

Hand *in* Hand

A Parenting Journey



A parenting guide for newcomers

Acknowledgments

We want to extend our gratitude to the newcomer parents who opened their hearts during our workshops and shared their worries and dreams about raising their children in a new culture.

We want to thank the Canadian parents who shared their parenting journeys - helping us acknowledge what we have in common and celebrate what we can learn from our differences. Your effort and commitment to do the best for your children has provided us with the basis for this manual. We hope you have rediscovered the joy of parenting.

We also want to thank the Chebucto Family Resource Centre, Bayers Westwood Family Resource Centre, Extra Support for Parents and IWK Health Centre for their invaluable help and collaboration throughout the creation and updating of this guide. We thank you for your ongoing commitment to create services and spaces that are welcoming to newcomer parents.

Production of the second edition of this document has been made possible by a financial contribution from Nova Scotia Office of Immigration. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the official policies of this department.

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Who is this booklet for?

- Do you wonder how to raise your children in ways that fit with Canadian society, while keeping your own culture?
- Are you worried about losing control of your children?
- Do you have questions about the Canadian government's powers to take children away from their parents?
- Do you feel that it is very hard to be a parent in Canada?

If you answer "yes" to any of the above questions, this booklet is for you. In this booklet we will try to answer many of your questions. We will try to give you information you need about being a parent in Canada.

Background Information

Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) is a leading community organization that welcomes immigrants to Nova Scotia. Working in partnership, we offer services and create opportunities to help immigrants to participate fully in Canadian life.

ISANS recognizes the key role of immigrants in Canadian society and we work with newcomers to help them build a future in Canada. We provide a wide range of services to immigrants, from refugee resettlement to professional programs, from family counselling to English in the Workplace.

ISANS was created by the merger of Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) and Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre (HILC) – together we have a combined experience of over fifty years serving immigrants in Nova Scotia. ISANS is the largest immigrant-serving agency in Atlantic Canada with over 115 staff members from more than 30 countries. We offer services in an inclusive manner, respectful of, and sensitive to, diversity. We make partnership, professionalism and accountability a priority in every aspect of our work.

Over the last decade the Family Support program has offered immigrants a wide range of services to support healthy family relationships, such as:

- Individual and Family Counselling
- Monthly support group for immigrant parents – in partnership with Extra Support for Parents Volunteer Services (ESP), IWK Health Centre
- Women's Support Group in partnership with the Bayers Westwood Family Resource Centre
- Family education workshops on discipline
- Parent and Teen Art Workshops
- Support on topics such as:
 - disciplining your children
 - understanding Canadian family law
 - solving conflict within the family
 - communicating with children and partners
 - learning to live with change
 - learning to deal with stress
 - family separation

Since 1980, ISANS has been helping newcomer families to settle in Canada. Many newcomers are already parents when they come here. Some become parents during the settlement process. The settlement process is a very difficult time for adults on their own - when you have to look after children as well, difficulties increase. Over the years, many newcomer parents have talked about their worries about raising their children in Canada.

In 2003 ISANS published the first edition of Hand In Hand – A Parenting Journey, a booklet that is based on the concerns and issues brought forward by newcomer parents. This new edition contains some of the ideas that the parents have shared in the program, additional information that was gathered from different sources and an updated community resource list.

Before we continue, here are questions and answers about some of the terms that you will find in this book.

Who is a newcomer?

A newcomer, or *an immigrant*, is someone who came to Canada to live not long ago. Many newcomers do not know much about services in their new community.

Who is mainstream Canadian?

Mainstream Canadian means Canadians who belong to the main culture. Their social values and traditions are more present in Canadian public life. For the last two hundred years in Nova Scotia, these people have come mainly from European cultures, especially England, Scotland and Ireland.

Who is Canadian-born?

Canadian-born means Canadians born in Canada. Canadian-born includes First Nation and African Canadian people.

Common Questions and Fears

This section answers many questions from newcomer parents. Maybe you are asking the same questions too. Here they are:

1. **Do I need to change my ways of parenting and be more Canadian?**
2. **I am afraid my children will lose our values if they spend their time with Canadian children.**
3. **I am afraid my children will lose respect for their parents and their elders.**
4. **How are Canadian families different from families in my country?**
5. **I am afraid I will lose control of my children by raising them in Canada.**
6. **Why is there so much concern about child abuse in Canada?**
7. **What is considered child abuse in Canada?**
8. **I am afraid that the government will take away my children if I discipline them my way.**

You are not alone. Many parents are sharing your same concerns and feel lost once in a while.

Question 1 : Do I need to change my ways of parenting and be more Canadian?

Answer: There are several reasons why you do not need to stop your own parenting style for the Canadian way:

- There is no one way to be a parent in Canada. Canadians come from many different backgrounds and cultures. They have different ways of being parents.
- Canada is a multicultural society. Different traditions, beliefs and practices are respected as long as they do not break Canadian law.

See also the sections in this booklet on child abuse, pages 15 and 16.

- Different traditions are healthy for Canadian society. Newcomers have ways of raising children that can be helpful to all Canadians.

Two examples are:

- in some cultures families care for each other and maintain strong family bonds.
- in some cultures family members have more honour and respect for elders.

You might notice that your family life is different from other families in Canada. It is a good time to think about your ways of raising children. It is also a good time to think about how other Canadians raise children. You can decide what is helpful about Canadian ways and what is not helpful. This can help your family settle into their new life.

You might need to make some changes. For example, the school might ask you to take part in some activities that may be new to you.



Question 2: I am afraid my children will lose our values if they have Canadian friends.

Answer: Your children are going to see different cultural values everywhere. They go to school, they read Canadian books, they watch TV and shop in malls.

They will notice differences between your family and families of friends and families on TV. Your children might ask for things that they see others having.

This can create problems in the family, but that is normal in a new country. There are ways you can protect your values.

For example: Focus on what is important to you as a parent. Look at your cultural values. Decide what is most important to you and what might be okay to change. Your children are getting two different messages: one from you and one from the outside.

It is your role to help your children understand what is good for them in the new community and still keep important values.

See also the section in this booklet on keeping your values, page 39.

Look for families that share your values. Different Canadian families have many different values. You will have more in common with some families. You can encourage some friendships made by your children and discourage others. Most parents do this. They encourage friendships with people who have similar values.



