks with minimum time, energy or both. Skills can often be divided into domain general and domain specific skills. For example, in the domain of work some general skills would include time management, teamwork, leadership, and self motivation. On the other hand, domain specific skills would be useful only for a certain job.

9) **Gender identity:** Gender identity refers to an individual's persistent unambiguous definition of self as either female or male; how one feels about self as female or male. It is a person's own sense of identification as male or female; one's concept of self as feminine or masculine.

Well, what is your opinion after reading an exhaustive list of ingredients? Do you think that if a husband and wife blend these all together they will happily enjoy the outcome all their life? Think about it!

Each spouse may begin the marital relationship with widely discrepant frames of reference with regard to the above factors you just read. The impact would be felt on every aspect of their day-to-day interactions like decision making process, patterns of communication, role performance, conflict resolution etc. Dissatisfaction in the relationship does not begin when there is a difference in personal factors but begins if the personal factors are unvoiced, implicit and not negotiated. With arranged marriages being a predominant pattern for most couples in India there may be very little opportunities for the partners to identify similarities and differences in their personal factors prior to marriage. This does not imply that the couples who select partners by self choice do not face this problem.

These factors may become a major source of conflict in the marital relationship subsequently. Initially it may appear that there are minor disagreements and arguments but the individual's position hardens with the passing of time and it increases conflicts between the couple. Thus while giving therapy or when counselling such couples you must undertake a careful analysis which needs to go beyond the superficial conflict areas and try to identify the discrepancies, especially the values. You must help the couple and individuals in families

understand the differences and make their values explicit. Once the differences are acknowledged it will help the couple either negotiate ways of narrowing down their differences or simply agreeing to remain different. Differences need to be respected mutually. An awareness of the differences itself creates conditions for change to occur.

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

Explain the following terms in brief:

1) Values

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2) Attitudes

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3) Gender identity

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10.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, you studied about the meaning of family life cycle which is a fundamental concept in understanding families and change. It is very important to understand the family life cycle because it opens the way for study of the particular problems and potentials, rewards and hazards, vulnerabilities and strengths of each phase of family experience from beginning to end. Each family grows through the years in its own unique way. Every family develops through a family life cycle in which it becomes established with the marriage of the husband and wife. It enters into child

bearing and child rearing with the coming of children, and becomes an arena of interacting family members as children grow up and in time launches the children into lives of their own. The middle-aged and aging couple lives through their remaining years in homes where they may live alone, with married children, their grandchildren and other relatives wherein they continue to remain a part of the family cycle. You got an orientation regarding the four salient features or rather common aspects which each stage of family life cycle will pass through. The last section of this Unit dealt with acknowledging and respecting individual differences of members in a family. You have to keep this fact in mind throughout your learning process in the context of counselling and family therapy.

10.8 GLOSSARY

Cyclical	:	Recurring, repeated
Dynamic	:	Energetic, vibrant
Explicit	:	Open, clear
Milestones	:	Landmark, target
Predominant	:	Main, chief
Vulnerabilities	:	Weakness, helplessness

10.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) The family life cycle is the fundamental concept in understanding how families change over time. The family life cycle can be divided into stages that are conceptually distinct and that typically occur in a given sequence. The family life cycle, as a frame of reference, is a way of taking a long look at family life.

2) The three things that will help us fairly predict about what is going on within a family are:

   - Where a family is in time in its life cycle, within an era of social change, and in a given season, day and hour.
   - Who lives in the family?
   - How the family rates in the community as seen in its social status.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) The two broad stages of family life cycle are:

   - The expanding family: It begins with marriage and lasts till the time its children are born.
   - The contracting family: In this stage the children of the family are being launched by the family into lives of their own and in the mean time the family contracts through the later years with one or both of the original parental pair still at home.

2) The eight stages of family life cycle given by Duvall are:

- The beginning families,
- Child bearing families,
- Families with preschool children,
- Families with school going children,
- Families with teenagers,
- Families as launching centres,
- Families in the middle years, and
- Aging families.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) Following are the reasons that underlie the importance of studying the family life cycle:

- Family life cycle will affect who you are and who you become.
- Each stage has challenges and issues which if dealt positively will help an individual move on to the next stage successfully.
- Understanding the family life cycle is a useful tool in training all those people who are involved in working with families either directly or indirectly.
- Knowing where a family is in its life cycle makes it possible to anticipate a number of vital factors.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1) The four features which are common across the family life cycle are:

- Roles and responsibilities of each family member,
- Domains of adjustment,
- Challenges and emerging issues, and
- Transitioning to the next stage.

The above four features are said to be common across the family life cycle because all stages are characterised by these features, and these have to be reckoned with at each stage as families progress through the cycle. In every stage the family members will have certain roles and responsibilities to perform and some domains which will call for adjustments. There would be new set of challenges and issues at every point of time. Each family will witness a time of transition into next stage.

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

1) A value is an assumption upon which an implementation can be extrapolated. A value is always important to the person who holds it. It is desirable and satisfying. Values are subjective and vary across people and cultures. Personal values evolve from circumstances and interactions with the external world and can change over time.

2) Attitudes are composite of feelings, emotions and convictions that come from heredity, environment, experience and present purpose. Attitudes are hypothetical constructs that represent an individual's like or dislike for an item. Attitudes change more readily than values.

3) Gender identity is an individual's persistent unambiguous definition of self as either female or male; how one feels about self as female or male; the concept of self as feminine or masculine.

10.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) Explain the meaning of family life cycle with a brief highlight about each stage.

2) Discuss the significance of studying the family life cycle.

3) Think about the families you know and try to place them in the family life cycle stages which you have just studied. Make an effort to think about the family members in the context of the roles and responsibilities, domains of adjustment, challenges and emerging issues and the process of transition to the next stage. Elaborate and discuss your findings.

4) Write short note on salient features of each stage of family life cycle.

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UNIT 11 MARRIAGE AND THE BEGINNING FAMILY

Structure

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11.1 INTRODUCTION

From the previous Unit, you know that a family passes through various stages in its life cycle. You also read about all the stages in brief. This particular Unit will focus on the first stage of family life cycle that is 'marriage and the beginning family'. You have also read about the *Grihastha ashram* – the beginning of family life cycle stage in India. This Unit will also throw light upon the concept of marriage in India and the various aspects related to marriage that are preparing to marry and importance of understanding one's self. As you proceed further in this Unit you will learn about the roles and responsibilities, domains of adjustment, challenges and emerging issues of the marriage and beginning family stage. The last section of this Unit talks about how a family in the beginning stage transits to the next stage that is, the child bearing stage and discusses certain issues associated with it.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to

- Describe the beginning family stage in India;
- Understand the concept of marriage in India;
- Recognise the roles and responsibilities in the beginning stage of family life; and
- Understand the domains of adjustment and challenges of the beginning family in India.

11.2 MARRIAGE AND THE BEGINNING FAMILY

The establishment phase or the beginning stage of the family life cycle begins at marriage and continues until child bearing time. In India, marriage marks the beginning of family in most cases. Among couples marrying for the first time, marriage represents the critical transition from being single adults to becoming a married pair. For the remarried, the transition is from an earlier conjugal relationship ended by death or divorce to one with a new partner in a new marriage. This also applies to couples who decide to cohabitate.

The normal custom in Indian society is that the husband and wife begin their married life not in an independent household but with the husband's parents. In the Western society such a living arrangement is considered as an emergency or temporary arrangement. The couple set up an independent household of their own as soon as possible. But you know that the Indian family is very different especially in structure. So, whenever you study Indian families you should always keep in mind the residence of members, dependence on each other and the kin relationship that is, the dynamics of family in the beginning stage would differ if a family is independent or dependent (in structure, function, property etc.) or if it is a traditional family with large number of kins living together.

In the previous Block, you have studied that the jointness of families in India is not disappearing and disintegrating but is changing into nuclear families. Studies of the urban families in India (for example, Ross, 1961; I.P. Desai, 1964; Gore, 1968; Vatuk, 1972; Ramu, 1977; Rao & Rao, 1982, Srivastava, 1986) focus on the continuity of some of the characteristics of the traditional joint family in the context of modernisation. You also studied that in a nuclear family where only the husband, wife and their unmarried children live; they will continue to be 'joint' with their primary kin like father or brother in terms of 'functioning'. Thus due to various factors the Indian family has mainly changed in 'structure' and interpersonal relationships.

Keeping the above facts in mind let us proceed to understand further a beginning family stage in India. But before we talk about the domains of roles and relationships and other dynamics in the beginning family stage, it is important for you to understand the concept of marriage in India. It is essential to understand the concept of marriage because in India most families enter the beginning stage in the family life cycle at the occurrence of marriage. So, let us see what a marriage means in India.

11.2.1 The Concept of Marriage in India

In India marriage is considered as social duty towards family and the community. It is an alliance between two families more than between two individuals. Therefore individuals in marriage need to accommodate and adapt to new situations as well as new families. This is more true for the woman who has to make lot of adjustments. She enters the family of procreation with preordained, stereotype role and behaviours in most cases.

Marriage being a social system is largely influenced by its institutional norms. These norms develop in the context of the religious, ethnic and community's norms and are further influenced by social changes and marital laws. Within this setting, marital dyads vary in their extent of adjustment to marriage.

Marriage is an enduring relationship between an adult male and an adult female based on religio-socio-legal sanctions. It is one of the most important stages of the life cycle. Marriage is like any other living system. A good marriage in India is the most rewarding experience life can offer to an individual (Bhatti, 2003).

A marriage guarantees sustained satisfaction of vital human needs both – physical and psychological.

Being a counsellor or family therapist you should keep in mind the difference of the nature of contemporary marriages from conventional marriages in India. Conventional marriages were primarily meant for fulfilling one's duty, procreation and sexual satisfaction. It was more of a filial relationship. The present day marriages are more consensual in nature. A holistic approach is very essential as a marital relationship cannot be treated as a unit outside the system of family and community.

11.2.2 Preparing to Marry

In the natural course to life most individuals are reared and prepared to go in for marriage. There is hardly any objective training to begin marital life for the majority of Indian population. Culturally most Indians are conditioned and socialised to get into marital bliss (Bhatti, 2003).

In order to retain the institutional norms of family structure and practices, selection in marriage was arranged and controlled by families. The concept of arranged marriages seems to cross all caste lines, regional boundaries and language barriers in India (Rao & Rao, 1982 in Ahuja, 1993). This left little scope for the individual involvement in the selection process of her or his marriage. The joint family structure laid great emphasis on the fitness and adjustability of the bride not only to her husband, but to the whole family. In this cultural milieu most individuals came to believe that their life partner is pre-destined, their fate is pre-ordained, they are helpless as far as choice is concerned and they must succumb to the celestial forces of the universe (Gupta, 1976 in Ahuja, 1993). Socialisation of most girls in India places an enormous importance adjusting successfully into the family of procreation by maintaining a harmonious relationship with the husband and his family members. It is expected that an individual particularly the female, make constant efforts to cultivate the marital relationship as well as other relationships in the family of procreation and the associated kin group.

It is essential to clearly interact with the family members regarding one's expectation for the marriage partner. If an individual has already decided upon the spouse (self choice or arranged marriage) one should be verbal about one's expectations out of the relationship and not be secretive about it. Healthy interaction is the key to any problem one is faced with.

The institution of marriage today is definitely affected from modern day changes and globalisation. There are an increasing number of inter-caste, inter-religious, self choice and cross-cultural marriages which in turn create subtle issues of adjustment, adaptation and communication. The young generation today has greater opportunities (television, internet, mobile phones) for better exposure to meet other people and develop intimate friendship which may eventually take the shape of marriage. Readiness for marriage is a major factor for preparing to marry. Age is an important factor which plays an important role in the readiness for marriage.

More and more people expect their marriage to be happy and emotionally supportive. Marital happiness needs to be cultivated and does not occur overnight with the tying of the knot. Crisis, conflict and disharmony creep in all aspects of life and marriage and beginning family is not an exception. The marital relationship should be entered with an attitude of long-term commitment with one's partner. Marriage is not something which is temporary and which will lapse at the slightest of inconvenience felt by either of the individuals within the marital relationship. When two different individuals begin a life together difficulties and problems may occur. But these problems should be dealt with through cooperation and patience, with the primary intention of staying in the system of marriage and not to get out of it. At the same time it is extremely unrealistic for couples to expect that life after marriage is going to be like heaven. Ideas like husbands and wives are each other's best friends; marriage is an equal partnership, children are essential for marital happiness, may remain dreams all your life if you don't work for it. For you to expect less stress and conflict and anticipate joys of greater freedom, it is also important that your expectations out of marriage be practical and realistic.

THE DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF MARRIAGE

Have you ever given a thought to what is marriage? What does being married mean to you? Well, you will be surprised to know that marriage has a different meaning in different religions. Let us together understand the different meanings and sociological significance attached to marriage:

- **Hinduism:** Marriage, being mainly performed for *dharma* and not for pleasure is considered a sacramental bond among Hindus.

Fig. 11.1: Hindu wedding

- **Islam:** Muslim marriage is called *nikah*. Unlike the sacramental marriage of the Hindus, a Muslim marriage is considered to be a civil contract.

Fig.11.2: Muslim wedding

- **Christianity:** In Christian religion, it is believed that marriage takes place because of the will of God, and that marriage creates not only biological relations but also mental and religious unions between the partners.

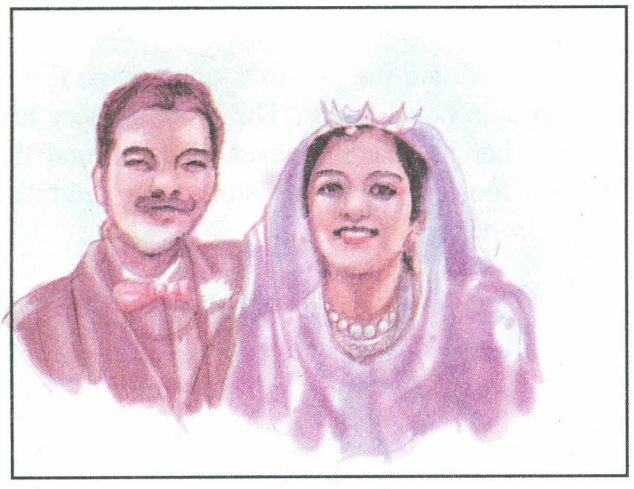

Fig. 11.3: Christian wedding

- **Sikhism:** The Sikh marriage is not merely a physical and legal contract, but is a holy union between two souls where physically they appear as two individuals but in fact are united as one. The Sikh marriage ceremony is known as *Anand Karaj* meaning blissful union.

Fig. 11.4: Sikh wedding

- **Jainism:** For the Jains, marriage means a public declaration of a man and a woman's intention to be together for the entire life. Jainism regards marriage as more or less a worldly affair.

- **Buddhism:** In Buddhism marriage is considered as personal and individual concern and not as a religious duty. Buddhism does not compel a person to be married and also does not force an individual to remain unmarried.

- **Zoroastrianism:** In Zoroastrianism a marriage is a sacred union of two souls competing with each other in the ideal practice of self abnegation.

A study by Yarhouse and Nowacki (2007) reviewed five major religions of the world (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism) and found that there are number of meanings associated with marriage that vary from religion to religion.

Marriage in India, in all religions have various rituals which involve all family members and are according to the kin relationship. Below we discuss two such marital rituals of Hindus in Tamil Nadu.

Sapthapathi

The bride's sari 'palla' and the groom's 'angavastram' (shawl) are tied in a knot and the couple holds hands. The groom places his foot under the bride's and helps her to take the seven steps around the fire. Then he places the bride's foot on a grinding stone near the fire and slips silver rings or 'metti' on her toes.

Fig.11.5: Sapthapathi

Kashi Yatra

Dressed in the traditional 'panchakatcham', holding an umbrella, a fan, a walking stick, and a towel containing 'dal' (lentils) and rice tied to his shoulder, the groom embarks on a mock pilgrimage. As he steps out of the 'mandapam', the bride's father pleads with him not to got to 'Kashi' (a sacred pilgrimage site in the city of Benaras) and marry his daughter instead. After much ado the groom accepts and returns to the 'mandappam' to get married!

Fig.11.6: Kashi Yatra

11.2.3 Self in Marriage

You must have experienced or heard people asking "What qualities do you aspire in your marriage partner?" Surprisingly most individuals have an imaginary list of qualities to seek in a marriage partner. Finding the "right" marriage partner is not the most significant factor in achieving a successful marriage but becoming the 'right' partner is! And the first step in becoming a competent marriage partner is to learn as much as possible about your own self. Learning about self is an important and continuous process but it should begin before choosing a marriage partner. Do you remember reading in the previous Unit that there are individual differences? Then you must also remember that individual differences need to be respected.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

Fill in the blanks:

1) The establishment phase or the beginning stage of the family life cycle begins at .....and continues until.....

