

**INDIGO CHILDREN: GESTALT THERAPEUTIC GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS
AND CARETAKERS**

A Christian Perspective

by

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Dedicated to all parents who are in need of guidance in bringing up their children.

I acknowledge Jesus Christ as the true and only Saviour.
He receives all the glory.

Ephesians 6:4 ...but rear your children tenderly in the training and discipline and the council and admonition of the Lord.

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Mari, for allowing me to work when we could have spent the time together.

All children who are my inspiration for what I do and who keep reminding me of where I come from and where I am going to.

SUMMARY

INDIGO CHILDREN: GESTALT THERAPEUTIC GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS AND CARETAKERS A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

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The motivation for this study was to challenge the Indigo Child phenomenon and to view it from a Christian perspective. Throughout the study the focus was on the researcher's opinion of Christianity, supported by other authors and the Bible. The assumption of the study was that Indigo Children were ordinary children whose behaviour was formed and reinforced by societal and parental influences and guidance.

The purpose of the study was to set up guidelines for parents and caretakers in order to facilitate and recommend strategic action regarding the management of these children. Guidelines were set up by using a combination of Gestalt philosophy, a Christian perspective and existing guidelines for so-called Indigo Children.

For the purpose of this study Thomas's developmental research and utilization model was applied to the intervention research approach. Semi-structured interviews were used in order to gain information regarding parental styles. The information gained was combined with information found in literature in order to set up guidelines for parents.

Key Terms:

Indigo Children; Parental guidelines; Christian perspective; Gestalt; Therapeutic approach; Attention Deficit Disorder; Hyperactivity; New Age; Strong willed children; Alternative disciplinary styles

OPSOMMING**INDIGO CHILDREN: GESTALT THERAPEUTIC GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS
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Die motivering vir hierdie studie was die uitdaging om die Indigo-kind fenomeen vanuit 'n Christelike perspektief te beskou. Die fokus was deurgaans op die navorser se beskouing van Christenskap, asook ondersteuning daarvoor deur ander outeurs en die Bybel. Die voorveronderstelling van die studie was dat Indigo-kinders gewone kinders is wie se gedrag gevorm en versterk word deur sosiale en ouerlike invloede en leiding.

Die doel van die studie was om riglyne vir ouers en voogde daar te stel en strategiese aksie aangaande die hantering van hierdie kinders te fasiliteer en aan te beveel. Riglyne is saamgestel deur 'n kombinasie van Gestalt-filosofie, 'n Christelike perspektief en bestaande riglyne vir sogenaamde Indigo-kinders te gebruik.

Vir die doel van hierdie studie is Thomas se ontwikkelingsnavorsing en gebruiksmodeel toegepas binne die intervensie navorsingsbenadering. Semi-gestruktureerde onderhouds is gebruik om inligting in te samel aangaande ouerskapstyle. Die inligting wat hieruit verkry is, is gekombineer met inligting vanuit die literatuur om sodoende riglyne vir ouers saam te stel.

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"I declare that 'Indigo Children: Gestalt Therapeutic Guidelines For Parents And Caretakers – A Christian Perspective –' is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references"

NAME: HERMANUS BOSMAN GROBLER

DATE: 11 JUNE 2003

Chapter One

Phase One

INTRODUCTION AND STUDY MOTIVATION

1.1 Introduction

Some years ago Carroll and Tober (1999: xii) came to hear about a “new kind” of problem behaviour amongst children. The problem behaviour was identified by a whole spectrum of people who worked with children. These children were different in the way they were doing things and in how they reacted to other people. Although professionals, who identified the problem, realized the new phenomenon, they did not react to it in a significant manner. Parents and caretakers found it more and more difficult to deal with these children. This led to an intensive research by Carroll and Tober in order to assemble information and report it (Carroll and Tober, 1999: xiii).

What they found, was a “new kind” of child, referred to as an “Indigo Child”. According to Carroll and Tober (1999: xiv), the Indigo Child is not only an American phenomenon and it goes beyond cultural and gender barriers. They identify the Indigo Child as “one who displays a new and unusual set of psychological attributes and shows a pattern of behaviour generally undocumented before (Carroll and Tober, 1999: 1)”.

While reading through literature, the researcher found the approach regarding Indigo Children to be New Age inclined.

In Virtue (2001: 67), Jesus is referred to as an “ascended master”, which correlates with the New Age belief that Jesus is a reincarnation and that His next incarnation will be that of Appollonius of Tyana (De la Guerre, 1991: 238). Virtue (2001: 46) refers to God as “The Source” and Gerard (in Carroll & Tober, 1999: 40) calls Him “Father-Mother-Creator”. The Trinity of God is not acknowledged. This corresponds with the New Age view that sees God as part of the universe. According to them everything is one and everything is God, people are God.

The researcher found it necessary to give a brief discussion of New Age because of its resemblance with the beliefs of the authors who write about Indigo Children and in order for the reader to gain perspective regarding the researcher’s point of view.

1.1.1 The Role of New Age regarding Indigo Children

According to De la Guerre (1991: 90-91), the New Age concept rotates around six central ideas:

- “Everything is one” – god, man, living and non-living things, as well as plants are all part of God thus the obsession with nature.
- “Everything is God” – an impersonal power of consciousness.
- “We are God” – because we are part of everything that is God – everyone must discover God in himself.
- “A changed consciousness” is necessary in order for mankind to acknowledge his divine character and to pursue it.
- “All religion is one” – the religion you choose to use as technique is therefore irrelevant.
- The future is painted with rosy colours – the New Era will arrive by means of more and more people who will achieve a new consciousness and by means of the universe that will transform itself.

According to the researcher, the New Age comes to mankind with the same temptation as in the case of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, that is, not to be obedient to God outside oneself, but to become God Himself. This lie is found in Genesis 3: 4-5 (Amplified Bible), where Satan states that man will not die (reincarnation of New Age) and that they would become just like God. According to the New Age, this should be discovered by mankind (De la Guerre, 1991: 91).

The researcher does not question the specific characteristics of the so-called Indigo Children, but he will attempt to explain this phenomenon by means of specific parental styles. Although the researcher agrees that there are children with specific traits and gifts, he does not agree that these children form a group or subculture whose origin may be from another dimension or planet, as is suggested by Carroll and Tober. They see these children as emissaries, sent by the “Father-Mother-Creator” and they ask themselves whether a subsequent generation of Indigo Children will arrive on earth (Carroll and Tober, 1999: 40).

This view is underlined by the New Age view regarding contact with entities from other “worlds”. According to Malan (1994: 51), many New Age followers have testified how they have become channels of “ascended masters” or enlightened entities. According to Carroll & Tober (2001: 56) Indigo Children are not possessed and they should be honoured with patience, even if parents do not believe what they are saying.

1.1.2 Challenges for the researcher

The motivation for this study was to challenge the Indigo Child phenomenon and to look at the Indigo Child from a Christian perspective. By doing this, the child with its specific characteristics and uniqueness was acknowledged, but the statement by Carroll and Tober that they are sent to earth with a special mission, was rejected. For the purpose of the study the focus was not on general definitions of Christianity, as there are many opinions, but on the researcher's interpretation of Christianity as supported by other authors.

Küng (1995: 18) is of opinion that, essentially, theologians are inclined to talk round the substance, rather than calling it by its name. According to him the logical answer to why Christianity is Christianity, is because it does not have its basis in any principles, ideas or concepts, but in a person, who, in ancient terminology, is called Christ.

From the researcher's point of view, Indigo Children are ordinary children whose behaviour is formed and reinforced by societal and parental influence and guidance. In other words, certain behaviour patterns are reinforced and allowed. This will lead to certain attitudes and eventually being labeled as Indigo Children.

The researcher wanted to set up guidelines for parents and caretakers in order to facilitate and recommend strategic action regarding the management of these children. This was done from a Christian perspective, in a Gestalt therapeutic manner.

The nature of the study did not involve play therapeutic techniques, although the guidelines could be used in play therapy with the child. The parent is seen as the extension piece of the play therapeutic process with the child and is incorporated as medium in order to reach the child.

Throughout the study the child had been referred to as “he”. This was done for practical purposes only and no gender discrimination was intended.

1.2 Operationalizing

1.2.1 Problem formulation

When confronted with the Indigo Child phenomenon the researcher realized that this new phenomenon could set a new trend by which certain children could be labeled as “different” and “weird”. According to the researcher, the “creators” of the Indigo Child phenomenon attached a certain enigmatical significance to these children that could be deceiving. In Virtue (2001: 1), Indigo Children represent a special breed of individuals who have come to our planet to bestow us with their gifts. The author elaborates further in saying that they are here to change our current systems, whether political, educational, nutritional, family or others. They are here to help us reach our potential by becoming more natural and intuitive.

When evaluating this from a Christian perspective, that is, not believing that Indigo Children are from other planets or possible reincarnated entities, these children are considered ordinary children who exist in all levels of society. They may show similar talents, characteristics and behaviour patterns, but not because of their mystical origin. Christianity states that all children are special and need to be brought up according to their gifts.

According to Proverbs 22:6 (Amplified Bible), a child should be trained in the way he should work, and in keeping with his individual gift. They are not from a different dimension. They are not “wise souls” reincarnated as

difficult toddlers or teenagers. They are mere human beings with specific characteristic traits. They do not form part of a subculture, although they may be grouped together as children with specific characteristics and behaviour patterns.

According to the researcher the problem does not lie in the willingness to acknowledge the existence of these characteristics within children, but in the approach and clarification of this phenomenon.

There are no guidelines from a Gestalt point of view with which the parent or caretaker can be guided to react to these children in a positive and meaningful way. This needs to be addressed.

The researcher is of opinion that the Indigo Child is a symptom of:

1. Therapists and/or counselors who believe in the Indigo phenomenon and treat ordinary children as if they are Indigo Children;
2. Certain parental styles that exclusively support and implement guidelines set up specifically for Indigo Children.

Existing guidelines regarding the management of the Indigo Child correspond with general guidelines from a Christian perspective, which is to treat others with love and respect. These guidelines can therefore not be seen as exclusively relating to the Indigo Child.

1.2.2 Problem statement

The need to research the Indigo phenomenon originated when the researcher was approached by parents who mentioned the possibility of their children being Indigo Children, and who needed to know more about this phenomenon.

The researcher came to the conclusion that a lack of Christian parental styles could be the cause of the Indigo phenomenon amongst children, that is, the way parents lead and teach their children may cause these children to behave in ways that are typical of Indigo Children. According to the researcher there exist no current Gestalt therapeutic guidelines for parents and caretakers from a Christian perspective. Wanting to emphasize the effectiveness of this combination, he therefore compiled these guidelines in order to guide parents and caretakers in the upbringing of their children.

1.3 Goal setting

1.3.1 *Aim of the research*

The primary focus of this study was to formulate an aim according to the problem statement, that is, *to set up Gestalt therapeutic guidelines from a Christian perspective in order to assist parents and caretakers in the management of Indigo Children.*

In order to reach the above aim, the following objectives were pursued:

1.3.2 Objectives of the research

1.3.2.1 *Looking at the child from an Indigo perspective*

To conduct an investigation into the Indigo Child phenomenon in order to understand this approach. The research enabled the researcher to challenge this phenomenon from a Christian perspective.

1.3.2.2 *Looking at the child from a Christian perspective*

To utilize the Christian philosophy and identify parental styles by means of semi-structured interviews with Christian parents in order to set up guidelines for parents and caretakers.

1.3.2.3 *Looking at Gestalt therapy*

To study the Gestalt theory in order to set guidelines underlining this perspective. According to Yontef (1993: 2), Gestalt Therapy teaches therapists and patients the phenomenological method of awareness in which perceiving, feeling and acting are distinguished from interpreting and reshuffling pre-existing attitudes. The goal is for clients to become aware of what they are doing, how they are doing it, and how they can change themselves, and at the same time, to learn to accept and value themselves.

Yontef (1993: 2) further states that Gestalt theory focuses more on process (what is happening) than on content (what is being discussed).

The emphasis is on what is being done, thought and felt at the moment, rather than on what was, might be, could be, or should be.

1.3.2.4 *Setting up guidelines for parents and caretakers*

To shift the emphasis from being served to serving others, not as slaves, but as children of God. Symbolically the Indigo Child must thus move from king to priest.

1.4 **Assumptions for this study**

1. Children need to look up to their parents and caretakers and find their role models in them. According to Boshers (1997: 17), student ministers (parents, caretakers) need to ask themselves whether their students (children) are able to see Jesus Christ in the way they live their lives.
2. The parent and caretaker have to take control and lead the way for the child to follow. However, even if it is the parent's role to lead the way, he should also live the example of serving and treating the child with love and respect.
3. According to Ephesians 6:4 (Amplified Bible), children should not be provoked, but reared in the training, discipline, counsel and admonition of the Lord.
4. Knowledge and insight gained on how to compile a guidance program will assist the researcher in guiding parents and caretakers regarding so-called Indigo Children.

1.5 **Preliminary examination**

Parents contacted the researcher at his Play Therapy practice regarding the Indigo phenomenon after they have read about these children.

According to one of the mothers her child's personality traits and behaviour patterns conformed to the traits indicated as those of Indigo Children. She also stated that after applying the Indigo guidelines, her relationship with her child seemed to have deepened. The child's behaviour also improved.

Fascinated by these statements by parents, the researcher decided to investigate this "new phenomenon".

1.5.1 Literature review

For the purpose of this study Indigo Children, Christianity and Gestalt theory were researched and combined in order to determine relevant guidelines for parents and caretakers regarding the management of so-called Indigo Children. Literature regarding new research on Indigo Children was found to be limited. A comprehensive literature study is to be found in chapters two to five.

1.5.2 Expert experience

Experts in the field of Sociology, Psychology, Youth Work, and Theology were consulted in order to gain an appropriate perspective regarding Indigo Children.

In terms of the Indigo phenomenon not one of these experts had previously heard about Indigo Children. No contributions could therefore be made.

The following experts were consulted:

- Prof. A.J. van Wijk – Rector of Huguenot College, theologian and psychologist
- Dr. C. H. Thesnaar – Senior lecturer in Practical Theology (Pastoral)
- Dr. De Wet Schutte - Lecturer in Sociology
- Mr. J.L. Ferreira – Counseling psychologist in private practice
- Mrs. H. Yates – Lecturer in Practical Theology

Certain contributions regarding Christian parental styles were made by Christian parents by means of semi-structured interviews. These interviews were constructed by combining questions from Carroll & Tober (1999: 83-85) with interview schedules set up by the researcher. The contributions will be discussed in chapter six.

The research methodology used in this study will now be discussed.

1.6 Research methodology

1.6.1 *Research approach:*

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport (2002: 359), the researcher is directly involved in the setting, interacts with people, and is the “instrument” when conducting qualitative research. No qualitative report can therefore exclude the researcher’s personal perspective. Consideration should also be given to how the researcher’s own opinion might have shaped events and interpretations.

The extent to which the researcher planned his participation in the study or outlined his role, should determine the extent to which his own perceptions will be reflected in the report.

The qualitative approach is therefore relevant to this study as the researcher's personal perspective and interpretation have been combined with literature and information gained through semi-structured interviews.

1.6.2 *Boundaries and restrictions of the research*

The research was conducted within the boundaries of the Gestalt Theory. Within these boundaries the researcher set up appropriate guidelines, utilizing existing guidelines from the Christian perspective. Existing guidelines from the Indigo perspectives were also used.

The Indigo Child was the focus unit of analysis of this study.

Restrictions of the research could include the fact that only the Christian belief was used as point of departure. Other religious perspectives were not utilized.

1.6.3 *Research strategy and work procedures*

Thomas's developmental research and utilization model (De Vos & Schulze, 1998: 384-394) was applied to the intervention research approach. The model consists of the following six phases:

- Problem analysis and project planning
- Information gathering and synthesis
- Design
- Early development and pilot testing
- Evaluation and advanced development
- Dissemination

At Masters level it was only expected of the researcher to conduct the first three phases.

1.6.3.1 Problem analysis and project planning

1.6.3.1.1 Identifying and involving clients

According to De Vos & Schulze (1998: 387), intervention researchers choose a constituency or population with whom to collaborate. A population is selected whose issues are of current or emerging interest to clients themselves, researchers and society.

As stated earlier the researcher was confronted with the Indigo Child phenomenon in private practice when parents contacted him to inquire about it.

The researcher also came to know about workshops and seminars presented on this topic. The researcher therefore identified Indigo Children as a possible interest group and decided to utilize this group as his study population.

1.6.3.1.2 Gaining entry and co-operation from settings

Successful intervention researchers form a collaborative relationship with representatives of the setting by involving them in identifying problems, planning the project and implementing selected interventions.

By working together with those who can facilitate access, researchers gain the co-operation and support necessary to conduct intervention research (De Vos & Schulze, 1998: 388).

Entry and co-operation were gained by means of liaisons with relevant experts in their fields.

1.6.3.1.3 Identifying concerns of the population

Rothman and Thomas (in De Vos & Schulze, 1998: 388-389) are of the opinion that intervention researchers must avoid imposing external views of the problem and its solution. Rather, the issues of importance to the population must be understood.

By using the Gestalt theory the researcher tried to understand why the population act the way they do. This helped the researcher in setting up guidelines for parents and caretakers.

1.6.3.1.4 Analyzing identified problems

According to Rothman and Thomas (in De Vos & Schulze, 1998: 389) certain questions need to be asked by the researcher in order to explore the consequences that help explain why the problem exists and why interventions have not succeed or been attempted.

These questions were asked by the researcher for a new light to be shed on the Indigo Child phenomenon. The researcher further presented a new set of guidelines for parents and caretakers.

1.6.3.1.5 Setting goals and objectives

According to Rothman and Thomas (in De Vos & Schulze, 1998: 389), a final operation in this phase is setting goals and objectives. They emphasize that these goals and objectives will clarify the proposed ends and means of the intervention research project.

The goal of this study was to set up guidelines for parents and caretakers that would assist them in the management of Indigo Children. In order to fulfill the goal, certain objectives needed to be achieved. These objectives included an adequate knowledge of the Indigo Child, Christianity and the Gestalt theory respectively, which was obtained by means of literature and semi-structured interviews.

1.6.3.2 Information gathering and synthesis

According to Rothman and Thomas (in De Vos & Schulze, 1998: 390), it is essential to discover what others have done to understand and address the problem when planning an intervention research project. Identifying and selecting relevant types of knowledge and using and integrating appropriate sources of information is part of knowledge acquisition.

The researcher acquired knowledge by utilizing existing literature and conducting interviews with experts in their appropriate fields, as well as with Christian parents.

1.6.3.2.1 Using existing information sources

According to De Vos & Schulze (1998: 390), the intervention researcher must look beyond the literature of their particular fields. Various sources of information may be used. For the purpose of this study, computerized databases, books, articles, expert opinions and semi-structured interviews were used to gain information.

1.6.3.2.2 Studying natural examples

De Vos & Schulze (1998: 391) is of opinion that interviews with people who have actually experienced the problem, such as clients, or those with knowledge of it, such as service providers, can provide insight into which interventions might or might not succeed.

As previously stated, the researcher utilized semi-structured interviews in order to obtain information from Christian parents in various occupations.

1.6.3.2.3 Identifying functional elements of successful models

According to De Vos & Schulze (1998: 392), by studying successful and unsuccessful models or programs that have attempted to address the problem, the researcher can identify potential useful elements of an intervention.

Although the guidelines set by Carroll and Tober (1999: 45-47, 52-54, 71-73) have not been proven to be successful, they were studied in order to establish a new set of guidelines, appropriate to this study.

1.6.3.3 Design

A qualitative research strategy was followed. Although there are numerous strategies, the researcher used a case study for the purpose of this study. According to Babbie (in De Vos et al, 2002: 275), a case study can refer to a process, activity, event, program, individual or multiple individuals.

According to De Vos (in De Vos et al, 2002: 275), the exploration and description of the case take place through detailed, in-depth data collection methods. The collection can include interviews, documents, observations or archival records. The researcher needs access to, and the confidence of, the participants. For the purpose of this study the researcher obtained information by means of literature and semi-structured interviews.

1.6.3.3.1 Designing an observational system

According to De Vos & Schulze (1998: 393), the researcher must design a way of observing events relating to the phenomenon naturalistically, a method system for discovering the extent of the problem and detecting effects following the intervention.

For the purpose of this study the observational system included semi-structured interviews.

1.6.3.3.2 Specifying procedural elements of the intervention

According to De Vos & Schulze (1998: 394), the researcher, by observing the problem and studying natural occurring innovations and other prototypes, can identify procedural elements for use in the intervention.

By studying literature, information was obtained, which was utilized for the semi-structured interviews, and eventually for the setting of guidelines for parents and caretakers.

1.7 Definition of terms and core concepts

1.7.1. *Play Therapy*

Play Therapy can be seen as therapy by means of play. Different play techniques can be used in order to get to the therapeutic process. In the foreword of Schoeman & Van der Merwe (1996), Hugo states that through play therapy the therapist can link up with the world of the child and even enter the world of imagination, and, with the aid of supplementary play therapy techniques, relieve and heal the pain and confusion of traumatized children. Play is part of every child's world and through play the child gives meaning to the world by exploring it.