You can give your children pride by sharing your culture with their friends and schoolmates. Mainstream Canadian children are often eager to learn how other people live. Classroom teachers sometimes need people to speak in their social studies lessons.

Question 3: I am afraid my children will lose respect for their parents and their elders.

Answer: You might think Canadian children are disrespectful to adults. **For example:**

- they question adults
- they talk without being asked
- they call adults by their first names
- they look directly into their eyes

This informal style of communicating is acceptable to most Canadians. Social relationships in Canada are less formal, even among different age groups.

However, most Canadian parents do not accept certain behavior.

For example:

- shouting at adults
- being violence towards parents
- disregarding rules
- disrespecting elderly people

It is true that disrespect for parents is a problem in some Canadian families. There are many different causes for this. However, many Canadians and newcomers share the value of showing respect. Teach your children the importance of taking care of other people, of communicating feelings in respectful ways, and of dealing with frustration or disappointment. Check local libraries, community centres, family resource centres and schools to find activities and information that promotes respectful relationships.

See Section three for how to teach children these things.



You already know what it takes to be a good parent but together we can learn how to do it even better!

Question 4: How are Canadian families different from families in my country?

Answer: You might think Canadian families are all the same. Maybe you think this because of what you hear or see on TV. But Canadian families are all different, just as newcomer families are all different. You might think there are big differences between your own family and Canadian families. It might make you worried about being friends with Canadian families.

This fear might make it difficult for you to learn about and become part of Canadian society. We discovered in our workshops that all parents want the same things for their children, no matter where they come from.

For example:

- loving our children and making them feel loved
- helping them to develop self respect
- supporting them to achieve their goals as productive members of their families and society
- promoting a sense of solidarity and respect for others
- building strong family bonds

However, there are some differences between families.

For example:

- who is in charge and who makes decisions
- activities parents do with their children
- relationships in the larger family

Differences do not have to threaten your culture's survival. You can be proud of your own culture but you can also learn to respect and accept differences. Talking to your children about the reasons why people act in different ways might help.

Learning about a country's history, political systems and environment can help you in understanding Canadian culture. It can help you better understand your own culture too.

Question 5: I am afraid I will lose control of my children by raising them in Canada.

Answer: In our workshops many newcomer parents shared that they were afraid of losing control of their children in two ways:

1. Newcomer parents felt they were losing control of their own lives. They said this because of the difficulty of living in a new country. It is difficult for different reasons, for example, a new language, immigration status, employment and a new culture.

It is important to remember you are still the parent. Some things are different but you are in control of your family life. You make all the decisions about daily family life, such as routines, customs and rituals. You give your children shelter, food, love and protection. You have all the knowledge, skills and successful experiences raising children that you always had.

However, it is a good idea to look more closely at the meaning of control. No one is ever in total control of either themselves or other people. The idea that we can totally control other people can lead to violence, because it is never possible. Parental control doesn't mean complete domination. It means guiding your children's lives by setting boundaries and limits according to your values.

2. Newcomer parents said they were afraid that the police, child protection agencies, doctors and schools interfere too much with family. They were worried that these authorities might make them lose their children. Many newcomer parents feel that Canadian agencies do not understand how they raise their children:

It is important to know that Canadian agencies work to help families. They do not punish parents or other family members. The government asks agencies to be respectful and understanding of different cultures. When you meet with people from the government, be willing to teach them what is important to you, if they don't know. Do not be afraid to ask questions. Do not be afraid to ask for an interpreter if you need one. Always explain your problem and ask for help.

See also the next questions and answers, which are about child abuse.

Question 6: Why is there so much concern about child abuse in Canada?

Answer: For many years in Canada, the government did not interfere with people raising their children. Family life was private. The government interfered only when there was injury or death.

Many people thought it was necessary to beat children to teach them how to behave. However, experts have researched different ways to raise children. Today, experts think that physical punishment is not a good way to teach children. Many believe that physical punishment does more harm than good.

We all know that children do some things only because they are young and can't think like adults. You need to learn what behaviour is normal at certain ages. Punishing children will not change those behaviours.

There are other ways to discipline children. Other ways can work better and help children gain self-esteem and confidence.

See part 3 for definition of self-esteem.

Child discipline is different from child abuse. It is important to discipline children. It is wrong to abuse children.

See later sections in this booklet about discipline.

Question 7: What is considered child abuse in Canada?

Answer: Examples of child abuse are:

Physical: any physical behaviour that might injure a child. For example, pushing, punching or hitting with an object.

Emotional: behaviors that make a child feel not loved, fearful, or which hurt a child's self-esteem. For example, name calling, put-downs, insults, constant yelling, etc.

Sexual: any physical contact with a child that is for an adult's sexual pleasures. For example, touching genital parts, showing adult materials, etc.

Chronic neglect: not giving a child the things necessary for life, like medical care, clothing and education, or not protecting a child from harm.

Question 8: I am afraid the government will take away my children if I discipline them my way.

Answer: In Canada, anybody seeing or suspecting child abuse or neglect must report it to a child protection agency or the police. If a child protection agency gets a complaint against you, they must investigate. Your child will not be taken away automatically.

Usually, a social worker will investigate the complaint. The social worker will decide if the child is in danger. The social worker will probably ask you and your child some questions. If the social worker decides the child is in danger, the social worker will decide how to help the child and the family. Social workers decide what they think is best for the child.

Here are some examples of decisions a social worker will make if they are worried about child abuse:

- The social worker helps the parent to discipline without hurting.
- The social worker warns the parent of consequences for hurting the child.
- The parents and social worker may agree to have the child removed from the family. The child can be removed for a short time. In this time the parents will learn new parenting ways or get help for other problems. This is called a “voluntary care agreement.” Talking to a lawyer is a good idea before signing a voluntary care agreement.
- The social worker can take a child away without the parents’ consent.
- The agency can apply for custody of the child. Custody is decided in family court. You can argue that there is not a reason to take your child away from you. You should ask a lawyer for help. The judge will decide to take the child away or not. The judge might decide to give temporary custody or permanent custody to the child protection agency.

Foundations for Parenting

Parenting is Like a Journey

Most parents want their children to become happy, healthy adults. They want their children to love and be loved. They want their children to have good employment, and to be honest and hardworking. They want their children to have respect and care for others. They want their children to keep strong connections with their family and to be good mothers and fathers when their time comes. Parenting is like going on a journey. The destination is the person you want your child to be, and the road is your parenting.