2) Culturally most Indians are conditioned and socialised to get into.....

3) The institution of marriage today is definitely affected from modern day changes and .....

11.3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Traditionally a husband was expected to play the role of a 'bread winner' or the head of the family and the role of the wife was that of a 'homemaker' who was responsible for bearing and rearing of children. A study conducted by Ramu (1988) shows that there is considerable agreement among the couples on role expectations. Both spouses generally agree on the husband's provider role (to provide economic resources for the family's wellbeing) and the wife's conjugal obligations are to be caring, loving, loyal and a good and affectionate mother; in short, to be a homemaker. Today, options are greater for both partners within marriage. Opportunities for flexibility in education, work and family life are increasing.

Couples in the beginning family stage must develop patterns of daily living that satisfy both of them and other members of the family. The societal controls of traditional roles are weakening and there are wider options for flexibility in roles. In order to select the most appropriate role and to respond appropriately to the role played by the other partner one needs to make many adjustments. This requires energy. This energy can only be regained when the other partner responds adequately to the role. Role complementarity is essential for marital equilibrium especially when one is establishing a family. Marriage and family life benefits from flexible marital roles. For example, a husband may do the cooking or cleaning while the wife is studying for a degree or a wife may seek employment not only to financially support her husband or family but for her self fulfillment.

Responsibilities are allocated to the husband and wife which are much in line with the roles, each one is supposed to play or is playing. At times roles and responsibilities of the husband and wife and other family members complement each other and at times they result in conflicts.

Sometimes time, talent, interest and marital power determines who does what and who allocates responsibilities. For example, a man who is temporarily unemployed may do housework while his wife is away on the job. But another man cannot see himself doing household work under any circumstances because he may believe it's a "woman's work". Even if the wife or mother is unwell, away or overloaded with work. One woman may have the power to hire a cook or domestic help but another woman will play multiple roles.

Responsibilities should be reciprocal in nature. When one member assumes a particular task as her or his responsibility it frees the other from it. This does not mean that one partner does everything and the other does nothing. Also, a satisfactory performance of responsibilities needs acknowledgment and rewards. For example, "What a delicious dinner!" "Congratulations for a promotion. You deserved it!" It is important to establish acceptable patterns of

roles and responsibilities in the early phase of marriage for an enduring and long-lasting relationship.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) List some essential qualities of roles and responsibilities during the beginning stage of family life cycle.

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11.4 DOMAINS OF ADJUSTMENT

When two families join through marriage there occurs a new family system. Inter-mixing of two families, norms, values and views occurs. The family system includes the ingredients which you read in the previous Unit. When you marry, you combine your original family system with your partner and her or his family. This requires reshaping many of the things in your life. In most functional marriages partners have the ability to take two different points of view and create an option that neither person had considered. This differs from compromise. It is not giving up something. It rather means to create a third and amicable option. But life is not that simple as we expect it to be. Problems and issues are waiting for the door to open. Let us understand the domains in the beginning family stage which call for adjustment.

11.4.1 Occurrence of Marital Coalition

At the time of marriage, each partner has her or his primary relationship with her or his family of orientation. Once married, a shift must occur in the relationships with their parents and siblings. The marital relationship must become the primary relationship. This shift is very essential for a successful marriage. It is this shift that leads to marital coalition. This does not mean getting dissolved into each other. It means arriving at very clear rules for various interactions and transactions in marital and family life. These rules have nothing to do with gender or learning capability. The two mature adults together have to make these rules. Each spouse has the right to express her or his needs and expectations. Equality between the spouses is the most desired value in modern marriages.

Fig. 11.7: After marriage, marital relationship must become the primary relationship that leads to marital coalition.

11.4.2 Residence of Marriage Partners

You should keep in mind that the practice of woman leaving her parental family and joining her husband's family is being followed, broadly in India. After marriage, a woman has to negotiate the transition from her parental family system to that of her in-laws. This may bring a variety of conflicts which in turn can affect the marital adjustment of the couple. Newly married members of the upper class sometimes move into a new house completely furnished for them by one or both of their families, but this is rare. Setting up a new and independent household brings with it new set of adjustments. A couple has to make different set of adjustments depending upon whether the family they live in is joint or nuclear.

A community of construction site labourers in the Panchmahal district of Gujarat follows an atypical practice after the marriage of a son or brother. They set up separate households in a few hours. They quickly divide their pots, pans and other household items. The newly married wife starts cooking on the new 'chula' (stove) which is made up of a few bricks.

11.4.3 Intergenerational Relationships and Relatives

After undergoing a shift from one's family of orientation to the family of procreation the couple find themselves in three families; that are family of orientation, family of procreation and their own subsystem, within that family. The couple requires space, power and freedom to build their own subsystem. If this does not happen, then it becomes a major source of marital tensions. Relationships with in-laws are generally dreaded before marriage. It may turn out that after marriage the relationships may be mutually helpful, satisfactory and provide warmth and support to the individual. Issues arising should be met and dealt with through healthy communication to avoid resentment. It is not an overnight affair to merge your value systems with that of others but one must work towards cultivating a healthy relationship. There is a possibility of more conflict in mixed marriages compared to marriage in similar backgrounds. It is important to recognise the fact that it is normal for parents and children to go through a weaning process when the couple marries. The acceptance of

this fact makes the interrelationships less troublesome. Apart from the in-laws, the other members of the immediate family also have to be dealt with in the beginning phase like a younger or elder brother, sister, grandfather, grandmother, uncle, aunt or distant relative etc. Thus, the larger family surrounds each newly married couple and it is essential to establish the foundation of relationships that will carry on over the years.

Fig. 11.8: Intergenerational relationships.

11.4.4 Mutually Satisfying Sexual Relationships

You read earlier that husband and wife both bring into marriage numerous and significant unconscious needs, desires and wants. Human sexuality is immensely complex. Human sexual relations are infused with a great many motivations, meanings and emotions in addition to biological urges. Sexuality and sexual relations are developed within the context of historical, cultural and biological background of the individual. An individual's knowledge of sex is influenced by the family and environment (friends, school, neighbours, religion and media) in which she or he lives.

Most people assume that sex, at its best is one of the life's greatest fulfillments. But sexual compatibility needs to be cultivated and worked upon. Sexual incompatibility and dysfunction are a major source of marital conflicts and sometimes even lead to divorce. Partners who have been sexually intimate before marriage will have already encountered problems (if any). The husband and wife who work out together a continuity of mutually satisfying sex relationship early in marriage not only find a source of deep satisfaction for the present, but also establish a firm foundation upon which other tasks can be undertaken and future happiness built. Cultivating one's sexual relationship is difficult if the family is very poor and the couple does not have a separate and private place for sexual intimacy.

11.4.5 Communication

Two people live in the same house, share the same bed and eat together, but unless they establish effective systems of communication between them, they might as well be miles apart. We do not live in emotional vacuums. We live in a climate of feelings where we may experience different emotions like love,

hatred, highs, lows etc. It is important to recognise the emotional states, the reasons behind them and deal with them in a realistic and honest manner. Expressing real feelings in an acceptable manner is important. Healthy communication is not only about verbal interactions but it also includes complexity of words, gestures, signs and symbolic action. It is easy to get through your spouse and other family members with love and affection but learning how to handle inevitable negative feelings is a difficult assignment. You know that some conflict is expected in the beginning family as everybody does not look at things and situations with the same lens. So communication is the key to unlock different or former ways of living and negotiate them into a unity of lifestyle.

11.4.6 Friends, Community and Religious Organisations

Adjustments need to be made with the friends of each individual after marriage. This may vary if the marriage takes place in the same city, state, country or to a different one. Marriages by self choice have different set of adjustments compared to arranged marriages. It may be possible that the couple has to rebuild one's network of friends especially the wife as she joins her husband's family after marriage. Realigning relationships with your friends is important because it now includes your spouse.

Participation in community activities may again depend on various factors like one's social status, personal interests and availability of time. There may be some problems related to religious activities and affiliations if it is an inter-caste marriage. But a marriage in similar caste and religion can also put forth difficulties in terms of degree of interest and religious ideologies and values. For example, the wife may not believe in God while the husband may have deep rooted religious values.

11.4.7 Power

The factor of power equation calls for many adjustments especially in the initial phase of marriage. The dynamics of power can range from power equation between two partners, in-laws and parents, two brothers etc. It is essential to work out the power positions within a family. The issue of power among husband and wife is more likely to occur in situations where the wife is employed.

Establishing power and control over money and other resources, male domination, only one or two family members having a say in making important decisions etc. will all give rise to conflicts for power. Power relationships can have various conceptualisations, that are availability of resources (wealth, knowledge and skills), capacity to produce them and control over the outcome of resources. In most cases the power games are played out much more subtly and indirectly. So, while providing family therapy and counselling you need to be aware about the covert manifestations of power and control in relationships. Absence of conflicts over power is not an indication of the absence of power game.

11.4.8 Finances

Financial adjustment is one of the major adjustments to be made especially during the early years of marriage. A family in the contemporary world not

only requires necessities but also luxuries. Advent of globalisation is quickly converting wants into needs. A couple has to undertake and establish mutually satisfactory systems for getting and spending money.

If the wife is not employed then it means that there is an addition of a family member who will equally utilise the resources. Poor families find it difficult to make ends meet in such situations. Also at the time of beginning family stage both partners are in the beginning stage of their careers and are inexperienced. The young husband and wife may augment their income in a number of ways.

In most cases they accept financial help and support from parents. This is not an unusual practice in India. Even the expense of marriage ceremony in most cases is borne by the parents whether the individual is earning or not.

In the recent days, the most frequent solution which is sought is the wife's ability and willingness to work. If the wife is already employed at the time of marriage then the couple is not faced with financial crisis but gets the benefit of added income. As more women have entered the workforce and are financially independent the decision about how, when, where, why and on what to spend the family income becomes co-operative, democratic and based on joint planning of husband and wife. Generally, in India, in joint households financial decisions are taken by the patriarch of the family and financial cringe of the couple is also met by the larger family.

At times the couple faces an intrinsic pressure to display evidence of success to their friends, relatives, parents, siblings or colleagues who may be better established. A couple or individual may feel that they want a car or a better house not so much because they actually need it but may be because they have a superimposed desire to enhance their social position.

Individuals are also more and more attracted to electronic gadgets and automatic household equipments which make their life simpler. At times the couple may run a rat race to make ends meet at the sacrifice of not having children, fewer children, future financial security and peace of mind. Taking loan from bank can also be an option for the couple facing financial crisis, in the early years.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

Fill in the blanks:

1) In most cases the power games are played out much more ..... and .....

2) The couple requires space, power and freedom to build their own .....

3) Traditionally a husband was expected to play the role of a ..... and the head of the family and the role of the wife was that of a ..... who was responsible for bearing and rearing of children.

11.5 CHALLENGES AND EMERGING ISSUES

Developing skills and dealing maturely with the sources of stress in the beginning stage lays the foundation of future success of the stages to come in the family life cycle.

Conflicts arise out of differences that make each partner unique. You already know that husband and wife are two different persons each with their own personal history, values, attitudes, goals, preferences, habits etc. So differences in opinions and conflicts are inevitable to some extent.

Being committed to make your marriage work is a crucial necessity at this point of time. A marital relationship is most vulnerable in the beginning stage. Let us see what can be some sources of stress, challenges or emerging issues in the beginning stage.

1) The tendency to think that life is going to be a 'bed of roses' after marriage and that marriage will bring an end to all problems is one of the big sources of psychological stress especially if it does not turn out to be the way one had ideally expected. Some individuals expect to find immediate and unending bliss as soon as they are married.

2) Financial strain is particularly great during the early years of marriage. Most couples and husbands are at the beginning point of their career. If the couple lives in a joint family the stress might not be that great compared to that of the couple who have set up an independent household. A couple who belongs to a low socio-economic status may run into financial debt due to the expenses made for the elaborate marriage ceremony. At times the couple may take a loan and buy more than what they can afford which may lead to a financial crunch in the later stages. Generally, in India, parents of the couple take loans especially in girl's wedding.

3) Employment of wife may or may not create issues in the family. Some couples work out mutually satisfactory adjustments from the beginning and some learn to do it in the course of time. This depends a lot on attitude of the other family members, education level of the wife, employment status of the wife, and reason for employment (help or fulfilment). Control over one's income is an issue which the wife has to face and deal with. Expectations of the family that the wife must do multiple tasks produce enormous stress for the performer.

4) Controlling fertility and planning for children appears natural but it is a challenge for the couple or individual. At times a woman may have not control over her fertility. Involuntary childlessness and the concept of double income no kids is an emerging issue which many couples are facing.

5) Domestic violence and abuse, instances of marital rape are crisis and stress producing situations.

6) When marriage takes place, most individuals portray ideal images of self in an effort to please other and feel happy. The real issues emerge when the initial idealisation phase wears off and individuals behave in the way what each one actually is.

7) Rising rate of divorce brings many couples in the situation wherein they begin their family life with either partner or both of them remarrying. This can happen after a former marriage has been broken by death or divorce. Jealousies and unfavourable comparisons with former spouses are issues to be avoided at this juncture of beginning family.

8) Power and identity issues also need to be resolved. Efforts to maintain one's individual identity and working for a 'couple identity' may bring with it many stressful episodes.

9) At times things which appear petty may pose a big threat and challenge to making the marriage work like eating habits and preferences, lifestyle, philosophy of life, type of friends, spending behaviours, dressing patterns, not wearing a *mangulsutra* or applying *sindhoor*, blind beliefs, recreational and leisure time activities, religious beliefs and ideologies etc. For example, a couple took divorce fifteen days after marriage because the wife insisted on drinking bottled water while on honeymoon.

10) Taboos, misconceptions and fictions about love, sex and marriages are disruptive especially during the early years. Sex in real life is not always enjoyable and recreational for both partners in the marriage.

11) Temperamental, sexual incompatibility and intolerance for each other's personality trait may appear minute but turn out to be a serious issue. If not dealt well, it can also lead to marital dissolution in the early stages.

A young romantic couple may feel that their marriage will escape all problems. This is only wishful thinking. Two different individuals living together and facing problems is inevitable. Developing problem solving strategies at an early stage can turn out to be a good investment.

An individual may let go of many facts and things about the partner irrespective of it being an arranged marriage or a marriage with self choice. Whatever is forgiven, forgotten and accepted at one point of time should be done forever and not temporarily. One cannot do anything to change what has already happened in the past.

It is very essential to understand the current qualities of the partner and focus on the present. To experience marital satisfaction it is important to convert stumbling blocks in to building blocks!

11.6 TRANSITIONING TO THE NEXT STAGE OF FAMILY LIFE CYCLE

Most couples take it for granted that they will have children and get married with an anticipation of having children. During the earlier times children just came as a matter of course. Now modern contraceptives make it possible to have choice of parenting and deciding the timing of child's arrival. Most people believe in planned parenthood. However, it is quite likely for an unplanned pregnancy to take place. A planned pregnancy leads to a smooth transitioning into the next phase of family life cycle because a couple and a family is ready for parenthood and have considered costs of having a child. Some unconscious or conscious decisions to have children would be to extend

one's family lineage, satisfy one's nurturance needs, to acquire adult status in the society, to prove one's ability to reproduce, to please parents and other relatives, for security in old age etc.

Unplanned pregnancies may result into a crisis time for couples or either of the partner. Sometimes both the partners accept that they are going to have a baby and sometimes both of them or either one rejects the idea of having a child. The reasons may vary from being psychologically unprepared for parenting to taking a responsibility of a child, inadequate resources and skills to parent a child etc. Such reactions are common and most of the times wear off with time or after discussions with parents and relatives. If a couple or any one partner still does not come to terms with the fact then they might consider the option of abortion.

Lack of knowledge and resources of family planning, pressure to have a child from parents and/or in-laws, especially having male child, and no control over one's sexuality for a woman are also some of the reasons due to which the couple or family suddenly transits into the new stage.

Inability to conceive a child (infertility) is another challenge to be faced by the couple. Infertility may result either due to the dysfunction of the wife or husband but most of the times it is the woman who is blamed. The society victimizes and stigmatizes her and gives her names like *'banj'*, 'barren', 'unfortunate', 'bringing ill to the family' etc. Infertility can also be a temporary condition and may respond well with treatment. If not, then after mutual consultation with each other and family members a couple may opt for surrogate pregnancy or in-vitro fertilisation. Another option includes adopting one or more children. All the alternatives to solve infertility are most of the times accompanied by personal, marital, medical and legal complications.

At this juncture there are chances of marital dissolution or desertion or a beginning of an unhappy marriage. The marriage becomes very vulnerable and takes a toll on the couple demanding patience, understanding and acceptance of the situation.

