IPC—Individual Parental Coaching —A Journey to “Value-land”

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Abstract

This article presents an individual parental coaching model (IPC) designed and examined for a PhD dissertation. Here we shall examine one aspect from the PhD, which explores the connection and influence that this IPC model has on the ‘teenager-parent’ relationship.

Essentially, the research had two main goals, firstly to examine the possible influence of a unique parental coaching process, with respect to the parents’ ability to form better connections and communication with their adolescent children. Furthermore, it sought to validate a certain perception of parenting - the notion that a parent must first establish a firm sense of “self” before taking part in parenting, thus self-definition, purpose and meaning, are the individual’s significant guidelines when establishing relations with others, especially the demanding relations with teenagers.

This was a qualitative narrative piece of research, since the parents’ life stories, as perceived and related by them, were at the core of this research. Seven Israeli families participated; heterosexual married couples who had raised at least one teenager between the ages of 13 to 18. The parents took an active part in a comprehensive coaching process consisting of ten weekly sessions. While the teenagers took part in an indirect manner, by filling out questionnaires. The data collected during the coaching sessions and open interviews were analyzed using the “Theme Analysis” method. This revealed some prominent individual and parental issues that contemporary Israeli parents had to deal with.

The results indicated the following central findings, apart from the parent’s appreciation of the opportunity to enter a deep process of ‘self-encounter’, resulting in great benefits despite the challenges along the way. The findings below address both the research question itself and the explicit change process in the communication and connection between the parents and their teenagers from both perspectives. Improvements included spending more time together, less anger and friction, more patience and tolerance, better awareness to discourse style and word choices plus an overall improvement in the atmosphere at home. All the participating parents without exception stated that it was a worthy journey, which they would recommend to all parents to experience.

Keywords parental coaching · adolescence · parenthood · values · parents-children relationship

IPC – Individuelles Eltern-Coaching – Eine Reise in das Werteland

Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel stellt Teilergebnisse einer qualitativen Untersuchung vor, die darauf abzielte, einige für Elternschaft und Coaching relevante Sachverhalte zu untersuchen – zunächst, um die Vorstellung zu validieren, dass ein Elternteil erst ein festes Gefühl von „Selbst“ aufbauen muss, bevor es an der Erziehung teilnimmt. Weiterhin, um den Einfluss des Modells des individuellen elterlichen Coachings (IPC) auf die Fähigkeit der Eltern zu untersuchen, eine bessere Beziehung zu ihren heranwachsenden Kindern aufzubauen und eine authentische Stimme zeitgenössischer israelischen Eltern hörbar zu machen.

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Es handelte sich um eine qualitative evaluative Untersuchung sieben israelischer Familien heterosexueller verheirateter Paare, die mindestens einen Teenager (13–18 Jahre) aufziehen. Beide Elternteile nahmen an einem umfassenden Coaching-Prozess teil, der aus zehn wöchentlichen Sitzungen, Interviews und Fragebögen bestand. Die gesammelten Daten die mit der „Theme Analysis“ Methode analysiert wurden, offenbarten einige hervorstechende individuelle und elterliche Probleme zeitgenössischer israelischer Eltern.

Zusätzlich zu den Ergebnissen, die in dem Artikel vorgestellt und diskutiert werden, zeigt das Hauptergebnis, das die Forschungsfrage beantwortet, eine explizite Veränderung zum Besseren in der Kommunikation und der Verbindung zwischen Eltern und Jugendlichen auf verschiedenen Ebenen. Ein anderes wichtiges Ergebnis bezieht sich auf die große Wertschätzung der Eltern für die Möglichkeit, in einen tiefen Prozess der Selbstbegegnung und ihrer Vorteile einzutreten. Alle teilnehmenden Eltern gaben ohne Ausnahme an, dass es eine wertvolle Erfahrung war, die sie allen Eltern empfehlen.

Schlüsselwörter Eltern-Coaching · Jugend · Elternschaft · Werte · Eltern-Kind-Beziehung

1 Introduction

This is a direct quote from one of the parents on the study:

I have to tell you something, I know that you will not be satisfied ... remember when we talked about things we don't allow our children to do, but do them ourselves? It happened to me yesterday, and your face jumped in front of me, the moment I heard myself yelling. I came home from work, and was in a hurry to make lunch, I was asking Yoav to bring me the bottle of oil from the cupboard. He said ok, but was busy with his phone, I asked again and again, and finally yelled at him—"put down your damn phone and do what I ask, or I will break it".