Remember that each child is different. The places and times you raise each child can be different. To arrive at our destination safely, we must choose the right way.

What are Parenting Styles?¹

As we said, our hopes and dreams are similar for our children. Most parents are going on the same journey. But, we choose different roads to our destination.

Experts think that there are three main ways of raising your children. These are called “parenting styles.” These parenting styles are used around the world. The three main parenting styles are:

- authoritarian
- permissive
- democratic

What is the Authoritarian Style?

This style is also called “bossy” or “brick wall.”² It was the main style used in Canada for many years. It is used in many other places, also. The family works like a dictatorship in this style. The parent is the boss. The children have no rights. The children have no say in anything. The parent decides what is right and wrong. The parent’s goal is complete obedience from the child. The parent tightly enforces the rules with threats, rewards and punishments.

What is the Permissive Style?

This style is also called “pushover” or “jellyfish.” It is the opposite of authoritarian.³ The children are in charge. The parents cannot say “no” to their children. There are rules, but the parents do not enforce them. The children are not forced to take responsibility for their actions.

What is the Democratic Style?⁴

This style is also called “backbone” or “firm-but-fair.” There are rules in the family, but they can change a little depending on the child’s age, temperament and needs. The child might help with making the rules. If the child is old enough, they can help decide consequences to breaking rules. The parent makes final decisions but will consider the child’s feelings and needs. The parent also gives the child some choices. In the democratic style, discipline is for teaching, not only punishing. The goal is to help the child develop discipline and integrity.

Looking at Discipline

The next chapter of this book looks at discipline in two ways.

The negative look is punishing children because they do something wrong. Discipline as a punishment does not help the children to think and understand. It makes them afraid of parents. When children are

afraid of parents they try to be good when the parents are present, but may not do the same when they are absent.

The positive look is being active in teaching children about everyday life. Discipline is not for a short time. It is for the whole time that your child needs you to help him/her grow in the way your society accepts and respects.

When you discipline your child by being an active and long time teacher, you are building that child from the inside. You are helping your child to understand the world where he/she lives. Your child will be able to think for himself/herself. They will not depend on your presence all the time or make decisions out of fear. This is called inner discipline.

Please note:



These three styles are described in their extreme forms. In reality, most parents mix these styles. However, you probably use one style as your main parenting style. It might be the same style your own parents used. It might be the main way that parents raise their children in your culture.

What is Self-Esteem and Why is it Important?

Self-esteem is how you think and feel about yourself. High self-esteem is being proud of yourself, feeling you have value and are a capable person. Low self-esteem is worrying that people do not love you, feeling that you are not good enough, and not valuable.⁵

Self-esteem can be separated into two types:⁶

Core self-esteem: This means having a deep sense you are valuable and lovable. Core self-esteem helps you cope with the hard things in life as well as the easy. You know you are a valuable person even when life is not the way you want it to be or when people don’t see you how you want them to see you.

Situational self-esteem: This is the feeling you have from being good at a certain thing, for example, playing soccer, speaking a language well, etc.

Experts researched how well children with high core self-esteem do at school.⁷ Children with high self-esteem do better than those with low self-esteem. The reasons are clear. When children doubt themselves and are afraid of failing, they are not able to do their best. When they believe in themselves and their abilities, they have energy to do the best job.

How Does a Child get Core Self-Esteem?

Some people say that it begins as soon as a baby is born. Their parents look at them with unconditional love. Unconditional love from parents is the main thing that builds core self-esteem. It is easy to give to a baby. But as children grow, their parents expect more. Sometimes children make mistakes and they disappoint their parents. It is part of how children learn. Most parents love their children no matter what they do. But their parenting style might send the children a different message. The parenting style might tell children they are not loved when they make mistakes or behave badly. It might tell children that the parents' love is conditional. The parents' love depends on the children always doing the right thing. What happens if a child wets the bed, does poorly in school or hits their brother? If the parent is harsh or critical, the child may feel less loved and less valuable.

Barbara Coloroso, a leading writer in parenting issues, says that children need to hear the following six messages from their parents every day:



- I believe in you
- I trust you
- I know you can handle life situations
- You are listened to
- You are cared for
- You are very important to me

You may be thinking: "But I need to discipline my child!" Of course you do. But we can discipline our children and still save the child's dignity and our own dignity. When you save a child's dignity you protect their self-esteem. When you correct your child's behaviour with beatings and put-downs, that takes away their dignity. This damages their self-esteem and makes them less confident.

What are Nurture and Structure?⁸

Nurture means all the things that we do for our children and with our children, which tell them that they are lovable, special and that they are part of us.

Structure includes all the things we do for our children and with our children, that give them the tools and information to function as members of the family and society. This includes teaching them appropriate daily routines and how to interact with others and establishing rules and boundaries to keep them safe.

We need to give our children both nurture and structure. We give them different amounts of nurture and structure depending on how old the children are, what the children are like and what is going on in their lives at any certain time. For example, infants require a lot of nurture and not much structure. When big changes occur in a family's life, such as moving to a new place, children need more structure. More structure helps them adjust to the new life.

It is important to learn how to give the right amounts of nurture and structure. If you see yourself as only targeting your child's actions, correcting and criticizing, the child may feel that love is equal to approval and that they can never get your love without doing what you want. On the other hand, if you are so afraid of hurting your child's feelings that you can't discipline the child when they do something wrong, then you are not giving them the tools to deal with life's challenges.

How Do the Three Parenting Styles Affect Your Child's Self-Esteem?

Authoritarian style: this style places most importance on situational self-esteem. It also is the practice of a lot of structure and very little nurture. The child understands that the parents love them only when they behave in the way the parents approve.

Permissive style: this style uses a lot of nurture but very little structure. The child doesn't learn how to be a responsible member of the family or society. This style doesn't hold the child responsible for their behaviour. This style does not expect much of the child. Therefore the child learns that they are not capable or responsible.

Democratic style: this style can help develop both core and situational self-esteem. It balances nurture and structure. The child learns to be confident and at the same time responsible.