While some couples are forced to remain childless there are also couples who opt for voluntary childlessness. Some reasons for voluntary childlessness are avoiding curtailment of wife's career and education, children perceived as interference in marital relationships and one's self indulging life, no interest or disliking children, to escape responsibilities, challenges, demands and anxieties related to child rearing, avoiding financial costs of child bearing and rearing etc.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) Write a note on infertility.

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2) What are some of the reasons a couple opts for voluntary childlessness?

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11.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, you studied that a typical beginning family in India begins with the marriage between two individuals. Marriages in different religions have different meanings attached. It is very important to understand your own self before entering the system of marriage. Marital partners are expected to play certain specific roles based on socially shared expectations. Each partner makes efforts to conform with the roles that she or he is expected to play. While doing that a couple may be faced with many challenges and issues which require adjustment. One needs to develop skills to deal with the sources of stress. Communication plays a great role in dealing with the issues. Successful transitioning to the next stage is not a smooth affair for all individuals. Marriage is most vulnerable in the beginning stage and commitment to make the relationship work is very important.

11.8 GLOSSARY

Abnegation	:	Give up or renounce.
Coalition	:	Union, alliance.
Filial	:	Due from a son or daughter.
Integrity	:	Reliability, honesty, truthfulness.
In-vitro fertilisation	:	It is a technique in which the ova are fertilised by sperms outside the woman's womb. The fertilised egg is then transferred to the woman's uterus with the intent to establish successful pregnancy.
Mixed marriage	:	Marriage between two people who belong to different caste, religion, nationality or socio-economic status.
Predominant	:	Main, principal, leading.
Surrogate pregnancy	:	An arrangement for a woman to carry and give birth to a child who will be raised by others.
Voluntary childlessness	:	It is a term used to describe individuals who choose not to procreate.

11.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) marriage, child bearing time
2) marital bliss
3) globalisation

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Some essential qualities of roles and responsibilities of the beginning stage are:
   - Roles should be complimentary in nature,
   - Role performance should receive adequate and satisfactory response,
   - Flexibility in roles is always beneficial to relationships,
   - Responsibilities should be reciprocal in nature, and
   - Performance of responsibilities needs acknowledgement and rewards.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) subtly, indirectly
2) subsystem
3) Provider/breadwinners, homemaker

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1) Infertility refers to the biological inability to conceive a child. Infertility may result either due to the dysfunction of the wife or husband but most of the times it is the woman who is blamed. The society victimises and stigmatises her and gives her names like 'barren', 'unfortunate', bringing ill to the family etc. Infertility can also be a temporary condition and may respond well with treatment. All the alternatives to solve infertility are most of the times accompanied by personal, marital, medical and legal complications.
2) Some reasons for voluntary childlessness are avoiding financial costs of child bearing and rearing, avoiding curtailment of wife's career and education, children perceived as interference in marital relationships and one's self indulging life, no interest or disliking children, to escape responsibilities, challenges, demands and anxieties related to child rearing.

11.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) Discuss the concept of marriage in India with special focus on the beginning family.
2) What are the roles and responsibilities of partners while they are in the beginning stage of the family life cycle?
3) Elaborate on the domains of adjustment in the beginning family stage.
4) Discuss the challenges and emerging issues in the beginning family stage.
5) Write short note on transitioning to the second stage of family life cycle.

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UNIT 12 CHILD BEARING FAMILIES

Structure

12.1 Introduction

12.2 The Family

12.3 Changing Face of the Family

12.4 The Child Bearing Stage

- 12.4.1 The Decision to Start a Family
- 12.4.2 Age and Stage of the Child Bearing Family
- 12.4.3 Developmental Characteristics of Infants

12.5 Changing Trends in the Age at which the First Child is Born

- 12.5.1 The Effects of Education Attainment
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- 12.5.3 Unemployment, Uncertainty, Economic Conditions and First Birth Timing
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12.6 Role of Caring Adults

- 12.6.1 Responsibilities of the Father
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12.7 Transition from Beginning Stage to Child Bearing Stage

12.8 Possible Sources of Stress for the Child Bearing Family

12.9 Role of Education, Women's Empowerment and Media

12.10 Let Us Sum Up

12.11 Glossary

12.12 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

12.13 Unit End Questions

12.14 Further Readings and References

12.1 INTRODUCTION

A child is born to a set of parents and this trio forms the basic family .The family is seen as the smallest unit that makes a community and is said to pass through various stages of development. The two individuals enter the institution of marriage, decide to settle down, bear children and the process continues till the children grow up, marry, bear children or move out of the parental household to make their own family.

This Unit, outlines various features of a child bearing family. It also gives an overview of the dynamics between the family members in the child bearing stage *vis-a-vis* type of family set up, changes in the place of residence, level of education, women's employment, spread of media and improvement in medicine and healthcare. In the Unit, you will also study about the possible sources of stress for the family during the child bearing stage.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Identify given stage of the family life cycle;
- Appreciate the functions of a family; and
- Understand the functions of the new mother and father in the child bearing stage.

12.2 THE FAMILY

The family is viewed as a unit of people usually related, usually living together, working together to satisfy their necessities and relating to each other to fulfil their wants. The family is a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption, constituting a single household, interacting and intercommunicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister, creating and maintaining a common culture (Burgess and Locke,1953).

The family is a small social unit consisting usually of husband, wife and children, but sometimes excluding one of these members or including grandparents, even non-related friends. The family is the unit which gives an individual strongest sense of community, and which, more than any other institution, lends stability and sincerity to life (McCormack, 1974).

Thus individuals living together make a family and the emotional bondage makes family not merely a concept but an emotional experience (Sinha,1999).

The family is a cohesive social group consisting of the man, his wife or wives and their children. Families can be of different types in different settings and their specific functions and meanings depend largely on their relationship to other social institutions. The different types of families as reported by sociologists are:

i) Nuclear family: It consists of the husband, wife and their children.

ii) Joint family: A joint family is an extension of the nuclear family consisting of the married sons and their children also.

iii) Extended family: An extended family may include the members, other than those related by blood and marriage, for example, siblings of the man or woman may also live in the same household.

The family has been regarded as the basic and the most important unit of the society and is often termed as the cradle of all civic virtues. It is viewed as an important agent of socialisation for the growing child and an individual's personality is judged by her or his family background. As you have studied earlier a family can be patrilineal, or matrilineal. According to residence, it can be patrilocal or matrilocal. It is regarded as patriarchal if decision making rests with the eldest male member and termed as matriarchal if the family is headed by the eldest female member of the household.

The family serves many functions such as:

- **Procreation:** Child bearing in a married couple relationship is seen as healthy for the newborn child and also for the society. It becomes the legal and moral responsibility of the couple to look after the baby. Children born out of wedlock find themselves at the worst end of negligence and non-acceptance in the society.

Fig. 12.1: Procreation is an important function of family.

- **Regulation of sexual behaviour:** The family consists of the man and woman, who being married, are viewed as socially and morally correct sexual partners. Marriage as an institution legalises the act of sex between the husband and wife in all societies across the world.

- **Taking care of small and young children:** The man-woman duo recognised as husband and wife after marriage begin to identify as a unit and take upon themselves the responsibility of looking after their children, thus ensuring the best life chances for their offspring. The other family members also take care of the child, in India.

- **Taking care of the old and sick members:** The family members who stay together and function in union, act as a support system for each other during period of crises as illness, economic hardships, old age etc.

Fig. 12.2: Young family members are expected to take care of old members of family.

- **Undertaking economic activities:** The family members engage in different kinds of activities that lead to economic gain. For example, in agrarian societies the family members engage in farming and later selling their produce in the market, a potter's family members work towards making earthen pots and selling them.

- **Providing a sense of belongingness to the members:** Human beings the social by nature and even though they look for company outside their family, they find it difficult to move away from the family as the latter provides them with a sense of belongingness and rootedness. This gives the individual a feeling of security and belongingness and also an identity for herself or himself. Even though the person may strive to develop an identity which is different and separate from that of the family, but the family identity does not leave her or him. Family passes life skills and traditions to next generation. It is the parents, siblings, and members in the extended family who train the newborn child to learn skills of eating, reading, language etc.

- **Passing culture to the next generation:** The child is born to a set of parents who have a set pattern of eating food, dressing up, the language they speak, the beliefs they follow about religion, morality etc. The child born into the family learns the above mentioned ways of life through imitation and direct instruction. In this way culture, norms, values are passed from one generation to another.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) Explain the different types of families.

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2) List down the functions of family.

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12.3 CHANGING FACE OF THE FAMILY

Family as a structural unit has been undergoing change due to ongoing socio- economic, demographic changes brought about with the technological advancement. Now-a-days the traditional Indian joint or extended family is structurally transforming into nuclear households.

The face of the family across the world is changing. Apart from death of a spouse resulting in single parent households, there is an increased number of single parent families due to divorce, teen unmarried pregnancies, adoption of children by unmarried men and women. As in parts of south east Asia, in India as well the family is primarily patriarchal. However, the broken nuclear or single homes are mostly female headed families.

In India, single parent families are created mainly due to death of the spouse, divorce or separation. The traditional nuclear family is also competing with the family setup consisting of individuals cohabiting without marriage and having children of their own or adopting them. The traditional man-woman couple has an emerging counterpart, consisting of same sex partners who adopt or procreate children to complete their family, in today's world. With changing work opportunities people also migrate in great numbers and this has added to another major category of individuals and families, termed as the migrant families across the world and inside each country.

The Indian couple had about 5 or 6 children about half a century back and now the couples are satisfied with having 1 or 2 offspring in the urban educated setup. Also, Government of India is propagating the norm of two child family.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) Write a short note on changing face of family in India.

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12.4 THE CHILD BEARING STAGE

12.4.1 The Decision to Start a Family

The decision to start a family means the decision to enter the stage of parenthood. The stage of parenthood is an enormous leap from taking care of oneself and partnering with other members in the family to being responsible for another human life for her or his overall well being throughout life. It can

be the most challenging and the most rewarding roles that an individual decides to take up and one can never be absolved of its responsibility even when the children become old and independent.

In India, child bearing stage of family is not just a stage of family life span but it also means a lot of other things for parents to be. Let us discuss these other factors that are important in Indian society:

i) **Social expectation:** After marriage, it is expected that couple will have a child within one or two years. The close relatives and friends also keep asking for couple's planning to conceive a child. In India, child bearing is not simply related to married couple but the decision is also affected by the parents of the couple or other family members. If the couple doesn't have a child within two years, the society members start believing that either there is something wrong in the marriage or any one from the couple is not able to produce.

ii) **Social acceptance:** In India, family starts with the arrival of child only. The family with child will be accepted as more responsible adults. The child in family increases the social status of the family as social contact increases and it improves socialisation.

iii) **Identification:** Young adults who become parents get a new identity in society and they become eligible to perform certain religious rituals, ceremonies and functions which are allowed or mandatory for parents only.

iv) **Religion:** Almost all the religions consider reproduction and procreation as a divine duty of human beings. For example, the main feature of *Gristhasharam* in Hindu religion is procreation and rearing children. Many religions believe that child is a blessing of God and child should be cared and reared as worship.

v) **Getting rid of loneliness:** Children not only fill the space physically in family but they also bridge the gaps emotionally. Children play important role in family ties. Children bring love, warmth and affection in not only the parents' life but in other family member's lives also.

vi) **Feeling of accomplishment:** Arrival of child does not only bring joy in parents' life but it also gives feeling of competence and accomplishment. The birth and rearing of a child generates a feeling of biological and psychological achievement in parent's life.

Fig. 12.3: Child birth leads to feeling of accomplishment in parents.

vii) **Ensuring continuity:** In India, child especially if he is son, uses his father's name after his name and follows the traditions and customs of his family. Hence, child in family ensures the continuity of family name and family occupation to the next generation.

viii) **For *Moksha*:** In Hindu religion, it is believed that son will open the doors for parent's *moksha (mukti)* means salvation. According to Hindu holy books, if son performs the funeral rites of his parents then they will reach heaven and get free from *yoni-chakra* (cycle of re-birth).

12.4.2 Age and Stage of the Child Bearing Family

A family is said to enter the child bearing stage when the couple have their first child and this stage continues till the first born begins formal school.

An optimum amount of time, thought, planning and emotional growing up is required so that the decision to begin a family and meet up to the demands of the times ahead is positively incorporated into the couples' lives.

Developmental Tasks of Child Bearing Family

The following developmental tasks are to be accomplished in this stage:

1) Income adjustments,
2) Role shifts,
3) Re-adjustment of personal goals toward family goals, and
4) Linkage with extended family.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) List down the factors that affect the decision of bearing a child.

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12.4.3 Developmental Characteristics of Infants

Beginning the journey of life from a single cell to a newborn at the end of 9 months is short but eventful when viewed in the perspective of the abilities that a neonate is born with. The reflexes of the newborn include Rootimg reflex, Sucking reflex, Moro reflex, Plantar reflex and so on. These reflexes have survival value for the neonate and with passage of time disappear and get replaced with mature behavioural patterns and abilities.

The infant spends most of the time of the day and night alternating between sleep, feeding time and eliminating. These functions help infants to adjust to the new environment and also in the process gain weight and improve in health.

Physical and motor development

The physical development during infancy is quite rapid. Physical development is related to maturation as well as health and nutritional status of the child.

Physical and motor development follows the cephalocaudal and proximodistal trend. This implies growth and gaining control and mastery of the body from head to toe and from gross motor to fine motor skills. Remember, you have read this in Block 1.

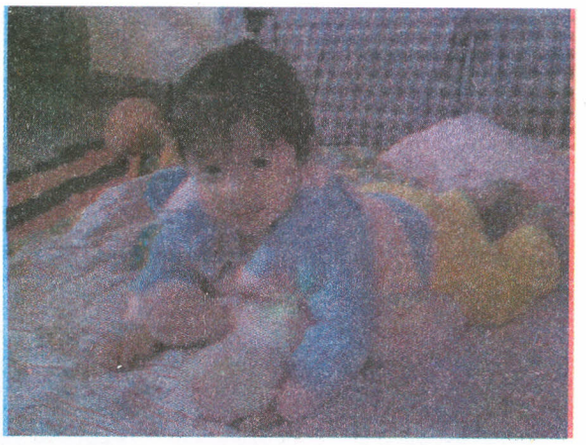

Fig. 12.4: Head of infant is proportionally larger in size as compared to the other body parts

Motor skill	*Average age*
1. Holding head erect and steady when held upright	6 weeks
2. Lifting self by arms when prone	2 months
3. Rolling from side to back	2 months
4. Rolling from back to side	5 months
5. Sitting alone	7 months
6. Crawling	7 months
7. Pulls to stand	8 months
8. Stands alone	11 months
9. Walks alone	12 months
10. Scribbling	14 months
12. Walks up stairs with help	16 months
13. Jumps in place	24 months

Fig. 12.5: Milestones for gross and fine motor development.

Developmental milestones of touch, taste, smell, balance, and hearing

At birth, neonates are responsive to touch and pain. They can distinguish sweet, sour and bitter tastes. They can distinguish odours and prefer sweet taste and odours. With head control, they are able to turn to general direction of the sound and can adapt their head movement in the flow of the visual stimulus.

By the age of 6 months the infants explore objects held in their hands by putting them in their mouth and have established some kind of preference for certain tastes through experience. With increased control over gross movements the head control also improves with the infant being able to sharply focus on the visual stimulus. The infant also begins to be more sensitive to the language that the family speaks and is well able to distinguish voices of the family members. During the age range of 7 to 12 months eye hand coordination improves and the child is also able to maintain balance of the body. By the end of the first year, the child is mature enough to speak the first word in his native language.

Fig.12.6: The growing child learns to maintain body balance while standing

Social Development

Social development is related to social cognition. Social cognition refers to the child's understanding of the self and the social world. The following trend is seen in the development of social cognition. It proceeds from concrete to abstract. It becomes more organized with age and children, as they grow, revise their ideas about behaviour from simple, one sided explanations to complex, interacting relationships that take into account situations and the people involved.

As they grow, infants realise that they are capable of making objects move, fall and so on. They are able to recognise themselves in the mirror; in the photographs and on videotapes. They begin to label themselves with their name, and the language also includes 'Me' and 'I' labels. Emergence of self esteem begins when the child is directed by adults to perform simple actions and in turn the child is rewarded with

praise and often commented upon as being a grown up child. Toilet training forms a major task that needs to be mastered by the age of 2-3 years and learning to control gives a major boost to the self esteem of the child.