He was calm, turned to me and answered quietly—"I will put my phone down, when you will put yours down". I was so ashamed ...

This quotation from the research was an overwhelming story—simple, mundane and yet one which happens to almost every parent, clearly reflecting parental “double standards”.

This article is based on a PhD dissertation and research that was conducted in Israel in 2016. The issue presented in this article, is only *one* major theme out of the few which were discussed in the dissertation, yet it reflects an important milestone in the understanding of the challenges that Israeli parents face in the 21st century.¹

Hypothesis The initial research hypothesis was that by using an individual parental coaching model (IPC), it would give the parents the opportunity to undergo an extensive personal coaching process that would help strengthen their core values, boundaries and priorities. This would then enable them to address their parental role with more confidence, conviction and flexibility, rather than confusion,

fear of losing significance and consequently affecting the teenager-parent equation for the better.

The main question addressed in this study, was whether such a process would ultimately lead to an improved ‘parent-teenager’ connection. This article will not present the entire research, but rather a brief theoretical basis of the issues in question, elaborate on the coaching model (IPC), and present some of the results.

2 Theoretical Backgrounds—Adolescence, Parenthood and the In-between

2.1 Adolescence

There have been countless theories and models presented over the generations, that attempt to describe, explain and deal with the complex processes that take place during adolescence. There is an overwhelming consensus amongst researchers that this is a critical period of personal and human development, during which the adolescent undergoes two major processes—separation and individuation (Blos 1979; Erikson 1966, 1994a,b; Inhelder and Piaget 1958; Arnett 1999; Allen et al. 2016). At this stage in life, teenagers are separating themselves from the protective and all-encompassing parental world that they experienced during early childhood and are undergoing an accelerated foray into the world of their peers. In addition, adolescents are struggling to find an individual unique voice that characterizes them as separate, both from their family as well as their reference group. All of these occur simultaneously at a time when adolescents are confused and experiencing a fast-moving storm of physical, emotional and cognitive changes that are new and unclear to them and are not even in sync with one another (Paikoff and Brooks-Gunn 1991; Blos 1979). Marcia (1983, p. 216) summarizes it well in his statement that “*early adolescence is a period of disorganization*”.

¹ Full dissertation—<http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/26407/>.

2.2 Parenthood

On the other side of the equation, we find parenthood. It is almost common knowledge that becoming a parent is one of the most significant, challenging and complicated roles in one's life. It is mostly perceived as a natural privilege, an innate, traditional, and instinctive part of the life cycle that is unburdened by the need for advance preparation. It seems that there are no conditions for entering into the significant role of parenthood; it can be done without a guidebook, training or certification. Most parents obtain their parenting skills from the parental modeling that they experienced in their own childhood home. The role of parenthood is focused on ensuring the survival and development of children, with parental activities falling into three categories: care, control and development (Hoghughi and Long 2004). Pecnik and Lalière (2007) emphasizes the holistic concept of parenting and its influences—an interaction between parenting resources and capacity, the child's developmental needs, and family and environmental factors.

2.3 Parenthood in the new World

The new era of humanistic approaches which emerged during the fifties and sixties of the 20th century, that were social and liberal in nature, defined the character of parenthood of those times. However, in the “post-modern” period that followed, family structures and parent-children relationships underwent massive changes. While modern times were characterized by the belief in an objective reality and the existence of clear and binding values derived from it, the post-modern era brought with it a sense of transience, arbitrariness and the loss of absolute values. The exclusive modern ideologies were largely replaced with the perception that everything is questionable, debatable, relative and pluralistic (Aviram 1994). These major changes created greater social openness and equality, but also caused a lack of clear ‘role definitions’, confusion regarding boundaries and ambiguity in many areas of life, including the concept of family. The “ideal” modern family structure was challenged by the recognition of diverse types of families that had been considered unacceptable not long ago, such as unmarried couples, single-parent families, or families headed by same-sex couples (Omer 2000). New values such as self-fulfillment, individual rights and a great emphasis on the individual's special abilities and needs, also led to the acknowledgment that children's thoughts, wishes and opinions were of great importance.

In looking at the new millennium, we can see further strain put on parents in the realms of increasing parental responsibilities that traditionally meant the need to attend to emotional development and physical wellbeing. The new parenthood includes over-involvement in the child's world.