According to West (in Yssel, 1997: 12), talking about Play Therapy implies a holistic approach, using play as means of helping in a non-invasive way. In the *Psychology Dictionary* (Gouws, Louw, Meyer & Plug: 1979: 288) Play Therapy is defined as a psychotherapeutic technique with which the therapist tries to give the child the opportunity to express his emotions verbally, as well as non-verbally.

It is assumed that the child will play out his problems symbolically, that he will get to know his own feelings and channel them more effectively, that

he will learn to trust others within a relationship, and that abnormal behaviour will thus be normalized.

Thus Play Therapy does not necessarily imply the use of play therapeutic techniques, but refers to therapy being done with the child or adolescent. Techniques can be used as tools in order to reach the child in a non-directive, non-threatening way.

1.7.2 *Gestalt therapeutic approach*

According to Yontef (1993: 129), Gestalt therapy teaches therapists and patients the phenomenological method of awareness in which perceiving, feeling, and acting are seen as essential, rather than interpreting the feelings and actions of patients. He goes further in saying that therapists and patients “dialogue”, that is, they communicate their phenomenological perspectives.

The importance, according to Yontef, is to beware of what you are doing, how you are doing it and how you can change yourself, also to learn to accept and value yourself. Gestalt therapy focuses more on process than content (Yontef, 1993: 129). Gestalt therapy further uses focused awareness and experimentation to achieve insight.

Kempler (1974: 49) says the following: “De Gestalt psychologie heeft dit bewustwordingsproces herkend als een opmerkelijk telescopisch venster tussen de mens en zijn universum, en heeft de operatie omgekeerd – in plaats van door het raam naar buiten te kijken, keek zij naar binnen”.

According to Perls (in Louw, 1993a: 631), the person is a unity, not only within himself, but also with his surroundings. Corey (1991: 231) is of

opinion that Gestalt therapy is an existential approach based on the premise that people must find their own way in life and accept personal responsibility if they hope to achieve maturity. The basic, initial goal is set for clients to gain awareness of what they are experiencing and doing.

For the researcher Gestalt highlights the person as a whole entity. He is not separate from the world around him. His family, social environment, church, and many other systems in his life all have some kind of influence on his behaviour.

The way in which these systems influence his life at present, is being focused on by Gestalt. Gestalt further strives to empower the person in order to become whole again and to regain balance.

1.7.3 *Indigo Children*

According to Carroll and Tober (1999: 1), the Indigo Child is one who displays a new and unusual set of psychological attributes and shows a pattern of behaviour generally undocumented before. They go further in stating that there are several kinds of Indigo Children and the characteristics of these children are seen to be specific. These characteristics and behaviour patterns are discussed in chapter two. Virtue (2001: 1) supports the above statements by saying that Indigo Children represent a special breed and that they are here to help other people reach their potential.

1.7.4 *Christian perspective*

Different people view Christianity in different ways. In order to understand the Christian perspective and to prevent confusion, Christian ethics need to be understood.

The researcher worked from a Christian perspective, utilizing the very basics of Christian ethics. These ethics will be discussed in chapter three.

According to Lehmann (1963: 26), one cannot think as a Christian without presupposing a certain way of understanding the Bible. The relation between Christian faith and the text of the Bible is too complex to allow a simple derivation of the faith from the text or of the text from the faith.

The researcher's view coincides with that of Rudnick (1979: 10) when he declares that his own theological orientation is a supreme commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ, both as the object of faith, and as the central and integrating theme of the Christian message, and to Scripture as God's own inspired and infallible witness to that gospel.

According to Patten (in Gumley & Stourton, 1996: 67), Christian values should be central to education in a Christian country, while respecting other faiths and beliefs from Judaism and Islam to Hinduism. These are the values that the researcher emphasizes when setting up the guidelines.

Ramsey (1980: xi) is of opinion that the central ethical notion or "category" in Christian ethics, is "obedient love".

This concept, basic to any understanding of the Christian outlook with the demands it places upon moral action, gives us the clue essential to

understanding certain other notions, such as “justice”, “right” or “obligation”, “duties to oneself”, “vocation”, “virtues” of moral character, “sinfulness” and the “image of God”, which in turn are of crucial importance in elaborating a theory of Christian ethics.

By understanding “basic love” and applying it, as well as being aware of oneself within the realm of this love, the Indigo Child could move from king to priest, from universe sent to God sent.

1.8 Research report

In order to structure the progress of this study, the research report is discussed by means of three phases within which the chapters fit. Phase one consists of chapter one in which the researcher motivates the relevance of the study.

Phase two, that consists of chapters two to five, focuses on the literature study that was done, and phase three focuses on the actual research process and results, and includes chapters six, seven and eight.

1.8.1 Phase one: relevance of the study

1.8.1.1 Chapter one : Introduction and outline of study

1.8.2 Phase two: literature study

1.8.2.1 Chapter two : theoretical grounding of the Indigo Child

1.8.2.2 Chapter three : contextual framework: a Christian perspective

1.8.2.3 Chapter four : child development in the context of this

1.8.2.4	Chapter five	:	study a theoretical framework for gestalt therapeutic guidelines
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1.8.3 Phase three: research results

1.8.3.1	Chapter six	:	the research findings of the study
1.8.3.2	Chapter seven	:	design of a prototype therapeutic guideline for parents and caretakers
1.8.3.3	Chapter eight	:	conclusion and recommendation

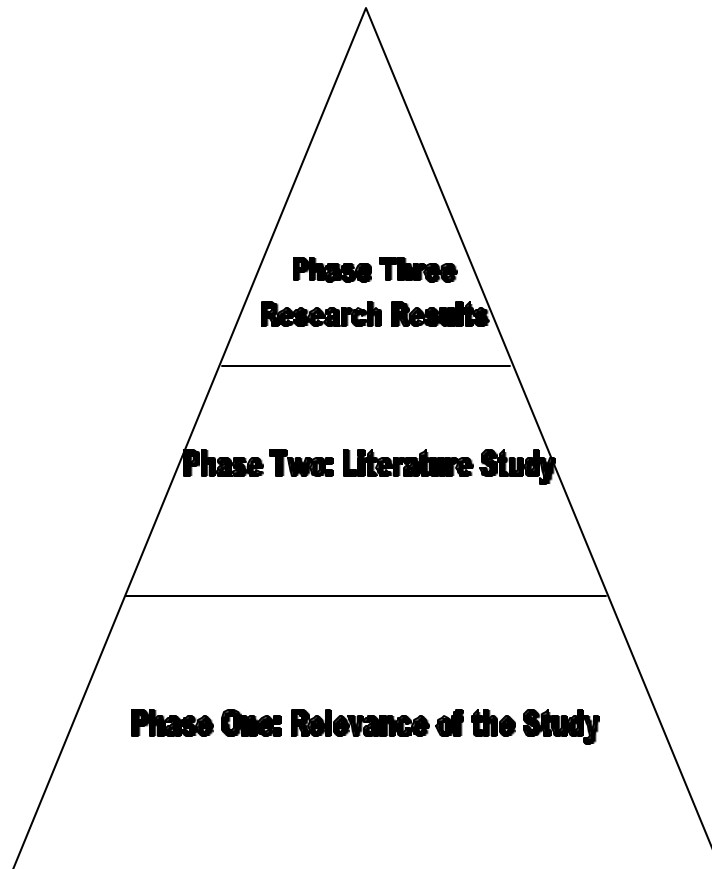


Illustration 1.1: Phase Pyramid

1.9 Contribution of the research

The phenomenon of the Indigo Child is relatively new to South Africa. By using a Christian perspective, combined with a Gestalt therapeutic approach, the researcher is of opinion that parents and caretakers, as well as other interest groups, will take note of the realism of this approach and will apply the guidelines in order to reach their children and help them through difficult times. This may reinstate a balanced parent-child relationship.

1.10 Problems that are anticipated and proposed solutions

Religion is a sensitive issue and the researcher may be heavily criticized from certain religious groups regarding his exclusive Christian approach. His questioning of the New Age phenomenon may also elicit criticism. However, these possible criticisms are only to be expected, given the view the researcher has taken. Nonetheless, his main concern is to convince parents and caretakers to utilize his proposed guidelines in order to empower themselves and their children, restoring balance and achieving gestalt.

1.11 Conclusion

In Chapter one, phase one, an introduction was given in the form of an overview of the research, and the motivation for this study was discussed. In phase two, Chapters two to five, an in-depth literature study will be discussed.

Chapter Two

Phase Two

THEORETICAL GROUNDING OF THE INDIGO CHILD

2.1 Introduction

The Indigo Child phenomenon seems to be quite a controversial issue in South Africa at present. Although this phenomenon was first identified in the late seventies, it is only within the last few months that the Indigo Child has become a topic of discussion in South Africa. The lack of knowledge regarding Indigo Children became evident during interviews, which were conducted with psychologists, social workers, youth workers and pastors.

The researcher was confronted with Indigo Children for the first time in 2001 when parents consulted him regarding the topic. Literature about Indigo Children was found to be limited.

2.2 Origin of Indigo Children

According to Virtue (2001: 35-36), the role of the Indigo Children in the world today has ancient roots and can be traced to the Hawaiian Islands, remnants of Lemuria, which once existed in the Pacific Rim. The Lemurians were peaceful and loving, and communicated telepathically, which, according to the *Psychology Dictionary* (Gouws et al, 1979: 288), is the extrasensory sighting of information that is present in the memory or consciousness of another individual.

They sensed that their land was going to sink and started to move to higher ground. By this move they escaped mass deaths precipitated by

earth changes. They settled in areas currently known as Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

However, due to influences by European settlers such as exposure to the spoken and written language, processed foods and basing their spirituality on externals such as a separate God, religious rules and ancient texts, they gradually started to lose their telepathic and spiritual abilities.

According to Seigle (in Carroll & Tober, 1999: 5), Nancy Ann Tappe was the first person to identify Indigo Children and to write about them. Tappe classifies certain kinds of human behaviour into color groups and is able to “see” the colour of people’s auras and to learn about their mission on earth. In the late 1970’s she noticed a colour she has not seen before and named it Indigo, because of its dark blue property. Her findings were published for the first time in 1982 (the current edition in 1986) in her book “Understanding Your Life through Color” (Tappe in Carroll & Tober, 1999: 7).

According to Virtue (2001: 7), the term *Indigo Children* refers to “indigo blue” a deep shaded colour of blue, similar to that found in denim jeans or lapis stones. The term is derived from chakra (energy) colours. Chakras are energy “wheels” of the spinal column and are situated where the nerves converge. There are seven chakras, situated at the base of the spine, over the spleen, at the navel, over the heart, at the front of the throat, in the space between the eyebrows, and at the top of the head (Steyn, 1994: 232). The sixth chakra, in the space between the eyebrows, and also known as the “third eye”, spins at three different colours, namely: white, purple, and primarily indigo.

Children born from the middle 1970’s to date are often called Indigo Children, because they are *children of the indigo ray* (Virtue, 2001: 10).

Indigo Children are also described by Virtue (2001: 10) as highly psychic and spiritually gifted.

According to Chapman (2002a: 1), Indigo Children are the world's most current generation. "Indigo" refers to their life colour in their auras (energy glaze that surrounds the human being and differs from person to person) and is indicative of the Third Eye Chakra that represents intuition and psychic ability.

Virtue agrees with Tappe in (Carroll & Tober, 1999: 7) when she states that Indigo Children are a group of individuals who first arrived on earth in the late 1970's. Some Indigo Children arrived in the late 1950's and 1960's as "explorers" to scope out earth for the larger group of Indigo Children that would follow (Virtue, 2001: 7).

At this stage it might be important to take notice of the authors who believe in and write about the Indigo Children. Virtue is a spiritual doctor of psychology who conducts workshops across the country on intuition, spiritual healing and manifestation. Carroll and Tober are self-help lecturers and authors. Their work is about self-empowerment and the raising of self-esteem. According to Carroll (in Carroll & Tober, 1999: xii), she and Tober enable people through their books to lift themselves above the level of whom they "thought" they were. Their work also involves spiritual healing and encourages self-examination for the purpose of finding the "God within" first, before searching for any outside source.

According to Carroll & Tober (1999: xiv), Indigo Children could well be seen as *a new human consciousness slowly arriving on the planet now – manifested in our children.*

In the Kryon Quarterly newspaper Carroll stated that Kryon has already spoken about Indigo Children in 1989. He stated that the new children of

the “Indigo” colour have arrived in their masses and would be an amazing attribute of age. These children are also referred to as Children of the Blue Ray, the Blue Race, and Children of the Violet Flame (Carroll, 1997: 1).

According to Chapman (2002b: 2), having an Indigo Child should not be perceived as negative. Parents of Indigo Children should realize that they are wonderful, marvelous, spiritual gifts. Parents should be honoured that these children have chosen them as parents and must help them develop to their fullest Indigo potential. Parents’ own understanding of how to interact with these children will definitely help the Indigo Children.

2.3 Purpose

According to Virtue (2001: 1), the Indigo Child is from a special breed of individuals who were sent to earth to heal our world. This viewpoint is shared by Gerard (in Carroll & Tober, 1999: 37-38) who believes that they came to earth with a definite purpose. He sees them as emissaries from heaven who bear wisdom and who serve the planet, their parents, and friends. The purpose of Indigo Children is to bring subtle messages to mankind that are beyond all of mankind’s knowing, but will help find truth, purpose and peace.

According to the researcher no intensive research has been done to confirm the above viewpoints.

From the researcher’s point of view these children have not been “sent” to earth to perform special duties and lead mankind to peace. They are

ordinary children with special gifts in certain areas and should not be approached differently than other children who may also have specific gifts and talents.

Regarding their purpose, Chapman (2002a: 1) states that Indigo Children have come to earth with difficult challenges to overcome. They have to raise the vibration of planet Earth and bring enlightenment. Indigo Children thus have a specific mission to accomplish. They have to share their knowledge and teach others to live together in harmony.

According to Virtue (2001: 33-34), every human being has a Life Purpose, that is, a mission that we agree to prior to our incarnation (becoming flesh or human). Indigo Children all share a similar global Life Purpose, that is, to help usher in the New Age of Peace. This New Age of Peace, according to Virtue (2001: 42), refers to a life of honesty and co-operation. The earth will be warm, tropical and moist. People will live a more natural life, will not eat processed foods, will work from home and will let go of meaningless jobs.

2.4 Characteristics

From the above discussion it becomes clear that the so-called “Indigo Children” have specific characteristics. It is the opinion of Carroll & Tober (1999: 1) that an Indigo Child can be defined as *one who displays a new and unusual set of psychological attributes and shows a pattern of behaviour generally undocumented before.*

The most common traits of Indigo Children can be summarized as follows (Carroll, L. & Tober, J.; Chapman, W.H.; Virtue, D.):

Carroll, L. & Tober, J.	Virtue, D.	Chapman, W.H.
They come into the world with a feeling of royalty and may often act like it.	Being strong-willed.	He gets bored easily with assigned tasks.
They have a feeling of “deserving to be here” and are surprised when others do not share that.	Born in 1978 or later (A few Indigos came to earth prior to 1978 in order to gather information and set the groundwork for the coming of the Indigo children race. These people are called <i>lightworkers</i>).	He displays symptoms of Attention Deficit Disorder.
Self-worth is not a big issue. They often tell the parents “who they are”.	Headstrong	He is particularly creative.
They have difficulty with absolute authority (authority without explanation or choice).	Creative, with an artistic flair for music, jewelry making, poetry, etc.	He displays intuition.
They simply will not do certain things, for example waiting in line is difficult for them.	Prone to addictions.	He has strong empathy with others.
They get frustrated with systems that are ritual-oriented and do not require creative thought.	An “old soul” as if they are 13, going on 43.	He is very intelligent.
They often see better ways of doing things, both at home and in school, which make them seem like “system busters” (nonconforming to any system).	Intuitive or psychic, possibly with a history of seeing angels or deceased people.	He developed abstract thinking very early.
They seem antisocial, unless they are with their own kind. If there are no others of like consciousness around them, they often turn inward, feeling like no other human understands them. School is often extremely difficult for them socially.	An isolationist, either through aggressive acting out, or through fragile introversion.	He is very talented and may be identified as gifted.
They will not respond to “guilt” discipline (“Wait till your father gets home and finds out what you did”).	Independent and proud, even if they are constantly asking you for money.	He seems to be a daydreamer.

Carroll, L. & Tober, J.	Virtue, D.	Chapman, W.H.
They are not shy in letting you know	Possesses a deep desire to help the	He has very old, deep, wise-looking

what they need.	world in a big way.	eyes.
They are computerized children who spend most of their time in front of the computer.	Wavers between low self-esteem and grandiosity.	He has spiritual intelligence.
They are technologically oriented.	Prone to insomnia, restless sleep, nightmares, or difficulty with/fear of falling asleep.	Most of these children are eight years old or younger.
They are fearless because of their belief in themselves.	Has a history of depression, or even suicidal thoughts or attempts.	
They are determined to follow through on tasks.	Looks for real, deep, lasting friendships.	
	Easily bonds with animals or plants.	

Table 2.1 – Characteristics of Indigo Children

According to Chapman (2002b: 2), a child is probably an Indigo Child if there is an agreement with ten or more of the above-mentioned statements (including the list of Carroll & Tober). If the child's characteristics correspond with more than 15 of those mentioned above, he is almost definitely an Indigo Child.

According to Virtue (2001: 19-21), a child will most probably be an Indigo Child when he displays 14 or more of the above-mentioned characteristics. When he displays 11 to 13 he is most likely an "Indigo Child in training".

Indigo Children are further described by Chapman (2002c: 1) as children who act with extreme rage that will need a safe, acceptable outlet in the form of counseling. They may experience existential depression at an early age if they do not remember their purpose here on earth.

According to Peter (2002: 1), Indigo Children are also known as Millennium Children and are described by Dennis & Whitman in their 1998

edition of “Millennium Children”. He goes further by saying that a growing number of children have been born within the last decade or so. These “Millennium Children” seem to be more intuitive and more creative than older generations were at that age. They present a quick knowledge of computers and have a natural understanding of technology. This understanding sometimes borders on the uncanny. They tend to be natural healers and have an understanding of the spiritual beyond their years. They also have a matter-of-fact attitude towards the paranormal, that is, a phenomenon that cannot be explained and that does not fit into the concept of scientific knowledge. However, Peter identifies another side of the Millennium Children, a so-called “yin” side.

According to de la Guerre (1991: 85), “yin” forms one part of the “yin-yang” doctrine that is the formative principle in the whole realm of Chinese thought, and teaches a certain balance between two poles. Yin refers to the passive, black, cold, slow, feminine, introvert, silent, negative pole.

Peter (2002: 1) refers to these Yin Children as “End-Times Children”. These “End-Times Children” are also identified because of their extraordinary ways, but instead of representing humankind’s best side and its hopes, these children are the embodiment of mankind’s fears and uncertainties. Although they are also intelligent and creative, with a natural understanding of technology, it is the destructive side that interests them, for example bombs, firearms, or other weapons. They show a strong ability to manipulate and destroy, they seem to lack the intuitive compassion of their counterparts and instead focus inwards, until their feelings explode in an unstoppable rage.

According to Peter (2002: 2), these are the two paths to our future. On the one side we have the Millennium Children and on the other side the End-

Times Children, both not easily understood or accepted. Whereas the Millennium Children are the natural healers, the End-Times Children bring emotional or spiritual pain to those they touch, and in some cases, being natural killers, that is, having an inborn tendency to destruct or kill, they bring death.

Chapman (2002c: 1) makes the statement that some experts believe that up to 90% of all children under the age of nine are Indigo Children. Some even believe that certain adults are Indigo Children. This corresponds with the view of Virtue (2001: 21). Chapman goes further in saying that Indigo Children have strong connections with humanity. They may have strong psychic abilities and may be natural healers (Chapman, 2002c: 2).

These healers seem to be naturally attuned to Reiki energy, which is an alternative healing method where body energy is used for the healing process. There are even some children with Asperger's syndrome and autism who are Indigo Children and who, together with spiritual counseling and various energy therapies can be helped to come out of their shells (Chapman, 2002c: 2).

According to Dr. David Weeks (in Virtue, 2001: 3-4), Indigo Children are eccentrics who are cheerful, idealistic and too busy to try and save the world to be bothered with making their beds. They share three basic characteristics, namely: a strong will, a good sense of humor, and the fact that they have fewer health problems than the general population and thus live longer. The latter trait contradicts what Virtue (2001: 42) says about their life expectancies when she says that, before incarnation, we choose the amount of years that we are going to live on earth.

Virtue (in Carroll & Tober, 1999: 23-24) states that Indigo Children wear their God-given gifts "on their sleeves".