At birth the neonate is capable of the rooting reflex to both external and self stimulation. Thereby begins the emergence of the 'I self' as the child begins to distinguish between her or his own body and that of the mother and others. The infant is able to smile and vocalize to the caregiver. By 15 months of age, infants begin to point to themselves in the mirror. By the end of second year the child recognizes the family members, shows attachment and sadness on their appearance and separation. She or he begins to enjoy the company of other children and attempts to follow their actions in study and play. The child also begins to identify with the same sex parent and attempts to imitate the parent in dress and behaviour. The child begins to relate to affection and reprimand shown by adults and attempts to do actions that result in adult approval. The infants have the primitive ability to learn through imitation.

Fig. 12.7: By the end of the first year, infants enjoy the company of other children

By the end of the second year children look for adult evaluation and praise which if contingent upon the success motivates the child to work with enthusiasm, work harder and also take up more challenging tasks in the future. This forms the future groundwork for laying the personality trait of being mastery oriented or having the trait of learnt helplessness. Here, you should recall the various theories studied in Block 1.

Emotional development

Emotions are inbuilt social signals that reveal the inner state of the mind and body in varied situations of anger, happiness, sadness, and fear. The newborn baby is born with the ability to show displeasure and happiness by crying and giving a serene appearance respectively.

During early weeks of life infants smile when full stomach, during sleep, when touched and on hearing the caregiver's voice. By the end of first month babies begin to smile on seeing interesting objects such as bright lights and objects.

Fig. 12.8: Smiling

On attaining the age of 10 weeks the infant is capable of social smiling on seeing the human face. On seeing familiar faces the infant also begins to smile by the age of 4 months. By the age of one year the young child displays varied types of smiles in differing social situations.

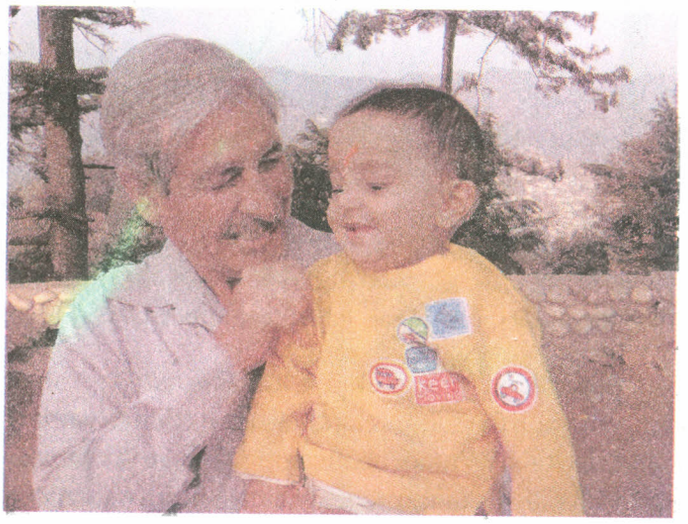

Fig. 12.9: Smiling babies pull others like magnet to themselves

Hunger, pain, changes in body temperature, under and over stimulation lead to distress. Angry reactions begin to appear by the age of 4-6 months and the triggers could be parting from the caregiver, removal from attractive situation or stimulus, being restrained from pleasurable activity, or unsuccessful attempts at certain actions.

Fear appears during the second half of the first year. The child begins to show reluctance to new toys, strange looking objects and animals, loud sounds and sudden extreme physical stimulations. By the age of about 9 months the child begins to show stranger anxiety and fears leaving the company of the caregiver. During this stage, the baby is unwilling to explore his physical environment outside the view of her or his caregiver.

The ability to regulate one's emotion does occur during infancy. Infants depend on the caregiver to soothe them in case of discomfort and anxiety. By the age of 4 months the development of the cerebral cortex leads to the ability to shift attention from unpleasant stimulations and with the mastery of mobility skills, the child's effort becomes easier. Adult intervention for soothing the agitated infant lays the foundation for the manner in which the young growing child will handle such situations in the future. Children's temperament can be categorised as easy, difficult and slow to warm up. Temperamentally the children can also be said to be inhibited or shy and uninhibited or sociable.

Attachment is another behavioural outcome of adult child interaction that gets established by the age of 6 months before which the infant exhibited the pre-attachment and the "attachment in making" phase. Around the age of 18 months development of language leads to formation of the reciprocal relationship between the child and the caregiver. The child may now begin to demand from the adult, time before a short separation occurs between the two – such as, being read a story before the caregiver leaves.

The nature of attachment between the child and the caregiver results from non-shared experiences in which the parents adjust their caregiving to their child's individual emotional needs. Here, again you should recall and relate the attachment theories with infants.

Cognitive development

The infant brain seeks stimulation through exploration of its immediate environment. The infant brain is completely formed structurally but is immature in function and organization. It is characterized by absence of lateralization and there is capacity for plasticity and influence of stimulation during the critical periods of development.

The infant brain seeks stimulation through exploration of its immediate environment. In the first year of life, absence of mobility leads the infant to explore through touch, taste, vision and hearing. During the first month, of life the newborn's reflexes help in the development of the reflexive schemas as proposed by Piaget. Here, we would like you to recall and integrate Piaget's cognitive theory for children at this stage. The reflexes get replaced by the primary circular reactions till the end of the 4th month. At this stage the infant repeats the physical movements that are pleasurable to her or him without anticipating the event and its outcome. This stage is replaced by the stage of secondary circular reactions during the age range of 4-8 months. Infants begin to focus on actions and their actions begin to become their intentional activity so as to get pleasure through repetition. For example, infant likes to kick at the mobile that is hanging overhead on the crib to see it move repeatedly. This repeated pleasurable activity gets replaced by activities that bring about goal directed behaviours around the age of 8 to 12 months.

Physical mobility leads to exploration of new areas in the house and objects and the child begins to realize that people and objects do not disappear when out of sight during the age range of 12-18 months. Beyond this age till the end of the second year the child begins to make mental representations of people and objects, thus starting to display behaviours of deferred imitation and make believe play. Children at this stage enjoy playing hide and seek; peek-a-boo etc.

Fig.12.10:Infants enjoy playing peek-a-boo game with others

Language development

Language development is a function of both the innate capacity to communicate and input from the child's environment. The newborn first begins to communicate through her or his cries when in discomfort. This crying is soon replaced by the first speech sounds around the age of 2 months called cooing. By the age of 4 months this is replaced and enriched by the sounds of babbling. In the absence of adult speech the baby vocalizes strings of sound that appear to be adult speech and is called the idiosyncratic speech that resembles adult speech in tone and intonation. First words appear by the age of 1 year and they get replaced by telegraphic speech, speaking two-word sentences, by 15 months of age. For example, 'more mango'. During the age range of 9-12 months the infant uses preverbal gestures — protodeclarative and protoimperative. Protodeclarative gestures are those preverbal gestures in which infants touch, hold, point to so that caregiver takes notice. Protoimperative gestures are those preverbal gestures in which infants takes out sounds, points, and reaches so that caregivers do what they want.

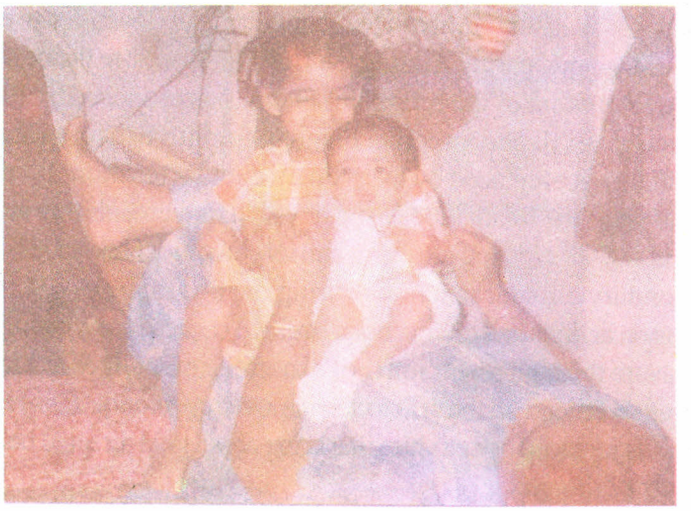

Fig. 12.12: Preverbal gestures of infants stimulate interactions

Language development of infants is characterized by comprehension being ahead of production abilities. By the age of 2 years the infant begins to use systematic strategies to simplify word pronunciations. The child may sometimes underextend and overextend word meanings. The telegraphic speech also begins to get replaced by three word sentences and they also begin to engage in conversations with turn taking behaviour.

12.5 CHANGING TRENDS IN THE AGE AT WHICH THE FIRST CHILD IS BORN

During the child bearing phase of the family life cycle, each individual, that is, the man and the woman who become the father and the mother of the new born need to realign their skills, roles and abilities to meet the challenges of taking care of the newborn. The decision of woman about when to bear children is also influenced by factors such as personal, familial, and societal.

i) *Personal influences* include independence, motivation to have a family, declining fertility, chronic health problems and presence of a stable relationship.

ii) *Family influences* include partner readiness for childbearing, financial stability, and the influence of the extended family.

iii) *Societal influences* include acceptability of advanced maternal age, divorce rates, parental leave policies in the workplace etc.

In the traditional family system where the man would earn and the woman would bear children and take care of the house, the roles of each gender were defined and there was no crossing of the role responsibilities as it was believed that physiologically a woman was meant to bear children and the man was supposed to earn and fend for the family. During the early times, in India, with the culture and tradition of child marriage the Indian female would begin child bearing as soon as she entered puberty and would continue to bear children till it was physiologically possible.

The decision to limit children rests on reasons such as their age, limited financial resources, fear of the future, difficulty in juggling work and family and personal reasons as losing one's freedom to do what one wants to do. Delayed parenthood is a phenomenon that is catching up across the world with the onset range being specific to each country in relation to its political, economic and societal conditions.

The factors that have led to the shift in the childbearing age of the couple are discussed underneath.

12.5.1 The Effects of Education Attainment

The woman and children were considered weak and needing support and protection for which a man was present and supposed to provide. The basic underlying idea about the gender roles have undergone a change with the new ideas of equality of the two genders and rise of the feminist thought process. The changes in the economy around the world with the industrial revolution, economic depression and economic renaissance, development in science and technology and a shift in the social thought process, the women have gained entry into the industry and the work force. Since time immemorial the female of the family has always been contributing to the unskilled, unorganised sector of the work force which was and still is undermined as the output does not show as clearly as that seen as output in the form of tangible goods and products. With the women entering the work force it became important for them to be trained and be at par with men in providing output to the industry and contribute to the economy of the country.

To compete, excel and earn well women need to be educated and trained to meet the needs of the industry. Thus it becomes important that the future workforce be trained and educated.

Economies in both developed and developing nations pose a demand for education and to find work for a living is possible only when the young educate themselves. A basic education does not suffice and ensure a stable job, sufficient wages, and increase in career prospects. Now-a-days, most women and men reach early adulthood and continue to pursue higher education.

As a student, resources are less so entering marriage and parenthood is a less likely option and is best viewed to be postponed till stability in work and income is achieved.

Women who have an extended study period also come into the category of late family starters. Studies have indicated that prolonged education periods lead to late motherhood. There is additional postponement of child bearing within each educational category and increasing differences in birth timing by educational level, with highly educated women postponing child bearing to a larger extent than the women with less education, who often have children at early ages.

In the light of the above discussed revolutionary changes in the thought process and economy of the world, the position of the female in the society has and is transforming.

12.5.2 The Conflict between Employment and Motherhood

Believing and maintaining that the woman is equal to man in all spheres of life, the woman is expected to show competence at all stages of life. However, physiologically a woman is supposed to bear children and this role requires commitment in totality from the mother and any change or disturbance in fulfiling this role affects the family.

The choice of raising a family before or after gaining employment is a relative issue taking into account individual and the couple's economic and societal conditions. The decision to bear children also rests with the options available to the couple with regard to the following:

1) **Nature of work of a woman:**

   The nature of work of women directly influences the decision of child bearing as full time worker has to think before bearing a child in comparison to the part time worker. Full time workers tend to be too busy to bear and take care for a newborn child. Similarly a woman who is permanently appointed, with the benefits of maternity leave policy, can opt for pregnancy more easily in comparison to a woman who is temporary or contractual appointed or a woman who doesn't have maternity leave policy benefits.

2) **Availability of childcare facility:**

   A large number of women are working now-a-days and with the increasing trend of nuclear families, the woman often has to think for childcare facilities after rejoining her work. The availability of the crèches or day care facilities also influence the decision of child bearing.

3) **Economic standing of the couple:**

Now-a-days to rear a child, money is a big concern. Expenditure on child's basic needs, immunisation, schooling etc. has to be calculated and planned by the parents before conceiving a child. Sometimes with low monthly income, some couples postpone the plan of conceiving a child until they earn enough to fulfil the needs of child.

The other factors that affect the child bearing decision are:

- Status of the woman in the family; and
- Perceived function of the woman by others in the family, social and caste group.

12.5.3 Unemployment, Uncertainty, Economic Conditions and First Birth Timing

In contemporary society parenthood is often deferred due to husband and wife who feel the need to be more settled and advanced in their careers as compared to others. Times when the wife was happy looking after the home and hearth and the man would be the breadwinner is changing. The need of higher social status attainment by the couple leads to postponement of child birth.

The optimal age for a couple to enter parenthood has seen an increase and it varies from culture, to nation, to ethnic group, to religion, and to individual life circumstances. The mental and emotional health of the couple also determines child bearing.

12.5.4 Family Planning/Contraceptives and the First Birth Postponement

With the advent of oral contraception the choice of birth control has made the female in a sexual relationship more in control than when she had to depend on surgical and other devices. The emergence of use of contraception does not directly delay bearing of children but serves as an assisting factor in reducing and mitigating risks of unwanted and accidental pregnancies. It gives more power of decision making relating to timing the family in relationships in and out of wedlock.

The face of the family is changing. The meaning and implication of relationships is under transformation as that of the man, his wife and their children. This change in perspective affects the process of childbearing.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) List down the major conflicts between motherhood and employment.

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2) Fill up the blanks:

i) In the traditional family system, the man would ..... and the woman would ..... and ..... of the house.

ii) Women who join the workforce and are actively participating in money earning for the family tend to bear children at .....

iii) With the advent of ..... the choice of birth control has made the female in a sexual relationship more in control.

12.6 ROLE OF CARING ADULTS

Depending on the age and stage at which the couple enters parenthood, the individual tasks of both the husband and wife will overlap with the additional tasks required after the child is born. For both husband and wife these tasks include:

1) Learning to be independent and depending on each other for assistance in fulfilling each other's responsibilities as the need be in running the household and looking after the baby.

2) Maintaining a strong and mutually satisfying marriage relationship even when the young child puts demands on parents' time and energy. At times, either partner, especially father feels neglected at the birth of the child and this may strain couple relationship.

3) Keeping a balance and maintaining social relationships with the extended family and the community.

12.6.1 Responsibilities of the Father

Parenthood entails a huge amount of responsibility for both husband and wife. Each one should have reached a certain level of maturity in accepting the changes in their roles and functions in the family. The male is seen as the breadwinner; thus unemployment may prove to be an obstacle in meeting the needs of the new mother and the baby. The major responsibilities of the father are:

i) Accepting the responsibility and bringing to consciousness that fatherhood is demanding and making efforts to fulfil his role as a father.

ii) Learning child care skills.

iii) Doing financial planning with the wife to keep expenditure in check.

iv) Sharing childcare responsibilities with the wife.

v) Giving physical and emotional support to the wife during childcare.

vi) Helping the wife and independently looking after the infant if the need arises.

vii) Providing support when the wife or child is sick and be able to seek help from wider family and community in times of crises.

viii) Become increasingly able to enjoy intimate personal interactions with the child.

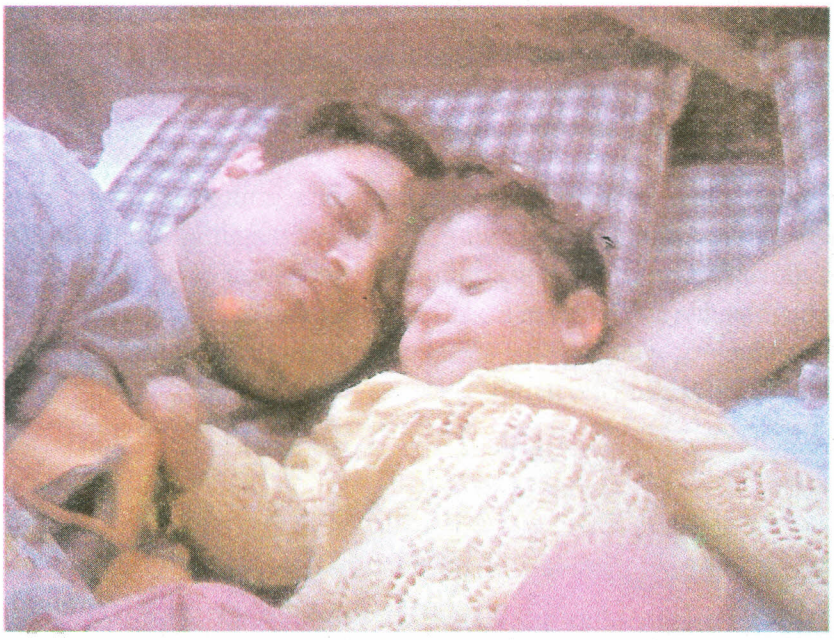

Fig. 12.12: Father has an important role to play in child rearing

ix) Willingness to take assistance, if required, from extended family or outside agencies to meet the needs and the growing expenditure when wife is on maternity leave or is a housewife.

x) Unemployed men will look for work and try to attain stability in their employment. Thus the father should look for and get settled in a job which can provide him with regular income to take care of the needs of the wife and newborn.