*When children believe in themselves
and their abilities, they have energy
to do the best job.*

Expanding your Parenting Tools

Practical ways of Parenting

This section discusses expanding our skills to help us deal with issues in the family. We discuss the democratic style of parenting, and give more information about building children's self-esteem and confidence. It can help children understand their strengths and weaknesses, control themselves, and respect themselves. It helps children build inner discipline.

The democratic style of discipline is not well understood because many people had parents who used more of the authoritarian style. Many parents have not had the opportunity to learn how to use other styles of parenting.

What is Discipline?

Before discussing the democratic style of discipline, we will talk about the meaning of discipline:

Many people think discipline means correcting children, or punishing them when they misbehave. They give more attention to only the child's good behavior and misbehavior. However, discipline has a broader meaning. Discipline is about all the things we teach children that will help them to live their everyday lives. It is more about guiding children and helping them learn and understand.

The broad meaning of discipline includes everything that you teach your child about living a good life. This includes some simple things such as:

- how to dress properly
- how to write neatly in their books
- how to behave when there are guests at home
- how to say their prayers

You also discipline your children when you help them with difficult tasks, or when you let them think for themselves. Your discipline guides how your children act now and in the future. Discipline is not a short journey. It covers all of childhood.

Most parents would agree that the main purpose of discipline is to teach. Discipline is not only to make children obey. A child who is totally obedient is not necessarily one that has the best inner discipline, self-respect and self-control. Parents want their children to learn their values and beliefs about life, learn the rules and values of society, and become strong adults who are happy and responsible. This can come only from proper discipline that aims at the long term goal of the person your child will become.



Does the democratic parenting style mean the child has an equal say? The word "democratic" in this case does not mean that the child has an equal say in making decisions with parents. Parents run families. Children cannot parent themselves.

How Does the Democratic Style Apply Discipline?

Many parents will need to learn new skills to raise their children in the democratic style. The skills parents will have to learn include:

- how to deal with your child's misbehaviour
- how to better communicate with your child
- how to solve conflicts in your family
- how to pass on your values to your children

How to Deal with Your Child's Misbehaviour

There are two different ways to think about how to deal with children when they do something wrong.⁹

The punitive way: this is to punish the child. The punitive way is how the authoritarian parenting style disciplines a child who makes mistakes or doesn't obey. The parent influences the child's behaviour

through fear of punishment. The advantage that people see in this way is that it is direct and easy to practice. However, this way does not teach the child to know how to tell the difference between right and wrong. The child might not know how to behave well when there is no threat or punishment.

The positive way is to build inner discipline. This is the way the democratic parenting style would deal with misbehaviour. The goal is to help the child think about the behavior and learn to correct it. Children raised in this way are encouraged to think, control themselves and act with integrity, even when parents or other authority figures are not around. This way teaches the child to have inner discipline. The following are examples¹⁰ of the positive way of dealing with misbehaviour:

Apply Natural and Logical Consequences¹¹

Natural consequences are results from life itself. For example, if your child insists on going out to play in the snow without mittens, it won't be long before her hands get cold. You might just need to wait a while before the child comes back to you asking for mittens. The next time your child refuses to wear the mittens, you could give a reminder of what happened before. However, when the natural consequence is obviously dangerous, we must not apply them.

Logical consequences are situations we create to teach children to change the way they do things. However, a logical consequence, like a natural consequence, has a direct link to the wrong behaviour. Below are some examples:

Example 1: A two-year-old writes on the wall. It is logical that someone must clean it up. It would be a logical consequence to work together with the child to clean up the mess. This will help the child understand the link between his behavior and the cleaning. This may take more time than cleaning it yourself, but it is an opportunity to teach your child some discipline.

Example 2: You have to wake up your child several times in the morning to get ready for school. If you yell at her or blame her, this might only cause guilt or rebellion. It might be better to make bedtime earlier. This allows the child to get enough sleep, probably making it easier for her to get up on time. You could also let your child go late and face the consequences at school.

Example 3: Your child leaves his bike outside on the sidewalk after you warned that it might be stolen. A logical consequence might be that the child is not allowed to ride the bike for some time. Return the bike when you know that the child has learned the lesson.

Discipline is about teaching your child. It doesn't have to hurt. Teaching children using natural and logical consequences will make a lasting effect on their behavior. It will not hurt their self-esteem. Remember that logical consequences do not come from an intention to make children suffer. It is to teach them to be responsible and to learn from their mistakes. It may take a little more time, thought and self-control to use logical consequences, but it is a good way to teach a child.

Use Positive Reinforcement or Rewards

Positive reinforcement means focusing on the good things the child does. When you show that you are pleased with your child's behavior, probably your child will repeat the behavior. For example, you may say to your child:

"Since you show so much interest in reading, let's go together and get you your own library card."

Give Encouragement Instead of Criticism

When you notice even the smallest attempt by the child to learn something, show your encouragement. This will promote good self-esteem and encourage the child to continue. On the other hand, criticism may have the opposite effect.

Have Reasonable and Realistic Expectations

You need to expect what is reasonable for a child's age. Many parents have expectations that are too high, especially of their oldest child.

Be a Role Model

Parents should "practice what they preach." In other words, you need to set a good example for your children. Show them good behaviour. Children learn from the people they see around them.

Give Choices

Try to give your child choices between two different things. This allows children to feel they have some control over their lives. It tells them that their parents trust their judgment and have confidence in them.

Establish a Routine

Children feel a sense of security when they have a routine at home. Children get comfort from things happening at the same time every day. It also means parents don't have to constantly remind children to brush their teeth or go to bed at a certain time every night. Routine creates a structure for the child's behaviour.

Lay the Ground Rules

It is important that you set firm rules and limits for your child's behaviour. The child knows exactly what their parent expects when rules and limits are set.

Create a Positive Environment

Parents can create a positive environment at home that will promote healthy physical and mental growth of the child. It will also reduce the amount of behaviour that needs your response. You can provide the child with books, toys, puzzles, or tools that foster creativity and are the right age for the child. For a toddler, the environment can be

altered or modified to "baby proof" certain areas. This way you don't have to say "no" all the time but can let the toddler explore and learn.

Distract and Substitute (Young Children)

Children should not be allowed to destroy valuable things, for example, tear up books. You can distract a young child with a toy rather than having to always say "no." It is a good idea to have toys nearby that the child can easily reach.