Parents began to experience new levels of anxiety, which caused parental satisfaction to decline during the 20th century (Stearns 2004: ix). In the present era, where all is permitted and negotiable, contemporary parents find themselves in a state of confusion, unable to establish a coherent parental-educational agenda and practice, as described by Dor (2004) as “the parental fog”. Parents are trying to maneuver between their desire to be considered “good” parents, while simultaneously striving to succeed as individuals in a materialistic, technological and demanding world.

2.4 Israeli Parenthood

It should be taken into consideration, that different cultures produce different sets of values, communication styles and therefore parenting patterns, which construct different types of parental emphasis, as demonstrated in Bornstein (2012, p. 17), who stresses the importance of the parental cultural context.

Becoming a parent in Israel seems more of a mandatory service than a personal choice. There is a certain path young Israelis are expected to follow—finish high school, go through Army service, get an education, find a job, marry and start a family. Raising children is considered to be the most important part in a person's life, almost to the point that life is not worth living without children, as described by Lavee and Katz (2003, p. 203):

Israel is a “child-oriented” society. Married couples are expected to have children, and a childless couple is not considered a family. Nearly 60% of Israelis believe that childless people have an “empty life,” and more than 80% believe that “the greatest joy in life is to follow children's growing up”.

Choosing not to marry or not to have children in Israel, is almost impossible and highly unacceptable; choosing to follow a different path takes its toll, both on the personal level, as well as the social one. Keeping that in mind, it is rather safe to assume that most young Israeli couples follow that path on an “automatic pilot”; it is more a question of when and how many children to have, than whether if to have them at all.

Many young couples give more thought and consideration to mundane decisions such as where to have the wedding, where to live, which family car to buy etc., than discussing the complexity of being a parent. The role of parenthood seems obvious and intuitive to most, one that could be entered into without further thought.

2.5 In Between—Parent-Adolescent Relationships

Entering adolescence presents an array of difficulties and challenges. For many teenagers, their parents had been, up

to this point, stable, secure, anchoring and trustworthy authority figures. Suddenly, every parental statement is questioned, parents find themselves undermined and losing status. In many cases, though definitely not in all, the parent-child connection that was once generally pleasant, relaxed and free flowing, is transformed into one saturated with conflict, objection, anger, frustration, disappointment and mutual insults (Montemayor 1983). Very often parents see these conflicts as indicating a rejection of the basic values by which they have been raising their children, while teenagers treat the conflicts as much less important (Steinberg 2001). During those years, parents frequently feel irrelevant and practically transparent in their children's lives, especially in comparison to the vast interest teenagers take in their peer group.

Adolescence is one of the most conflict-ridden periods in parent—children relations. There is certainly more than one way to explain parent-adolescent conflict, Smetana (1988) argues that it can be meaningfully understood if we account for the different ways in which adolescents and their parents interpret social situations. Conflicts emerge when the boundaries of legitimate parental authority are renegotiated. What begins over seemingly trivial matters might become routine conflicts that reflect the differences between parent and child. Younis and Ketterlinus (1987) suggests that the origin of parent-adolescent conflict lies in the dichotomy between the teenagers' ambition to separate from their parents as they establish their own unique self, counterbalanced by the desire to maintain the parental connection for validation and approval of their new self. It is usually at this stage, where parents turn to look for a “magic pill”, a “guide to the perplexed” when seeking to chart a new course for themselves and their lost children, paths that will cross one another where parent and adolescent can meet (Stearns 2004).

In the field of “parental guidance”, which aims to help parents to cope with the overwhelming challenge of raising teenagers in the modern world, we can find parent groups, parental guiding and counseling, parents' education programs, family therapy etc. In Israel during the last two decades we have witnessed an overall growth in the number of parents seeking help, support and guidance, in their search for ways to improve their parenting style and better deal with family conflicts.

2.6 Coaching

Although coaching is a relatively new methodology in the field of “helping others”, it has been widely studied and investigated. There are many definitions to the field (i.e. Maddux et al. 2004; Joseph 2006; Kimsey-House et al. 2010; Beck 2011; Gray et al. 2016). Many agree that the roots of coaching goes back to the 20th century psychology in the work of Adler, Jung & Rogers, who considered

each person to be unique, whole and capable of change and growth (Williams and Davis 2002). One of the founding fathers of the discipline, Martin Seligman considered positive psychology to be the proper theoretical base for the practice of coaching (Seligman 2007; Kauffman 2006). The heart of positive psychology, like coaching, lies in the practitioner's choice to shift attention away from pathology and pain and direct it towards strength, vision and dreams.