From the above it thus seems as if these children are gifted and the characteristics of Indigo Children correspond greatly with the characteristics of gifted children. Gouws et al (1979: 30) define giftedness as a basic, primarily inborn ability to develop and acquire skills.

According to Hegerle (in Carroll & Tober, 1999: 32), Indigo Children process their emotions differently than other children, because they have an exceptional high self-esteem and strong integrity. They feel strongly about working things out for themselves and will only accept help from others if it is presented with respect and within a format of true choice. They are intelligent and *can suck up knowledge like a sponge*. The author goes further by saying that Indigo Children have innate healing abilities and they have the tendency to be drawn to other Indigo Children. It is important for them to feel safe in order to fully explore their universe (Hegerle in Carroll & Tober, 1999: 33-35).

The National Foundation for Gifted and Creative Children in America have set up the following list of characteristics for gifted children:

- They are highly sensitive.
- They have excessive amounts of energy.
- They get bored easily which may appear as having a short attention span.
- They require emotionally stable and secure adults around them.
- They will resist authority if it is not democratically oriented.
- They have preferred ways of learning, particularly in reading and math.
- They may become easily frustrated, because they have big ideas, but lack the resources of people to assist them in carrying out these tasks.

- They learn through experimentation and resist rote memory or being a listener only.
- They cannot sit still unless absorbed in something of their own interest.
- They are very compassionate and have many fears such as death and loss of loved ones.
- When experiencing failure early in their lives, they may give up and develop permanent learning blocks.

According to Gerard (in Carroll & Tober, 1999: 37-38), Indigo Children can be easy and loving and they live proudly in the now. Many of them look wise and have “powerful eyes”. They appear to be very spirited, stay happy and have their own agenda. Indigo Children are fascinated with accuracy and how people interrelate. They can be easily disturbed when things are out of synchronization. They like being spontaneous and get easily excited for no obvious reason.

When looking at these characteristics the Indigo Child could easily be diagnosed as an ordinary child with obsessive-compulsive tendencies. According to the American Psychiatric Association (1994: 672-673) these tendencies include the following:

- A preoccupation with details, rules, lists, order, organization, or schedules to the extent that the major point of the activity is lost;
- Perfectionism that interferes with task completion;
- Excessive devotion to work and productivity to the exclusion of leisure activities and friendships;
- Being overly conscientious, scrupulous, and inflexible about matters of morality, ethics, or values.

Viewing the Schizotypal Personality Disorder according to the American Psychiatric Association (1994: 645) other corresponding characteristics include:

- Odd beliefs or magical thinking that influences behaviour and is inconsistent with subcultural norms;
- Unusual perceptual experiences, including bodily illusions;
- Odd thinking and speech;
- Behaviour or appearance that is odd, eccentric, or peculiar.

It is not the researcher's intention to insinuate that so-called Indigo Children have personality disorders. He merely wants to demonstrate that these children could be ordinary children who display certain characteristics also found in people suffering from these disorders. These characteristics are not exclusive to Indigo Children, but also exist elsewhere.

2.5 Different types of Indigo Children

According to Tappe (in Carroll & Tober, 1999: 10-12), there are four different types of Indigo Children:

2.5.1 *The Humanists*

These Indigo Children work with and serve the "masses", and include doctors, lawyers, teachers, salesmen, businessmen and politicians. They are hyperactive, extremely social and have very strong opinions. They can be awkward in their bodies and may run into the wall, because they forget to turn on the brakes. They find it difficult to play with one toy and have to bring everything out, without touching most of it. You have to keep reminding them to do things, because they get distracted easily.

Most of the above characteristics can again be found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 1994: 84) where there is an outlay of the diagnostic criteria of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. The following traits are included:

- Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly;
- Often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace;
- Often has difficulty organizing tasks or activities;
- Is often easily distracted by extraneous stimuli;
- Is often forgetful in daily activities;
- Often fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat;
- Often runs about or climbs excessively in situations in which it is inappropriate;
- Is often “on the go” or often acts as if “driven by a motor”.

2.5.2 *The Conceptualists*

These Indigo Children are more into projects than people and will be tomorrow’s engineers, architects, designers, astronauts, pilots, and military officers. They are often very athletic and not as clumsy as the humanists. They like to control others, especially their mothers if they are boys, and their fathers, if they are girls. They have tendencies towards addictions, especially towards drugs during their teenage years.

Characteristics that coincide with criteria from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 1994: 94) include the following traits from the Oppositional Defiant Disorder:

- Often actively defies or refuses to comply with adults’ requests or rules;

- Often deliberately annoys people;
- Often blame others for his mistakes or misbehaviour;
- Is often touchy and easily annoyed by others;
- Is often angry and resentful;
- Is often spiteful or vindictive.

2.5.3 *The Artists*

The artistic Indigo Children are much more sensitive and often physically smaller than the others. They are creative and will be tomorrow's teachers and artists. They will always go into the creative side of something. Between the ages of four and ten they may start a variety of different creative arts, doing one for five minutes and then put it down. They may work with a few different instruments and when reaching their teenage years, they will pick one field and become an artist in it.

2.5.4 *The Interdimensionals*

These Indigo Children are larger than all the other Indigo Children, and at one or two years of age you cannot tell them anything. They are the ones who will bring new philosophies and religions to the world. They may tend to become bullies (this is also a trait of the child with Conduct Disorder as stipulated by the American Psychiatric Association (1994: 90)) because of their size and because they do not fit in like the other types do.

According to Hegerle (in Carroll & Tober, 1999: 32-35), Indigo Children can see through hidden agendas. They are determined to work things through for themselves. They will only accept help and guidance if it is offered with respect and within a format of true choice. They create experiences where they need to grow. Experiencing life helps them best and they respond best when treated like respected adults.

Indigo Children have innate healing abilities, which they may be using without knowing it. They need to feel safe and for them safety means it is okay to do things differently.

When looking at the discussion of the common traits of Indigo Children in chapter two as depicted by Carroll and Tober (1999: 1-2), the resemblance with the traits of the Narcissistic Personality Disorder is striking. These traits include the following (American Psychiatric Association: 661):

- A grandiose sense of self-importance;
- Preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty or ideal love;
- Belief that he is “special” and unique and can only be understood by, or should associate with, other special or high status people;
- Requirement of excessive admiration;
- A sense of entitlement;
- Arrogant, haughty behaviour or attitudes.

From the above comparison it seems possible that Indigo Children may only be ordinary children who display certain kinds of personality traits, already existing as diagnostic criteria. Although the characteristics of an Indigo Child may not comply with all the diagnostic criteria of a certain personality disorder, he may show certain aspects thereof, which means that these traits are not exclusive to those of Indigo Children.

2.6 Indigo Children and Attention Deficit with Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

According to Virtue (2001: 1-2), Indigo Children will not let anyone stand in their way. They are often labeled as having Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit with Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

However, it is not they who are disordered, but the world they are trying to fit into. According to Gerard in Carroll & Tober (1999: 40) Indigo Children are labeled with ADD because they cannot consistently relate to the linear mind or linear objectives. However, this is a valuable characteristic and not a deficit. ADD could be dealt with by providing a creative dialogue with these children and permitting them to safely express their activities and orientation in the spiritual or creative realm.

According to Virtue (2001: 2-3), Indigo Children are highly gifted and it is this giftedness that could be mistaken for ADD or ADHD. Gifted and ADHD children share many similar characteristics with the only difference that ADHD children are unable to finish tasks whereas Indigo Children tend to finish what they start. She goes further in saying that ADHD actually stands for **A**ttention **D**ialed into a **H**igher **D**imension. Indigo Children seem to require a great amount of stimulation and excitement. If they are not stimulated, they create stimulation themselves. It is Virtue's opinion that ADHD children most probably need guidance with respect, rather than Ritalin (prescription drug for ADHD).

Virtue (2001: 23-24) points out that being put on Ritalin, Indigo Children do "fit in" with other children, and it may even put them on a "high", which may help them to escape the pain of feeling different or empty inside for not being able to work on their Life Purpose because of the medication. The price they pay is high, because their spiritual gifts are bound in a chemical straight-jacket. They lose their ability of intuition, as well as their psychic abilities and warrior personalities. They also have a tendency to abuse illegal drugs and may become violent.

According to Virtue (2001: 24-25), studies show that ADD and ADHD run in families.

This is an indication that most Indigo Children are being raised by lightworkers. A possible solution in dealing with ADD may be creative dialogue with these children and allowing them to safely express their activities and orientation in the spiritual and creative realm (Virtue, 2001: 40)

The characteristics of the Indigo Child compare significantly with the child with ADHD as discussed previously under the *Humanists*. It may thus be possible that Indigo Children are mistaken for children with ADHD.

According to the Child Development Institute (2000: 4), the symptoms of ADD are caused by a neurological dysfunction within the brain. It may either be inherited or acquired. ADD may be acquired through various conditions, which cause damage to the brain, for example during pregnancy where drugs are used, infectious diseases, overexposure to radiation, pre-maturity, complicated delivery, meningitis, seizures from fever, head injury and lead toxicity. Although excessive use of sweets does not cause ADHD, it may make symptoms worse for children who already have the condition.

2.7 Further aspects of Indigo Children

According to Carroll & Tober (2001: 56), Indigo Children are not possessed. They should be honoured with patience even if you may not believe what they are saying. It might be helpful to have knowledge of the following aspects about Indigo Children, in order to understand them better (Virtue, 2001: 133-142):

2.7.1 *Indigo Children are ultra sensitive*

Parents and caretakers may feel frustrated because Indigo Children may be impossible to live with at times. It may appear as if everything is upsetting them. This may be the result of their tendency to feel things so intensely that it is sometimes painful. Indigo Children become overwhelmed by the emotions they pick up from others and may avoid one-to-one conversations.

They are very picky when it comes to comfortable clothes and shoes. They need to feel comfortable and may often wear loose-fitting clothes.

Many Indigo Children develop allergies. Their skin sensitivity may lead to allergic reactions to laundry detergents and synthetic fabrics and pesticides may cause itchiness, rashes, asthma, and anxiousness. Household cleaning agents need to be adjusted and food dyes and unnatural additives need to be avoided. They do not have a tolerance for artificial smells and heavy perfumes because of their over-sensitivity to smells (Virtue, 2001: 133-135).

2.7.2 *Indigo Children's bodies need to be detoxified*

Detoxification from meats, fowl, and fish contaminated with hormones and pesticides is important. Detoxification of pesticides in fruits and vegetables, toxins in beverages, nitrates, toxins in toiletry items, and pollutants should also be done. Detoxification is important, because toxins pull down energy levels. They also block mental alertness and spiritual growth (Virtue, 2001: 135-139).

2.7.3 *Indigo Children and animals*

According to Virtue (2001: 140) case studies show that Indigo Children usually develop close bonds with their pets and telepathic communication between these children and their animals is common. Parents should give their Indigo Children the opportunities to raise and care for pets. This teaches the children about responsibility and long-term commitments.

2.7.4 *Indigo Children and the environment*

Indigo Children have a Life Purpose to help the world. They need to be assisted to heal any sense of emptiness and to feel as if they are making a positive difference. Parents and caretakers need to be creative when thinking of ways in which Indigo Children can contribute to heal the earth (Virtue, 2001: 141-142).

According to the researcher, environmental education should already start in the early years of childhood. Children should be made aware of their important role regarding the environment and what they could do to make a positive contribution. This education should then be taken further in schools where children could be taught to respect nature by means of environmental camps and appropriate subjects. Environmental education should however not be limited to Indigo Children, but should be given to all children. It is not valid to say that only Indigo Children have a Life Purpose as stated by Virtue (2001: 141). Every human being has a Life Purpose. Every child is special and has to use his specific talents to contribute to the environment and help others.

2.8 Conclusion

The researcher has come to the following conclusions regarding Indigo Children:

1. The characteristics of Indigo Children as depicted in Table 2.1 cannot be solely reserved for Indigo Children. All children have special talents. A child does not have to be an Indigo Child if he reveals ten or more of the discussed traits.
2. There is no scientific proof that Indigo Children come from other planets and are different from other children. The researcher is of opinion that Indigo Children are mere children with certain characteristics and behaviour patterns due to parental education styles and environmental influences.
3. All children should be treated with respect and according to their talents and personalities, not only Indigo Children.

In the next chapter the focus will shift to a Christian perspective within the context of the Indigo Child.

Chapter Three

Phase Two

CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

3.1 Introduction

For the purpose of this study the Christian perspective was utilized as a contextual framework in which the Indigo Child could be placed. A variety of **concepts** are found within the research process that need to be defined. According to De Vos (in De Vos et al, 2002:29), a concept is neither true nor false, neither valid nor invalid. The concepts within this chapter also have to be placed within a specific **context**. It is this context that has a specific influence on the research process, as well as on the outcome of the research.

In the exegetical methodology of the Bible, the model described by Friedl & Friedl (in De Vos et al, 2002: 443) was used as reference for this chapter. In this model the authors mention that the Bible can be examined critically with the same empiric-rational methods as any other literature. Responsible and serious exegesis can only be done with the Christian faith as a presupposition, since methodological work depends not only on its object, but also on a certain attitude and expectation from the researcher.

When referring to the Bible text in this chapter, a preliminary analysis was necessary to demarcate the textual unit and to determine its (non-) uniformity. It is hardly possible within the scope of this study to analyze entire Biblical books. The demarcation for a textual unit, used in this chapter, was checked by the signals suggested by Friedl & Friedl (in De Vos et al, 2002: 449), viz. changes of time, place and subject matter.

Since the meaning of the textual unit substantially depends on the general meaning of the entire text, and since the meaning of words, sentences and partial texts are induced by the literary context, the relationship between the pericopes and the text as a whole has to be considered (Friedl & Friedl in De Vos et al, 2002: 450).

The practical application for every textual unit was done by answering the following questions, as suggested by Friedl & Friedl (in De Vos et al, 2002: 450):

- Where does the pericope begin and end?
- How can it be divided into units and meaning?
- What is its context (especially with regard to subject and action)?
- Which historical, social, religious and psychological factors are relevant?

The researcher is aware of the comprehensive science of Biblical exegesis and only used a preliminary analysis for reference to the Bible as communicator of the Christian faith. References in this chapter reflect the personal interpretation of the researcher as a Christian.

Although the researcher has no formal theological background or biblical exegetical basis, the following three key concepts are interpreted by the researcher to be the foundation of Christianity, and will be discussed accordingly:

3.1.1 Jesus Christ

The researcher interprets Jesus Christ as the core of Christianity. He is the ultimate role model for Christian children, in His relationship with His father, God, in whose footsteps parents must follow in order to be guided in how to handle and discipline their children.

According to the researcher, Christianity refers to the belief of people who believe in Jesus Christ as the true and only Saviour of all people. It is also one of the oldest religions as confirmed by the following quote:

“Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was Christ.

And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named for him, are not extinct at this day.” Josephus (c. A.D. 37-100) (in De Bruyn, 2002: 5).

In 1 John 4: 15 (Amplified Bible) Jesus Christ as the core of Christianity is confirmed when it states that *anyone who confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.*

In John 6: 35 Jesus proclaims that He is the Bread of Life and that *he who comes to Me will never be hungry, and he who believes in and cleaves to and trusts in and relies on Me, will never thirst anymore* (Amplified Bible).

3.1.2 The Holy Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)

Within Christianity there is clear reference towards the Trinity, that is the true belief in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The core of Christianity as a faith lies in the belief that Jesus Christ was crucified for mankind and that He was resurrected to reign together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. In Isaiah 44: 6 God refers to Himself as the First and the Last, and that there is no other God besides Him (Amplified Bible).

The importance of the Holy Spirit is emphasized in Acts 10: 45 (Amplified Bible) where the Holy Spirit was bestowed and poured out largely, even on the Gentiles. In John 8: 18 (Amplified Bible) Jesus refers to Himself as the One who bears testimony regarding Himself, as well as His Father who has sent Him. The importance of the Trinity is outlined in John 14: 11; 16-17 where Jesus states that He is in the Father and the Father in Him. He also confirms that He will ask the Father and that He will give the people another Comforter or Intercessor, that is the Holy Spirit, so that He may remain with the people forever (Amplified Bible).

The researcher has thus come to the conclusion that the leading, help and guidance of the Holy Spirit are of great importance for Christian parenting.

3.1.3 The Bible

Further, the Bible (Old and New Testament) is accepted as the written Word of God.

According to Joubert (in Meiring, 1996: 146), the Bible is the Word of God in which God's voice is heard of in an authoritative manner.

The Bible therefore serves as a guide to listen to the will of God, but also as a Book of comfort and encouragement to those who believe in God, and even to those who don't. According to Nel (1998: 4), young people should receive ministry, which is a communicative act in the name of God, that is, on His behalf. The intention is to help the children to become what they were created for.

The researcher interprets ministry as a form of education.

Through ministry, children should also be taught how to stand in a respectful relationship with their parents, and parents should be taught how to manage their children. This is applicable to all children, also so-called Indigo Children. He agrees with Ezzo & Ezzo (1998: 18) when they say that, although the Bible provides moral ideals, it does not provide parents with exact "how-to's" regarding parenting. The Bible does not consist of a detailed blueprint that prescribes to every action.

3.2 Background and history

For the purpose of this dissertation Ephesians 6:4 (Amplified Bible) will be referred to as the basis for the child-rearing process, that is children should be reared in the training, discipline, counsel and admonition of the Lord. This perspective will be referred to as the "Christian Perspective".

According to Küng (1995: 18), it is not the history of the term "Christianity" that is decisive to us. The two thousand year old historical Christianity as a way of faith and life had to do with Jesus Christ who had to come to earth as a human to die for the people's sin.

Its basis thus lies in a person and not in principles, ideas or concepts. However, Küng continues by saying that Christianity is not a Biblical term.

The word “Christians” already appears in the Acts of the Apostles where it is mentioned that this name appeared in Syrian Antioch. In Acts 11: 26 (Amplified Bible) it is said that the disciples in Antioch were called Christians. It is here where the first Gentile Christians lived alongside Jewish Christians who had fled from Jerusalem. In the year 110 Christianity appears in the letters of a Bishop Ignatius where Christianity is already been differentiated from Judaism. Ignatius stated that it was “out of place to say Jesus Christ and to live as a Jew” (Küng, 1995: 18).

According to König (2001: 14), people in general believe that there is a God. It is the minority of people who do not believe in any God. However it is the way that the believers believe and how they perceive God, that differs. The perspectives of people regarding God and His will differ significantly according to Borchert & Stewart (1986: 157). At the one end they mention the so-called legalists who believe that God’s laws are timeless, true and specific for everybody irrespective of time and place. At the other end are the situationalists who believe that God’s will vary according to time and place and that it must be discovered in the concrete human situation.

Throughout the history of religion people have identified a great variety of things with the will of God – from celibacy to polygamy, from the right of kingly rule to the right of social revolt, from the pursuit of peace to the prosecution of war, and from the support of religious art to radical iconoclasm (Borchert & Stewart, 1986: 157).

When looking at Jesus, the Son of God, a variety of different interpretations can be found. According to De Bruyn (2002: 4), the “Historical Jesus” is loaded with various descriptions.

He has been called an “Essene” who rebelled from his order, a Palestinian “freedom fighter”, a “guru” who visited India where He acquired his teachings, a “Gnostic mystic”, one of the “great prophets”, a Jewish “troublemaker”, or merely an “extreme carpenter” who died a “martyr”.

These descriptions assume that Christians have so changed and embellished the story of Jesus, that the original and true Jesus is lost in the mists of time. If one cannot accept that Jesus is who the Christians say He is, one assumes that He is someone else. However, de Bruyn (2002: 4) states that if one wants to discover the real Jesus, one must not assume anything, but take the facts as they appear.

According to Joubert (in Meiring, 1996: 145), Christianity centres around the person and work of Jesus Christ. His earthly appearance, but especially His crucifixion and resurrection, form the heart of all Christian denominations and ecclesiastical dogma.

The essence of religion according to the Bible is a personal relationship between God and man. Without God one cannot speak about man and vice versa. Man finds the purpose and destiny of his existence in his obedience and service to God. Without God man’s life is worthless (Crafford in Meiring, 1996: 215).

According to the researcher, the existence of man and God is intermingled and cannot be seen as separate. God made man to serve and love Him and to walk a personal path with Him in obedience. According to Crafford (in Meiring, 1996: 215), man is the highlight of God’s creation.

Man becomes a creative, thinking being. God can talk to him, he can communicate with God, love Him, serve Him and worship Him.

Man becomes the crown of the creation, because he receives a consciousness of a transcendent spiritual dimension that differentiates him from animals.

In Genesis 1:27-31 (Amplified Bible) one finds God creating man and putting him above all other creatures, giving him dominion over them. God stands in relationship with man. According to van Wyk (in Meiring, 1996: 217), man cannot be understood other than in his relationship with God. God wants man to focus on Him, but due to the fall of man his life is directed away from God.

Crafford (in Meiring, 1996: 217) is of opinion that this tendency away from God leads to idol worshipping. In Revelation 21: 8 it is clearly stated that those who are idolaters (those who give supreme devotion to anyone or anything other than God) will surely die.