Ignore (Young Children)

Sometimes young children make a lot of disturbance just to get attention. If you don't give their misbehaviour any attention, they will often stop. Then give them lots of positive attention for their good behaviour.

Stick to What Happened

You need to think about the child separately from what the child is doing. You can explain to the child why their behaviour isn't a good idea, instead of insulting the child or calling him/her names like lazy, stupid etc. The child will get the message that the behaviour is not good, but that he/she is still loved.

Be Calm Before Punishing a Child

If you feel that you must punish a child for his/her behaviour, you need to first be calm. You need to wait until your emotions are under control. Then you can see clearly what happened and what needs to be done about it. This could mean removing yourself or the child from the situation. This allows you time to be more objective. It allows the child time to regain self-control. Also following these guidelines about disciplining a child:

- Be kind but firm; never ridicule or call names
- Use a neutral tone; avoid sarcasm
- Be consistent in saying yes or no to particular behaviours

This table gives some differences between the positive and punitive ways of discipline.

The Punitive Way (Adult oriented)	The Positive Way (Child oriented)
Top down relationship with child, parent is always right	Child participates identifying the problem and solution
Often negative	Often positive, does not have to hurt
Fear is used to stop the child	Focus is on encouragement and respect
Goal is obedience	Goal is to build inner discipline
Adult judges the child	Child learns to judge their own behavior
Examples: spanking, grounding, lectures, finger pointing, name-calling	Examples: Natural and logical consequences of actions
Love is expressed	Demonstrates unconditional love
Child becomes externally motivated and does not learn self-control in the absence of rewards and punishments	Child becomes internally/externally motivated, is able to think for themselves and experience own rewards

Note: Learning to use positive methods of discipline isn't easy. Reading about a new skill isn't the same as practicing it. However, many parents succeed in changing their response to misbehaviour — and you can, too. There will be mistakes and wrong turns that you make, but always remember, our children don't need perfect parents. They need parents who are learning and growing — just like them.

How your children might respond to changes in your parenting style:



Some parents say they have tried to be more positive and democratic, but they don't see the changes they expected in their children. This is normal. Children might even get confused in the beginning when their parent is acting differently. Sometimes children react to the new parenting method with some rebellion. This will not last, as long as you are determined to be more effective.

Don't give up! Your children will learn in the end that though you are not harsh, you are firm and you mean what you say.

Communication Skills

What is Communication?

Communication is a two-way process where two people give and receive messages from each other. It can be done with words, but also the look on your face, the tone of your voice, the way you move your hands, how you are standing, what you are thinking and many other things.

What is Important for Communicating with Children?

Communicating with children is different from communicating with other adults. You probably need to help children understand you and to communicate with you. To improve your communication with children, it is important to see yourself from a child's point of view. Try the following exercise.

Sit quietly for a moment with pen and paper, and try to write down or remember all the things that you ask your child to do in one whole day — things that they would not do on their own. Try to think of everything— from asking the child to wake up, to brush their teeth,

eat breakfast, to pick up their school bag, and so on. You will realize the following things:

- you ask your child to do a lot of things
- children would not do most of these things on their own
- most of your requests are in the form of commands
- sometimes you give children a lot of commands at the same time

Let's face it, we have to ask children to do these things. However, getting too many instructions can overwhelm the child. It can also cause conflict. We can communicate our thoughts to our children without overwhelming them. These ways can get them to cooperate willingly with you.

Suggestions for Good Communication¹²

- Refer only to the present situation. Don't talk about past history. For example, don't say: "You forgot to hang up your coat yesterday too."
- Refer to the behaviour, not the person. For example, say: "I don't like it when..."; instead of "You are..."
- Give information about what is needed. For example: "This table needs to be cleared before I serve supper."
- Give encouragement: "I know you can do it."
- State your feelings.
- Use "I" statements instead of "you" statements: "I find it frustrating when..." rather than "You make me..."
- Give time/warning: "We need to leave in 5 minutes."
- Wait for an explanation: "You are late getting home. What happened?"
- Avoid arguments: "If we put our heads together, we can find a solution that works for both of us."
- Pose the problem: "The floor is covered with toys. What needs to happen?"

- Say things in a positive way, not in a negative way. For example, say "Next time, come home as soon as you finish your work" instead of "Don't be late."
- Use open-ended questions to obtain information: "Can you tell me what happened? Little Sami got hurt..."
- Use open body language. Remember, open arms mean an open mind.
- Summarize, paraphrase and reflect their feelings. For example, say, "So, in other words..." and "That must feel..."
- Choose the right time to talk to children about a problem.

Avoid these Ways of Communication

- Don't blame or accuse. For example, don't say: "It's your fault!"
- Don't use name-calling, insults, sarcasm or character attacks: For example, don't say: "You are a bad girl" or "That's just laziness."
- Don't threaten.
- Don't give harsh orders.
- Don't lecture, moralize or use a guilt trip: For example, don't say: "With all I did for you..."
- Don't compare. For example, don't say: "Your brother always does his homework on time!"
- Don't generalize: For example, don't say: "You always..." or "You never..."
- Don't shame. For example, don't say: "You should be ashamed of yourself!" or "I am very disappointed in you."
- Don't predict the future. For example, don't say: "You will never be able to ... if you don't..."
- Don't insist on an explanation from your child if it is not necessary. For example, don't say: "Why did you hit her? Why?"

Ways to Solve Conflicts in Your Family

People's cultural backgrounds and beliefs influence how they see problems and how they solve problems. Many people say that conflict makes them feel tense, afraid, anxious, angry and nervous. Most of us have these feelings because we have learned that conflict is bad. We are afraid of conflict.

We are afraid of conflict for good reasons. Over the years and in every country, force and aggression are used to deal with conflicts. Also, people who are in positions of authority may see conflict as a threat to their power. They try to stop conflict from happening at all. Some people feel they know what is best for everyone. In a family, such people might say: "Do it my way because I say so." This creates more misunderstanding.

In the family we sometimes hope that if we don't talk about conflicts that are happening, the conflicts will just go away. But they don't go away. Instead, when conflicts are not solved, people feel angry and have negative feelings that keep getting stronger over time.

Conflict is Not Always Bad for Your Family

It is normal and natural for family members to have disagreements. The best way to solve conflict is to use good communication. When people can communicate in good ways, conflict can help them understand each other better. It can help strengthen the bonds between family members.