In summary, coaching is a method for helping generally adequately functioning people to learn, improve and maintain their skills, leading them to happier, more productive and fulfilled lives (Nelson-Jones 2006). Over the last two decades, the discipline has developed and flourished, putting forth various approaches and methodologies that provide answers for different human needs, among them being parental coaching.

2.7 Parental Coaching

There is no end to the doubts and questions regarding the parental role, which should be asked aloud, discussed and addressed, since parents take on the most responsible role and are agents of change in their children's lives. Parental coaching is a growth experience that empowers parents and gives them an opportunity to begin a journey towards becoming more familiar with their own “selves” and their values as individuals. Here, they can begin to explore secret dreams and unspoken fears, and are given an opportunity for transformation.

Parental coaching can be addressed from various points of view—Ellam and Palmer (2006) make a distinction between the “parental training program”, which takes on a directive or instructional approach, and “parental coaching” that is designed to empower parents, endowing them with the confidence and belief that they can find answers within themselves. They believe that parents hold the solutions to their own problems, since individuals have the knowledge and ability to find suitable answers compatible with their values, life styles, family habits and wishes. By asking “powerful questions”, the coach enables parents to find their unique way for navigating this winding road of raising adolescents. Marchant and Young (2001) emphasize the coach's role is teaching parents positive reinforcement and proactive skills. Bamford et al. (2012) stress that coaches do not claim to be parenting experts, do not criticize parents for their behavior and do not offer parents a script to follow.

2.8 Values—the Essence of it all

The heart of the IPC model that is presented here in brief, resides in the content worlds of values. Values are the “road map” by which people manage themselves, their relation-

ships and their interactions with others—partnerships, parenting, family and friendships.

People like to think of themselves as virtuous, good human beings who do the right things and make the right choices. The majority perceive themselves as being aware and able to recognize the central values that guide their lives as individuals, partners and parents. In order to use values as a “road map”, it is necessary to examine the concept of “value”—What is the meaning of “value”, this primary basic unit, which most claim to have and behave by.

There are many definitions of this ambiguous term, for example:

“Values are our important and fundamental beliefs about what we consider to be good or right ... Values are broader life-orienting principles.” Encyclopedia of Identity (Jackson II and Hogg 2010, p. 856)

“the beliefs people have, especially about what is right and wrong and what is most important in life, that control their behavior”. Cambridge dictionary (British version)²

“principles or standards of behavior; ones judgment of what is important in life”. Oxford dictionary (2005)³

According to these definitions, it is clear that “values” are perceived and understood by most human beings as the building blocks that shape their personality, character and behavior. Values are viewed as the basic, fundamental materials on which humans base their worldviews, choices, behavior and whereabouts in the world. The value scale that individuals adopt, are acquired through an ongoing, life-long process of observation, imitation, learning and socialization.

Prof. Y. Leibowitz, one of the greatest Jewish philosophers of the 20th century, expressed this worldview when he said:

Value is something a person chooses for himself, in order to determine his actions and live his life accordingly, because he believes that it is good.

In the course of any personal coaching process, values are perceived as an integral and inseparable part of the process, therefore they are considered to be a meaningful and effective tool to work with. They are interpreted as a set system of paradigms and principals which express a person’s basic and central needs, traits and skills. They form guidelines for one to examine the surrounding environment, from which norms and behaviors are adopted.

Identifying and mapping personal values, lead to the understanding and acknowledgment of a person’s beliefs, dreams and wishes. All of these, are essential stepping

stones on the path towards developing a personal vision, which also includes the parental one. There are many typologies that attempt to define the place of values within a coaching process, a well known one is elaborated in Prof. Dolan’s (2011) book “Coaching by Values”. Dolan’s theory emphasizes the importance of acknowledging one’s core values and the impact it has on all spheres of life. He suggests that when people are familiar with their values (regardless of how they were established) they can clearly see and understand how these values shape their thoughts, feelings, actions and in general, day to day lives. One of Dr. Dolan’s famous sayings “success in the life of business and the business of life” refers to the positive changes, which appear when a person’s set of values is conscious, coherent, and in congruence with one’s goals and objectives. Such improvements include higher inner satisfaction, which leads to better performance in all areas, well-being and general happiness. Dolan’s methodology is clear, and can applied in various contexts, such as business, organizational settings etc. In this research, it was used in the personal and parental one.