According to the researcher, this also refers to the way Indigo Children are seen as special beings who need to be treated with special treatment. This could imply that they are seen as idols by some people and may be treated like gods, rather than like children who need guidance and discipline from their parents.

According to Crafford (in Meiring, 1996: 218), true religion, according to the Bible, is obedient service to God, the Holy Trinity. This service flows into service to one's fellowman and respectful conservation of God's creation.

He further states that it is important to distinguish between religion as general human phenomenon and faith as the form of religion where only one personal Creator (the Holy Trinity) is acknowledged and served.

According to Joubert (in Meiring, 1996: 146), most Christians worldwide accept the dogma of the Holy Trinity according to which God is one Entity, but distinguishable in three Persons, that is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

3.3 God and children

According to Carroll (2001: 132), Jesus points to children as a pattern and paradigm of the reign of God in each of the synoptic Gospels. He emphasizes that there is a specific place for children in His “household”, a central position for even the youngest and those lowest in status and power. Socially children are seen differently, that is, that their role is a submissive one to adults and that they cannot hold a central position of honour where Jesus is concerned.

Children should thus be allowed to develop their strengths and God given talents. This view corresponds with Carroll & Tober (1999: 53) when they say that Indigo Children’s strengths must drive the limits and they should be asked to determine the limits. However, according to the researcher this view should be applied to all children and not only to children who are seen as special, such as Indigo Children. When looking at children from a biblical perspective there are a few aspects that stand out:

3.3.1 *Children are special*

All children should be taught that they are special because they belong to Jesus. Children are created in the image of God to serve Him by choice.

In Luke 18: 15-16 (Amplified Bible) Jesus reprimanded the disciples who reproved children who wanted to go to Him, telling them to *allow the little children to come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God*. According to Nel (1998: 4-5), the aim of ministrant education is to assist the young child to know his calling from God and to enable him to be of service to God. He supports the Christian perspective when he states that the starting-point of Christian education is highlighted by 1 John 4: 19 (Amplified Bible) that says, we love Him, because He loved us first. Love is thus the foundation of all education. It teaches the child to give love, but also to receive it. The source of all love is God.

The book of Samuel gives an example of such love between God and a child. It depicts the special relationship between God and the child Samuel. In 1 Samuel 2: 26 (Amplified Bible) it is written that *the boy Samuel grew and was in favor both with the Lord and with men*.

In the story of David the special relationship between God and an adolescent is also clear when God gave Goliath in his hands after David proclaimed that the Lord would deliver Goliath in his hands, and that all the earth would know that there is a God of Israel (1 Samuel 17:46, Amplified Bible).

3.3.2 Children are gifts from God

According to Nel (1998: 11), God is involved with children in the very special way that He “gives” them to parents. This is confirmed in Psalm 127: 3 where it is said that *children are the heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb, a reward* (Amplified Bible).

3.3.3 *Children are made in God's image*

In Genesis 1: 26-27 (Amplified Bible) it is also said that God made man (thus also children) in His image. This contradicts the viewpoint of Carroll & Tober (1999: 40) where they say that Indigo Children are sent to earth by the “Father-Mother-Creator” as emissaries. According to Nel (1998: 101), the fact that children are there, means that people were involved. Thus “people do not fall out of the air”. Although they are gifts from God, they were brought into life by God through people.

3.3.4 *God uses children to work for Him*

God has great pleasure in reaching people through children (Nel, 1998: 12). In 2 Kings 5: 2-3 (Amplified Bible) we read about a little girl who tells Naäman's wife about a prophet in her country. In modern terms David is probably anointed as king when he is still in his teens (1 Samuel 16-17, Amplified Bible).

Other examples include Daniel (Dan 1:17) of whom it is said that *God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams* (Amplified Bible). God used this child to work for Him. In Jeremiah 1: 7 (Amplified Bible) God tells Jeremiah that even being young he has to go *to all to whom I shall send you, and whatever I command, you shall speak*. This coincides with Carroll & Tober (1999: 37) when they argue that children have been sent to earth with a purpose and bring special messages to the people.

3.3.5 Children are just as important as adults

However, according to the researcher, God does not imply that these children are more special than others. The fact that He includes them in His plans for humankind only emphasizes that He embraces children as part of His creation. Looking from a Christian perspective does not implicate children to be less important than adults. This is emphasized in the New Testament where there is reference to young men who are involved in serious and disciplinary acts in the early church (Acts 5, Amplified Bible).

In Acts 21: 5 (Amplified Bible) we read about children kneeling together with their parents during a farewell prayer-meeting for an apostle.

We also read that unmarried daughters have the gift of prophesying (Acts 21:9, Amplified Bible). Maybe most important is that Jesus came to earth as a child, being born as the firstborn Son to Mary, *a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord* (Luke 2: 7,11, Amplified Bible).

According to the researcher, the supporters of the Indigo Child phenomenon emphasize the power of the Indigo Child in such a way that the focus is taken away from Jesus. The Indigo Child becomes the substitute for Jesus Christ, “messenger” and “saviour” of others.

No matter how powerful human beings can become and to what extent their gifts can be utilized, they still depend on God. This is supported by Matthew 5: 3 (Amplified Bible) where it is written that *blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*.

According to Burger (1997: 77), God is the One who creates life (therefore also that of the Indigo Child) and who sustains it with His love and mercy. God is the One who holds all life in His hand.

According to John 3: 16 (Amplified Bible), God loved the world in such a way that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but will receive eternal life. This contradicts the existence of Indigo Children who were allegedly sent to earth as reincarnated old souls (McKee in Carroll & Tober 1999: 71).

In Colossians 3: 20 children are reprimanded to *obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord* (Amplified Bible).

3.4 The role of parents

According to Nel (1998: 109), parents are gifts from God. In the same way that children are gifts to parents, parents are gifts to children. They play a vital role in their children's faith development and identity and have an important influence on their children's lives. The influence of the parents is also emphasized by Ezzo & Ezzo (1998: 35) when they say that parents play a vital role in their children's lives when it comes to physical care, but that they often neglect the children's moral training.

The researcher is of opinion that it is not only the parents' influence regarding faith that plays an important role, but also their influence in all aspects of their children's lives. It is this influence, or lack of influence, that may, according to the researcher, determine whether or not the children will display behaviour that corresponds with the behaviour of the so-called Indigo Child.

According to Ezzo & Ezzo (1998: 15), their “Growing Kids God’s Way” ministry and educational program is based upon the belief that God has given parents the responsibility to raise children. Parents are there to guide, nurture, and discipline their children. The researcher is of opinion that this guidance should be done with respect towards the children and certain guidelines should be followed regarding their upbringing. These proposed guidelines will help the parent and caretaker in order to guide the child towards a healthy adulthood.

According to Nel (1998: 110-112), it is through the intimate contact between parent and child that the Christian faith is discovered. It is important that parents learn to link their faith in God with everyday life and to talk to their children about faith and religion.

In Genesis 18: 19 (Amplified Bible) God says that He has chosen Abraham as His own so that he may teach his children to keep the way of the Lord and to do what is righteous and just. In Deuteronomy 6: 4-7 (Amplified Bible) God is clear when He says that He is the only God and that we must love Him with all our heart and with our entire being and with all our might. He goes further in saying that we must teach this to our children and that we must talk of His words *“when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up”*. In Psalm 147: 11-13 it is said that God takes pleasure in those that worship Him and that He will bless their children within them (Amplified Bible).

The parents therefore have an important role to play when it comes to the acknowledgment and worshipping of God, because their attitude and behaviour will be linked to God’s attitude towards their children.

In Proverbs 22: 6 (Amplified Bible) it is made clear that children should be trained in the way they should go so that they will not forget it when they are old.

In 1 John 4: 4 (Amplified Bible) God tells the children that they belong to Him and have already overcome the agents of the antichrist, because He who lives in them, is greater than he who is in the world.

According to DeVries (2001: 165), children should be educated as who they are, that is, children, and not as who they will become. Growing up should not mean leaving childhood behind. DeVries goes further by saying that *the insights of childhood are not illusions that must be replaced with the cold hard facts of adult reality*. The researcher agrees that children are valuable as children and need not become adults to be of value. Values that are taught to them by their parents can be utilized to express themselves as children and to stand in the service of God. These Christian values, which are communicated from parents to children, are most important in the upbringing of the child.

When these values are established and followed through by parents, the “Indigo Child” will cease to exist. Parents will see that these children are merely the products of their educational approach. They will come to realize the importance of the inclusion of Christian values in the upbringing of children.

Furthermore, the researcher is of opinion that a good relationship between parents and their children is of great value to the development of the child’s view of God.

According to Ezzo & Ezzo (1998: 57, 63-64), the family plays an important role in society and should be protected. They state two reasons why successful parenting is threatened and families cease to exist. The first one is the downplaying of the significance of the husband-wife-relationship in the parenting process.

Much of a child's basic security depends on what he observes between his parents. When he observes love and affection between them, he will feel more secure.

The second one is falling into the entrapment of child-centred parenting, that is, parents who centre their entire world around the nurturing of their children. In effect, they bring the world to the child instead of bringing the child into the world.

According to the researcher, parents of Indigo Children can be viewed as child-centred parents.

3.4.1 Five dangers of child-centred parenting

There are five dangers associated with child-centred parenting (Ezzo & Ezzo, 1998: 64-65):

1. It attacks the husband-wife relationship by reducing its biblical significance. It wrongly authorizes one or the other to pull away. By doing this the message in Mark 10: 9 (Amplified Bible) is ignored where God says that whatever He has joined together, no one should divide. According to the researcher, one or both parents focus so intensely on the child that their own relationship lacks mutual love and support.

2. A false sense of self-reliance is created, thus reversing the natural process of moral development. This philosophy grants freedom beyond the child's ability to manage freedom.
3. It fosters family independence and not family interdependence. Children who find themselves the centre of attention often grow into selfish independence. The child does not have to be loyal to his family.
4. It magnifies the natural conflict between the natural way of the child and his need for moral conformity.
5. This parenting style may become dangerously close to idolatry. These children become little gods whose parents worship their creation, rather than the Creator.

According to the researcher, the child should experience love from both parents. He should feel secure and wanted, but he should not be the ruler of the house. The lives of the parents should not come to a standstill when the baby is born. It may change and the parents will probably have to adapt, but their lives do not cease to exist and their relationship should not be compromised in order to accommodate the baby.

The researcher found the following statement by Maria Pestalozzi in Malan (1979: 19) as still relevant today:

"When a mother loves, the child also loves; when the mother trusts, the child also trusts.

When the mother says: 'I have a Father in heaven of Whom all good things come that you and I can enjoy', then the child believes the words of his mother and he trusts his Heavenly Father.

And when she as Christian prays to Him, when she reads about God's love in the Bible and when she is inspired by the Holy Spirit, the child gladly prays with her.

The child believes in the Word of Him whose Spirit he already came to know in his mother's life.

In this way the child's simple love for his mother is extended in a natural way to include the love of his fellowman, and from this the true Christian's belief and love are born."

However, there is also reference in the Bible to the father's responsibility and caring role towards the child. In Psalm 103: 13 (Amplified Bible) it states that the Lord loves and pities those who fear Him just as *a father loves and pities his children*. According to the researcher, the father as head of the house also has a responsibility to his children. The child must realize that religion is also manly and strong. Although the young child may not always understand what is being said, the atmosphere, respect and awe will make an impression on him.

The importance of the father is also emphasized by Ezzo & Ezzo (1998: 85). According to them the father achieves the most basic of relationships with the baby when he is born, that is, a biological one.

The next level focuses on the father's role to provide and satisfy the needs of the child. He thus has the role of provider and protector. The highest level of relational commitment between the father and the child depends on the quality of mutual trust and loyalty between the two.

Ephesians 6:4 can be emphasized where it commands fathers not to *irritate and provoke their children to anger, but to rear them tenderly in the training and discipline and the counsel and admonition of the Lord* (Amplified Bible).

According to the researcher, it is this exposure of the child to religion in the daily life of the family that plays a vital part in the child's upbringing. The researcher believes that, if parents abide to a Christian upbringing of their children, it is not possible for "Indigo Children" to exist. The so-called Indigo Child will only be seen as an individual with individual needs, as all children are.

When following a Christian perspective, the parents cannot believe that their children are Indigo Children whose life-purposes are agreed to prior to their incarnation as stated by Virtue (2001: 33). They should merely recognize their children's individuality and discipline them with the necessary love and respect. Proposed guidelines by Carroll & Tober (1999: 45-47, 52-54, 71-72) could be adapted and incorporated into a Christian perspective, as well as a Gestalt therapeutic approach in order to accommodate all children. According to the researcher, these guidelines are therefore not exclusively for the Indigo Child who, according to him, is a false creation and unnecessary labeling.

Furthermore, the researcher believes that the parents' teaching should be based on truth and that it is their responsibility to guide their children into right relationships with God and others.

This view is supported by Ezzo & Ezzo (1998: 86) when they state that family members should base their relationships on devotion to one another as Christ is devoted to His church, and that the Bible is the only Sourcebook of truth about God and about man's relationship to Him. It provides a solid framework for any Christian approach in working with young people.

3.5 Discipline

God's Word is quite clear when it comes to the discipline and upbringing of children. In Psalm 119: 105 we find reassurance that the Word of God is a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths (Amplified Bible).

This can also be applied to the upbringing of children. We thus have to use God's Word to guide us with our children. Mark 10: 14 (Amplified Bible) states that the children must be allowed to go to Jesus and should not be prevented, for the Kingdom of God also belongs to them. Acts 2: 39 (Amplified Bible) stresses that God's promise is to and for all of us and our children, even for those who are far away (who may not believe in Him) whom God is calling.

In Proverbs 1: 8 (Amplified Bible) it is clearly stated that children *should hear the instruction of their father, and that they should not forsake the teaching of their mother*. In Psalm 144: 12 (Amplified Bible) David asks God to rescue him and his people from those who are deceitful so that *their sons can be as plants grown large in their youth and their daughters as sculptured corner pillars hewn like those of a palace*.

However, according to Ezzo & Ezzo (1998: 42), many children are not taught the why behind the application of moral law.

They know what they should do or should not do, which results in children who are only outwardly moral. They know how to respond to certain situations, because they have been trained according to the situation, not because they understand the moral principle behind it.

3.5.1 *Biblical education approaches*

According to Byrne (in Zuck & Benson, 1978: 33-34), the Bible suggests certain approaches regarding education. These approaches have not changed throughout the years and the researcher finds them to be applicable still:

- It teaches that every person is a sinner and therefore in need of regeneration;
- It challenges the Christian youth to be committed to the Lord and to serve Him;
- It indicates that Christian educators have Bible truths to transmit;
- Intellectual grasp of Christianity is insufficient. The Word should be lived;
- Christianity is timeless and always relevant to people's needs;
- The Bible teaches that the illuminating, teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit is necessary if one is to comprehend and appropriate Bible truth;
- It indicates something of youth's "spiritual potential." Young people need God and are capable of knowing Him;
- The Bible challenges teens to a high standard of moral, Christ-honouring living;
- It stresses the need for knowing, being concerned for, and fostering the welfare of other believers.

3.6 Comparing Indigo guidelines to the Bible

When looking at the guidelines set up by Carroll & Tober (1999: 45-46) regarding the handling of Indigo Children, and comparing these with biblical guidelines for children in general, similarities, as well as contradictions, can be pointed out.

3.6.1 Similarities

Although the following Biblical extracts (Amplified Bible) correspond with the views of the authors who write about Indigo Children, it differs in the way that it refers to all children, not only Indigo Children as suggested by the authors.

- Proverbs 22: 6 recommends parents to *train up a child in the way he should go and in keeping with his individual gift or bent, and when he is old, he will not part from it*. This corresponds with Carroll & Tober (1999: 45) when they say that Indigo Children should be treated with respect and their existence in the family should be respected.
- In Isaiah 54: 13 it is stated that *all children shall be disciples, and great shall be the peace and undisturbed composure of your children*. This corresponds with what Gerard (in Carroll & Tober, 1999: 37) says when he refers to the purpose of the Indigo Child.

3.6.2 Contradictions

- Psalm 89: 30-32 (Amplified Bible) states that *if children forsake My (God's) law and walk not in My ordinances, if they break or profane My statutes and keep not My commandments, then will I punish their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes*.

Parents should thus be in control and teach their children according to God's Word. Unlike what Carroll & Tober (1999: 45) suggests regarding giving children choices in everything, the Bible makes it clear that children should be reprimanded if they do not follow certain instructions.

3.6.3 *The youth's relationship with the Bible*

The importance of the Word regarding the upbringing of the child cannot be emphasized strongly enough. Youths should be educated in the Word – at school, at work, but also at home. This is supported by Zuck and Benson (1978: 37-41) when they highlight the following regarding the youth's relationships and its correlation to the Bible. This theory regarding the nature of the youth's relationship with God should have remained the same as in 1978. The researcher still found it to be relevant today:

3.6.3.1 *The young person's relationship with his family must be based on the Word.* The family is the primary unit of God's operation and the child who finds his proper place in the family, may not have such difficulty in finding his proper place in the church. Responses that are required from children regarding their parents in the Scripture include obedience and reverence.

In Ephesians 6: 1 (Amplified Bible) we read that children should obey their parents for it is just and right, and in Colossians 3: 20 (Amplified Bible) it is said that children *should obey their parents in everything, because it is pleasing to the Lord*. In regard to honouring we read in Ephesians 6: 2-3 (Amplified Bible) that children should *honour your father and mother – this is the first commandment with a promise – that all may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth*.

This also refers to the commandments of Exodus 20: 12 (Amplified Bible) where it says that children should *regard your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land the Lord your God gives you.*

3.6.3.2 *The young person's relationship with the church must be based on the Word.* The word "church" is the rendering of the Greek word *ekklesia* and may mean one of two things in the New Testament. It either refers to a universal body of believers who belong to Christ through regeneration, or any specific geographical representation of that body in any place at any time. The Christian youth needs to realize that they have obligations and responsibilities to their local church, because without the church, the gospel cannot be proclaimed. In the church they must find a safe haven. The youth must see themselves in a biblical perspective, which may revolutionize their whole outlook on the church. Jesus already had a special "relationship" with the church as a young boy and felt safe and secure in the temple. In Luke 2: 46 it is said that *after three days they found Him (safely) in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions* (Amplified Bible).

3.6.3.3 *The young person's relationship with the world must be based on the Word.* The problem of worldliness almost always has to be dealt with at some stage with young people.

In 1 John 2: 15-17 (Amplified Bible) we are warned not to love the world or anything in the world, but rather focus on God and radiate our love towards Him. "The world passes away and disappears, and with it the forbidden cravings, but he who does the will of God and carries out His purposes in his life, abides forever." The Bible must therefore be appreciated as the holy Word of God, and not merely a historical document.

The young person's developmental phase must also be taken into account when talking about worldliness. Young people are curious and enjoy exploring.

They like excitement and new things. The Word of God should thus be presented in an exciting manner, luring them away from worldliness into godliness.

3.6.3.4 *The young person's relationship with the future must be based on the Word.* The young person's future should consist of genuine discipleship, which tolerates no reservations or concern for one's own life. It should be a complete commitment to Jesus Christ that will be the guideline for the future. Young people need to be taught an understanding of how to know the will of God in their lives. According to the researcher young people need to know the Word of God, because it will help them to endure the onslaughts of the world.

Involvement in such things as serious Bible study, a willingness to listen to the guidance of others, an understanding of and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's guidance, and an appreciation of the way God uses divine providence to steer events in the lives of His children, must be taught by Sunday school teachers and youth leaders who work with teens in evangelical churches.

According to Ezzo & Ezzo (1998: 36-37), biblical ethics is concerned with the manner of life that the Christian faith demands and establishes the basis of training for parents that produces goodness, purity, and holiness.

They go further by saying that God's character is reflected in biblical ethics, that He is morally perfect and that all biblical values are an extension of His character. Without God, there is no basis for objective ethics and all values become relative. Values derived from the Bible do not change. The moral requirements by which Christians live today are therefore the same as yesterday and will be the same tomorrow.

In Hebrews 13: 8 (Amplified Bible) we read that Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. God's character is thus unchanging and from Him timeless values flow. These unchanging values of God's character are called biblical absolutes. They are standards of right, wrong, good and evil that do not change with the moral whims of society. God expects parents to call right, wrong, good and evil, what God calls right, wrong, good and evil (Ezzo & Ezzo, 1998: 37).

3.7 Conclusion

From this chapter it is clear that there are similarities between the Bible and literature about Indigo Children when it comes to their handling and discipline.

The greatest difference between these two perspectives, viz. the Bible and "Indigo literature", is that the latter distinguishes between Indigo Children and others, whereas the Bible's guidelines are applicable to all children. All children are created in the image of God, and should be treated accordingly.

Now that a comparison between Indigo literature and the Bible has been made, the next chapter will focus on child development. The researcher would thus like to determine whether there is a difference in the development of Indigo Children and other children.

