

ICDP IN BHUTAN

Taken from the ICDP report by trainers Ingeborg Egebjerg and May Aanundsen

COMMENTS BY TRAINED CAREGIVERS

One participant shared that while she was doing household chores, if her daughter came to share her feeling or talk to her, she would often feel irritated because she was focused on her work. However, after attending just two sessions, she realized how important it is to listen to her daughter and felt genuinely sorry for not being more attentive to her feelings. One remarkable story that stood out was when a parent shared that her sons showed her their test scores this time. She hugged them and praised their efforts, which surprised and relieved the children. Without her prompting, they returned from their room to hug her and said, "Next time, you'll see even better results, Mom." This change in her approach was significant; in the past, she would always find ways to encourage them to do better, regardless of their scores. This sudden shift in her response elicited a strong reaction from her children, leaving her emotional as she realized that a simple gesture of love, like a hug, could lead to such a profound change and greater bonding between them.

Parents shared their efforts to initiate intimate dialogues with their children, noting that this approach led to even greater openness. One parent observed that children thrive on acknowledgment and praise, eagerly seeking opportunities to receive it. During the discussion of Theme 5—joint focus and attention—a parent shared a reflection about an experience from the previous week. Her youngest son had opened an umbrella indoors, held a juice bottle, and invited her to join him under the umbrella, saying, "Come under, it's raining." She approached him, closed the umbrella, and requested that he do something else. Reflecting on this, she realized that if she had understood the concept of joint focus and how to expand on its meaning, she could have played along, recognizing that this would provide valuable cognitive support for her son.

As usual during the homework presentation, one of the participants shared her experience on controlling her anger by going outside and then come back and interact with the family in a polite way, encourage the child activity by following together helps in children to build more confident to set the positive limit setting of whats bad and what good thing to do.

From the home work, one care giver said Most of the time I scold my daughter when she is asking for me to go together outside and play.but now I can understand that playing outside together with the child also one of the way that I show Love and good interaction with the child.

My baby girls are very restless and used to through the thing when she is angry, and I used to beat her, but after the meeting, I let my child to be herself until she is back to her normal mood.

I used to shout at my daughter to write her homework fast and read more others subjects, but after the meeting, now I understood, firstly as a caregivers we have to know the child's ability, and have to plan and help the child based on her/his level of ability.

One caregiver shared concern about how parents and caregivers often have high expectations for their children, introducing them to complex play and placing excessive emphasis on academics, even when these activities are not developmentally appropriate. She described this as "snatching away childhood."

She also shared a personal revelation—she had previously labelled her child as lazy, unintelligent, and a "bad boy." However, after the first session, she attempted to redefine her perspective, and to her surprise, her child responded positively.

Another participant reflected on how she had previously been forced to become a monk and perform religious practices on her son despite his lack of interest. Through the session, on reflecting, she realized the importance of respecting individuality and following his lead instead rather than imposing your own interest or desire.

Another participant, during a role play, was able to empathize with her child's feelings by stepping into their perspective. She experienced how painful it was to seek attention from a peer, only to feel ignored and devalued. This exercise helped her understand how such experiences could lead a child to feel demotivated and even question their own worth and the validity of their emotions.

The group collectively observed that, unlike in the past when they interacted with children more automatically or without much thought, the program had heightened their awareness. They shared that although they might occasionally fall back into old patterns (old habits) of authoritative or directive parenting, they now catch themselves in the moment and consciously choose a more supportive and respectful approach.

The most common feedback we received from participants was that the program was highly practical and relevant to their everyday lives. Many shared that it helped them realize they already possessed the strengths and resources within themselves, and the program came at just the right time to awaken and reinforce those qualities. They described the experience as enlightening.

Beyond its practical benefits, the program also evoked deep emotional reflection. It reminded participants of their own childhoods—bringing both moments of grief and joy—as they revisited those early experiences. This reflection offered valuable insight into their current parenting approaches and broader life perspectives.

One caregiver shared that she often referred to her son as “naughty” whenever he was energetic or curious. After doing the exercise, she realized that his behaviour was not misbehaviour but rather a sign of curiosity and creativity. She said she now tries to say “inquisitive” instead and encourages his questions instead of scolding him. This small change, she noticed, improved their interaction and reduced stress at home.

Another caregiver talked about labelling her daughter as “lazy” because she took longer to complete tasks. But after the session, she started observing her daughter more closely and realized that the child was simply slower in her approach and liked to take her time. She redefined her label from “lazy” to “thoughtful” and began appreciating her daughter’s careful nature. These examples highlighted the power of words and how intentional reflection can lead to a shift in mindset.

One caregiver shared that she used to only give instructions to her son. But when she sat down just to talk and listen, her son hugged her and said he liked it when she listened. This moment touched her deeply. It showed how important it is for children to feel heard and how simply listening can build emotional closeness. This reflects the value of intimate dialogue in creating strong, trusting relationships.