3 IPC Model and Research Methodology

The core of this research is a qualitative one, where the essence lies within the comprehensive individual parental coaching process undertaken by that all seven couples. It is based on the experiences, perceptions and thoughts that parents shared, discussed and realized during these sessions. All information, knowledge and conclusions, presented and analyzed in this study, were obtained from these meetings. Hence it is the parent’s voices presented in this work.

Mainly qualitative methods were used for collecting the data, alongside a quantitative method to enable a more comprehensive and detailed perception and understanding of the investigative issue. The quantitative tool was used in a sequential exploratory design (Hanson et al. 2005) as two phases of questionnaires. In this format, the qualitative and quantitative data were collected separately, and were combined at the interpretation and discussion stage (Hanson et al. 2005).

All data was collected in two major formats—transcripts of recorded interviews and coaching sessions together with questionnaires that consisted of close-ended questions. The range used in the questionnaires was from 1–5. After completing the coaching sessions, in-depth interviews and analysis of the two stage of questionnaires, several major themes surfaced from the data. The qualitative data was analyzed using theme analysis, a generic approach to data collected from the field, where the materials were analyzed in the form of principal concepts. Identifying common personal and parental issues, dilemmas and behaviors, made room

² <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/value>

³ <http://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/value>

for a certain degree of generalization and induction, which enabled examining whether the suggested coaching processes, in fact brought about the expected changes in their relations with the teenagers.

Questionnaire analysis was done automatically through the platform of Google forms, which analyzed the frequencies of choice and ranking of specific statements for closed-ended questions. Answers given to open ended questions were quoted and embedded in the work.

The *IPC* method presented here, is a unique model in the sense that it refers to parents as holistic independent individuals, while keeping their parental role in mind. It is designed to give parents an opportunity to focus on themselves as individuals, and invites them to a process of re-introduction, self-study and reflection on their own parenting, a somewhat rare opportunity in today's fast moving modern life style.

The *IPC* model was evaluated using qualitative evaluation research that included seven Israeli families of married heterosexual couples that had at least one teenager (13–18 years old) residing at home. It consisted of ten weekly consecutive coaching sessions, in which both parents attended as a couple; each session revolved around relevant issues for the parents first as individuals, and then as parents. During the sessions, various coaching methodologies were used, including given assignments to the parents, where they were asked to reflect, observe or write at home.

4 Coaching Sessions Layout

Pre-coaching Session Mutual “getting to know you” meeting—dedicated to examining the suitability and motivation of both parents to take on an active and conscious role in the coaching process.

First Session A “snapshot” of my life—aimed to allow the parents to authentically examine the “here & now” of their lives.

Second Session Parents as adolescents—A big part of the ability to understand and relate to the adolescent's world and experience, relies on remembering one's own experience of puberty.

Third Session Personal perception of myself as a parent—What do I think of myself as a parent? Am I living the parental dream I had prior to having children?

Fourth Session Personal values—dedicated to the value mapping process, in which each parent had to choose the ten most important personal values, by which they lead their own lives and practiced parenthood.

Fifth Session The influence of values on personal and parental boundaries—After mapping the “core values” as individuals and as a parental unit, this meeting dealt with the practical boundaries that were derived from these values.

Sixth Session Personal barriers—‘discovering the things that hold us back’, parents were encouraged to identify the barriers that disrupt and prevent them from achieving their goals.

Seventh Session Personal resources, special abilities and skills—This session was complimentary to the previous meeting. It revolved around the strengths, powers and talents that each parent possessed.

Eighth Session Personal and parental toolkit—Here parents were presented with different tools for interpersonal interactions that could also be useful in interacting with teenagers.

Ninth Session Renewed personal and parental vision—Upon reviewing all the above personal components, parents were asked to reflect on a future parenthood model that they wished to practice.

Tenth Session This session was dedicated to summarize the entire process; parents were asked to identify significant insights, understandings and changes that they had experienced. Closing and farewell.

The field of coaching psychology considers people as the “expert” of their own lives, it does not assume that the coach has all knowledge and solutions; it does not judge or impose any way of thinking. The goal is to assist and accompany people in their process of becoming familiar with themselves as human beings, finding their own unique voice and creating the way of life that meets their values and suits their priorities, while searching to achieve better parenthood. The process of self-discovery occurred throughout the coaching sessions; it is a cyclical, continuous and recursive process in which discussed issues were re-surfaced and re-discussed more than once, hence, any topic recurs in varying contexts, each time allowing for deeper understanding and insights to develop.