Chapter Four

Phase Two

CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS STUDY

4.1 Introduction

According to the researcher, the therapist has to take into account the various developmental phases of the child when working play therapeutically. The behaviour of the child must be assessed within his developmental phase at that moment, because children usually behave in a specific way during different developmental phases. For example, children usually start talking within the first two years. If a child does not have a limited vocabulary at age three, there might be developmental shortfalls.

Various components of development must be considered, that is, cognitive, social, personality, and emotional. The developmental phases of the average child can be utilized in order to determine a possible comparison with the development of the Indigo Child.

4.2 Developmental components

For the purpose of this study the developmental components mentioned above, are subsequently discussed.

4.2.1 Cognitive development

According to Schoeman (1999: 15), this component refers to the ability to know and solve problems.

Learning and academic progress takes place. Aspects that are related to cognitive development include the ability to observe, communicate and process general information. It also includes the child's ability to learn from experience and to understand context, cause, and consequence. The child's cognitive ability must be taken into consideration when looking at his coping mechanism when confronted with problem situations. Piaget states that the cognitive development of a child is carried into effect through a complex interaction amongst genetic, psychological, and environmental factors. He also emphasizes the importance of support and guidance by adults during the cognitive development of the pre-school child (as cited by Du Toit & Kruger in Bender, 1994:80).

Virtue (1999:23) states that Indigo Children are "gifted children". They are naturally born philosophers, gifted scientists, inventors and artists. According to the researcher, the focus should not be on what these children may become as adults, but on whom they are at present, in the "here-and-now".

Cognitively they are supposed to be coping well within society. However, the gifts of these children are not always recognized in society due to the misunderstanding or inability to acknowledge these children. This could lead to labeling Indigo Children as children with ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) or ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder).

These children can also mistakenly be thought to be “learning disabled”, because people do not understand them and cannot communicate on their intellectual level (Virtue, 1999: 23).

According to the researcher, the Indigo Child’s intellectual ability does not distinguish him from another “non-Indigo Child” who is gifted. Every child should be handled according to his intellectual abilities. Recent research indicates that children can perform certain cognitive functions at a much earlier age than that suggested by Piaget. It is important not to forget that every child is unique and that certain children go through the different developmental stages at a slower or faster rate (Du Toit & Kruger in Bender, 1994: 80-81). Indigo Children might just as well be children who go through these stages at a much faster rate and who are mistakenly perceived as “gifted”.

4.2.2 *Social development*

This component refers to the influence of society, contact persons and relatives on the child’s functioning. Moral development is important and the child should learn to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (Schoeman, 1999: 15). Du Toit & Kruger (in Bender, 1994: 94) agree with Schoeman when they state that social development of the child refers to a process through which he learns to comply with the moral standards, expectations and requirements of acceptable behaviour.

As with other children, Indigo Children do not act in a specific way socially. There are various personalities amongst Indigo Children and they all act differently in different social situations. This is confirmed by Tappe (in Carroll & Tober, 1999: 10-12) when she refers to the four different types of Indigo Children.

The “Humanists” are extremely social, whereas the “Conceptuals” are more into projects than people. According to the researcher, they do not seem to be different from “non-Indigo Children” who also display a variety of social skills.

Therefore Indigo Children should not be treated differently than other children. The way other people will respond to them socially will depend on their specific personalities and how they behave socially, not because they are Indigo Children.

4.2.3 *Personality development*

According to Schoeman (1999: 15), personality can be described as the child’s totality of characteristics, which include cognition, values, attitudes, emotions, habits and preconceptions. Personality development is a process and is influenced by various factors. The process of the child is also linked to personality.

According to the researcher, there exists no scientific evidence that Indigo Children have different personality traits than “non-Indigo Children”. As with other children, the personality development of Indigo Children is a process and is influenced by various factors, for example disciplinary methods, behaviour of role models, genetic factors, and learned behaviour.

4.2.4 *Emotional development*

According to Helms & Turner (1987: 165-166, 252), emotions can be defined as changes in arousal levels that may either interfere with or facilitate motivated behaviour.

Emotional development refers to a change from helplessness to independence and self-sufficiency. It also means the acquisition of emotional flexibility and greater emotional differentiation.

According to Hegerle (1999: 32), Indigo Children process their emotions differently than non-Indigo Children because of a higher self-esteem and stronger integrity. The researcher, however, is of opinion that this is a broad generalization, as there are non-Indigo Children who also have high self-esteem and will process their emotions in a different way than other non-Indigo Children. The emotional development of Indigo Children can therefore not be seen as different from non-Indigo Children. Emotional development will be determined by specific circumstances and personalities of the children.

It is possible that Indigo Children are mere ordinary children with a well-developed emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence can be explained by means of five domains (Salovey in Goleman, 1996: 43):

- Knowing one's emotions – self-awareness is the keystone of emotional intelligence;
- Managing emotions – handling feelings in an appropriate manner;
- Motivating oneself – having self-control;
- Recognizing emotions in others – being able to have empathy with others;
- Handling relationships – the art of relationships is mostly skill in managing emotions in others.

4.3 Developmental phases

According to Schoeman (1999: 15-29), child development can be divided into six phases, which include the prenatal phase, neonatal phase, baby

years, infancy, middle-childhood, and adolescence. Erikson identifies eight phases of development.

According to Gillis (1994: 67), Erikson's psychosocial theory of development is of particular importance when working with children and adolescents. He focuses on the development of personality from childhood and provides insight into the thoughts and feelings of young people.

He further perceives the social environment as playing an important role in influencing the child's personality and identifies eight specific developmental phases.

Although the growing up is a continuous process, each stage involves specific conflicts, which should be dealt with accordingly in order to prevent maladjustment later in life, that is, not being able to adjust to a normal, healthy adulthood.

According to the researcher, the Indigo Child goes through the same developmental phases as the non-Indigo Child. Differences in development depend on a variety of factors. Some children may develop faster in some areas than others, but this does not mean that they are Indigo Children.

4.3.1 Prenatal phase

This phase includes the months the unborn baby spends in the uterus of his mother. According to the researcher, bonding can already take place between parents and baby during these nine months, because the unborn baby's senses have already developed at an early stage.

At the moment of conception it is a single cell containing a genetic message from the father and the mother.

Nine months later this single cell has developed into a fully developed fetus (Helms and Turner, 1987: 106). According to the researcher there is already a genetic bond between unborn babies and parents, even if emotional or physical bonding has not yet taken place.

4.3.2 Neonatal phase: birth to two months

According to Schoeman (1999: 15), the new-born reacts to various stimuli and can for instance blink his eyes in reaction to movement. At about two weeks the baby stares longer at his mother's face than the faces of others. Hearing must be adapted because sound conducting takes place through air now and not through water as during the pre-born phase. The new-born can already distinguish his mother's body odour from other women when six days old. The baby can also distinguish between different tastes, which are measured according to the baby's heart rate and face expressions. The new-born also experiences heat, cold and pain.

The researcher is of opinion that the baby's sensory development and reaction to his senses by the parents play an important role in later developmental phases.

If the baby's senses are stimulated it will probably lead to the baby growing into a well-balanced, intact small child, teenager and adult. If, however, the senses are not stimulated, the baby's senses may not develop to its full potential.

According to the researcher, there is a possibility that Indigo Children's parents pay more attention to the initial development of their babies' senses, whereas parents of other children may neglect these phases.

4.3.3 *Baby Years: two months to two years*

The baby years stretch from two months to about two years. During this time many behaviour patterns are established. The baby develops significantly on a physical level, and motor development takes place.

Depth observation is formed and protects the baby against unnecessary accidents. Babies have the tendency to look at the person they are listening to. During this phase they learn to master language.

Cognitively they realize that an object or person still exists although it cannot be seen at that moment. Abuse and/or neglect during the baby years may lead to personality changes. The experience world of the baby is very limited, which leads to lasting impressions of that which is experienced. Overprotection at this stage has a definite influence on later developmental phases. However, personality traits rarely change as the child grows older.

The baby is able to show emotions like crying and laughing. At about three and a half months the baby's laugh is spontaneous and at about four months he can laugh out loud. Temperament already develops during the baby phase and can manifest in many different ways.

Closeness to others is not automatically present after birth. The relationship between mother and baby plays an important role regarding the bonding between them.

The researcher would also like to emphasize the importance of bonding between the father and the baby. The father-baby-bonding can be just as strong as the mother-baby-bonding.

During this phase the baby cognitively realizes that the face of a stranger differs from the face of his mother. Separation anxiety develops at about eight to twelve months and normally disappears at about twenty to twenty-four months. It occurs when the baby's parent or caretaker momentarily leaves him.

Socializing becomes an important activity at this stage and peer group interaction takes place. Toilet training is implemented.

According to Erikson (in Gillis, 1994: 68), the above phases can be combined into his first two phases:

➤ **Basic trust versus mistrust: (birth to one and a half years)**

The baby learns through ongoing contact with his parents, as well as through the quality of these interactions, to perceive the world as an orderly, safe and predictable place. The parent's consistency and caring behaviour is thus very important. The development of this basic sense of trust is the corner-stone of a healthy personality.

If the parents are not reliable and consistent, the baby experiences mistrust which may lead to problem behaviour later on within intimate relationships.

➤ **Autonomy versus shame: one and a half to three years**

Toilet training takes place during this phase and the child is expected to exercise control over his bodily functions.

When there is a balanced relationship between the baby and his parents he will develop increased feelings of self-confidence. When there is a lack of trust, the baby will experience shame and self-doubt.

The baby years include the following five of the six phases in Piaget's sensorimotor stage (Helms & Turner, 1987: 140-142):

- **Primary circular reactions (one to four months)**

When the infant discovers a pleasurable activity, he will repeat it for his own sake. The infant displays signs of co-ordinating one action with another.

He may also try to look at whatever is grasped and reach for whatever happens to be seen. He tends to be preoccupied and fascinated with his own arms, hands, legs, or feet and at other times carefully investigates simple movements of his bodies.

- **Secondary circular reactions (four to eight months)**

The infant attempts to reproduce interesting events that might have been caused by accident. He gradually becomes aware of the changes he can make. Another cognitive development is his anticipatory effect.

- **Co-ordination of secondary schemes (eight to twelve months)**

At about eight months the infant starts to understand the concept of "object permanence", that is, the idea that objects still exist even if you cannot see them.

- **Tertiary circular reactions (twelve to eighteen months)**

By the end of the first year, simple trial-and-error behaviour emerges, and there is a better understanding of object permanence.

- **Invention of new means through mental combinations (eighteen to twenty four months)**

The toddler starts to create mental images that enable him to devise new ways of dealing with the environment. Simple problems may now be thought through before they are executed. Reasoning abilities develop.

4.3.4 Pre-school phase (*infancy*): two to seven years

The family plays an important role in the infant's life. Growth takes place quickly and length and body mass increases rapidly. Perceptually the infant develops fast. They often have difficulty going to sleep and would like to have the light on during the night.

Gender identity and gender role identity are emphasized and at the age of three the infant begins to differentiate between male and female. Socially the infant is playing most of the time and it is important to him. Aggression that surfaces during the infant years may usually be linked to frustration and is not necessarily negative. Aggression can be provoked by competition, family factors and/or cultural factors. Cognitively the infant learns to utilize symbols and signs. Developmental tasks during this phase may also include the following:

- Motor control (control over their bodies);
- Learning of competence;
- Adaptation to society;
- Self conceptualization;
- Self control (learn to control own needs);
- Moral development.

According to Erikson (in Gillis, 1994: 68), this phase corresponds with his **Initiative versus Guilt phase (three to six years)**. The child develops a need to do things his way. He realizes he may have control over people and his immediate environment. This realization is built on the trust and self-confidence that have been formed during the earlier phases.

If the parents encourage his initiative, the child will develop self-assurance generated by achieved success. If the child's initiative is not encouraged, feelings of insignificance, inadequacy and guilt may develop.

According to Piaget (in Helms & Turner, 1987: 191, 234), this phase is characterized by two of his developmental stages:

➤ **Stage of preconceptual thought (two to four years)**

This stage is part of the longer pre-operational stage (two to seven years) and also provides a foundation for later cognitive functions. When the pre-schooler has new experiences, he structures them in accordance with his existing mental schemes or places them into new mental categories. In this way the mental structures become more detailed and elaborate. Several cognitive developments take place, for example the ability to engage in symbolic functioning. Other cognitive activities include the development of egocentrism, animism, artificialism, and immanent justice.

➤ **Intuitive thought (four to seven years)**

This is also a substage of the pre-operational thought stage. The child's thinking is characterized by immediate perceptions and experiences, rather than mental operations. Egocentrism still exists, but often changes because of the child's cognitive advances.

4.3.5 Middle childhood years: seven to twelve years

It may be seen as a relaxed developmental phase, but it is a phase where patterns are established and where cognitive, social, emotional and self-concept development are formed for the purpose of:

- further refinement of motor development;
- the establishment of gender role identity;
- the development of concrete-operational thoughts;
- elaboration of social participation;
- development of greater self knowledge;
- development of pre-conventional morality.

The child's body begins taking on the form of that of an adult, the brain reaches its matured weight and size, milk teeth are replaced by permanent teeth and breathing becomes deeper and consistent. Cognitively operational thoughts develop. Emotionally the child typically fears the unnatural or the death of his parents. Children who experience love is capable of giving love, and aggression is mostly a secondary consequence.

Socially the child changes from egocentric to sensitive participator. The influence of the peer group plays an important role.

On a personal level the self-concept develops fast. If the child is treated respectfully at this stage, he will most probably develop into a healthy adult. The child's parents and teachers play important roles.

According to Erikson (in Gillis, 1994: 68), this phase, **industry versus inferiority (six to twelve years)**, is characterized by a need to master new tasks successfully and acquire multiple skills, particularly in areas outside the immediate environment, for example the school. The child needs to create and understand things that are meaningful and needs to receive recognition for his creations. When supported, the child will develop a positive self-image and a sense of accomplishment.

When no or little support is received from parents or teachers the child may experience feelings of incompetence and worthlessness.

According to Piaget (in Helms & Turner, 1987: 237), this phase corresponds with his **concrete operational phase (seven to eleven years)**. The child thinks more logically about his environment and executes mental operations, which previously had to be carried out physically. The child begins to reason consistently. However, abstractions are still difficult to understand.

According to the researcher, this phase is no different for Indigo Children. Different children will go through this phase at an earlier or later age and at a different intensity.

4.3.6 Adolescence

This phase can be identified as the phase between childhood and maturity.

The teenager grows towards maturity and has to complete the following developmental tasks:

- Acceptance of changing bodily appearance;
- Development of gender role identity;
- Engagement in heterosexual relationships;
- Development of strong emotional relationship with a significant other;
- Development of social-responsible behaviour;
- Acceptance of and adaptation to certain groups;
- Career choice;
- Development of life-philosophy;
- Development of intellectual capabilities.

The adolescent is intensely aware of the physical changes his body is going through. These changes must be integrated and developed into an identity. He is pre-occupied with his own thoughts and experiences it as unique. Egocentricity usually subsides after sixteen years of age. The adolescent is aware of his shortcomings. He must identify problems, formulate hypotheses and search for solutions.

According to Erikson (in Gillis, 1994: 69), this phase is also the period of adolescence and it entails **identity versus confusion (twelve to twenty years)**. The adolescent searches for identity. It allows opportunities for experiments with different roles, attitudes and personalities, prior to making important life-decisions.

According to Piaget's model (in Helms & Turner, 1987: 280-281), adolescence can be explained by means of his **formal operations phase** where the adolescent's ability to acquire and utilize knowledge, reaches its peak. Thinking becomes scientific and the individual is now capable of thinking about the past, present and future. Abstract thinking becomes possible.

4.4 Conclusion

When looking at the phases of development discussed above, it is clear that the Indigo Child goes through the same developmental phases.

According to the researcher, there exists no scientific proof that states otherwise. Although some children may develop faster than others, or may experience some stages less acutely than their peers, they all go through these phases of development.

When working with the Indigo Child the therapist will thus focus on the same developmental phases and concerns as with any other child.

In chapter five the researcher will focus on the Gestalt therapeutic perspective.

Chapter Five

Phase Two

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR GESTALT THERAPEUTIC GUIDELINES

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher introduces Gestalt Therapy as a therapeutic approach. Its background and important concepts are discussed and the relevance of its role in working play therapeutically with the child is outlined.

5.2 Gestalt therapy as therapeutic approach

According to Aronstam (in Louw, 1993: 629), the origin and development of Gestalt therapy is the result of the work of Frederick (Fritz) S. Perls. Perls refers to man (the organism) as a unity, not only in himself, but also regarding his environment. The inherent wisdom of the organism is capable of bringing the most dominant biological and psychological needs to the foreground. The psychological needs should not be seen as more important than the biological needs. Where psychoanalysts see the unconscious, as well as experiences from the past, as the most important focus of psychotherapy, Gestalt therapists focus on the present as the only reality to work with (Aronstam in Louw, 1993: 631).

According to Barrett (1997: 1), Gestalt Theory not only focuses on pathology, but also strives to understand and expand health and freedom of action in any sphere. It does not merely map behavioural suffering or abuse. Compared to classical psychoanalysis, Gestalt can be seen as replacing Freud's id, ego and superego with the concept of figure-background/figure-foreground where the dominant need moves from the background (unawareness) to the foreground (awareness) until it is satisfied.

It then returns to the background after being attended to (Aronstam in Louw, 1993: 631). According to Yontef (1993: 5) psychoanalysts focus too much on transference, rather than on the actual relationship between therapist and patient. Another focus of theirs that differs from Gestalt is their emphasis on interpretation, rather than on the actual experience of either the therapist or the patient.

5.3 Fundamental Principles

According to Yontef (1993: 6), Gestalt therapy focuses on both the therapist and patient growing personally, by being actively present and engaging both during therapy sessions and in the world in general. Philipppson (1998: 6) argues that the Gestalt therapeutic process consists of experimentation. In Gestalt experiments the patient explores his senses and preferences. The aim is thus to create a safe place where the patient can accept the anxiety of moving out of the familiar and risk acting differently.

The importance of a trusting relationship between the therapist and patient must be emphasized.

5.3.1 *Five layers of neuroses*

According to Perls (in Schoeman, 1999: 113), this relationship, as well as the therapeutic process, undergo a series of stages or layers. He mentions five layers of neuroses that form a series of counseling stages for the therapeutic process.

These layers should be considered as five steps to a better Gestalt way of life and include the following:

- *The phony layer* – This layer is characterized by many conflicts that are never resolved. Many children get trapped in trying to be what they are not.
- *The phobic layer* – Children become aware of their phony games which leads to an awareness of the fears that maintain these games. This may be a frightening experience.
- *The impasse layer* – According to Perls (in Bruno et al, 2001: 2), this layer can also be called “nothingness”, “emptiness” or “the feeling of being stuck and lost”. It is marked by a phobic attitude, namely avoidance. Schoeman agrees by saying that children get stuck at this stage and refuse to move on. Resistance is always present in this phase. She goes further by stating that a child has to show resistance. If there is no resistance, he “swallows” all new information without “digestion”. The play therapist must be aware that the “digestion” process, and thus the resistance, has nothing to do with the personal relationship. It is rather resistance to new information. Resistance is needed for good integration (Schoeman & Van der Merwe, 1996: 32).

- *The implosive layer* – Children become aware of how they limit themselves and they begin experimenting with new behaviour.
- *The explosive layer* – When children are successful with experimenting with new behaviour, they are able to discover much unused energy that has been tied up in maintaining a phony existence.

In order to make progress through these layers the therapist should observe the body language of the child, which is a better indicator of the truth than the child's words. By working through these layers children are helped to help themselves to mature, take charge of their lives, and become responsible for them. The central goal in Gestalt therapy, according to Perls, is the deepening of awareness, which promotes a sense of living fully in the here and now.

Children need to take responsibility and to facilitate their achievement of personal integration. The aim of integration is to help children become systematic, whole persons whose inner state and behaviour match. This integration allows children to give their full attention and energy to meeting their needs appropriately (Rudolph & Thompson, 2000: 67).

Integration is possible by working through the five layers of neuroses by applying the Gestalt philosophy.

5.3.2 *Corner-stones of the personality theory*

According to Aronstam (in Louw, 1993: 633-635), the following aspects can be seen as the corner-stones of the personality theory, emphasized by Gestalt therapists:

5.3.2.1 *Holistic approach*

According to Perls, human beings are integrated organisms, which always function as a unit. However, they cannot survive without their environment, and is in constant contact with the environment. Just as the child needs its physical environment for food and water, he needs his social environment for love, friendship and other social needs.

The researcher interprets Perls's view as also being applicable to Indigo Children. The Indigo Child is in constant contact with his surroundings and other people, for example school, church, peer groups. At different developmental stages children have different needs. As a baby or toddler the child cannot function without the care of his parents. The adolescent on the other hand regards the approval of friends very highly.