The thrilling and heartfelt points shared by one caregiver were truly impactful. She openly confessed to living with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), which often leads her to be very strict about maintaining a clean and orderly home environment. As a result, she frequently found herself shouting at her children over minor disruptions. However, through the session, she shared a powerful realization the importance of using a gentle tone, offering praise, and creating emotional safety over strict discipline. Her honesty and transformation deeply resonated with the group and added great value to the collective learning experience.

COMMENTS BY FACILITATORS

During the course, my development as a facilitator I create a close and trusting relationship with the caregiver by showing them respect and listen their personal stories. Most important I personal growth in how to interact with other not as facilitator but as a human being. I become more patient, empathetic and emotionally aware.

When I first started, I was often consumed by doubts during our training and meetings with caregivers. I questioned whether I could genuinely relate to their experiences and how authentic I would seem, especially since I do not have children of my own. I worried that caregivers might find it challenging to engage with my insights on caregiving. However, as the meetings progressed, I realized that the core of the ICDP is empathy. I understood that as long as I approach others with compassion and recognize that every individual deserves empathy, I don't need to be a mother to convey that message. We all serve as caregivers at different points in our lives, making my perspective relevant. Now, when I think of myself as a facilitator, I feel "proud and loving." I take pride in my achievements and my ability to contribute, even in small ways, to sharing knowledge and making a difference. I've also become more compassionate, showing kindness to myself and others, even when daily stresses test my patience.

When I reflect on the series of caregiver meetings, the first feeling that comes to mind is a deep sense of pride, as a woman, caregiver and an educator. Being able to draw from each of these roles and use them meaningfully to remind caregivers that ICDP is truly about embodiment has been a powerful experience for me. During the second ICDP workshop, when we were informed that facilitating caregiver meetings would be part of our assignment, I was excited. I assumed it would be relatively easy since group facilitation is already a part of my work. However, I quickly realized that ICDP meetings are quite different. While I approached the sessions with enthusiasm, there were challenges particularly in bringing the group together and maintaining engagement. Despite facilitating the sessions, I

found myself learning a great deal from the group's dynamics and from each caregiver's unique perspective. As a facilitator, I made the most of these opportunities to learn and grow. I feel a strong sense of fulfillment in having completed all eight sessions with depth and purpose, and I remain hopeful that the caregivers will carry forward the insights and practices they have gained from ICDP into their everyday lives.

Through this journey, I have come to value awareness and self-reflection more deeply, both in myself and in the caregivers. The ICDP's sensitizing method has helped me embody its values not just in my role as a facilitator, but also in my personal life. It has been a process of integrating head, heart, and action.

Rather than telling them what to do, I learned to support them in discovering answers themselves. This made our sessions more meaningful. The sensitivity approach also helped me become more patient and empathetic

During the course my development as a facilitator, using sensitizing method was very meaningful. In the beginning I was not fully confident how to lead discussion but as I learned and practiced the sensitizing method, I started to see changes in myself. I learned to listen more carefully, create a safe space where people felt respected and heard.

Looking back on the caregivers' meetings, the first thing I notice about myself as a facilitator is my openness and flexibility. I constantly reminded myself that the parents are the experts, and my role was to facilitate, not direct. I focused on creating a safe space that encouraged vulnerability and honest sharing. By staying adaptable and responsive to the group's needs, I helped foster trust and meaningful connection throughout the sessions.

The sensitizing methods served as a guiding principle—a kind of compass—that kept me attuned throughout the course and supported me in delivering the content effectively. They provided a constant reminder to stay curious, inquisitive, and deeply aware of the group's needs. This approach helped me grow as a facilitator by encouraging sensitivity and responsiveness, ensuring that I remained connected and adaptive to the participants at every stage.

There isn't a single defining moment, but rather a collection of reflections that come to mind when I think back on the sessions with the caregivers. These include a sense of completeness, satisfaction, and happiness. Each session brought a mix of excitement and anxiety. The excitement stemmed from the anticipation of learning something new and

valuable for both the caregivers and me. At the same time, there was anxiety due to concerns about being inadequately prepared and the possibility of not meeting the session objectives within the allotted time. However, as the sessions progressed and I became more familiar with the flow of presentation and discussions, my confidence grew. The delivery became more natural, and the initial anxiety gradually subsided.

As a facilitator, building confidence and staying well-prepared for the various themes to be delivered was essential. Equally important was recognizing that each caregiver brought unique experiences in raising their children. Remaining humble and open to learning from their insights improved me to facilitate. In essence, the sessions became a space for bidirectional learning—a dynamic exchange of knowledge and skills that enriched everyone involved.

One of the most valuable skills I developed throughout the sessions was the ability to truly listen. Prioritizing listening over speaking created space for deeper engagement and understanding. I was fortunate to co-facilitate with a colleague who brought decades of experience in delivering health education within community settings. His expertise in the field complemented my background of teaching in higher education institution, enabled us to create a well-rounded and effective facilitation team.

The first thing that came in my mind is to suggest that ICDP Program should be introduced to all the ECCD Facilitators. In Bhutan. In the ECCD education setting, one of the components is the Parenting Program.....so if the ECCD Facilitators are trained....they can educate the parents to educate their child.