12.6.2 Responsibilities of the Mother

The major responsiblities of the mother are:

i) Learning childcare skills.

ii) Not feeling hesitant in asking for help in childcare from family members.

iii) Adjusting and making a different routine according to the needs of the child.

iv) Learning to cope with added work responsibilities of childcare and running the household.

v) Learning to manage time so as to also look after the needs of the husband and continue to have a satisfactory married life.

vi) Learning to take time out for herself to pursue hobbies, take rest etc.

vii) Maintaining healthy and cordial relationships with other members of the joint or extended family.

12.6.3 Role of the Extended Family and Community

The paternal and maternal grandparents are important relatives with whom the young child comes in contact in addition to the parents. In the nuclear set-up, the grandparents may be visiting and providing time, energy, physical, emotional and moral support to the new young parents and the infant. The elder lady is a key member in training the new mother about ways of childcare and often takes over the household responsibilities when the new mother is recuperating

from the child birth. As the child grows older, the bond between them gets stronger and they are often the best source of enculturing and socialising the child. The grandparents often take up the responsibility of childcare when the mother is employed and cannot physically take up childcare responsibilities.

There are many rites; for example, *namkaran* or naming ceremony, *chola* or wearing new clothes, *mundan* or shaving the head of the child etc. in the Hindus; *Brit Milah*, *Bar Mitzvah* in the Jew community; recitation of *Adhan*, *Aqeeqah* in the Muslim community; *Samanera* in Buddhist; the naming ceremony and *Dastarbandi* in the Sikh community, which are the social ceremonies that initiate the young child into the social fabric outside the family.

Fig. 12.13: Paternal and maternal grantparents play an important role in child rearing.

The community as neighbours and a support system help to serve as an important alternative to the extended family in taking care of the young child, in providing assistance and replacing the parents in their absence. The dormitories in the tribal Indians and the Kibbutz in Israel serve as important caretakers and socialising agents for the young members of the community.

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) List down the major responsibilities of the mother.

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2) List down the major responsibilities of the father.

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12.7 TRANSITION FROM BEGINNING STAGE TO CHILD BEARING STAGE

The birth of the first baby brings about total restructuring of the household arrangement and functioning. As the newborn is not adjusted to the daily wake-sleep patterns, the erratic feeding, sleeping and elimination take up most of the time and energy of the new mother, who is also coping with low energy levels, suffering from post partum conditions and complications; and irregular rest and activity periods. This requires that the mother and the child should be constantly together throughout the day and night. As a result the husband may have to opt out of the physical space that he shared with the wife so that he can have adequate rest to join work the next day. His routine of rest and work may also be compromised for child care if no additional help is available to run the household.

The presence of the newborn also affects the quality of companionship that the couple shared with each other and their spending time together and interactions may only be restricted to talking and discussing about the needs of the new member in the family.

With the birth of the baby, the economic expenditure of the household increases. All requirements for food, medicine, immunisation and education have to be taken care of.

Mothers who have husbands working in permanent jobs or with stable work environments often take a break from work if alternate childcare is not available or work part-time if alternate child care is available for example other family members in the household. However single mothers or those with unemployed husbands have to continue work with the same number of working hours.

The new mother may suffer from complications during child birth and may be required to take bed rest for a long time and do minimal activity. Thus support from other family members is required.

Mother who is not able to breast feed the child should look for additional feeding methods and food supplements.

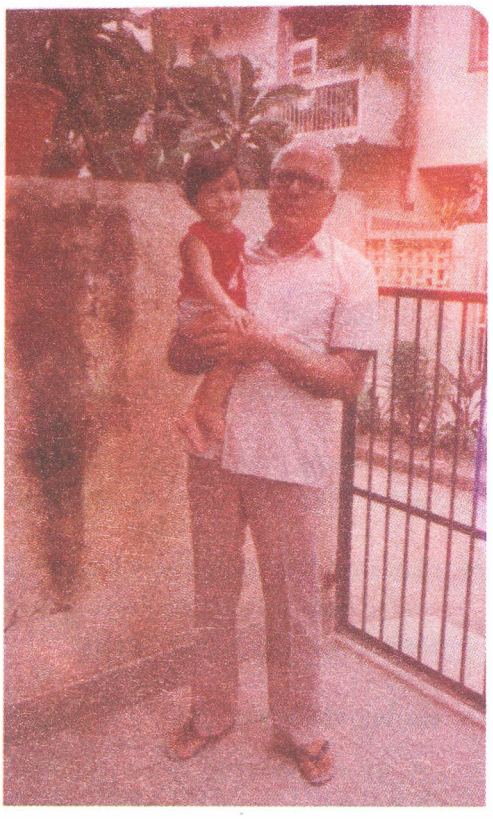

Fig. 12.14: Family members help in childcare

Sometimes the new born child may not be healthy at the time of birth and may require additional hospital stay, medication, frequent visits to the hospital, nutritional changes and modifications in life style.

Check Your Progress Exercise 6

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) State 'True' or 'False' for each of the given statements:

i) The birth of the first baby brings about total restructuring of the household arrangement and functioning .....

ii) The presence of the newborn doesn't affect the quality of companionship that the couple shared with each other .....

iii) Mother who is able to breast feed the child should also look for additional feeding methods and food supplements. .....

12.8 POSSIBLE SOURCES OF STRESS FOR THE CHILD BEARING FAMILY

Stress is a condition relative to the situation of an individual. The members of the child bearing family can face stress related to the following reasons:

Physical Stressors

i) The young mother is loaded with house work and childcare with ever-increasing expectations from family members as to the roles of the young bride, the young mother and as the wife.

ii) Mother's mobility is affected as she needs to be physically present with the small infant and so may feel stuck up in the house. She may not be able to go out for shopping and social visits when the child is very young.

iii) Absence of personal space and time for herself as the young child is always making demands on her time and energy, may make the mother feel all bound up with housework and childcare.

iv) The young child brings with herself or himself a lot of expectations which if not met may lead to parental dissatisfaction.

v) The mother after the birth of the baby may develop health issues that make her unable to lead a healthy and normal life and fulfil all the multiple roles in the family.

Psychological Stressors

i) A young couple who is newly married and does not know about contraception and family planning may accidentally get into the family way. They may feel anxious about their own capabilities and situations inspite of the immediate family and relatives welcoming and providing help and support on the arrival of the young one.

ii) Lack of physical, emotional and moral support from spouse and other family members may give the young mother anxious moments in case of illness, emergencies and routine child care practices of feeding, cleaning and dressing the baby.

iii) The nature and quality of the husband-wife interaction patterns change after the child is born. The changes in the communication patterns, amount of time spent together, changes in the daily routine may prove stressful to both the partners.

iv) Birth of a sick child may be a source of tension and anxiety for the parents.

v) Birth of a child with disability will cause anxiety and apprehensions in the minds of the parents who often either deny or blame themselves for the cause.

vi) The gender of the newborn may become a source of unhappiness when the newborn is not of the gender that the parents were expecting.

vii) The father being away for work and not providing the emotional and moral support to the new mother may become the cause of stress.

viii) Single parent families due to death of any one parent put an additional burden on the single parent, both psychologically and physically in bringing up the young child.

ix) Postpartum disorders (PPD) and postpartum psychosis can have serious consequences for the new family just after the baby is born. Psychological stressors contributing to PPD include stressful life events, marital conflict and lack of personal support from one's spouse, family and friends. Studies indicate occurrence of PPD amongst teenage mothers was 2.5 times more than in older mothers (age 30+ years) as the latter have higher education, higher occupational levels and higher socio economic status than the younger counterparts who have less schooling, lower self esteem, lower occupational levels, lower socio-economic status and less social support.

Economic Stressors

i) Lack of optimal finances to meet the growing needs of the baby may also be a concern for the couple.

ii) Individual aspirations of both father and mother of accumulating wealth, raising status of the family, acquiring higher education, having a higher standard of living, fulfilling other needs and desires may get stifled and create a sense of underperformance and non achievement.

iii) Parenthood requires a certain amount of commitment with regard to one's time and efforts, and thus may affect individual aspirations of both the parents.

Social Stressors

i) The decision and the readiness to start a family with societal pressure will lead to more negative mental setup.

ii) A young and new bride who is still adjusting with the husband's family may feel stressed out adjusting to the new set up and also coping with the responsibility of looking after the young one.

iii) Single parent families of unwed, separated or divorced mother face additional burden of coping with litigation, social non-acceptance and stigma in bringing up their children.

Check Your Progress Exercise 7

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) List down the major economic stressors.

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2) Match the columns:

Column 1	**Column 2**
i) Social Stressor	a) Lack of optimal finances to meet the growing needs of the baby may be a concern for the couple.
ii) Economic Stressor	b) Postpartum disorders and post partum psychosis just after the baby is born can have serious consequence for the new family.
iii) Psychological Stressor	c) The young child brings with herself or himself a lot of expectations which if not met may lead to parental dissatisfaction.
iv) Physical Stressor	d) A young and new bride who is still adjusting with the husband's family may feel stressed out adjusting to the new set up and also coping with the responsibility of looking after the young one.

12.9 ROLE OF EDUCATION, WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND MEDIA

The multiple roles of the female in the society place demands on her capacities and performance. The home or work; career or child demands can be challenging and full of dilemmas. Enmeshed in the fabric of social customs, traditions and individual family cultures, the contemporary educated woman strives to achieve a balance juggling the multiple roles on a day-to-day basis.

The awareness and the actual process of acquiring education for employment, for personal growth and empowerment has helped in improving the status of the woman as a person and as a parent, in the family, in individual's social group, in the community and in the workplace.

With the structural dissolution of the extended family and the joint family it rests upon the young couple to take on all responsibilities of the house and the child. The demarcation of gender roles also softens as the woman of the house also shares equal responsibility of earning and fending for the growing family. It becomes imperative for the father to actively participate in childcare. There is acceptance and openness about this shift in childcare roles in the society. The proof of this lies in the presentation of materials and programmes which educate both the parents about the intricacies of childbirth and child care through the print and audio-visual media. There is an increasing trend of schools providing early childhood care facilities and enrolling parents for childhood care and education training classes – a model replacing and giving an alternative support system in the absence of the extended family to the young couple in the family way.

12.10 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we studied about the meaning of family, different types of families and major functions of the family. We had seen the changing scenario of family. There are many factors that affect the age of child bearing such as personal influences, family influences and societal influences. We also studied the major reasons to bear a child in family that are social expectations, social acceptance, identification, religion, feeling of accomplishment and ensuring continuity. We also discussed major reasons of postponement of child bearing stage that are education, financial stability, goal achievements at work place, transformation of family and partnership and family planning.

When a family opts to bear a child, the role of husband and wife is changed to father and mother respectively. Although father is perceived as a breadwinner of family who has to perform activities maximum out of home yet roles are changing now-a-days. Father's role in child rearing is not less important than mother's role. At this time extended family also plays an important role. The elder female member helps the new mother to cope up the situation and to learn child care practices. The birth of first child brings about total restructuring of household arrangements and functioning.

Sometimes when newly made parents are not able to cope up with new demands of family situations, stressors arise. There are number of reasons which may lead to stress like unplanned parenthood, financial constrains, changes in daily routine, changes in husband-wife relations, individual aspirations, child illness, child with special needs or post delivery depression etc. In the end of this Unit, we discussed the role of education, women empowerment and media on child bearing families.

12.11 GLOSSARY

Contraception	:	Obstacle to fertilisation of the ovum by sperm cell.
Custom	:	A practice followed by people of a particular group or region.
Mobility	:	State of being in motion.
Mutuality	:	A reciprocity of sentiments.
Post partum disorders	:	Form of clinical stress which affects women after delivery of child.
Procreation	:	To beget and conceive offspring; reproduction.
Stress	:	Human brain response to unpleasant situations which persists for a long period.

12.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) The different types of families are:

   i) *Nuclear family:* It consists of the husband, wife and their children.

   ii) *Joint family:* A joint family is an extension of the family consisting of the married sons and their children also.

   iii) *Extended family:* An extended family includes members other than those related by blood and marriage, for example, siblings of the man or woman may live in the same household.

2) The functions of family are:

   - Procreation,
   - Regulation of sexual behaviour,
   - Taking care of small and young children,
   - Taking care of the old and sick,
   - Undertaking economic activities,
   - Providing a sense of belongingness to the members, and
   - Passing culture to the next generation.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Family as a structural unit, has been undergoing change due to ongoing socio-economic, demographic changes brought about with the technological advancement. Now-a-days the traditional Indian joint or extended family is transforming into nuclear households. In India, single parent families are created mainly due to death of the spouse, divorce or separation .The traditional nuclear family is also competing with the family setup consisting of individuals cohabiting without marriage and having children of their own or adopting them. The traditional man–woman couple has an emerging counterpart,

consisting of same sex partners who adopt or procreate children to complete their family, in today's world. With changing work opportunities people also migrate in great numbers and this has added to another major category of individuals and families, termed as the migrant families across the world and inside each country.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) The factors that affect the decision of bearing a child are:
   i) Social expectation,
   ii) Social acceptance,
   iii) Identification,
   iv) Religion,
   v) Getting rid of loneliness,
   vi) Feeling of accomplishment,
   vii) Ensuring continuity, and
   viii) For *moksha* or salvation.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1) The major conflicts between motherhood and employment are:
   i) Nature of work of the woman,
   ii) Availability of childcare facility,
   iii) Economic standing of the couple,
   iv) Status of the woman in the family, and
   v) Perceived function of the woman by others in the family, society and caste group.
2) Fill up the blanks:
   i) earn, bear children, take care
   ii) a later age
   iii) oral contraception

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

1) The major responsibilities of the mother are:
   i) Learning childcare skills,
   ii) Not feeling hesitant in asking for help in childcare from family members,
   iii) Adjusting and making a different routine according to the needs of the child,
   iv) Learning to cope with added work responsibilities of childcare and running the household,
   v) Learning to manage time so as to also look after the needs of the husband and continue to have a satisfactory married life, and
   vi) Learning to take time out for herself – to pursue hobbies, take rest etc.

2) The major responsibilities of the father are:

i) Accepting the responsibility and bringing to consciousness that fatherhood is demanding and making efforts to fulfil his role as a father,

ii) Learning child care skills,

iii) Doing financial planning with the wife to keep expenditure in check,

iv) Sharing childcare responsibilities with the wife,

v) Giving physical and emotional support to the wife during childcare,

vi) Helping the wife and independently looking after the infant if the need arises,

vii) Providing support when the wife or child is sick and be able to seek help from wider family and community in times of crises,

viii) Become increasingly able to enjoy intimate personal interactions with the child,

ix) Willingness to take assistance, if required, from extended family or outside agencies to meet the needs and the growing expenditure when wife is on maternity leave or is a housewife, and

x) Unemployed men will look for work and try to attain stability in their employment. Thus, the father should look for and get settled in a job which can provide him with regular income to take care of the needs of the wife and newborn.

Check Your Progress Exercise 6

i) True

ii) False

iii) False

Check Your Progress Exercise 7

1) The major economic stressors are:

i) Lack of optimal finances to meet the growing needs of the baby may be a concern for the couple,

ii) Individual aspirations of both father and mother of accumulating wealth, raising status of the family, acquiring higher education, having a higher standard of living, fulfilling other needs and desires may get stifled and create a sense of underperformance and non achievement, and

iii) Parenthood requires a certain amount of commitment with regard to ones time and efforts and thus may affect individual aspirations of both the parents.

2) Match the columns:

Column 1	Column 2
i) Social Stressor	d) A young and new bride who is still adjusting with the husband's family may feel stressed out adjusting to the new set-up

and also coping with the responsibility of looking after the young one.

ii) Economic Stressor	a) Lack of optimal finances to meet the growing needs of the baby may be a concern for the couple.
iii) Psychological Stressor	b) Postpartum disorders and postpartum psychosis just after the baby is born can have serious consequence for the new family.
iv) Physical Stressor	c) The young child brings with himself or herself lot of expectations which if not met may lead to parental dissatisfaction.