To deal with conflict in a good way, it may also help to understand the difference between a person's position and the need behind that position. Each person has a need, and that need is why that person takes a certain position in the conflict. For example, when you say to your child "you must eat all the food on your plate", you are stating your position. Your reason for this, or your need, might be to keep your child in a good health. When your child shouts to his sibling saying: "You have to give the toy to me because it's mine." This child's need might be to show that he is the owner, and to feel in control. If you understand that need, you might be able to change the child's position

and solve the problem. For example, if you say: "You are right. The toy is yours, just lend it to your brother for a while". This might solve the conflict because you make your child feel the way he wants- in some control of his property.

Thinking About Your Ways of Dealing with Conflict

To help us deal with conflict in a better way, it helps to think about what we are already doing. When you look at your ways, you will see the reasons why you get involved in conflicts in the first place. Then, it is important to think about how you normally feel and what you do to feel better. Sometimes we respond only to satisfy ourselves, so we win and the other person loses. This is called a win-lose situation. But it is not always the best way, because the person who loses may be still angry, disappointed or having other negative feelings.

It is often more helpful and better for a relationship when you recognize the needs of all people in a conflict. This often results in leaving everybody happy, a win-win situation. For a win-win situation, we need to review our old methods and learn new methods which can help meet everyone's needs. The rest of this chapter will discuss more about some of these skills.

Tools for Solving Conflicts

- Begin with an open mind. When a problem starts, it doesn't necessarily mean that someone is attacking you or your authority. The other person is probably just expressing a need or interest that is different from yours.
- Listen to and respect the other person's point of view. Try not to sound defensive.
- Get the facts. You need to know exactly what is happening and if possible why these things are happening.
- Identify the problem. Say what your problem is and listen to the other person's problem.
- Share your feelings about the problem as soon as you know them. Use "I" statements. For example, say "I feel afraid when

this happens.” Try to share your feelings without letting your emotions take control.

- Give yourself time to be calm before you try to solve a conflict. This gives time for both you and the other person to think more clearly.
- Brainstorm solutions. Brainstorming means everyone says different ideas that might fix the problem. Listen carefully or write down all the ideas even if they sound crazy. Don’t judge or discuss the ideas until you have them all. Sometimes the craziest idea becomes the best in the end.
- Look at all the ideas to see what works the best for everyone. Look at what would happen for each choice. Negotiate and compromise. Choose a solution.
- Plan to look at the solution later to see how well it is working. If the solution is not working, have more discussions to improve the situation. Choose a new solution if necessary.

Preventing Problems from Getting Worse

Sometimes conflicts can become terrible battles in a family. Try to take a break and let people calm down. Don’t exchange personal insults during a conflict. Think about the conflict as a problem to be solved, not a contest to be won. Don’t make your goal to be “right” and the other person to be “wrong”. Instead, try to be “effective”.

The following are some phrases you can use:

- Yes, as soon as... (instead of saying “no”)
- I need to think about that...
- Tell me what you think our problem is (then listen!)
- Let’s talk until we find a solution that works for both of us
- We have a situation here that isn’t working for either of us
- I am not sure how I feel about that
- I bet that feels...

- Possibly so...
- That’s one option
- We need to find something that works for both of us
- I will give you an answer in five minutes
- Convince me
- Let’s agree to disagree

Holding a Family Meeting

Many experts recommend family meetings as a good method of handling conflicts. The following list shows the steps to a useful family meeting:

- Set ground rules, for example: no attacking, no interrupting and no put-downs
- Write down what you are trying to solve in the meeting
- Give everyone a chance to express their concerns and feelings
- State what everyone’s point of view is
- Allow people to respond to other’s arguments
- Define the problem and check that everyone agrees with this
- Brainstorm solutions
- Choose solutions everyone can agree with
- Make sure everyone knows what they have to do to make the solution work
- Choose a time to check on how well the solution is working

A family meeting allows children to think, to state their needs and to work towards finding a solution to the problem. This is very good for the emotional and social development of children.

All family members should state their concerns. And all family member should work together to solve problems. Parents must accept that their child’s needs are important. Parents also must show their child that they trust the child to make decisions. Adults must truly accept the child’s feelings as valid and important.

Be proud and confident about many of the parenting strategies you are bringing from your country.

Many of them are very useful for the Canadian society.



*This is me and
my family praying
supper*

Teach your children to understand why they should or should not do certain things. The phrase, "Because I say so" is not the best answer. Be firm but gentle about the need for the child to act more appropriately. If you have to say "no," make it clear that there is a reason. The goal is to help children understand gradually how actions or words affect people. Children need to learn to be able to see things from another person's point of view. If you take time to work on problems with your children, they can learn to see and solve conflicts.

Different Approaches to Understanding and Resolving Conflict

As we mentioned earlier, culture and family background play important roles in how we understand, value and approach conflict. The approach we have shared in this booklet is based on ideas and practices that may be different from yours. However, these approaches work for many people. Therefore, we think they can work with people of different cultures. We are not saying that these are the only successful approaches to resolving conflict. We encourage you to look at ways that are already working for you, to maintain a strong and healthy family.

How to Pass on Your Values to Your Children

Values are moral principles and accepted standards that a person or group holds as important. Values are passed down from parents to children. They have a strong place in a person's culture. Values are an important part of people's lives. Many parents pass on their values to their children, so that their children can keep their values alive and strong.

Our values guide our actions. For example, Canadians place much value on the independence of family members. For that reason, in many families children are allowed to do many things independently, when they are capable. On the other hand, many newcomer families place more value on a strong bond and togetherness within the family. For this reason, many newcomer families stay together longer, and the whole family is involved in making decision regarding individual members, more often than in many Canadian families.

Core Values

Core values are the values that are the most important to you. You are normally not able to compromise these values. In fact, you may be willing to sacrifice things to keep these values alive. Many newcomers think that their core values are very different from Canadians' core values. They may be more similar than you think. It is important to identify exactly what are your core values. There may be other values that you would be willing to compromise as you adjust to life in a new country.