5 Value Mapping Process

The process in which a person stops to take an honest introspective look, and tries to authentically identify personal core values, is far from simple. This part was very significant, both for the parents as individuals as well as couples. Identifying and mapping the most important values by which they wished to lead their lives and raise their children, enabled

the parents to examine whether their choices, behaviours and decisions, truly derive from and are in correlation with those declared chosen values. Furthermore, the process of value mapping, granted an opportunity to baldly examine whether the parents themselves lived and behaved according to their own declared values.

On session 4 (see Coaching Sessions layout p. 8), Parents were presented with special therapeutic cards; each had a value title as well as a brief description of the traits/behaviours it represents. (Following the model presented in Prof. Dolan’s book: “Coaching by Values” 2011).

They were asked to select realistic values that actually represented them as human beings, living and operating in the real world, as opposed to idealistic, theoretical and lofty values that they might aspire to. It was to be expected that they would have difficulty choosing “only” ten values from the total array. Most parents collected more and more value cards, while passionately claiming that each one was essential and represented their human existence. All of them agreed that the process of having to choose *only* ten values was very difficult, and some would even try to negotiate:

Ed: It’s hard to choose ... it’s not easy, can I choose 15?

Mo: May we pick more than ten?

In a slow process of focusing and carefully examining each value card, parents reluctantly gave up cards, and remained with ten cards each, claiming them to be precisely those that indeed reflected their true core values.

The difficulty that parents encountered during the process of choosing only ten values, which they considered as central, grew out of their desire to perceive themselves as good, virtuous, well-educated, living and behaving in accordance with acceptable social norms. When asked to choose only ten values, the parents were confronted with the challenge of prioritizing values; hence, when actively and consciously giving up a certain value, actually meant that they did not consider it significant enough or they did not live according to it. This process of having to give up certain values from their list was far more difficult for them than choosing the ones to keep.

Si: “how do you expect me to choose only ten? All of them are important to me”

Etz: “if I give up the value ‘honesty’, does it mean that it’s not important to me? That I’m not honest?”

The selected values by most parents were not surprising. These were considered universal values, recognized in most of Western society for representing human ideals which most of us wish to live and behave by, such as—sensitivity, empathy, support, forgiveness, flexibility, patience, respect, justice, familism, loyalty, integrity, friendship and generosity.

6 Findings and Discussion—“Values in Motion”

As stated previously, this article presents only a small part of the entire coaching process—the segment chosen, is the one specified in sessions no. four and five in the Coaching Sessions layout. It deals with identifying personal and parental core values and understanding the way that these values are manifested in reality. In this paper, one salient value was chosen as an example, in trying to present some of the research findings, and the answer to the main research question.

All of the presented values chosen by parents displayed a clear image of the way parents believed that they lived and raised their children. It is safe to assume that if a person embraces any value and considers it important and essential to them, they would take action accordingly. This expectation of course holds true regarding values concerning raising children as well.

In reality, things were a little different.

After choosing core values of existence, which represented personal and educational agendas, it was crucial to investigate and discuss each of the selected values, in order to examine how they might be manifested in reality.

“**Familism**”⁴ was the one prominent value that was chosen by *all* couples, with no exception. It was perceived as the main values that guides their lives, if not the most important one, as quoted by one of the mothers:

Edu: It is the family that matters ... it is of high value to me ... Especially, my mini core family, my husband and my children. I will do whatever it takes for them.

As mentioned above, Israel is considered a family and children-oriented society, (Lavee and Katz 2003; Rutlinger-Reiner 2013) hence, this kind of statement, is regarded as natural, ordinary and normative, even expected. Since all couples claimed that family and children were the top priority in their lives, one would expect them to act accordingly—spend as much time possible with their children, share mutual content worlds and interests, and generally try to establish relationships that are characterized by closeness, openness and communication.

The value “familism” is an abstract idea. In order to understand what this term constitutes, defining pragmatic behaviors driven from it, was necessary. In an attempt to clarify the components of the value “familism”, parents were asked many related questions such as—time spent

⁴ The term “familism” as presented in this article, is a free translation of the Israeli concept that family and children are the most important components in one’s life. It is not necessarily compatible with the acceptable social meaning of the term.

with children, mutual activities, shared hobbies, the ability to conduct an honest and attentive conversation etc.