5.3.2.2 *Homeostasis*

Homeostasis refers to the process through which the healthy child functions as a unity within himself, as well as with his environment, and thus becomes self-regulating. The child maintains his equilibrium, and therefore maintains his health under various conditions. Homeostasis is the process by which the child satisfies his needs. The healthy child is capable of giving attention to the most prominent need, which becomes the foreground figure. As soon as he is satisfied, it becomes part of the background again.

According to the researcher, the child reaches homeostasis by satisfying his most prominent needs, those that are on his foreground.

Different developmental stages will determine different needs that reach the foreground.

Indigo children do not seem to be different and also have to deal with issues on the foreground in order to move on and reach homeostasis.

5.3.2.3 *Contact boundary*

Contact Boundary is necessary to prevent the child losing his identity, and refers to the boundary which separates himself from his environment. However, it is important that this boundary must be permeable to allow appropriate exchange between the child and his environment. According to Perls (Louw, 1993:634), man is distinguished from his environment by means of an ego boundary.

This boundary lies between the inside, which is part of the child, and the outside, which is foreign. The boundary must not be fixed. When fixed, it becomes character and character hinders development, because it forces the child to act in a certain way, thus becoming predictable.

Although society expects the child to have character or be predictable, Perls describes the child without character as most productive and creative. However, if the ego boundary is too weakly developed, the child becomes one with his environment and loses his identity. The well-developed, pliable ego boundary distinguishes between the self and others, without breaking contact. Through the process of contact and withdrawal the child is continuously interacting with its environment. It is important that the child regulates the appropriate flow of contact and withdrawal in order to allow for Gestalt completion.

Contact, without the necessary boundaries between what is part of the child and the acknowledgement of dissimilarity, leads to confluence.

Confluence refers to the loss of autonomous existence. On the other hand, isolation represents a lack of contact. According to the researcher, confluence often occurs during adolescence when the adolescent desperately wants to be part of the group. He is willing to set aside his personal values and beliefs in order to fit in with the group. When this is a continuous process, he forgets who he really is and becomes part of the group's identity. Isolation can easily occur when the child acts differently to the group and is therefore seen as an outcast and not welcome. He does not feel part of the group and may become isolated from his peers.

Both these forms of contact prevent growth and development of the personality. Appropriate contact refers to the child's ability to focus on what is on his foreground. Without awareness the child will not be capable of obtaining this focus. The spontaneous process of self-regulation will thus not be able to take place.

5.3.2.4 Full awareness

Full awareness, according to Radar (in Louw, 1993: 635), is necessary for healthy personality functioning. Without the necessary awareness, the child will not be able to focus on the most dominant need. This will lead to interference with self-regulation. Although mankind is capable of existing with only partial awareness, Gestalt completion and growth are possible only by being fully aware of the situation. According to Yontef (1993: 7), Gestalt therapy emphasizes what people know and what they can learn by focusing their awareness.

According to Yontef (1993: 184), awareness must measure up to three requirements:

1. Awareness must be based on and motivated by the dominant current need of the child.
2. Awareness is incomplete to the child if he does not have direct knowledge of the situation and how it is within the situation. Awareness thus implies owning, where the child is not only aware of his experience and life space, but also of his responsibility in terms of the situation.
3. Awareness always takes place in the here-and-now, and always flows and develops. It is not something magical, but sensorial, and thus truly exists. By being fully aware, the child is capable of identifying his most dominant need and making contact with his environment in order to satisfy his needs. According to Yontef (1993: 7), the momentary here-and-now is the focus point of awareness work, contact and the creating of new solutions.

During the play therapeutic situation, the therapist needs to examine the structure of the child's experience and increase his awareness thereof. The therapist needs to know what the child experiences, why he behaves the way he does and what the reasons for his behaviour are. Awareness is the means by which the child can regulate himself by choice. Experimental exercises can help build a relationship between the therapist and the child and may serve to promote awareness (Schoeman & Van der Merwe, 1996: 30).

According to Yontef (1993: 19), Gestalt therapy is wrongly defined in terms of techniques and therapy becomes the application of these techniques. This approach indicates a lack of understanding of what psychotherapy is and Gestalt only becomes another form of behaviour modification. The researcher agrees with Yontef that the focus is wrongly placed on techniques, rather than on the true philosophy of Gestalt. However, techniques should not be merely dismissed as inapplicable to Gestalt, but must instead be used as useful tools during the therapeutic process.

Analysis of Gestalt therapy involves discussing concepts in their relationship to the whole (Yontef, 1993: 26). The following concepts form part of Gestalt philosophy:

5.3.2.5 *The paradoxical theory of change*

This concept refers to the theory that the more the child tries to be who he is not, the more he will stay the same. In order to grow, he needs to be self-supporting. Trying to be someone who he is not, is not self-supporting. Being self-supporting the child needs to identify with his state, that is, his actual experience, behaviour and situation. These states tend to change over time. The child has to identify with the flow of states and thus having faith in movement and change (Yontef, 1993: 26).

According to Crocker (2001: 2), a Gestalt therapist who is committed to true dialogue, operates within a paradoxical framework. Although the overarching agreement between therapist and the child is for the therapist to help the child achieve change, the meeting of the child and his self-revelation are primary.

According to Yontef (1993: 26-27), self-support includes both self-knowledge and self-acceptance. A child cannot support himself without knowing himself, for example his needs, capabilities, environment, duties and so forth. When a therapist “leads” or “heals” a child he is actually pushing or leading the child to be different, sending out the message that the child is not acceptable the way he is. By doing this, the therapist does not benefit the child’s self-support.

According to the paradoxical theory of change, good therapy requires the therapist to have a good theoretical understanding, good personal centring, and good clinical understanding. The dialogue relationship and awareness, based on respect for the patient’s personal experience and experiential style, are essential in Gestalt therapy. The paradoxical theory of change does not require the therapist to directly move patients towards a preconceived outcome or so-called “health” (Yontef, 1993: 28-30).

According to Crocker (2001: 3), “what-is”, is most often hidden behind protective masks of the patient. These masks have served a variety of practical purposes during the patient’s life. However, healing can only come if the patient face “what-is”. The processes of change require progressively radical truth telling, that is, pulling back veils which hide the truth of how a person actually does business with the world.

5.3.2.6 *Relationship: engagement and emergence*

According to Yontef (1993: 30-31, 34-35, 39), Gestalt theory places the emphasis on the dialogue engagement between the therapist and the child and trusts that growth will emerge from such engagement.

The engagement takes place in the here-and-now. Dialogue refers to a relationship based on engagement and emergence and not on getting the child somewhere. During the dialogue the therapist is present as a person, sharing meaning with the child that includes love, despair, joy, anger, humour, spirituality and sensuality.

Dialogue cannot be aimed for, but emerges from persons who make contact. It emerges when therapist and child come together in an authentically contactful manner. Dialogue is not therapist plus child, but is emerging from the interaction. It may occur when both parties make themselves present and can only happen when the outcome is not controlled or determined by either party. "Trying" and aiming are not dialogue.

According to Crocker (2001:2-3), there is an openness and genuine curiosity from the therapist's side about what goes on in the child's life. The therapist absorbs the patient's revelations and permits his curiosity to influence what is said by asking questions about what happened, how the child feels/felt and so on. It is done in such a way that the child is convinced by the therapist's genuine interest and caring and starts to lift the veil behind which he hides. Over time the child lives at increasingly deeper and more truthful levels.

One of the most important objectives of the therapeutic relationship is to achieve dialogue. The therapist must encourage the child to bargain about his circumstances. The child must learn to think, talk, and to negotiate. He must experience all possible perspectives of a situation and participate effectively in dialogue (Schoeman & Van der Merwe, 1996: 32).

According to Yontef (1993: 132), four characteristics of dialogue can be emphasized:

- *Inclusion* – the play therapist must put himself as fully as possible into the experience of the patient without judging, analyzing or interpreting, while simultaneously retaining a sense of his separate, autonomous presence.
- *Presence* – the play therapist has to share experiences with the child, sharing his feelings, preferences and personal experiences.
- *Commitment to dialogue* – it is important that the play therapist and child bargain or agree to allow contact to happen.
- *Dialogue is lived* – the play therapist and child can choose how they want to communicate, that is, by means of dancing, songs, words, or any modeling that expresses and moves the energy between them. Nonverbal expressions can thus be included.

According to Yontef (1993: 40-41), real contact is not made it “happens”. Although each party can bring their will to the boundary, they can only go that far. In dialogic self-regulation the other person is contacted, but remains an independent person, although aspects, or the “otherness”, of that person are assimilated into oneself. Thus, even if that person has a style I do not like, I can accept that person with that style. According to the paradoxical theory of change each person is unique and only by knowing how we are with other people and how they are with us, we truly become ourselves and know ourselves. We cannot be ourselves by aiming at ourselves.

The role of the Gestalt play therapist can be interpreted as that of participant-observer of here-and-now behaviour (Yontef, 1993: 56).

The person learns by experimenting in the safe environment of a therapeutic situation. Although the therapist does not focus on mental concepts, the past, or the future, no content is excluded in advance. The focus is not on the “why’s” of behaviour or on the manipulation of stimulus consequences to bring about a change in behaviour.

The Gestalt therapeutic approach can be effectively applied when doing play therapy. According to Oaklander (1988: 160) play is not only the child’s form of improvisational dramatics, but the way in which the child tries out and learns about his world. It is therefore essential to his healthy development, that is, mentally, physically, and socially. Play is the child’s form of self-therapy through which confusions, anxieties, and conflicts are often worked through. Furthermore, play serves as a language for the child who uses it as a substitute for words.

That which a child cannot express by means of language, he expresses through play. In this way he formulates and assimilates what he experiences.

As previously stated, when working Gestalt therapeutically, the emphasis is not on the techniques as such, but on the Gestalt philosophy. It is also possible for the psychoanalyst or behaviour therapist to utilize the same play therapeutic techniques as the Gestalt therapist. The difference thus lies in the philosophies of these theories. The Gestalt play therapist will determine the child’s developmental stage and work accordingly. Just as clay or sand can be used as mediums in a play therapeutic situation, verbal communication can also serve as medium by means of which the therapist makes contact and enters into dialogue with the child.

The play therapist will focus on the child's world and may use certain techniques in order to "speak" the child's language.

According to Schoeman & Van der Merwe (1996: 29), when building a relationship with a child it is necessary to look at the awareness level of that child. If the child is unaware of himself, his interaction and his sensory functions, it will be difficult to build a relationship with him or to work towards recovery.

The main aims of the Gestalt therapist in building a relationship, would be the following (Schoeman & Van der Merwe, 1996: 29-30):

- Know the cause of the problem that induced the parent to bring the child for play therapy;
- Bring the child into contact with his sensory, emotional and cognitive needs;
- Help the child to fulfil his own needs and to be realistic in his expectations;
- Inform the child that there may be situations that are painful, but facing them will be necessary for recovery;
- Inform the child that he will have to make choices and take responsibility for his own life;
- The child must be willing to relate to his environment and other people and accommodate his influence in the world;
- The therapist must make a study of the child's process, that is, how the child deals with his situation in the world;
- The therapist must study the child's self-regulatory system;
- The therapist must empower the child so that he can assume responsibility for his own life.

When building a relationship with the child, the following two aspects are also important:

1. **Contact**

According to Schoeman & Van der Merwe (1996: 54), contact making is a continuous process and includes the following:

➤ **Awareness:**

1. The child becomes aware of the need for contact making;
2. The awareness intensifies and influences thoughts and behaviour;
3. The child integrates his total life experience in significant totality to become a unified whole;
4. A prominent motivation to take action is formed.

➤ **Action:**

1. The child starts to mobilize his energy, considers alternatives and makes choices. He then moves towards fulfilment of needs.

➤ **Experimental contact making:**

1. The child develops consciousness of the self, his boundaries are expanded and he clarifies the content of meaningful material.

➤ **Making contact:**

1. Interaction takes place between the child and his environment;
2. Exchange of sensory information becomes more prominent.

➤ **Assimilation:**

1. The child allows the new energy sensation to take place freely;
2. The child experiences new stimuli spontaneously.

➤ **New meaning regarding consciousness**

1. The child attributes new meaning to stimuli;
2. The potential exists for development of new perceptions.

Zinker (in Dierks, 1994: 54) outlines the above contact awareness cycle as: withdrawal, sensation, awareness, mobilization of energy, action, contact and withdrawal. It can be illustrated as follows:

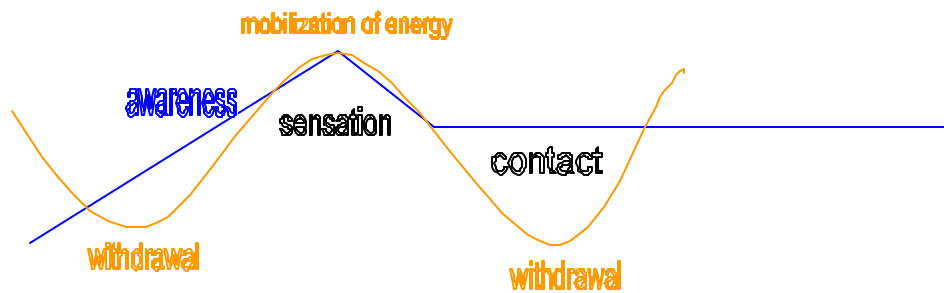


Illustration 5.1: Zinker's truncated Contact-Awareness Cycle

2. Resistance

Resistance implies that a child has specific goals, which can be identified, like visiting a friend, doing homework, writing a song.

Any intra-personal interference to move in this direction, is called resistance.

Resistance could manifest in the form of the following (Yontef, 1993: 14):

- *Retroflection*, which is a split within the self, a resisting of aspects of the self by the self;
- *Introjection*, through which foreign material is absorbed without discriminating or assimilating. Introjected values and behaviours are imposed on the self;
- *Projection*, which is a confusion of self and others that result from attributing to the outside that is truly self;
- *Confluence*, which takes place when the separation and distinction between self and others become so unclear that the boundary is lost.

5.4 Gestalt therapeutic techniques

Gestalt therapy is selectively and differentially practiced according to the personality and needs of the therapist, the child and the setting. Each therapist has to find his own way in which to apply the theory, using many aspects of the here-and-now situation in order to create growth opportunities, encounter, experimentation, observation, sensory awareness and the like (Yontef, 1993: 590).

According to Crocker (2001: 1), there are two overarching methods that characterize the whole Gestalt process, that is, the therapeutic dialogue and the phenomenological method.

When it comes to the therapeutic situation, the therapist brings a certain ground of learning and experience, by which his observation of what is important regarding the child is influenced.

This leads to spontaneous dialogue between the therapist and child, which results in practical intervention.

According to Crocker (2001: 3), the phenomenological method is the direct methodological implication of the paradoxical principle of change, and it is equally paradoxical. When practicing this method, the therapist is open to receive whatever and however the child shows himself, verbally, as well as non-verbally.

Although the therapist's verbal and non-verbal responses bring novelty into the child's phenomenology, they are altered by the ground, which the child brings to the session. The revelations, as well as the effect on these revelations of the grounds of both therapist and child, determine the subsequent responses by both parties.

There is mutual influencing by means of revelation and ground, and dialogue is thus referred to as "speaking through" and not "speaking at" or "speaking to". True dialogue refers to an authentic form of interpersonal relationship and not a mere concept of "being-alongside" (Crocker, 2001: 2).

According to Crocker (2001: 4), the phenomenological method uses theory to organize and explore what is revealed. However, it honours the revelations themselves as primary and the therapist's thoughts as secondary. Hypothetical constructs are put aside. The therapist does not know more about the child's experiences than the child himself, and remains humble, open, and respectful in the face of what the child shows of himself.

According to Yontef (1993: 59), Gestalt therapy is selectively and differentially practiced according to the personality and needs of the therapist, the patient and the setting. Each person has to find his own way to apply the theory.

5.4.1 Gestalt techniques with children

There are certain techniques that could be used as tools during the therapeutic process (Yontef, 1993: 27-30):

- *Stay with it* – It encourages the patient to continue with the feeling that is experienced at that exact moment. It builds the child's capacity to deepen and work through a feeling towards completion;
- *Enactment* – The therapist asks the child to put feelings or thoughts into action. This technique is used to enhance awareness. The child can either talk to a specific person or make use of role play;
- *Exaggeration* – This is a special form of enactment. The child has to exaggerate some feeling, thought, movement, and so forth, in order to experience the enacted vision more intensely. Exaggeration helps intense feelings to come back to the child's awareness.
- *Guided fantasy* – Some children can bring an experience into the here and now effectively by means of visualization. According to Rudolph & Thompson (2000: 171), fantasy may help the child deal with a less pleasant reality. Fantasy is *a way of seeking gratification of needs and frustrated desires through the imagination* (Rudolph & Thompson, 2000: 74);

- *Body techniques* – These include any technique that brings children's awareness to their body functioning, or helps them to be aware of how they can use their bodies to support excitement, awareness and contact;
- *No gossiping* – If a child has the need to talk about someone that is not present during therapy, he has to “talk” directly to the person by means of the empty chair technique, making use of the present tense (Rudolph & Thompson, 2000: 168);
- Another technique according to Corey (1990: 342) is *dream work*. The Gestalt therapist does not focus on the interpreting and analyzing of dreams, but intends to bring back the dream to life, to re-create it, and to help the child relive it as if it were happening now.

According to Rudolph & Thompson (2000: 172), dreaming is a way of becoming aware of the world in the here-and-now. Gestalt also focuses on the here-and-now and dream work can thus be used effectively;

- *Language exercises* According to Corey (1990: 333-335), our speech patterns are often expressions of our feelings, thoughts, and attitudes. By focusing on our overt speaking habits, we can increase our self-awareness. Words can either bring us to ourselves or take us away from ourselves. The child is asked to use “I” instead of “it” or “you”. By doing this, the child reveals himself and takes responsibility for what he is saying. The child can also be asked to change “can’t” statements to “won’t” statements. This enables children to accept their power by taking responsibility for their decisions.

According to Rudolph & Thompson (2000: 168), the *why* question should be avoided and substituted with *what* and *how*.

- *Changing questions into statements* – This method assists the child in being more authentic and direct when expressing their thoughts and feelings. Perls believed that most questions were phony in that they were really disguised statements (Schoeman, 1999: 116);
- *Taking responsibility* – The child has to complete sentences and take responsibility for these feelings (Schoeman, 1999: 116);
- *Incomplete sentences* – These sentences help the child to become aware of how he helps or hurts himself (Schoeman, 1999: 116);
- *Bipolarities* – Here Perls refers to the term differential thinking. One of the most common bipolarities consists of the so-called *topdog* and *underdog*. The *topdog* is authoritative and think he knows best. He works with “you should” and “you should not”. The *underdog* is manipulative by being defensive or apologetic. He works with “I want” and makes excuses such as “I try hard” and “I have good intentions” (Schoeman, 1999: 116);
- *The empty chair technique* – This technique is often used to role-play a conflict between people or within a person (Schoeman, 1999: 116).

Alternative techniques, according to Schoeman (1999: 147), are the following:

- *The paradox* – The aim of therapy is not always to bring about behavioural change, but to create discomfort within the child in order for him to be ready to work on his problem. The paradox entails a demand to carry into effect the opposite of what is actually wanted. However, a discomfort must accompany the paradox. An illusion of control is created. The paradox is used when continuous unwanted behaviour surfaces;
- *Rephrasing* – By means of rephrasing, negative qualities are changed into positive ones. One of the quickest methods to obtain success is to empower the child to pity the thing he once feared.

5.5 The field theory

According to Yontef (1993: 286-287), the practice and theory of Gestalt therapy is built on the importance of being aware of our awareness process. The process of our thinking is an important aspect of this and Field Theory points to the process of how we think.

The Field Theory is therefore important for therapists to study, because it can help the therapist focus on what is important and essential about what he does, and what is peripheral. It can provide guidance and orientation, as well as a framework for communicating (Yontef, 1993: 288).

The field theory is a vital part of the Gestalt therapy theory upon which the Gestalt therapy methodology is built. Some of the central concepts in Gestalt therapy are difficult or impossible to understand without a field theoretical attitude.

In order for a Gestalt therapist to have a comprehensive understanding of his chosen approach, he must therefore study Field Theory (Yontef, 1993: 288).

According to Brownell (in Brownell et al, 2001: 2), “field” refers to the phenomenology of the child, that is, everything that has effect in the life of that child. This view is supported by Crocker (in Brownell et al, 2001: 2-3) when she refers to the field as a “sphere of influence”.

In order for the therapist to understand certain behaviours, cognitions or feelings of the child, it may be necessary to see the child within the context of his family, his situation at work, a regional economic situation or a combination of these influences.

According to Crocker (in Brownell et al, 2001: 5-6), the field which comes into being as the therapist and child meet, is influenced by much of what each party brings with him. This includes beliefs, habits of interaction, theoretical orientation of the therapist, expectations and hopes of the child, race, cultural differences, and so forth. The important thing is what is relevant to the situation. The field should always be taken as a relative term, which becomes defined within a specific context.