The following questions will help you think about what your core values are:

- How would you like people to describe you at your funeral?
- How would you hate people to describe you at your funeral?
- If you had some free time, what would you do?
- If you were able to save some money, what would you save it for?
- Think of someone you admire. What do you admire most about that person?
- If your house or apartment was on fire and all the people and pets were safe, what would you grab on your way out?
- If you could go back inside, what would you want to get?
- What would you like to be the most important thing that you do in your life?
- What really disappoints you about some people?
- What do you cherish most about life?
- What do you want most for you and your children?
- If you were granted three wishes, what would they be?
- What are your three greatest personal needs?

List your answers on a piece of paper. If an answer comes up more than once, that answer could be a very important value to you. Draw a circle. Write the most important values in the middle of the circle.

Write the least important values near the edge of the circle and write others in between.

After arranging your values in the circle as described, look at your circle closely. Note that the ones that appear in the centre are your core values. The ones near the outer edge might be ones you could compromise on when there is need to do so.

Other Suggestions for Passing on Values

Parents at our workshops also thought of the following ways to pass on values to children:

- Find ways for children to see values in action
- Share stories with children about relatives or friends that show certain values
- Explain the cultural or religious reasons for your decisions and some things you do
- Show movies that portray values at work
- Read books and share the stories or give books to children to read
- Bring children to community meetings and gatherings.



Look for Free Help

Remember that Canadian society has many free resources for everyone to use.

Immigrants need to find these resources and use them to express their culture and values. For example, there are free radio programs, free meeting places, videos from libraries and rental shops, and so on. Also, you will find a list of community resources at the end of this booklet.

*Our families may look different but
we want the best for our children.*

*Let's respect and learn from
different parenting styles.*



*My dad reading a
Story to us*

Christine Atid

Resources in Your Community

Health and community services are available with interpretation when you dial these numbers:

911 - Emergency number for Health, Fire, and police . Dial the number and ask for your emergency required service

211 - Information and referrals and directions for community and social services

811 - Speak to a nurse and get quick recommendations regarding minor health problems

311 - Information about municipal services: Metro Transit, Waste Collection and Recreation

Halifax Public Libraries

Libraries play a vital role in everyone's life progress in Canada. They not only provide books, music and videos, it's also a study centre for students, and a place for social and educational programs to everyone. You can make suggestions to the information desk staff regarding books and videos in your own language or religion.

Phone: 902-490-5753

www.halifaxpubliclibraries.ca

Family Resource Centres

Family resource centres help families and individuals in the community. Their programs include parenting workshops, parent and child groups, academic upgrading, health and wellness, individual counselling and stress management. There is no charge for programs. There is free childcare at the centres for most programs.

Bayers Westwood Family Resource Centre

3499 McAlpine Avenue
Halifax, NS
Phone: 902-454-9444
www.bayerswestwoodfrc.com

Chebucto Family Centre

3 Sylvia Ave, Spryfield
Halifax, NS
Phone: 902-479-3031
www.homeoftheguardianangel.ca

Fairview Family Resource Centre

6 Titus Street, off Lace Wood Drive
Halifax, NS
Phone: 902-443-9569
www.ffcns.ca

Dartmouth Family Resource Centre

107 Albro Lake Road
Dartmouth, NS
Phone: 902-464-8234
www.dartmouthfamilycentre.ca

Memory Lane Family Place

22 Memory Lane
Lower Sackville, NS
Phone: 902-864-6363
www.memorylanefamilyplace.com

BRAVE

Centre for Building Resilience through
Anti-Violence Education
Child and School Consultant,
318-7071 Bayers Road
Halifax, NS
Phone: 902-422-3777
www.iambrave.ca

Parents and Children Together

Suite 102, 1114 Cole Harbour Road
Dartmouth, NS
Phone: 902-434-8952
www.parentsandchildrentogether.info

Resources for Parents

Canadian Association of Family Resource Program

Multilingual Resources for Parents FRP
FRP Canada Multilingual Parenting Information
www.welcomehere.ca

About Kids Health

Your questions get answered by The Hospital for Sick Children in many languages: Arabic, Spanish, Punjabi, Chinese, etc.
www.aboutkidshealth.ca

Loving Care Books

There are four books free to all Nova Scotia families. The first three books are available online and in print: Birth to Six Months, Six to Twelve Months, and One to Three Years. Public Health Services will mail parents a set of these 3 books. The fourth book, Parents and Families, is separate but also available on request.

Phone: 902-481-5800
www.novascotia.ca/dhw/lovingcare

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Halifax

Main Office (Administration)
50 Caledonia Road, Dartmouth NS B2X 1K8
902-435-3204 or info@bgcgh.ca
Program Locations:
East Dartmouth: 902-435-3364
North Dartmouth: 902-463-1210
Cole Harbour: 902-462-7148
www.bgcgh.ca

Prenatal, Postnatal and Early Childhood Support

Doula Program, Chebucto Family Centre Prenatal Services

3 Sylvia Avenue, Spryfield, NS
Phone: 902-479-3031 ext. 347
www.homeoftheguardianangel.ca

Family SOS

Provides low-income pregnant women and new mothers with information and emotional support.

2006 Gottingen Street, Halifax, NS

Phone: 902-455-5551

www.familysos.ca

La Leche League

Helps with breastfeeding concerns/problems

Dartmouth, NS

Phone: 902-470-7029

www.lllc.ca

Parent Support Groups and Centres

ISANS Parent Support Group

Brings newcomer parents together to share and learn from each other.

6960 Mumford Road, Suite 2120, Halifax, NS

Phone: 902-423-3607

www.isans.ca

Extra Support for Parents Group (ESP)

A peer support program which gives emotional support and reassurance, help with infant care and information. Volunteers can visit you. For parents who have children of ages one day to six months.

IWK Health Centre

5850/5980 University Avenue, Halifax, NS

Phone: 902-470-8888

www.aboutkidshealth.ca

The Incredible Years

Parenting Education program offered by IWK Primary Health. Available to parents of children ages 6 to 12 who live or see a family doctor in the following areas: Dartmouth, Spryfield, Sambro Loop, Clayton Park, Fairview, Armdale, Halifax.

Phone: 902-470-7111

Veith House/In Home Parenting Program

The program provides families with parenting education, support and information in their own homes.

3115 Veith Street, Halifax, NS

Phone: 902-453-4320

www.veithhouse.com

Parents of Multiple Births Association

This service is devoted for parents with twins, triplets or more.