The belief that people tend to allocate time resources to others that they consider important, seems like a safe assumption. Consequently, time spent with teenagers, was *one way* to examine the practical application and validity of the strong statements regarding the centrality and importance of children. Since all parents firmly stated that the family (including children) was the most important part of their lives, one would expect them to spend a great deal of time with them. These were the results prior to commencing the coaching process:

Question: How much time (in minutes) a day (on average) do you spend talking to your teenager?

The data of Table 1 shows that over half of the parents, spend up to 10min with their teenagers in the course of 24h. 3 more spend up to 30min with them; the rest spend over 30min with them. In addition, according to the parents, during most of the time spent with the teenagers, there were other parallel activities taking place, suggesting that their attention was not focused entirely on interacting with the children.

This simple and naïve piece of data reflects a large gap between the practice of everyday life and the insistent declarations made by the parents regarding the centrality and importance of the value “familism” in their lives. Furthermore, when examining other practical aspects of the value “familism” such as—shared meals and activities throughout the day i.e. common interests or hobbies etc. most parents were honest to say that they do not insist on any of them, despite realizing that all these components could open channels for discussion, closeness and partnership.

The analysis and interpretation of the pragmatic aspects of the core value “Familism”, suggests that the statement “*family and children are in the first place*” is primarily theoretical. One might think it is a form of a “tax” that needs to be paid in conformity to the Israeli cultural and social context, where parents are expected to feel, speak and behave according to the notion that children and family stand above all. One should remember that most Israeli parents themselves were raised with the same agenda and might feel obligated to continue and maintain the consensus which declares that “*children come first*” (Lavee and Katz 2003; Rutlinger-Reiner 2013). It seems that in the course of everyday life, the value “fades away” and many parents find it very hard to actually act upon it.

In the course of the sessions, the discussion regarding the value “familism” and the way that it was translated into pragmatic day-to-day behaviors, shed some light on the gap between aspired parenthood and the actual one. These discussions were not conducted in a condemnatory or judgmental manner, but rather through an open and hon-

Table 1 Time spent with teenagers *prior* to coaching process

Minutes per day talking with teenagers			
1–10min	11–30min	31–60min	60+ min
7 parents	3 parents	1 parent	3 parents

est discourse that included guiding questions, and examples from daily routine, in trying to understand the place and importance of the value “familism” in the family routine. The main goal was to allow parents to become aware of the values and perceptions that motivate them as individuals and to recognize the correlation between these personal principals and the manner in which they “come to life” in day-to-day parenting.

During the coaching sessions, parents faced the truth regarding authentic and practical behaviors on their part, which surprised and alarmed them. These behaviors included realizing the actual time spent with their children (see table above), manner of speech or attentive listening, as described by one of the mothers, in sharing an honest description of her listening patterns:

Si: “I don’t always have it (...) if I tell you I do in 100%, I would be lying (...). Sometimes I don’t have the patience (...) so I pretend ... and they say to me MOM, you’re not listening, they figure me out in a second ...”

The open and honest conversations this coaching model summons, enabled parents to develop an improved self-awareness through which they were able to recognize themselves as frequently having “double standards”, that disregard or even contradicted their selected values declared as representing them as human beings. Parents were surprised to realize that they asked their teenagers to behave in a certain way while they themselves, as responsible adults, did not live by the same standards. Examples of these double standards were seen in cellphone use (see introduction), respecting others, attentive listening, or discourse manners, as indicated in the stories told by the parents:

Ed: “I am less respecting, and more demanding (...) As I said earlier, I expect them to be respectful towards me, but I tend to consider my kids’ words less (...) I am less respectful ... It happens to me a lot especially with my oldest son when he wants something and I automatically say no ... It’s not nice ... I do not respect his view”

Etz: “(...) it’s in the expression he (referring to her husband) uses towards them the style in which he speaks, it can be violent (...) and then he expects them to be nice and polite”

Table 2 Time spent with teenagers *post* coaching process

Minutes per day talking with teenagers			
1–10 min	11–30 min	31–60 min	60+ min
5 parents	6 parents	2 parents	1 parent