12.13 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) Define and explain the childbearing stage of the family life cycle.

2) Analyse the reasons for the shifting trend of increase in age of the mother entering the child bearing stage.

3) Read the following profile of a mother and point out the possible causes of stress for her in the family.

Alka is 28 years old. She is an MBA and was working in a company for 3 years before she got married. Her husband is posted in a remote village and Alka could not continue her job as she joined her husband after marriage. The couple have a year old daughter. But Alka feels very depressed and finds it very hard to take care of her child and husband.

4) Discuss the changing role of the father in the contemporary dual earning family setup.

5) Describe the changing role of a female who from a young bride has become a mother in a joint family setup. How can the family in the present setup help her in fulfilling the role of a mother?

12.14 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 13 FAMILIES WITH PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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13.1 INTRODUCTION

Children develop in the context of family. It has greatest contribution in the development of children and has long-lasting impact. Stage-setting and intervention theories of family as a social system describe direct and indirect influences of family on children. There is wide range of factors which affect family relationship in any cultural context. Formal social networks such as schools and work place, as well as, informal social networks such as neighbours, friends, relatives and community members provide social and emotional support, particularly during crisis.

Families once formed go through different stages of life-cycle and period of transitions. Family members are required to modify their roles when there is transition from one stage to another stage of family life-cycle. Family developmental tasks are the responsibilities accomplished by a family at a given stage of its development.

Parenting is a challenging task and parenting style has great impact in the domains of social competence, academic performance, psychosocial development

and problem behaviour of children. The benefits of authoritative parenting style and the negative effects of uninvolved parenting are evident as early as the preschool years and continue throughout life. For successful parenting and positive child outcomes, discipline should be firm, fair, and logical. Parenting skills require that all parents learn effective disciplinary techniques best suited to their child.

Children of different ages present different challenges and issues for their parents and families.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Define elements of parenting, parenting style and child outcomes, discipline and child outcomes, and factors affecting parenting style;
- Identify developmental characteristics of preschool children;
- Discuss challenges and emerging issues of families with preschool children; and
- Learn disciplinary techniques for toddlers and preschool children.

13.2 CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY CONTEXT

The family is the child's first and longest-lasting context for development. Families are pervasive and parents are universally important in the lives of children. Of course, other social settings also mould children's development, but in power and breadth of influence, none equals the family. Family introduces children to the physical world through the opportunities it offers for play and exploration of objects. It also creates bonds between people that are unique. The attachments children form with parents and siblings usually last a life time, and they serve as models for relationships in the wider world of neighbourhood and school. Finally, the family is children's first context for learning the language, cognitive skills, and social and moral values.

13.2.1 The Family as a Social System

Today, family system theorists recognise that children are not mechanically shaped by the inputs of others. There exist bi-directional influences in which the behaviours of each family member affect those of others. The term *family system* means that the responses of all family members are interrelated. These system influences operate both directly and indirectly.

A number of theories have been developed to describe possible linkages between parent-child and child-child relations. These theories can be divided into two groups – "stage-setting" and "intervention" theories. These theories propose direct and indirect pathways of family influence on children's development.

Stage-Setting Theories: These theories describe the indirect influence of parents on the children's development (Hartup, 1992). Parents do not make deliberate attempts to modify children's behaviour but "set the stage" for their development. Indirect influences include the quality of parent-child relationships, early attachment relationships and the disciplinary techniques used by parents.

relationships. For example, child adjustment problems, particularly those that are related to parental conflict, are more common in urban than rural setting. Psychological disturbance is highest in areas where families move often, parks and playgrounds are scarce, community centres providing leisure-time activities do not exist and visits among neighbours are rare. In contrast, when family ties to the community are strong as indicated by frequent contact with friends and relatives — family stress and child adjustment problems are reduced.

Ties to community reduce family stress and enhance children's development because social support offers interpersonal acceptance. For example, a neighbour or relative who listens and tries to relieve a parent's concern enhances self-esteem. The parents, in turn, are likely to behave more sensitively towards their children. Social networks have important functions. First, when families experience stress and strain, social networks affect parenting practices indirectly by reducing mother's feeling of depression. Second, social networks often provide access to valuable information and services. Third, social networks such as friends and relatives may encourage and demonstrate effective ways of interacting with children and discourage ineffective practices. Finally, when children interact with their parent's social networks, other adults can influence children directly through warmth, stimulation and exposure to a wider range of competent models.

13.2.3 Family Life Cycle

As you have been studying in this Block, there are typical stages through which families pass. Families once formed, typically enter into a period of growth as children are born and grow older. As the family life-cycle status shifts, for example, from the early married to the child-rearing stage, the adult family members are required to modify their roles. Now they act as both mates and parents. Different demands are made at each stage of family life cycle and couple's life undergoes significant changes as the family moves on to a new stage in its life cycle.

The readjustment of role is required when the married pair becomes parents. But one is always in a continuing process of changing role demands. This is the most important and drastic shift required. Each shift in family life-cycle status demands a readjustment in every aspect of the roles of all family members.

Family Developmental Tasks

Family developmental tasks are specific to a given stage of development in the family life cycle. Family developmental tasks may be seen as those responsibilities that must be accomplished by a family at a given stage of its development in a way that satisfies its members.

Each family member can be viewed as an individual determined to achieve certain developmental tasks while interacting with other family members.

These indirect influences may be the effect of third parties within the family. There exist a range of relationships like relationships of mother with father, parent with sibling, grandparent with parent. These relationships modify the child's direct experiences in the family. Third parties can serve as effective support for children's development; for example, when parents are warm and considerate toward each other, mothers and fathers praise and stimulate their children more and scold them less. In contrast, when marriage is tense and hostile, parents are likely to criticise and punish. Disputes between parents over child-rearing issues seem to be very harmful. They are linked to rise in children's behaviour problems.

Fig. 13.1: Family sets the stage for the development of the child.

When children's development or adjustment is affected by conflicts between their parents, grandparents may indirectly promote children's development by providing parents with child rearing advice, models of child rearing skills, and even financial assistance. Of course, like any indirect influence, grandparents' involvement can sometimes be negative; when quarrelsome relations exist between grandparents and a parent, children may suffer.

Interventionist Theories: Interventionist theories refer to the ways in which parents have a direct influence on children's behaviour. Direct influences are those through which parents deliberately try to influence their children's behaviour and development. For example, to promote social competence of children, parents attempt to design children's play environments, plan children's social contacts with other children and supervise their children's interaction with other children. Parents act as 'designers' when they select a safe neighbourhood to live in where there are a number of children to play with, 'booking agents' by enrolling their children in child care settings or other organised activities, 'mediators' when they initiate contacts for their children, and 'supervisors' when they directly monitor and supervise their children's interactions with others (Ladd, 1992).

13.2.2 The Family System in Context

Families exist in a cultural context and there are a range of factors which impact on parent-child interaction and relationship. Connections to the community may be in terms of formal organisation, such as school, work place, day care centre and a religious group. Family also has connections to informal social networks of relatives, friends and neighbours. These connections influence parent-child

relationships. For example, child adjustment problems, particularly those that are related to parental conflict, are more common in urban than rural setting. Psychological disturbance is highest in areas where families move often, parks and playgrounds are scarce, community centres providing leisure-time activities do not exist and visits among neighbours are rare. In contrast, when family ties to the community are strong as indicated by frequent contact with friends and relatives — family stress and child adjustment problems are reduced.

Ties to community reduce family stress and enhance children's development because social support offers interpersonal acceptance. For example, a neighbour or relative who listens and tries to relieve a parent's concern enhances self-esteem. The parents, in turn, are likely to behave more sensitively towards their children. Social networks have important functions. First, when families experience stress and strain, social networks affect parenting practices indirectly by reducing mother's feeling of depression. Second, social networks often provide access to valuable information and services. Third, social networks such as friends and relatives may encourage and demonstrate effective ways of interacting with children and discourage ineffective practices. Finally, when children interact with their parent's social networks, other adults can influence children directly through warmth, stimulation and exposure to a wider range of competent models.

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Each family member can be viewed as an individual determined to achieve certain developmental tasks while interacting with other family members.

Stage-Sensitive Family Developmental Tasks through the Family Life-Cycle (Duvall, 1977)

Stage of the family life-cycle	Positions in the family	Stage-sensitive family developmental tasks
Married couple	Wife Husband	Establishing a mutually satisfying marriage. Fitting into the kin network. Adjusting to pregnancy and parenthood.
Child bearing	Wife-mother Husband-father Infant daughter/son or both	Having adjusted to and encouraging the development of infants.
Preschool age	Wife-mother Husband-father Daughter-sister Son-brother	Adapting to the critical needs and interests of preschool children in stimulating, growth-promoting ways. Coping with energy depletion and lack of privacy as parents.
School age	Wife-mother Husband-father Daughter-sister Son-brother	Fitting into the community of school age families in constructive ways. Encouraging children's educational achievement.
Teenage	Wife-mother Husband-father Daughter-sister Son-brother	Balancing freedom with responsibility as teenagers mature. Establishing post parental interests and careers as growing parents.
Launching centre	Wife-mother-grandmother Husband-father-grandfather Daughter-sister-aunt Son-brother-uncle	Releasing young adults into work force. Maintaining a supportive home base.
Middle-aged parents	Wife-mother-grandmother Husband-father-grandfather	Refocussing on the marriage relationship. Maintaining a supportive home base for younger generations.
Aging family members	Widow or widower Wife-mother-grandmother Husband-father-grandfather	Coping with bereavement and living alone. Closing the family home or adapting it to aging. Adjusting to retirement.

Developmental tasks of families with preschool children include adapting to the critical needs and interests of preschool children in stimulating, growth-promoting ways; and to cope with energy depletion and lack of privacy as parents.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

Briefly describe the following:

1) Stage setting theories.

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2) Family life cycle.

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3) Family developmental tasks.

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13.3 PARENTING AND CHILD OUTCOMES

Parenting is a multifaceted activity that includes many specific behaviours that work individually and together to influence child outcomes and behaviour. Although specific parenting behaviours, such as spanking and smacking or love withdrawal, may influence development of the child, looking at any specific behaviour in isolation may be misleading. It has been noted that specific parenting practices are less important in predicting child well-being than is the broad pattern of parenting. Diana Baumrind is one of the best known experts on parenting styles and in her research she identified the four main parenting styles known as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful or uninvolved. These parenting styles are described on the basis of elements of parenting

13.3.1 Elements of Parenting

Two important elements of parenting as described by Maccoby and Martin (1983) are parental respc nsiveness and parental demandingness.

Parental Responsiveness: Baumrind (1991) explained that parental responsiveness is also called *parental warmth* or *supportiveness*. *Parental responsiveness* refers to the extent to which parents deliberately promote independence, self-regulation and self-esteem by being supportive, adjusted to, and accepting to children's special needs and demands.

Parental Demandingness: The term parental demandingness is used to examine the level to which the parent expects and anticipates a more grown up, sensible and ultimately responsible level and standard of behaviour from their child (Baumrind, 1991). Some parents establish high standards, while other parents demand very little and rarely try to influence their child's behaviour. Some parents are accepting and responsive to their children.

13.3.2 Parenting Style and Child Outcomes

Baumrind (1973, 1977) identified four patterns of parenting style based on the dimensions of parental responsiveness and demandingness. Here, the four patterns of parenting style developed by Baumrind are briefly outlined and the effects on children's behaviour are described. These four different styles of parenting are authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful or uninvolved.

1) **Authoritative parenting style:** Authoritative parents make reasonable demands for mature behaviour, set limits for children and insist on obedience. At the same time, they express warmth and affection, listen patiently to their child's point of view, and encourage participation in family decision making. Authoritative child rearing is a rational, democratic approach that recognises and respects the rights of both parents and children.

   Children of authoritative parents are likely to be happy, self confident and self controlled. They are friendly and cooperative. Research indicates authoritative parenting is linked to many aspects of competence, emotional maturity, social and moral maturity, academic achievement and educational attainment.

2) **Authoritarian parenting style:** Authoritarian parents are also demanding, but they place such a high value on conformity that they are unresponsive, sometimes even rejecting, particularly when children are unwilling to obey. They engage in very little give-and-take with children, who are expected to accept an adult's word for what is right in an unquestioning manner. If the child does not, authoritarian parents resort to force and punishment. The authoritarian style is clearly biased in favour of parents' needs; children's self expression and independence are suppressed.

   Children of these parents are anxious, withdrawn and unhappy. When interacting with others, they tend to react with hostility. They are likely to be angry, defiant, dependent and withdraw from challenging tasks. When grown up they are less well adjusted than those exposed to an authoritative style.

3) **Permissive parenting style:** The permissive style of child rearing is nurturant and accepting, but it avoids making demands or imposing controls of any kind. These parents allow their children to make many of their

own decisions at an age when they are not yet capable of doing so. They do not have to learn good manners or do any household chores. They are permitted to interrupt and annoy others without any parental restraint.

Children of permissive parents are immature. They have difficulty in controlling their impulses, are disobedient and rebellious when asked to do something that conflicted with their momentary desires. They are also over demanding and dependent on adults. They show less persistentce on tasks at school. They have poor self control.

4) **Uninvolved or neglectful parenting style:** Undemanding parenting combined with indifferent or rejecting behaviour constitutes the uninvolved style. Uninvolved parents show little commitment to caregiving beyond the minimum effort required to feed and cloth their child. Often these parents are so overwhelmed by the many pressures and stresses in their lives that these have little time and energy to spare for children.

At its extreme, uninvolved parenting is a form of child maltreatment called *neglect*. Especially when it begins early, it affects all aspects of development. Emotionally detached, depressed mothers who show little interest in their babies have children who soon show deficits in many domains, including attachment, cognition, and emotional and social skills. These children are non-compliant and demanding; are low in tolerance for frustration and emotional control, do poorly in school and are prone to engaging in delinquent acts.

13.3.3 Consequences of Parenting Style for Children

Parenting style has been found to predict the child's well-being in the domains of social competence, academic performance, psychosocial development and problem behaviour. In general, parental responsiveness predicts social competence and psychosocial functioning, while parental demandingness is associated with instrumental competence and behavioural control (that is academic performance and deviance).

	Responsive	*Unresponsive*
Demanding	Authoritative parent	Authoritarian parent
Undemanding	Permissive parent	Uninvolved parent

Fig. 13.1: A two dimensional classification of parenting styles

Baumrind (1991) and Weiss and Schwarz (1996) found that:

- Children from authoritative families (high in demandingness and high in responsiveness) rate themselves and are rated by objective measures as more socially and instrumentally competent than those whose parents are non-authoritative. These children tend to perform well in school and be uninvolved in problem behaviour, have good social skills, high self-esteem, and lower levels of depression.
- Children from authoritarian families (high in demandingness, but low in responsiveness) tend to perform moderately well in school and be uninvolved in problem behaviour, but they have poorer social skills, lower self-esteem, and higher levels of depression.

- Children from indulgent homes (high in responsiveness, but low in demandingness) are more likely to be involved in problem behaviour and perform average in school, but they have higher self-esteem, better social skills and lower levels of depression.
- Children from uninvolved families (low in responsiveness and low in demandingness) perform poorly in all the domains.

The benefits of authoritative parenting and the damaging effects of uninvolved parenting are evident as early as the preschool years and continue throughout adolescence and into early adulthood.

13.3.4 Factors Affecting Parenting Style

Parenting styles that is responsive but demanding is the most common pattern around the world. But there exist differences in parenting style affected by a variety of factors discussed below.

Family Education and Occupation: An educated parent usually has a more realistic attitude toward the parenting style. If both the parents are working, then the parenting style will be different. The child will probably develop an independent attitude.

Family Background: It denotes the family of the parents. It includes the family of both the father and the mother. The parenting style is very often influenced by the way the parents were reared by their parents in the past.

Family Status and Living Standard: Parental status and living standard of the family plays an important role in the growth and development of the child. If the child belongs to a rich family from high status, the child will be exposed to party culture and high status. These parents are able to provide many enriched experiences to their children. But a child from a poor family has entire different attitude and exposure to the society.

Family Size: The family has enormous effect on the child's development. If the child is alone then the parents generally pay extra attention to the child. But when the child has one or more siblings then the parenting style will be different.

Health of Family Members: Health of family members and mood of parents plays an important role in upbringing of children. If any one of the family member is suffering from prolonged illness or disease then it may have an effect on the parenting style. Parents get irritated easily.

Ethnicity: Ethnicity also affects the parenting style since ethnic groups often have distinct child-rearing beliefs and practices.

Poverty: Parenting is seriously endangered in poverty ridden families. Poor families experience many stresses and crises. When daily crises arise, parents become depressed and irritable. Family conflict rises and parenting becomes less nurturant and involved, and children's development suffers.