961 Bedford Highway, Halifax, NS

Phone: 902-435-3403

www.pomba.ca

Child Protection Services

For dealing with issues related to children and families, investigation of alleged abuse, adoptions, foster homes and foster group homes, services to single parents, childcare services (out of home).

Cobequid Multi-Service Centre

Bedford/Sackville

70 Memory Lane, Lower Sackville

Phone: 902-865-5750

Dartmouth District Office

Department of Community Services

Dartmouth Professional Centre

Suite 400, 277 Pleasant Street, Dartmouth, NS

Phone: 902-424-3298

Cole Harbour District Office

Department of Community Services

Cole Harbour Place, 3rd Floor, 51 Forest Hills Parkway

Dartmouth, NS

Phone: 902-435-7472

Children's Welfare

6009 Quinpool Road, 4th floor, Halifax, NS
Phone: 902-425-5420

Crisis Intervention

ISANS Outreach Crisis Intervention

Phone: 902-423-3607
www.isans.ca

Bryony House

3358 Connaught Avenue, Halifax, NS
Phone: 902-423-7183
www.bryonyhouse.ca

Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team

Help Line 24 hours: 902-429-8167
Toll Free: 1-888-429-8167

IWK Health Centre Emergency Team

On-Call Crisis Worker
Phone: 902-470-8623

Legal Help

Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia

5523 B Young Street, Halifax, NS
Phone: 902-454-2198, Fax: 902-455-3105
www.legalinfo.org/access-legal-help-ns.html

Nova Scotia Legal Aid Youth & Criminal Law

5475 Spring Garden Road, Halifax, NS
Phone: 902-420-6583
www.nslegalaid.ca

Nova Scotia Legal Aid Family Law

2830 Agricola Street, Halifax, NS
Phone: 902-420-3450
www.nsfamilylaw.ca

Dalhousie Legal Aid

2209 Gottingen Street, Halifax, NS
Phone: 902-423-8105
www.dal.ca/faculty/law/dlas.html

Settlement and Language Services

Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS)

6960 Mumford Road, Suite 2120, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Phone: 902-423-3607
Fax: 902-423-3154
www.isans.ca

YMCA Centre for Immigrant Programs

65 Main Avenue, Halifax, NS
Phone: 902-457-9622
Fax: 902-457-0386
www.ymcahrm.ns.ca

Immigration Francophone Nouvelle-Écosse

6960 Mumford Road, Suite 2085, Halifax, NS
Phone: 902-433-0439
www.immigrationfrancophonene.ca

African Diaspora Association of the Maritimes (ADAM)

3200 Kempt Rd #202, Halifax, NS
Phone: 902-404-3670
www.admamns.ca

Multicultural Association of Nova Scotia (MANS)

1113 Marginal Road, Halifax, NS

Phone: 902-423-6534

Fax: 902-422-0881

www.mans.ns.ca

Halifax Regional School Board Adult EAL (with daycare facility)

- Bedford Highway, Halifax, NS
- St. Agnes Church, Mumford Road, Halifax, NS

Phone: 902-421-7779

- Forsyth Adult Learning Centre, 136 Pinecrest Drive, Dartmouth, NS

Phone: 902-464-2868

Children and Family Services Act**Child in Need of Protective Services**

[22(1) in this section, “substantial risk” means a real chance of danger that is apparent on the evidence.]

Section 22 (2) A child is in need of protective services where:

(a) the child has suffered physical harm, inflicted by a parent or guardian of the child or caused by the failure of a parent or guardian to supervise and protect the child adequately;

(b) there is a substantial risk that the child will suffer physical harm inflicted or caused as described in clause (a); [risk of physical harm]

(c) the child has been sexually abused by a parent or guardian of the child, or by another person where a parent or guardian of the child knows or should know of the possibility of sexual abuse and fails to protect the child;

(d) there is a substantial risk that the child will be sexually abused as described in clause (c); [risk of sexual abuse]

(e) a child requires medical treatment to cure, prevent or alleviate physical harm or suffering, and the child’s parent or guardian does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable to is unable to consent to the treatment;

(f) the child has suffered emotional harm, demonstrated by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or self-destructive or aggressive behaviour and the child’s parent or guardian does not provide, or

refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the harm;

(g) there is a substantial risk that the child will suffer emotional harm of the kind described in clause (f), and the parent or guardian does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the harm; [risk of emotional harm]

(h) the child suffers from a mental, emotional or developmental condition that, if not remedied, could seriously impair the child's development and the child's parent or guardian does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the condition;

(i) the child has suffered physical or emotional harm caused by being exposed to repeated domestic violence by or towards a parent or guardian of the child, and the child's parent or guardian fails or refuses to obtain services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the violence;

(j) the child has suffered physical harm caused by chronic and serious neglect by a parent or guardian of the child, and the parent or guardian does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the harm;

(ja) there is a substantial risk that the child will suffer physical harm inflicted or caused as described in clause (j); [risk of physical harm due to neglect]

(k) the child has been abandoned, the child's only parent or guardian has died or is unavailable to exercise custodial rights over the child and has not made adequate provisions for the child's care and custody, or the child is in the care of an agency or another person and the parent or guardian of the child refuses or is unable or unwilling to resume the child's care and custody;

(l) the child is under twelve years of age and has killed or seriously injured another person or caused serious damage to another person's property, and services or treatment are necessary to prevent a recurrence and a parent or guardian of the child does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to, the necessary services or treatment; [under twelve and serious crime]

(m) the child is under twelve years of age and has on more than one occasion injured another person or caused loss or damage to another person's property, with the encouragement of a parent or guardian of the child or because of the parent or guardian's failure or inability to supervise the child adequately. [under twelve chronic crime]

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9. This idea is based on Coloroso's work.
10. All examples in this portion are derived from *Parenting in a Culturally Diverse Society*, Manual and Video, 1995. The Children Aid Society of Ottawa-Carleton.
11. Barbara Coloroso
12. Derived in part from: *Keeping the Peace at Home*, Sunburts Communications, Parent and Child Videos, Pleasantville, NY.

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*It is a good time to think about
your ways of raising your children.*



We are playing outside

Cecilia

isans | Immigrant Services
Association of Nova Scotia

6960 Mumford Road • Suite 2120
Halifax • Nova Scotia • Canada • B3L 4P1
Phone: 902.423.3607 • **Fax:** 902.423.3154
Toll free: 1.866.431.6472

www.isans.ca