Avz: “I find myself listening only to things I want to hear (...) there is a problem in my listening patterns, because I am a stubborn man (...) one day I asked my daughter Hadar why doesn’t she speak to me, and she said—why should I? Do you talk to me? ... what could I say ... she was right (...) then I realized that if I want her to tell me things, I need to let go, tell her about myself, and stop the selective listening”

The justifications and explanations for such parental behaviors are vast; busy schedules and routines, long work hours, difficulty in navigating between career and family life, tiredness, and so forth. All of these statements are indeed valid; parents in Western society have a lot on their plate, considering that they have multiple roles, tasks, expectations and wishes to fulfill. On the one hand, they wish to raise a family, acting as good, supportive, and thoughtful parents, who know how to provide an appropriate response for expressive needs. On the other hand, there is an expectation to provide the family with a dignified livelihood, meet instrumental needs, wishes and aspirations in this consumer-driven world. At the same time, parents as individuals are expected to pursue a successful career, good employment, higher education and leisure standards. Here are the words parents shared when asked to describe the tension between parenthood and their own personal needs:

Of: “yes, TV represents the things I love ... TV is me. I love the quiet times to watch TV, all I want is to be left alone, no children ... Quiet. This is the time when I stop being a parent, I am just me. This is my time”.
Avz: “listen, I come home late in the evening, at these hours I expect a little quiet, I don’t have patience or strength for arguments ... I need my quiet time alone.”

All of the above impose a huge burden of personal and social expectations upon people, a load that increases significantly, when becoming a parent. Parents find themselves caught up in compromise, evasions and self-justifications, in order to manage the multiple roles that they have taken on. One of the outcomes of such parental juggling is the existing gap between the idealization of “values” as building blocks for optimal personal and parental identity (i.e. the value “familism”) and the ability to live and act upon the same values in reality.

At the end of the coaching process, parents were asked the same question regarding time spent with the teenagers once again. As time dedicated to children is a practical

and measurable indicator for the quality of the relationship. Table 2 indicates a significant change in the amount of time that the parents dedicated to simply being together with their teenagers.

One of the mothers gave a perfect example of this significant change:

Ed: “following the sessions with you, it (referring to her habits) completely changed, I used to come home from work and start my second job, I wouldn’t rest for a minute ... nowadays, I find myself sitting with them for two hours, talking, watching TV shows ...”

7 Summary

Values are a significant and central part of any personal coaching process. For most people, they are at the heart of what shapes their guidelines for norms and behaviors. A crucial stage on the path towards creating a personal and parental vision, is marked by the acts of identifying, acknowledging and mapping those personal values that express one’s wills, principles and beliefs. While working with parents using the IPC model, several prominent issues concerning the relation between parents and values, became evident.

The majority of the parents were not aware of the core values that motivate them as individuals or as parents. Most of the values that they acted upon were adopted during their own unconscious socialization process, starting in early childhood and continuing throughout life. Therefore, a great part of the personal or parental decisions and choices, were based on these values, hence lacking conscious awareness, deliberate thought, or active choice.

In general, throughout life people do not have many opportunities to stop and examine their core values and the way that they are manifested in reality. Most people are inclined to act, choose and decide automatically, based on their personal experience and surroundings. The complex confrontation of a person with their values usually takes place when partaking in therapy, consultation or coaching. It is in these contexts, where a deliberate stop of the routine carousel becomes possible, allowing for the inspection of the inner core of oneself and one’s character.

Furthermore, when trying to select values, parents as do most people, tend to break away from real, authentic values, beliefs and wishes into the idealistic, normative and preferable ones. This seems to be a human trait; people need to perceive themselves in an idealistic way, and to attribute higher values to themselves, different from the ones that they act upon in everyday life.

A significant finding from the study showed that working with the IPC model made it possible for parents to

recognize the existing gap between their selected values and their actual realistic behavior, allowing them to make new choices and decisions derived from these values. The recognition of values and the ability to see existing gaps lead to substantial changes and improvement in the parent-teenager' relationships. These improvements were visible in many ways according to the parents, the amount of time spent together was higher, there was an elevated level of dialogue, plus a decline in the amount of frictions, arguments & disagreements and finally an improvement in the general atmosphere around the house.

The results derived after analyzing all the data, indicated that all the participating parents had clearly witnessed a significant improvement in connection and communication with their teenagers after having gone through a comprehensive coaching process. After witnessing how all the participating parents and teenagers achieved different degrees of enriched relations, it appears safe to say that individual parental coaching is a viable method for improving the parent-teenager relationship.

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