Family Type: Extended family system has more positive impact on parenting style, particularly in low-income and single parent families. By providing

emotional support and sharing income and essential resources, the extended family helps reduce the stress of poverty and single parenthood.

Sex of Child: Often parents believe that girls are weaker than boys so they are more likely to be softer and permissive with girls.

Fig. 13.2: Parents dote on their daughters

Parenting style provides a strong indicator of parenting functioning that predicts the child's well-being across a wide spectrum of environments and across different groups. Both parental responsiveness and parental demandingness are important components of good parenting. Authoritative parenting, which balances clear, high parental demands with emotional responsiveness and recognition of child autonomy, is one of the most consistent family predictors of competence from early childhood through adolescence.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

Briefly describe the following:

1) Elements of parenting

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2) Authoritative parenting style

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3) Uninvolved parenting style

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4) Consequences of parenting style on children

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5) Factors affecting parenting style

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13.4 FAMILIES WITH PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Three to five or six years old child is often called as preschool child. Preschool children are making developmental progress and express an interest in the world around them. They are enthusiastic to learn and to gain inner control. They learn by experiencing and by doing. They are more independent than toddlers. They can express their needs through meaningful language. It is important that parents and family members have understanding of developmental characteristics of preschool children which will help them guide preschoolers through this stage.

Transition to Preschool Children Family

During the second year when children are able to comply with parental directives, effective caregivers pace their demands so they fit with children's capacities. For example, they do not impose a range of "don'ts" on infants. Instead, they put away breakable objects, place barriers across steep staircases, and physically remove babies when they behave in ways that endanger themselves or disturb others.

As children enter preschool age, they explore, ask questions, start new tasks and imagine. Parents of these children need to be open-minded and ready to grow to meet the challenging needs of children. They need to change their behaviour in ways that will be good for preschool children. Families with preschool children also experience frustration, anger and feelings of inadequacy while socialising these children.

It is not only that family and parents go through transition; children also go through transition from one stage to another. Children need to be prepared for a smooth separation or transition from family to preschool.

13.4.1 Developmental Characteristics of Preschool Children

Below are listed some of the important developmental characteristics of preschoolers. This information will help parents understand what to expect from their child.

Physical Development: Preschool children can run well, march, stand on one foot, jump, ride tricycle, feed themselves well, put on shoes and socks, unbutton and button. They are very active in their play, can make designs and write simple letters. They can cut on a line with scissors and have more fine muscle control. They can ties shoe laces.

Fig. 13.3: Physical development during preschool years is rapid

Social Development: Children during preschool years get involved in parallel and cooperative play, enjoy being by others, take turns, know if she or he is a girl or boy, enjoy group activities and respond to verbal guidance. They enjoy a variety of activities, indoor and outdoor. Boys and girls have similar interests, so will often play together and share same toys such as dolls or trucks. They are highly social, may play loosely organised group games. They are talkative and versatile. They are beginning to learn that others have "rights" as games are played.

Fig. 13.4: The preschool child is aware of his or her gender

Emotional Development: Preschool children's emotions are usually extreme and short-lived. They are learning to express their feeling with words. They

can be aggressive but want friends and enjoy being with other children. They appreciate praise for their achievements. They are developing the ability to interpret the feelings of others. They are capable of some self-criticism. Physical aggression like hitting others may decrease, however, verbal aggression, like name calling may increase.

Fig. 13.5: Preschool children enjoy being with other children

guage Development: Vocabulary and language skills of preschool childr developing quickly. These children have about 2000 words in the bulary. They can use complete sentences with 5 to 6 words. They can te stories, read their own name and ask meaning of words. They kno s of colours and want to know more about environment. Their questio ewer and more meaningful.

Fig. 13.6: Preschooler can utter complete sentences with 5 to 6 words

Cognitive Development: Preschool children want to explore environment and answer simple questions. They ask lots of questions, including "how" and "why" questions. Their questions are often direct and personal. They are

imaginative and may recite a few nursery rhymes. These children learn best by doing. They are able to understand some basic concepts such as number, size, weight, colour, texture, distance, time and position.

Fig. 13.7: Preschoolers are able to understand some basic concepts like fruits

Here, you should be able to corelate the theories learnt in Block 1 with this age group, such as, application of Freud's theory, Piaget's theory, Erikson's theory and others, to this age group.

13.4.2 Activities to Promote Development of Preschool Children

During preschool years there is rapid development of children. It is the foundation stage for future development. Parents should provide activities to promote all round development of children. The activities listed below would foster development among preschool children.

- Physical and motor development during preschool years is rapid, so stimulation of motor skills is required. It is important that parents should provide outdoor and indoor activities for children.
- To help the development of language – stories and rhymes, free conversation, participation in discussions, field experiences and dramatisation should be introduced.
- To develop elementary social skills, parents should stress the need to share toys and play materials. Exposure should also be provided for adequate care of the home and school property, to greet people and to thank them whenever it is required.
- Experiences should be provided to develop number, time, colour, form, and other concepts.
- To promote aesthetic and creativity development, music, dancing and art activities should also be included.

Fig. 13.8: Parents should allow and encourage children to participate in cultural activities

- To promote cognitive development, parents should provide science experiences and first hand experience for observing animals, trees, flowers, birds and other natural environment. For exposure of people who work for the society like doctor, policeman, postman, grocer etc. trips can be planned.

- Writing readiness is developed by means of a large number of activities involving paper and pencil. Spontaneous drawing, copying, tracing, filling, completing are some of the activities used for this purpose. Crayon work, brush and finger painting, collage work, and work with chalk on the blackboard etc. are also useful.

There are many more such activities that can be performed with children to enhance their development.

13.4.3 Domains of Adjustment in Families with Preschool Children

During preschool years adjustment and happiness of children and family depends on what happened to children and family during these years. In this sub-section, different domains of adjustment are explained taking into consideration the developmental aspects of children and family relationship.

Developmental Domains

Different areas of children's development which need adjustment in families of preschool children include physical, language and cognitive, social and emotional, and personality domains.

i) *Physical domain:* Preschool children are highly susceptible to all kinds of illness. Sickly children fall behind in their physical and motor skills. As a result, they find they are misfit in the play group. Children are also prone to accidents, awkwardness and obesity. If parents blame children for these negative aspects of physical domain, it will make children tense

and nervous. Parents need to immunise their children to protect them from illnesses and need to take care of their health and diet so that adjustment is good in peer group, school and family.

ii) *Language and cognitive domain:* Language is a tool for communication and is essential for social acceptance. Children, who cannot communicate with others, will be socially unaccepted, and this will lead to feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. Once parents find that their child has poor language skills or that their child has speech disorder, they should consult the expert and provide stimulating environment to overcome problems associated with poor speech.

iii) *Social domain:* Children with poor language skills and poor emotional control are likely to be rejected by their peers in a social group. These children will not only feel lonely, even more important, they will be deprived of opportunities to learn to behave in peer approved manner. As a result of the treatment they receive from peers, they may develop unhealthy social attitudes. Parental guidance and a stimulating environment are very crucial to overcome some of these problems and for better adjustment in family and preschool.

iv) *Emotional domain:* The major emotional hazard of preschool years is the dominance of the unpleasant emotions, especially anger. If children experience too many of unpleasant emotions and very few of the pleasant ones, it will distort their outlook on life and encourage the development of an unpleasant disposition. This is likely to lead to negative parent-child relationship since parents may assess their child as one with a difficult temperament. These parents need to be very careful in their parenting practices to protect their child from the damage of negative emotions. Parents should try to make family atmosphere cheerful and happy so that children will learn to make their contributions to maintain this atmosphere.

v) *Personality domain:* One of the most serious personality hazards during early childhood is the development of an unfavourable self-concept. Unfavourable self-concepts once developed, are hard to overcome. Many parents fail to recognise that young children are developing unfavourable self-concepts or they believe that children will "outgrow" these self-concepts as they grow older and as their social horizons broaden.

Parents need to maintain vigil in developmental aspects of their children and work best to eliminate habits and attitude which predispose children to act in a socially unacceptable manner and protect them from developing a distorted personality. Parents should make realistic aspirations in accordance with their capabilities. Success in these tasks will foster favourable a self-concept in children.

Family Relationship Domain

Parents are the most significant persons in the life of children. Deterioration in family relationship is hazardous to good personal and social development. In some families boys are preferred. Girls in these families will resent their parents and also their brothers. For boys the major threat to family relationship is the lack of a father to identify with or the lack of emotional warmth between father and son.

Family relationships are also affected by step-parents, if bonding between children and step-parents is poor. During these years sibling quarrelling is caused by jealousy or by differences in interests among siblings. It can have negative impact on children's adjustment and development because it can deprive them of companionship at an age when their social world is limited mainly to family and when socially approved behaviour is learned. Children can carry their habit to peer group which can endanger their chances for making friends.

Child-abuse in the family is also one of the serious family-relationship hazards. This may take forms varying from mild abuse in the form of slap to such serious abuse as to lead to permanent disability in the child.

13.4.4 Roles and Responsibilities of Families with Preschool Children

During preschool years there is rapid development of children. It is the foundation stage for future development. Role of parents is to provide activities to promote all round development of children. During preschool years children spend most of the time in the family with their parents, siblings and grand parents. These children are sent to preschools, *balwadis* or *anganwadis* for informal preschool education. This is the first time when they are away from their parents. Parents should remember that all preschoolers are different and reach the various stages at different times. Here, you may recall the theories that you studied in Block 1 and and try to integrate the same with the preschool age period. Some children may achieve various developmental milestones earlier or later than the average. Parents have to teach children to carry out some responsibility and to get along with other children.

During preschool years parents need to teach children the concept of right and wrong, how to respect the rights of others, which behaviours are acceptable and which are not, with a goal of helping to develop a child who feels secure and loved, is self-confident, self-disciplined and knows how to control impulses, and who does not get overly frustrated with the normal stresses of everyday life.

Family Acts as the First School for Children

Family is the first school for children and parents are their children's first teachers. It is important that parents give time and take interest in children's activities. It can be done through:

- *Read together:* When adult family members read to their children or listen to them on a regular basis, achievement of children improves.
- *Establish a family routine:* Routines generally include time for completing homework, doing chores, eating meals together, and going to bed at an established time. These daily events are important to make life predictable for children and satisfying for all family members. Parents should encourage their child's efforts and help her or him in academic work and spend time discussing what she or he has learned.
- *Use television wisely:* Limit the amount of time children spend watching television and help them choose appropriate programs for viewing. When choosen carefully, some TV programs can help increase interest in learning.

- *Keep in touch with the school:* Parents should get to know what their children are learning, what their assignments are, and how they are doing. Keep in touch with school teacher through parent-teacher conferences or a telephone call to discuss children's progress.

- *Offer praise and encouragement:* Parents and families play an important role in influencing a child's confidence and motivation to become a successful learner. Encourage them to complete assignments and introduce them to outside experiences that will enhance their self-confidence.

13.4.5 Challenges and Emerging Issues of Families with Preschool Children

Children of different ages present different sets of challenges and issues for their parents and families. During the first year excessive irritability, sleeplessness and feeding problems are likely to dominate parents concerns. During the second year, when the child has become mobile and self aware, possibility of physical harm, destructiveness and aggression overpower earlier worries. By the third year, parents are concerned about disobedience, resistance to routine, poor social skills and slow growth of verbal ability.

Parents of preschool children expect their children to develop cognitive skills, sociability, security, self confidence, obedience and control of aggression during early years of preschool. A little later, parents hope to see gains in independence, autonomy, motivation for mastery, a willingness to compete with others and defend the self against attack and domination.

Parents believe that the early development of these qualities will help their children to adapt to the social and cognitive challenges which they will confront as they grow old. If a preschool child is too timid with other children, the mother may initiate a play group. If the child is too dependent on the mother she will encourage the child to play alone.

All parents sometimes have to deal with some child behaviour problems. Young children can develop many behaviours that may trouble or annoy their parents such as whining, poor eating habits, hitting, biting and kicking, and interrupting.

i) *Whining*: Nearly all children express whining at some time or another. The best way to handle whining is to ignore it as much as possible. Giving in to whining can teach children that whining is an effective means of getting what they want. Consistency is extremely important if parents are to eliminate or reduce whining in their home.

ii) *Poor eating habits*: Food battles are among the most common child behaviour problems. Eating habits begin forming during infancy and it is important for parents to offer healthy foods consistently and repeatedly. An eating schedule is also important.

iii) *Hitting, biting, and kicking:* Preschool children sometimes express feelings of frustration or anger. Children who hit, bite and kick need to be taught gently that those behaviours are unacceptable. Parents may use time-outs to discourage aggressive behaviour, but they should never hit their children as punishment for this behaviour.

iv) *Interrupting:* Interrupting is also one of the most annoying child behaviour problems. Children have a lot to say and they want to say it now, even when their parents are busy. Children need to be encouraged to wait, rather than interrupt, but remember that they can only wait for short periods of time.

13.4.6 Discipline and Child Outcomes

Disciplinary techniques used by parents play important role in children's development. These disciplinary styles can be considered to be embedded within the styles of parenting described by Baumrind (1973, 1977). Brody and Shaffer (1982) report three general categories of parental discipline, these are:

Power Assertion: Power assertion involves use of commands, physical power, or deprivation of privileges to control children's behaviour.

Love Withdrawal: In this type of discipline parents use negative techniques such as ridicule, expression of dislike or disappointment and isolation of the child in order to threaten the child with loss of parental love.

Induction: In this type of discipline parents use reasons and explanations so that children can understand the rationale underlying the parents' reasons for engaging in or for prohibiting certain behaviour patterns.

Children of parents who use inductive disciplinary strategies display less disruptive behaviour than those who have power assertive parents. Children who experience coercive control at home are more likely to display aggressive behaviour in peer interactions. Children may model the aggressive behaviour of their parents in peer interaction and use unfriendly strategies which lead to peer rejection.

For effective parenting and positive child outcomes, discipline should be firm, fair and friendly. *Firm* means consequences should be clearly stated and then adhered to when the inappropriate behaviour occurs. Fair means, the punishment should fit the misdeed or inappropriate behaviour. Also in the case of recurring behaviour, consequences should be stated in advance so the child knows what to expect. Harsh punishment is not necessary. Use a friendly but firm communication style when letting children know they have behaved inappropriately and let them know they will be responsible for the consequences of their behaviour. Encourage them to try to remember what they should do instead to avoid future consequences. Also praise them for appropriate behaviour.

13.4.7 Disciplinary Techniques for Toddlers and Preschool Children

Parenting skills require that all parents learn effective disciplinary techniques which are best suited to their child. Discipline is not the same as punishment. Instead, discipline has to do more with teaching.

Disciplinary Techniques for Toddlers

Toddlers are curious by nature. They try to experiment with everything they get. So it's wise to eliminate temptations, especially cleaning supplies and

medications should be kept well out of their reach. They easily get irritated if they are disturbed in their activities. Following are some of the techniques to discipline toddlers:

i) *Change the activity*: When children start doing something wrong, stop them. It is important to explain why they are stopped. Suggest something else they can do. For example, if they want to scribble on the wall, give them paper to scribble on instead.

ii) *Ignore:* Some misbehaviour is done to get parental attention. The best way to deal with this is to ignore it. Pay attention to good behaviour. Children need attention for good behaviour, not for misbehaviour.

iii) *Be firm:* Be clear and firm when you tell the child what she or he needs to do. Tone of parents' voice can show that they mean what they say.

iv) *Use words:* Talk calmly with the child. Ask the child what happened and why. Then talk about ways to work out the problem. Try to find an answer that you both like. This helps the child learn to be responsible for her or his behaviour.

v) *Active listening:* Since toddlers are not very verbally skilled, using active listening with them relies more on "hearing" what they are saying through their actions, than does on listening to their words. It's a way of letting them know what parents understand about children's feelings, and it's a way of helping children clarify how they feel.

vi) *No physical punishment:* Toddlers are unable to make connection between their behaviour and physical punishment. They will only feel the pain of the hit. It's important not to spank, hit or slap a child of any age. It is important to note that children learn by watching adults, particularly their parents. Parents are the role-model for their children.

vii) *Set physical limit:* It is difficult for toddlers to understand only words, follow up verbal limits with physical limits. A physical limit is imposed when a child is stopped to do an activity, for example, from drawing on the wall. Physical limits like removing the pen from child's hand are different from physical disciplinary techniques like slapping the child. Physical disciplinary techniques are not good with one exception, sometimes toddlers need to be physically restrained. Physical restraint is like a very strong hug and, without hurting a child, simply restrains her or him until she or he can calm down.

viii) *Provide choices:* Choices are a part of daily life with toddlers and they are an essential part of teaching them discipline. Giving children choices, teaches them that they are entitled to opinions and that they have some say in their own life. It shows them respect and it demonstrates parental trust. The more experience they have with making choices at a young age, the better they'll do when they're teenagers faced with larger and more life-threatening choices.

ix) *Natural consequences:* Toddlers are rarely logical enough to understand logical consequences, so the best approach is to allow and point out

natural consequences. For example, "You hit Swati, now Swati is sad and crying, and she doesn't want to play with you anymore today."

x) *Time-outs*: A time-out is a way of separating the child from the moment, person or object that is causing the trouble. Time-outs can be effective discipline for toddlers. A child who has been hitting, biting, or throwing food, for example, should be told why the behaviour is unacceptable and taken to a designated time-out area, such as a chair, for a minute or two to calm down (longer timeouts are not effective for toddlers).