According to Perls (in Yontef, 1993: 59), any change in the field will affect the entire field. Thus the immediate results may generalize to the rest of the field after intervention at many points and from many angles.

According to Philipsson (1998: 1-2), Gestalt field theory begins with the whole. The field theory stands central to Gestalt. Parlett (in Philipsson, 1998: 2-3) states five principles regarding the field theory:

1. The principle of organization

This principle states that meaning derives from looking at the total situation, the totality of co-existing facts. When looking at Gestalt field theory an “intra-psychic” activity does not exist.

What the child thinks, feels, and does is based on his interaction with his environment at that moment.

According to Lewin (in Yontef, 1993: 305), every event, experience, object or organism is determined by the field, of which it is part.

All movements of any part are determined by the whole field and the organism or environment field determines the person. It can thus be said that a child’s progress is a function of the whole field.

2. The principle of contemporaneity

Contemporaneity refers to the here-and-now. The child is not affected by the past, which no longer exists for him, but by the memories of the past and our expectations and learning of our past. All of these are present parts of the field, as well as the environmental reminders of the past. According to Perls (in Yontef, 1993: 311), *the time centre of ourselves as conscious human time-space events is the present. There is no other reality than the present.*

This concept of the here-and-now is also emphasized by Yontef (1993: 311) when he states that Lewin’s Principle of Contemporaneity refers to the viewpoint that anything that has an effect is present in the here-and-now. Only present facts can thus produce present behaviour and experience.

According to Yontef (1993: 311), contemporaneity in Gestalt therapy theory is defined in terms of the phenomenology of a person in the experienced here-and-now.

However, although the here-and-now is emphasized by Gestalt therapy as the central point in a flow of time from past to future, it is not considered to be static or absolute. Awareness is not only a sensory event occurring in the here-and-now, but also includes remembering and anticipating.

It is good Gestalt therapy to talk about the past when doing so is the figure of interest in the present and part of lively current functioning.

It is just as dysfunctional not to talk about the past when it is currently needed, as it is when talking about the past to avoid some aspect of the present.

3. The principle of singularity

According to this principle, each situation and person-situation field is unique. Therapy must be co-created to fit in with the therapist, child, and the child's life situation.

A child's progress is a function of the whole field and not only determined by his motivation and strength. It is also determined by other factors, for example the therapist's skill, the relationship between therapist and child, and the family and friends who are part of the child's life space (Yontef, 1993: 306).

4. The principle of changing process

The field changes constantly. Homeostasis and creativity thus go hand in hand. New ways must be invented to balance the child's needs and interests with environmental possibilities.

According to Yontef (1993: 313), Gestalt therapy is a process therapy. Process is a necessary and central aspect of Field Theory and refers to the idea that everyone and everything moves and becomes. Everything is energy, structured by the dynamic forces of the field, and moves through time and space.

According to Parlett (in Yontef, 1993: 313), the principle of a changing process refers to the fact that experience is provisional, rather than permanent.

In Gestalt therapy field theory everything is considered the energy and movement of the field, everything is action and in the process of becoming, evolving and changing. A process is always active and refers to something that is happening (Yontef, 1993: 314-315).

5. The principle of possible relevance

Any part of the field is possibly relevant to the situation and might need to be explored.

Gestalt field theory is inherently dialogic, in that the therapist and the patient are co-creating each other in their contact. The dialogue points to the field and not to the individual. The dialogue is not limited to verbal exchanges, but to the whole way in which the therapist and child act towards each other (Philipsson, 1998: 5).

5.6 Gestalt and religion

According to Carpenter (1997: 1), therapists should have a thorough knowledge and understanding of how to work with religious issues in order to remain ethical. Gestalt therapists are well equipped for religious issues as they focus on a dialogical relationship as opposed to a rigid challenging of the child's religious beliefs. The researcher agrees with this statement. However, if the therapist is uncomfortable working within the child's field of religion, a referral should be made.

This view is supported by principle D of the ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct (APA Ethics Code, 1992) in Carpenter (1997: 2), where it states that referrals should be made or additional experience, training or supervision should be obtained where differences of age, race, religion, sexual orientation and language significantly affect the therapist's work concerning the child.

According to the researcher, it is important for the parents to be able to trust the therapist when working on a spiritual level with the child. Religion is diverse and the therapist should not work with the child spiritually in order to change his spirituality, but to guide him in becoming whole within his religious milieu outside of the therapeutic situation.

Pate and Bondi (in Carpenter, 1997: 2) are of the opinion that therapists should protect the child's rights and personal dignity by respecting the importance of his spirituality and religion and incorporating it in their practices. According to Carpenter (1997: 3), religion is still overlooked when it comes to recognition and respect in a therapeutic situation.

In Gestalt therapy there is indeed a place for differences of opinion in which the beliefs of both therapist and child can be mutually explored, but there is a critical difference between a therapist who makes a place for the different beliefs of the child, and the challenging therapist who is on a crusade to save the child from primitive fundamentalism.

A phenomenological approach will save both therapist and child from a rigid stand-off. It allows the therapist to explore how the child creates meaning from experience. He offers support, but plays a minor and manageable role in their relationship (Carpenter, 1997: 4).

The researcher supports Carpenter regarding the therapist's role when religious issues are involved. However, if the therapist works from a certain religious perspective, the situation changes. For instance, when the therapist only works from a Christian perspective, his therapeutic approach will carry that perspective as basis.

The child and his parents should be informed about his working ethics and may either agree with his approach or ask for a referral.

As a therapist, the researcher may feel that certain issues, for example the New Age, can only be dealt with therapeutically when working within a Christian perspective. However, it remains the therapist's responsibility to discuss this with the child (also with the parents, when working with a minor). The child still has the choice whether to continue with therapy or be referred.

5.7 Conclusion

The basic philosophy of Gestalt therapy was briefly covered in this chapter. Although much more can be said regarding Gestalt theory, the researcher attempted to keep the information relevant to his study.

Phase two, chapters two to five, was a referral to literature and the discussion thereof. In phase three the research results will be discussed. The proposed guidelines for parents and caretakers will be outlined and a conclusion and recommendation will be made.

Chapter Six

Phase Three

THE RESEARCH FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

6.1 Introduction

In order to compile guidelines for parents and caretakers the researcher utilized relevant literature and semi-structured interviews with Christian parents who have experience of parenthood. In order to protect the parents' identities no names will be mentioned.

The researcher also interviewed psychologists, theologians, social workers, sociologists and teachers in order to establish their knowledge about Indigo Children and possible recommendations regarding the handling of these children. Not one of the above experts had any knowledge of Indigo Children.

6.2 Universe

The universe consisted of Christian parents from various professions who also had contact with other children. These parents were from different gender and age groups.

Respondent One: Male, 38 years old, psychologist.

Respondent Two: Female, 41 years old, Sunday-school teacher.

Respondent Three: Female, 51 years old, librarian and housewife.

Respondent Four: Female, 68 years old, nursery-school teacher and grandmother.

6.2.1 Sample

The purpose of the sampling method was to obtain specific information. According to De Vos (in De Vos et al, 2002: 334), the purposeful selection of participants represents a key decision point in a qualitative study. A particular case is chosen because it illustrates some feature or process that is of interest for a particular study. For the purpose of this study the following criteria were considered within the sampling method:

- Christian parents who are of opinion that they maintain well-balanced relationships with their children;
- Christian parents who stand in professions where they have contact with children and who have an understanding of the dynamics of children.

6.2.2 Sampling methods

Four parents were approached to take part in semi-structured interviews. The sampling was purposive rather than random, in the sense that all the selected parents were Christians and were following a profession where they had contact with children. At the time of the interviews all four parents were situated in the Gauteng province of South Africa.

6.3 Semi-structured interview schedules

Personally formulated questions of the researcher were combined with questions from Carroll & Tober (1999: 83-85) for interviews with parents. These questions were intended to focus on parents' relationships with their children regarding discipline, as well as their disciplining methods. Information obtained by means of these interviews is tabulated below:

QUESTIONS	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4
What knowledge do you have about Indigo Children?	None.	Only that they are highly intelligent.	Yes, they are highly intelligent, arrogant, come from other planets, not popular with peers.	No.
What is your parental style?	Strict. We make the rules and expect them to keep to them. However, there are exceptions.	Different styles for different children. Physical punishment till twelve.	Authoritarian, I believe in discipline and to withhold certain privileges.	Authoritarian, but less so when child is about 14 years of age.
Is this style effective?	Yes, we can see it from our eldest child's behaviour and feedback from others.	Most of the times.	Yes, I get what I want and they feel safe, because rules are consistent.	Yes, if I stick to it.
How did you decide about the manner of discipline for your children?	We were brought up in the same way.	Tried not to be like our parents and it worked.	Learned from other people.	Example from own parents.
Do you use different disciplining methods for different children?	The basics are the same, but every child is handled according to his personality. We are more lenient with the younger children.	Yes, depends on the child's temperament and personality.	No.	No, unless it really is not working.
Do you think "special" children, e.g. Indigo Children, should be disciplined differently from other children?	You should look at the different personalities. Do not know if we could get used to an Indigo Child. There would be conflict.	It all depends on personalities.	Yes, methods can be adapted to child, but not privileges.	No.
Would you say that you have an Indigo Child?	No.	No.	No.	No.

QUESTIONS	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4
Do you listen to your children's needs and have a lot of fun together?	Yes.	Yes, games, puzzles, etc.	Yes.	Yes, now more than before.
Do you respect their privacy and personal space?	Yes.	Yes.	Absolutely.	Yes, if it suits me and if it is really important for her.
Do you feel your children's opinions are valuable, and that you can learn from them?	Yes.	Yes, always listen to their side of the story.	Absolutely.	Yes, but I am not inferior.
Do you give reasons why you make certain decisions?	Yes, but not always. Sometimes we know best.	Yes.	Definitely.	Yes, most of the time.
Do you frequently praise your children?	Yes.	Yes.	I think so.	According to love, not her behaviour.
Can you sometimes admit that you made a mistake and are sorry?	Yes.	Yes.	Did it once.	Yes.
Do you teach your child to have respect and compassion for other people?	Yes.	Yes, get positive feedback from teachers.	Yes.	Yes.
Do you take time to teach your children about different aspects of the world?	Yes.	Yes.	Yes, I try.	Yes, more on an emotional level than regarding practical issues.
Do you frequently encourage your children?	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.	Yes, now more than before. It depends on the child's developmental phase.
Do you do things for your children that they can do for themselves?	Yes, a lot.	No, they have to try first.	Not at all.	Yes.
Do you give your children responsibilities around the house, and do they have a choice regarding these responsibilities?	They do the minimum. No specific tasks.	Work according to roster.	They have responsibilities, but no choices.	No responsibilities around the house.
Do you notice when your children behave and then praise them for it?	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.
Do you have regular family meetings to discuss responsibilities and family outings?	No, they have choices if the outing is about them.	Not about sexual issues. We go on many outings. Parents decide.	Yes.	No, not at all.

QUESTIONS	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4
Do you teach your children about different emotions and how to communicate them?	Yes, especially how to handle teasing from peers.	Yes, e.g. boys are allowed to cry.	They are good at it. They also learn from school.	Yes.
Do you listen to your children when they complain about being lonely or depressed?	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.	Yes, if she has reason to be.
Do you have clear and consistent expectations and consequences for when they misbehave?	Yes.	No.	Yes, absolutely.	Yes.
Do they eat excessive amounts of sugar and preservatives?	No.	No, lots of fruit.	No, one child is sugar sensitive.	Yes.
Do they show signs of hyperactivity after eating certain foods?	No	No.	No.	No.

Table 6.1 – Semi-structured Interview Schedules

6.4 Research synthesis for prototype guidelines

The researcher was confronted by parents who did not know how to handle their children whom they had identified as Indigo Children.

According to the researcher, the Indigo Child is a product of specific parental styles and ways of discipline. He decided to compile Gestalt therapeutic guidelines from a Christian perspective in order to guide parents and caretakers when dealing with these children. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to determine the possible need for such guidelines.

6.5 Conclusion

According to the researcher, sufficient relevant literature was studied in order to set up appropriate guidelines. It was important for the researcher to gain insight into the Indigo Child phenomenon.

Relevant knowledge regarding the Gestalt philosophy, the Christian perspective and child development was also important as a basis from which the researcher could work towards intended guidelines. The knowledge acquired from the literature, as well as from the semi-structured interviews, was adapted and combined with existing guidelines to form a new set of guidelines with a Gestalt therapeutic approach, as well as from a Christian perspective. These guidelines will be outlined in the next chapter. For the purpose of this study the efficiency of the guidelines were not tested.

Chapter seven

Phase Three

DESIGN OF A PROTOTYPE THERAPEUTIC GUIDELINE FOR PARENTS AND CARETAKERS

7.1 Introduction

It is not always easy for parents to understand their children. So many times they do not know what to do or where to go for help. So often they do everything they can, but they still cannot reach their children. No two children are alike. They have different personalities and temperaments, although they were brought up under the same circumstances and were treated the same. They go through various developmental phases – physically, cognitively, emotionally, spiritually and socially. All these aspects have to be taken into account when rearing children.

Parents and caretakers should be aware that the roles they play in their children's lives are of utmost importance. The way they handle their children plays a major part in influencing and shaping their children's path of life.

In this chapter the researcher will provide guidelines to parents in order to guide them when rearing their children. The researcher utilized existing guidelines of Carroll & Tober, which he found relevant and supportive, as support for the prototype therapeutic guideline.

This guideline could be generalized and utilized for all children. However, for the purpose of this study the focus of the practical exercises fall on teenagers, as this is the group the researcher relates to best.

7.2 Handling strategies and discipline within the family or learning situation

According to Gerard (in Carroll & Tober, 1999: 39-40), Indigo Children may demand more attention than others. They may want things to happen immediately and may force a situation according to their will and expectations. Parents should be cautious not to react to these demands.

Indigo Children may become emotionally upset when their peers show a lack of understanding and, as previously mentioned, they may be wrongly diagnosed as suffering from ADD or ADHD.

According to Carroll & Tober (1999: 45 – 46) and McCloskey (1999: 52-54), the next list can be seen as basics in how to discipline and handle Indigo Children:

Carroll & Tober	McCloskey
They (the children) should be treated with respect and their existence in the family should be honoured.	They (the parents) must be creative in setting limits and allow for physical energy. In setting limits, they must ask the child to help determine them.
We must help them create their own disciplinary solutions.	Treat Indigo Children as adults and peers without giving them adult responsibilities. Give adult explanations, do not talk down to them, listen to them and respect them.
They must be given choices about everything.	Do as you say. Do not say you love them and then treat them with disrespect.
Never belittle them.	Do not try to get away with deception. If you do not know or are unsure, ask them or other parents with Indigo Children.
Always explain why instructions are given to them.	

Carroll & Tober	McCloskey
Parents should make them their partners in the raising process.	
When they are infants, parents must explain everything they are doing.	
If serious problems develop, get them tested before drugs are used on them.	
Provide safety in your support and avoid negative criticism.	
Let them decide what they are interested in, they know better.	
Keep the child informed and involved.	
Prevent potential misunderstanding by simple explanations.	
Rather discuss than issue orders.	
Keep your word.	
Deal with each situation in the moment.	
Do not hit or use abusive language.	
Let your emotion show love.	
Make reprimanding a "time-out" event.	
Talk the situation over after being reprimanded.	
Always join together afterwards and confirm that everything is smoothed out.	

Table 7.1 - Carroll & Tober Disciplining Guidelines

According to Tappe (in Carroll & Tober, 1999: 47), parents must talk to their Indigo Children, working through their events instead of just saying no. Indigo Children do not respond well to "no" answers and need explanations. They must be given choices, although parents must guide them through these decision-making processes.

This is confirmed by Kryon (in Carroll, 1997: 2) when he says that parents must first explain to Indigo Children why they are being asked to do something, and then be given a choice. According to Tappe (in Carroll & Tober, 1999: 48-49), it may sometimes be better to give them control because of their great personal power. It is not wise to isolate them, because they will be destructive and will not co-operate.

These children demand quality family life where parents must sit down and spend time with them. They need parents to be present, body and soul, not just to quickly spend some time together.

According to Hegerle (1999: 55), parents should not let their children get bored. Boredom can bring out arrogance in Indigo Children. Hegerle (1999: 54-56) agrees with McCloskey that parents must be open and honest with their Indigo Children in order for the children to respect them. Boundaries must be clear as to what is not acceptable. However, open exploration within these boundaries must be encouraged. It is important to be firm, but fair, not only for the children's sake, but for the sake of parents as well.

According to Gerard (in Carroll & Tober, 1999: 71-72), discipline is vital for Indigo Children. Because of their creativity and alertness, they will try out everything and explore their boundaries. They need reassurance and need to know the safety limits. However, parents should not tell them what to do. This approach will only block their creativity and suppress their expression. Instead, "loving discipline" should be followed. This kind of discipline follows the following guidelines:

7.3 The roles of parents and caretakers

According to Ocker (1999: 75-76), his vision of future education is based on unconditional love. Parents and caretakers need to come to a new awareness. They must teach children how to think and not what to think. The role of the parent is not to pass on knowledge, but wisdom. *Wisdom is knowledge applied.*

When parents pass on knowledge, the children are taught what to do, what they are supposed to know, and what their parents want them to believe to be true. However, when wisdom is passed on, the children are being taught to find their own truth.

Although a certain amount of knowledge needs to be passed on from generation to generation, children must make discoveries for themselves.

7.4 Parental guidance styles

Regarding the needs of Indigo Children at home and parental guidance, the suggestions of Patterson (1999: 83-85) and Chapman (2002d: 1-2) are being outlined in the following table:

Patterson	Chapman
Parents must value their children's opinions and learn from them.	Respect them.
Parents need to listen to their children and have fun with them.	Practice unconditional love for your child. Love them and show it, no matter what.
Parents should respect the privacy and personal space of their children and always give reasons for decisions being made.	Give choices.
Parents should praise their children and offer three compliments for every criticism.	Give them freedom to develop, balanced with supervision and safety limits.
Parents must be able to admit that they have made a mistake and are sorry.	Do set limits to protect them, but not arbitrary ones.
Children must be taught to have respect and compassion for others.	Let them help to create rules as far as possible, as well as fair and appropriate consequences for breaking them.
Different aspects of the world should be discussed with the children.	Give them complete explanations.
Parents should encourage their children frequently and give them choices of responsibilities around the house.	Do not talk down to them.
Parents should listen to their children when they complain about being lonely and/or depressed.	Give reasons and explain why.
Parents must teach their children about different emotions and ways of communicating these emotions.	Never say "just because" and feel it is an adequate reason for an Indigo Child.
Expectations must be clear and consistent.	Be honest. They will know if you do not tell the truth.
Do not overcorrect children, but rather praise them when they behave.	Avoid giving orders, but rather ask for their co-operation.

Patterson	Chapman
Advise children a few minutes in advance of certain activities.	Do not use guilt, fear or hate as a controlling tool.
Give them as much choice as possible.	Be fair.
Provide short explanations why you want certain things to be done.	Be consistent. If you say "no", make sure you have a good reason and do not give in.
Do not give too many directions at a time.	Do not compare your childhood to theirs.
Use phrases like "I need you to help me to..."	Do not try to manipulate them.
Decide with the children on certain consequences for certain misbehaviours.	Provide emotional support for them and their goals.
Make use of a time-out chair or quiet area when they misbehave.	Listen to them.
Count to three for misbehaving and if they do not stop, make use of the time-out area.	Respect their privacy and personal space.
Do not argue or lecture during discipline.	Teach your child to have respect for others.
Make use of star charts as rewarding systems.	Admit when you make mistakes.
Praise children for following expectations of parents.	Make time to play with them.
Make use of regular routines.	Do not do things for them they can do for themselves.
Always be consistent, even if you do not have the energy to follow your discipline plane.	Give them responsibilities and choices about which responsibilities they will have.
	Notice and reward good behaviour.
	Involve your children in your life.
	Respect any psychic skills that they develop.
	Provide appropriate training and support for any special talents they have.
	Appreciate their strengths.
	Provide creative outlets.
	Be open to learning from them.

Table 7.2 - Patterson & Chapman Parental Guidelines

According to Patterson (1999: 85-88), parents should not allow Indigo Children to misbehave just because they are perceived to have special abilities. They also need boundaries to learn self-control, which is an integral part of a peaceful community. Discipline should be given while still preserving the Indigo Child's dignity.

7.5 Proposed practical non-academic guidelines

The following guidelines have been set up to guide parents towards a more fulfilling relationship with their children. Most of the guidelines set up by Carroll & Tober correspond with a Christian perspective, as well as with the Gestalt philosophy. However, according to the researcher these guidelines are not complete and are applicable to all children, not only Indigo Children.