Disciplinary Techniques for Preschoolers (3 to 6 Years)

As the child grows and begins to understand the connection between actions and consequences, parents should start communicating the rules of family to their preschool children. Some of the disciplinary techniques for preschoolers are:

i) *Set the rules and be consistent:* The earlier that parent set the rules and explains them to their children, the better for everyone. Consistency is the key to effective discipline, and it's important for parents to decide what the rules are and then uphold them.

ii) *Reward good behaviour:* Discipline is not just about punishment but also about recognising good behaviour. For example, saying "I'm proud of you for sharing your toys at playgroup" is usually more effective than punishing a child for the opposite behaviour, that is, not sharing.

Fig. 13.9: Reward good behaviour to incorporate good habits

iii) *Natural consequences:* When children see the natural consequences of their actions, they experience the direct results of their choices. But be sure the consequences do not place them in any danger. Children will learn best when they learn for themselves and will not blame their parents for the consequences they receive. Natural consequences work best, but they are not always appropriate. For preschool children, parents need to step in and create a consequence that is closely connected to their actions. When this method is used, it is important that parents mean what they say. They should let their child know that they are serious.

iv) *Make a behaviour chart:* If a child continues to misbehave or displays an unacceptable behaviour, make a chart with a box for each day of the week. Keep a track of the good and unacceptable behaviours every day. This will give the child and parent a concrete look at how it's going. Once this begins to work, praise the child for learning to control misbehaviour.

v) *Time-outs:* Time-outs also work well for preschool children. Establish a suitable timeout place that's free of distractions and will force the child to think about how she or he has behaved. Consider the length of time that will best suit the child's age until child is calmed down (to teach self-regulation).

Guidelines for Healthy Parent-Child Relationships

Healthy and positive parent-child relationship promotes children's development. Good quality of parent-child relation is exhibited in the manner parents support their children through warmth, sensitivity and encouragement. Their expectations from their children are based on developmental level of children and they understand that every child is unique and respect their children as an individual and give them unconditional love which is not based on their achievements.

Through interactions with parents and other significant caregivers, children learn to develop social skills that they transfer from the home to the school context while interacting with peers and other adults. Positive parent-child relationship promotes prosocial behaviour in children and is associated with their social and academic performance in school. When parents give quality time to their children, show warmth and affection, and develop close relationships with their children, their children are less likely to have social or emotional problems in school and with their peers.

- Parents should never disagree about discipline in front of their children.
- Parents should be consistent in discipline, that is, reward or punish the same behaviour in the same manner as much as possible.
- Parents and children must agree on what behaviour is desirable and not desireable.
- All should agree on how to respond to undesirable behaviour.
- Parenst should make it as clear as possible what the child is to expect if he or she performs the undesireable behaviour.
- Parents should look for gradual changes in behaviour and should not expect too much. Praise the behaviour which is coming closer to the desired goal.
- If one of the parents is disciplining a child, the other person should not step in on the argument in progress.
- Parents should remember that their behaviour serves as a model for their children's behaviour.
- Parents should reward desirable behaviour as much as possible by verbal praise, touch or something tangible such as a toy.
- Parents should give quality time to their children and try to set aside time on a regular basis to do something enjoyable with their child.

- Parents should never give an order, request or command without being able to enforce it at the time.
- Both the parents should have an equal share in the responsibility of discipline as much as possible.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

Briefly describe the following:

1) Transition to family with preschool children

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2) Social and emotional development of preschool children

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3) Family relationship domain of adjustment

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4) Challenges of families with preschool children

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5) Disciplinary techniques for toddlers

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6) Disciplinary techniques for preschool children

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13.5 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have learnt that the family is the child's first and longest-lasting context for development. It creates bonds between people that are unique. Grandparents play important role in children's lives and may indirectly promote children's development by providing parents with child rearing advice, models of child rearing skills and even financial assistance. Family also has connections to informal social networks of relatives, friends and neighbours in the community. These connections influence parent-child relationships and reduce family stress and enhance children's development. There are typical family life stages through which each family passes. Family developmental tasks are specific to a given stage of development in the family life cycle. We have studied that it is not only that family and parents go through transitions; children also go through a transition from one stage to another. Children need to be prepared for a smooth separation or transition from one stage to another. Parents should remember that all children are different and reach the various stages at different times. Some children may achieve various developmental milestones earlier or later than the average. We discussed that parent-child relationship is an important aspect in children's development. This relationship is bi-directional in nature, that is, parents influence the behaviour of children and children influence the behaviour of their parents.

Further, we learnt about the parenting style and disciplinary techniques used by parents. Parents play an important role in children's development. For effective parenting and positive child outcomes, discipline should be firm, fair, and friendly. The benefits of authoritative parenting and the damaging effects of uninvolved parenting are evident as early as the preschool years and continue throughout adolescence and into early adulthood. There exist differences in parenting style affected by variety of factors such as education and occupation of parents, family background, family size, health of family members, ethnicity, poverty, family type and sex of child. For promoting development of children, parents should give them quality time and take interest in their school related activities.

During preschool years adjustment and happiness of children and family depends on what happened to children and family during these years. Adjustment of families with preschool children is required in developmental domains and family relationship domain. During preschool years children spend most of the time in the family with their parents, siblings, and grand parents. Role of parents is to provide activities to promote all round development of children.

At the end of the Unit, we have studied that children of different ages present different sets of challenges and issues for their parents and families. During preschool years families face the challenges like disobedience, whining, resistance to routine, poor social skills and slow growth of verbal ability, hitting, biting, and kicking. Finally, we have studied some of the important disciplinary techniques for toddlers and preschoolers such as ignoring, active listening, setting physical limits, providing choices, setting rules and being consistent, and rewarding good behaviour.

13.6 GLOSSARY

Active listening : Carefully hearing what children are saying through their actions than listening to their words only.

Bi-directional : Bi-directional means that parents influence the behaviour of children and children influence the behaviour of their parents.

Discipline : Technique to teach children what is right and what is wrong.

Egocentric : Self-centered.

Family developmental tasks: Family developmental tasks are those responsibilities that must be accomplished by a family at a given stage of its development in a way that satisfies its members.

Family life-cycle : Stages through which family go. Families once formed, typically enter into a period of growth as children are born and grow older.

Firm : Consequences should be clearly stated and then adhered to when the inappropriate behaviour occurs.

Induction : Use of reasoning and explanation to make the child understand.

Interventionist theories : Interventionist theories refer to the ways in which parents have a direct influence on children's behaviour.

Natural consequences : Consequences of children's actions which they experience directly.

Parenting : Parenting is a multifaceted activity that includes many specific behaviours that influence child outcomes and behaviour.

Parental responsiveness : Parental warmth or supportiveness.

Parental demandingness : Parental demandingness is used to examine the level to which the parent expects and anticipates a more grown up and responsible behaviour from their child.

Power assertion : Use of commands and physical punishment to control children.

Preschool child : Three to five year old child.

Stage-setting theories : Theories that describe the indirect influence of parents on the children's development.

Time-out : A way of separating the child from the moment, person or object that is causing the trouble.

13.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) **Stage setting theories**

These theories describe the indirect influence of parents on the children's development. Parents do not make deliberate attempts to modify children's behaviour but "set the stage" for their development. Indirect influences include the quality of parent-child relationships, early attachment relationships and the disciplinary techniques used by parents.

2) **Family life cycle**

There are typical stages through which families pass. Families once formed, typically enter into a period of growth as children are born and grow older. As the family life-cycle status shifts, for example, from the early married to the child-rearing stage, the adult family members are required to modify their roles and responsibilities.

3) **Family developmental tasks**

Family developmental tasks are specific to a given stage of development in the family life cycle. Family developmental tasks may be seen as those responsibilities that must be accomplished by a family at a given stage of its development in a way that satisfies its members. Each family member is determined to achieve certain developmental tasks while interacting with other family members.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) **Elements of parenting**

Two important elements of parenting are parental responsiveness and parental demandingness. Parental responsiveness refers to the extent to which parents deliberately promote independence, self-regulation, and self-esteem by being supportive, adjusted to, and accepting to children's special needs and demands. The term parental demandingness is used to examine the level to which the parent expects and anticipates a more grown up, sensible and ultimately responsible level and standard of behaviour from their child.

2) **Authoritative parenting style**

Authoritative parents are warm and affectionate, and place high demands on their children. They use reasoning and explanations with their children; they set rules and limits, but children have choices within limits. They foster self-control in children, but, not by bribing or punishing.

3) **Uninvolved parenting style**

Undemanding parenting combined with indifferent or rejecting behaviour constitutes the uninvolved style. Uninvolved parents show little commitment to caregiving beyond the minimum effort required to feed and cloth their child. Often these parents are so overwhelmed by the

many pressures and stresses in their lives that these have little time and energy to spare for children. At its extreme, uninvolved parenting is a form of child maltreatment called neglect.

4) **Consequences of parenting style on children**

Children of authoritative parents are independent, imaginative, confident, cooperative, trustworthy and socially responsible.

Children of authoritarian parents are anxious, withdrawn and unhappy. They are likely to be angry, defiant, dependent and withdraw from challenging tasks. When grown up they are less well adjusted than those exposed to an authoritative style.

Children of permissive parents are immature. They have difficulty in controlling their impulses, are disobedient and rebellious when asked to do something that conflicted with their momentary desires. They are also over demanding and dependent on adults. They have poor self control.

Children of neglectful parents show deficits in many domains, including attachment, cognition emotional and social skills. These children are noncompliant and demanding; are low in tolerance for frustration and emotional control, do poorly in school and are prone to engaging in delinquent acts.

5) **Factors affecting parenting style**

Parenting style that is responsive but demanding is the most common pattern around the world. There exist differences in parenting style affected by a variety of factors such as education and occupation of parents, family background, family size, health of family members, ethnicity, poverty, family type and sex of the child.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) **Transition to family with preschool children**

As children enter preschool age, they explore, ask questions, start new tasks and imagine. Parents of these children need to be open-minded and ready to grow to meet the challenging needs of children. They need to change their behaviour in ways that will be good for preschool children. Families with preschool children also experience frustration, anger and feelings of inadequacy while socialising these children.

2) **Social and emotional development of preschool children**

Children during preschool years get involved in parallel and cooperative play, enjoy being by others, take turns, know if she or he is girl or a boy, enjoy group activities and respond to verbal guidance. Boys and girls have similar interests, so will often play together and share same toys such as dolls or trucks. They are talkative and versatile. They are beginning to learn that others have "rights" as games are played.

Preschool children's emotions are usually extreme and short-lived. They are learning to express their feelings with words. They can be aggressive but want friends and enjoy being with other children. They appreciate

praise for their achievements. They are developing the ability to interpret the feelings of others. They are capable of some self-criticism. Physical aggression like hitting others may decrease but the verbal aggression, like name calling may increase.

2) **Family relationship domain of adjustment**

Parents are most significant persons in the life of children. Deterioration in family relationship is hazardous to good personal and social development. In some families boys are preferred. Girls in these families will resent their parents and also their brothers. For boys the major threat to family relationship is the lack of a father to identify with or the lack of emotional warmth between father and son. Family relationships are also affected by step-parents if bonding between children and step-parents is poor. During these years sibling quarrelling is caused by jealousy or by differences in interests among siblings.

3) **Challenges of families with preschool children**

Children of different ages present different sets of challenges and issues for their parents and families. By the third year, parents are concerned about disobedience, resistance to routine, poor social skills, and slow growth of verbal ability.

All parents sometimes have to deal with some child behaviour problems. Young children can develop many behaviours that may trouble or annoy their parents such as whining, poor eating habits, hitting, biting, kicking, and interrupting.

4) **Disciplinary techniques for toddlers**

Toddlers are curious by nature. They try to experiment with everything they get. So it's wise to eliminate temptations, especially cleaning supplies and medications should be kept well out of their reach. Some of the techniques to discipline toddlers include changing the activity, ignoring the behaviour, using words, active listening, setting limits, providing choices and avoiding physical punishment. Natural consequences and time-outs are also good disciplinary techniques for toddlers.

5) **Disciplinary techniques for preschool children**

As the child grows and begins to understand the connection between actions and consequences, parents should start communicating the rules of family to their preschool children. Disciplinary techniques effective for preschool children are setting the rules and be consistent, rewarding good behaviour, making a behaviour chart and using natural and logical consequences. Time-outs also work well for preschool children.

13.8 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) Discuss family as a social system.

2) Briefly describe family life cycle with transitions in the family.

3) Explain the consequences of parenting styles for children.

4) Describe the factors affecting parenting style.

5) Briefly describe the developmental characteristics of preschool children.

6) Explain the domains of adjustment in families with preschool children.

7) Discuss the roles and responsibilities of families with preschool children.

8) What are the different challenges and issues of families with preschool children?

9) Explain the disciplinary techniques for toddlers and preschoolers.

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MCFT-001
Human Development and Family Relationships

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BLOCK 5 MANUAL FOR SUPERVISED PRACTICUM (MCFTL-001)

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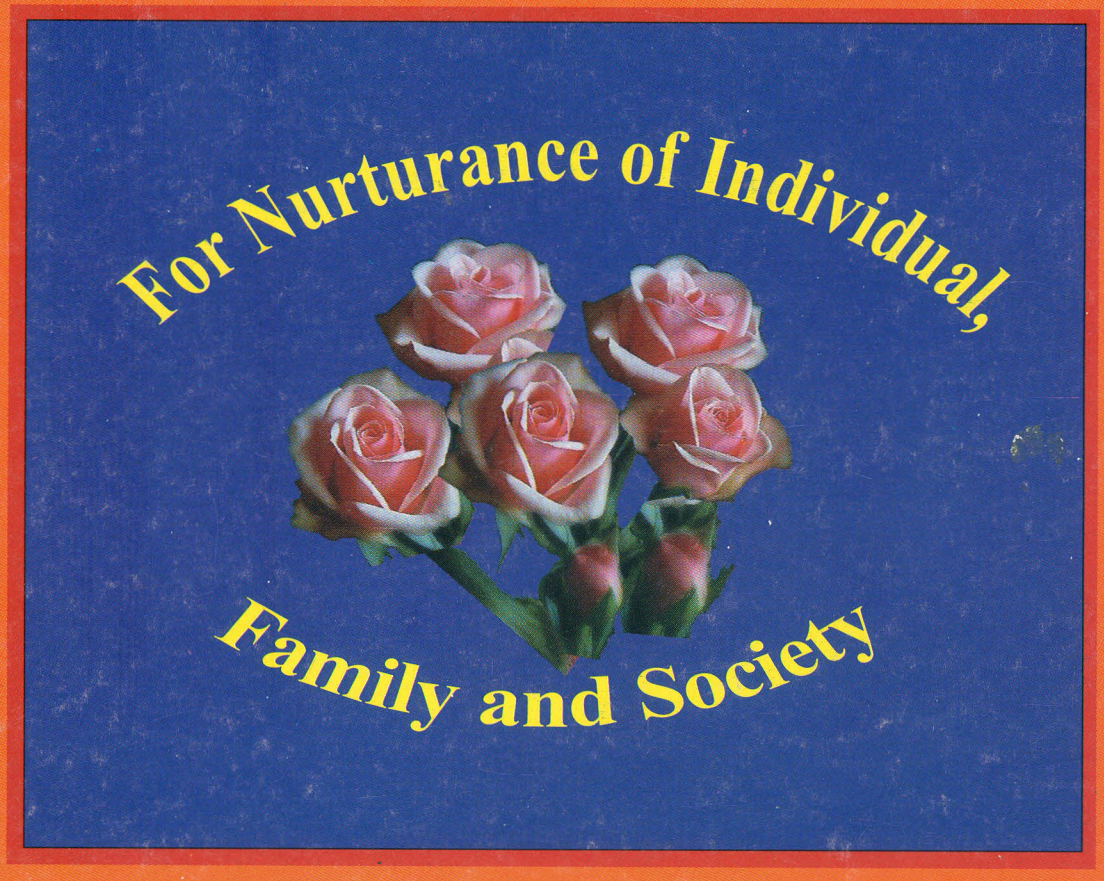

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