The proposed guidelines consist of a combination of the Christian perspective (Chapter three), Gestalt Philosophy (Chapter four) and guidelines set up by Carroll & Tober for Indigo Children. According to the researcher, balance within the family with a so-called Indigo Child may be restored by the combination of a Christian and Gestalt perspective with existing guidelines for Indigo Children.

These guidelines are set up for parents as well as caretakers, although reference is only made to parents. The guidelines are also set up to give the parents and caretakers freedom within their unique situations and are therefore more of a comprehensive than a specific nature. It has been outlined in a practical, non-academic style, aimed at the parent for support in rearing children. It is important that the child should be communicated to on his developmental level.

With these guidelines the researcher wants to encourage parents to go back to the basics. Parents need to realize that their children need them and that they not only need to spend quality time with their children, but also quantity time. In order to avoid lengthy proposed activities by focusing on all age groups, the focus will be on teenagers.

Still, these guidelines will apply to all age groups, even though the activities will have to be adapted to accommodate every child in his developmental phase.

The goal for parents should not be to apply the guidelines as quickly as possible, but rather to make it their own so that it can become part of their daily lives. Each of the ten guidelines could be focused on during a seven-day period. It should serve as a starting-point to rediscover or enhance their relationship with their children.

However, parents should not expect to get to know their children after ten weeks. These ten weeks only serve as an experimental time, after which these guidelines can be integrated and moulded into a new and more effective ongoing lifestyle. According to the researcher, his actual contribution lies within the underlying Christian perspective in which parents should approach their children.

7.5.1 Make contact with the child.

- Combination of Gestalt, Christian, and Carroll & Tober Problem Areas
- Proposed non-academic Activities for Parents and Children

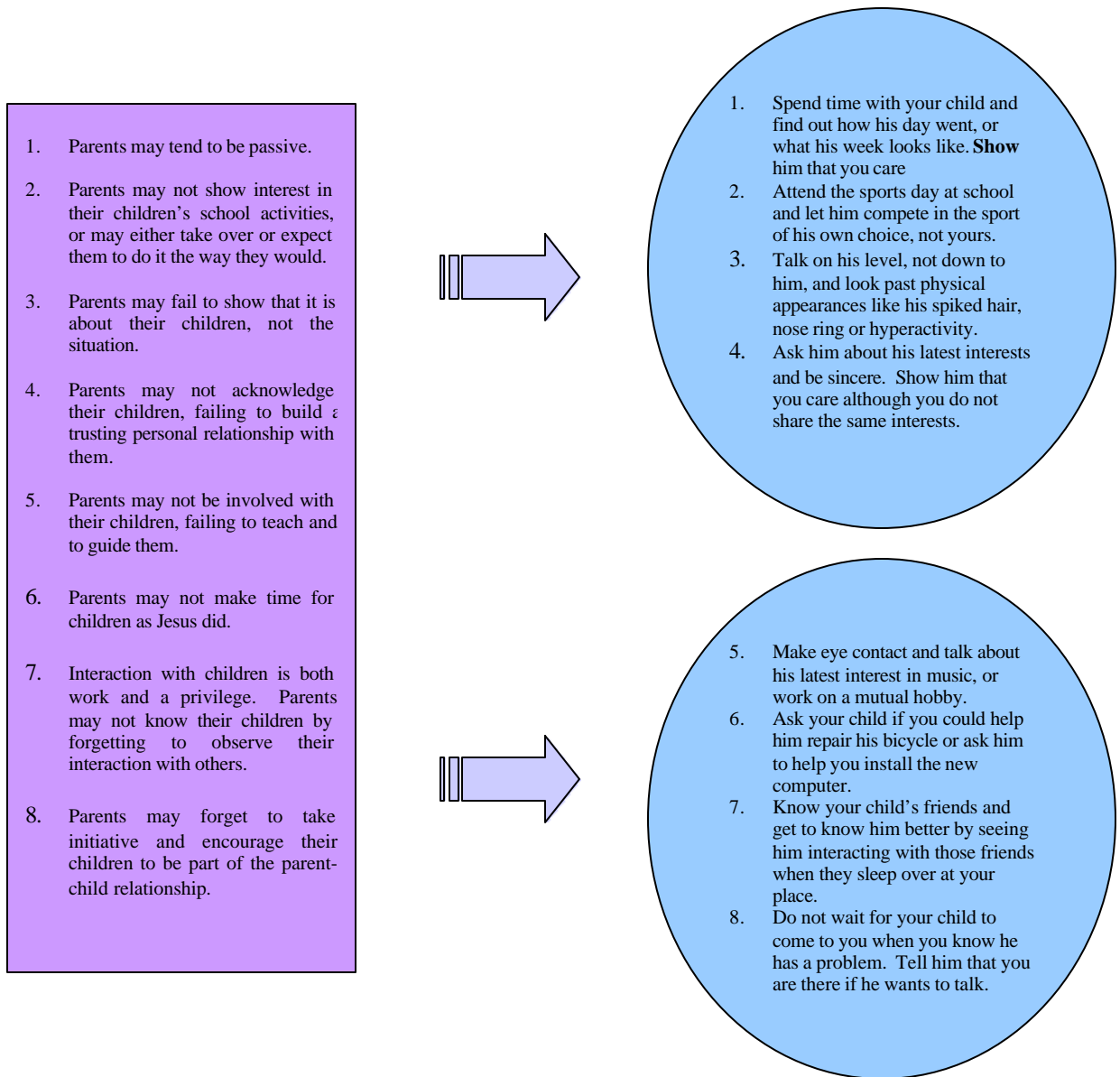


Illustration 7.1.1: Making Contact

7.5.2 Focus on his awareness

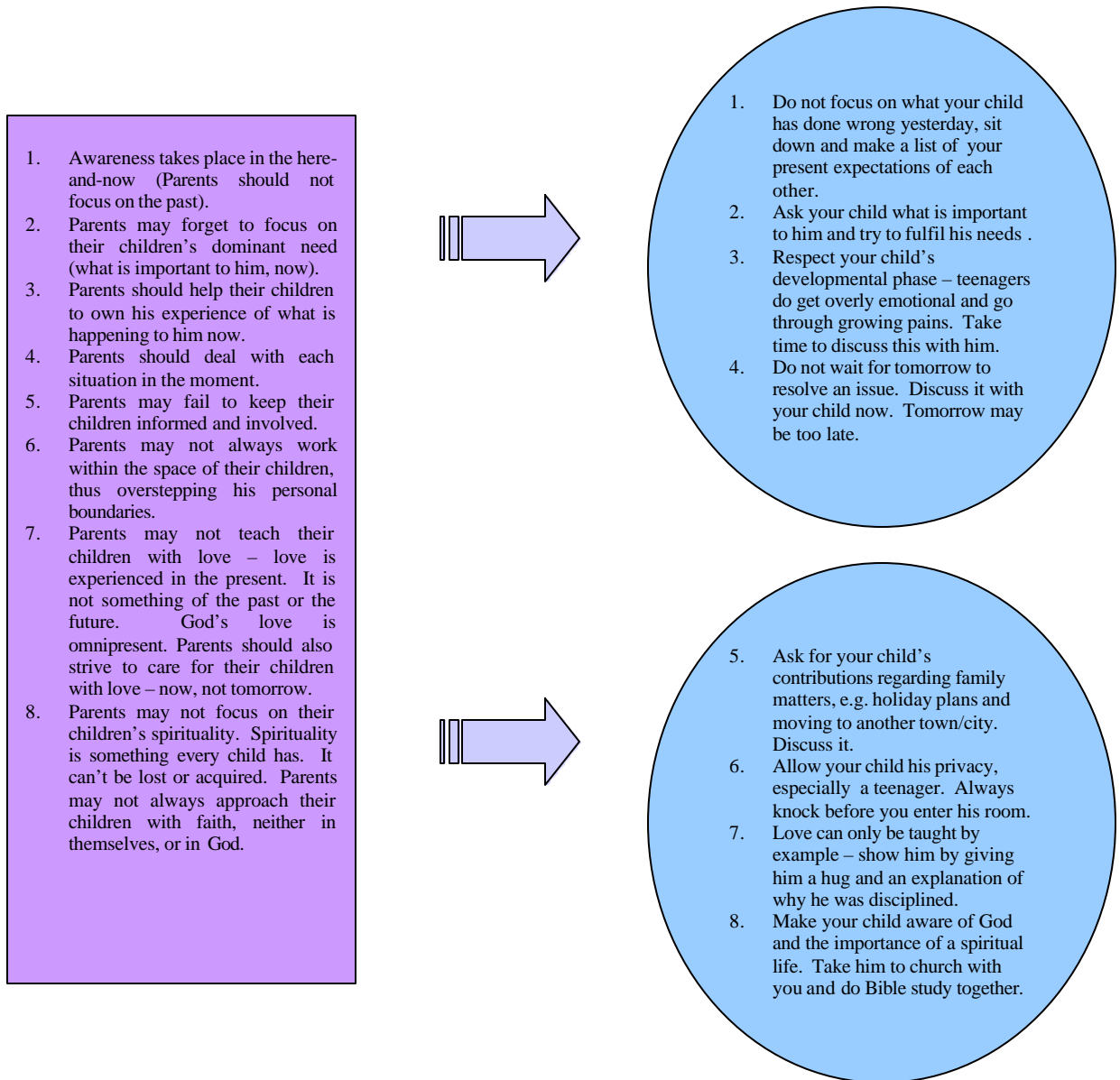


Illustration 7.1.2: Awareness

7.5.3 Assure dialogue in the relationship

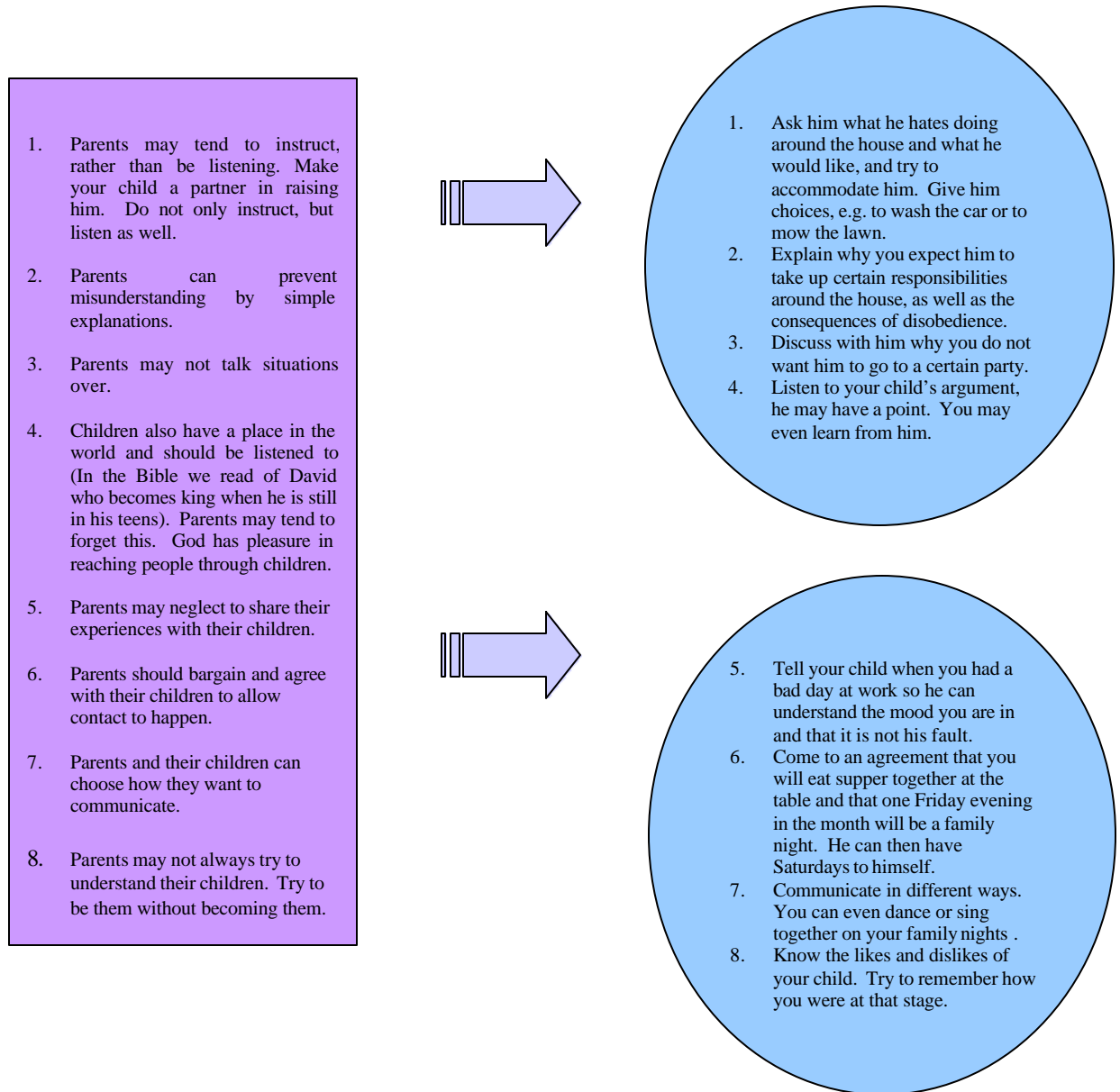


Illustration 7.1.3: Dialogue

7.5.4 Know your child's process

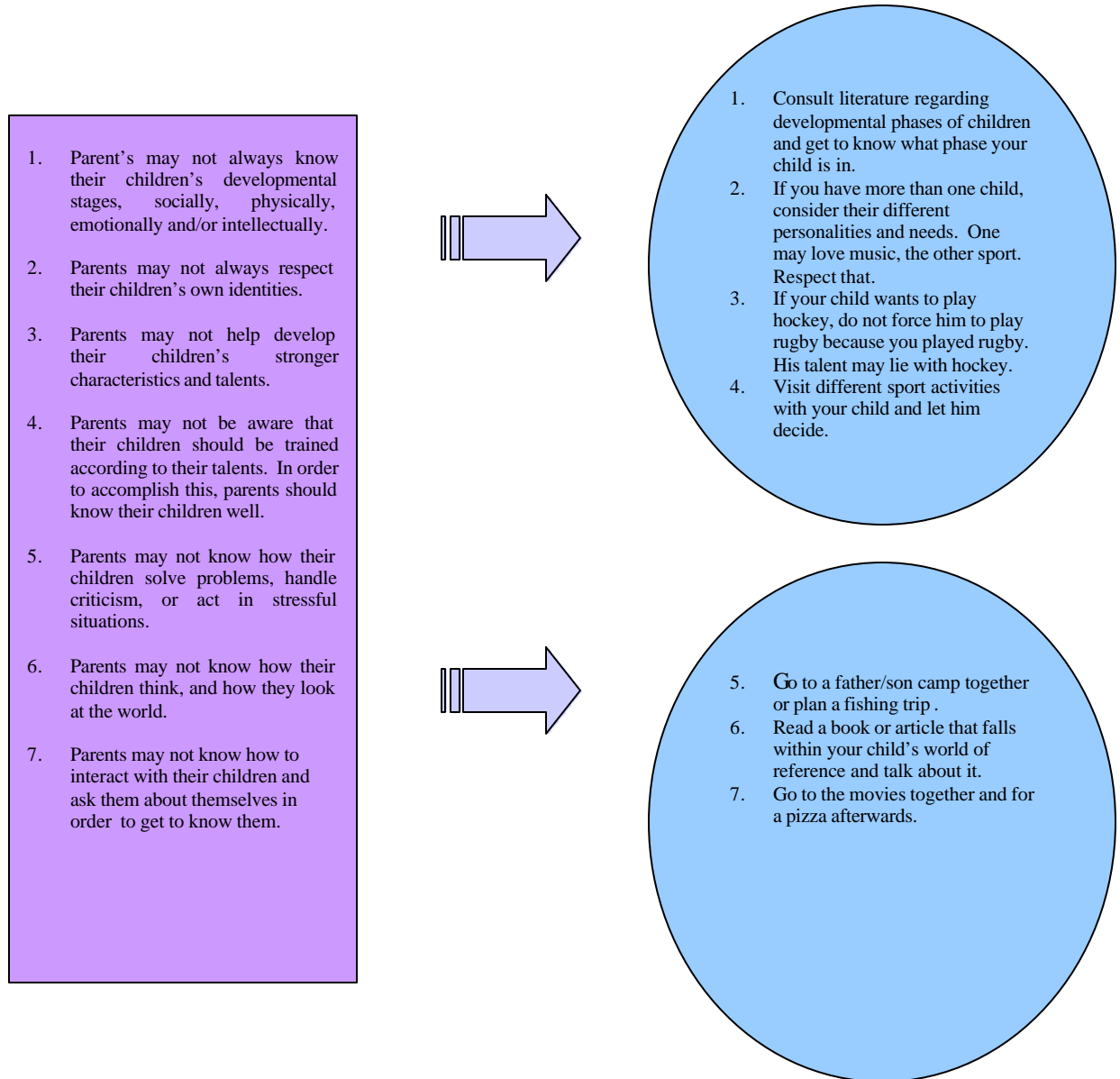


Illustration 7.1.4: Process

7.5.5 *Make sure your child is in balance*

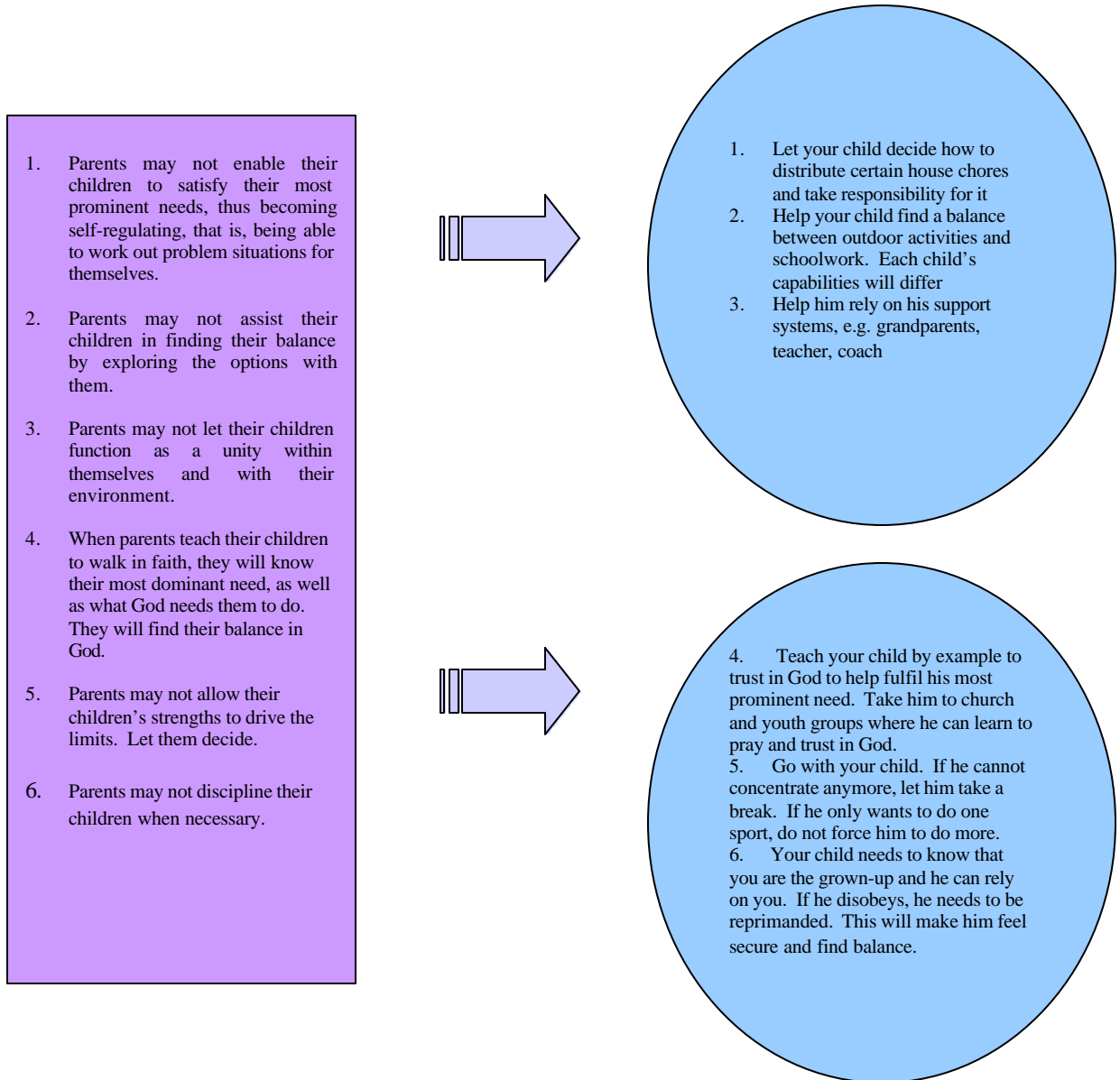


Illustration 7.1.5: Balance

7.5.6 Do not be afraid of resistance

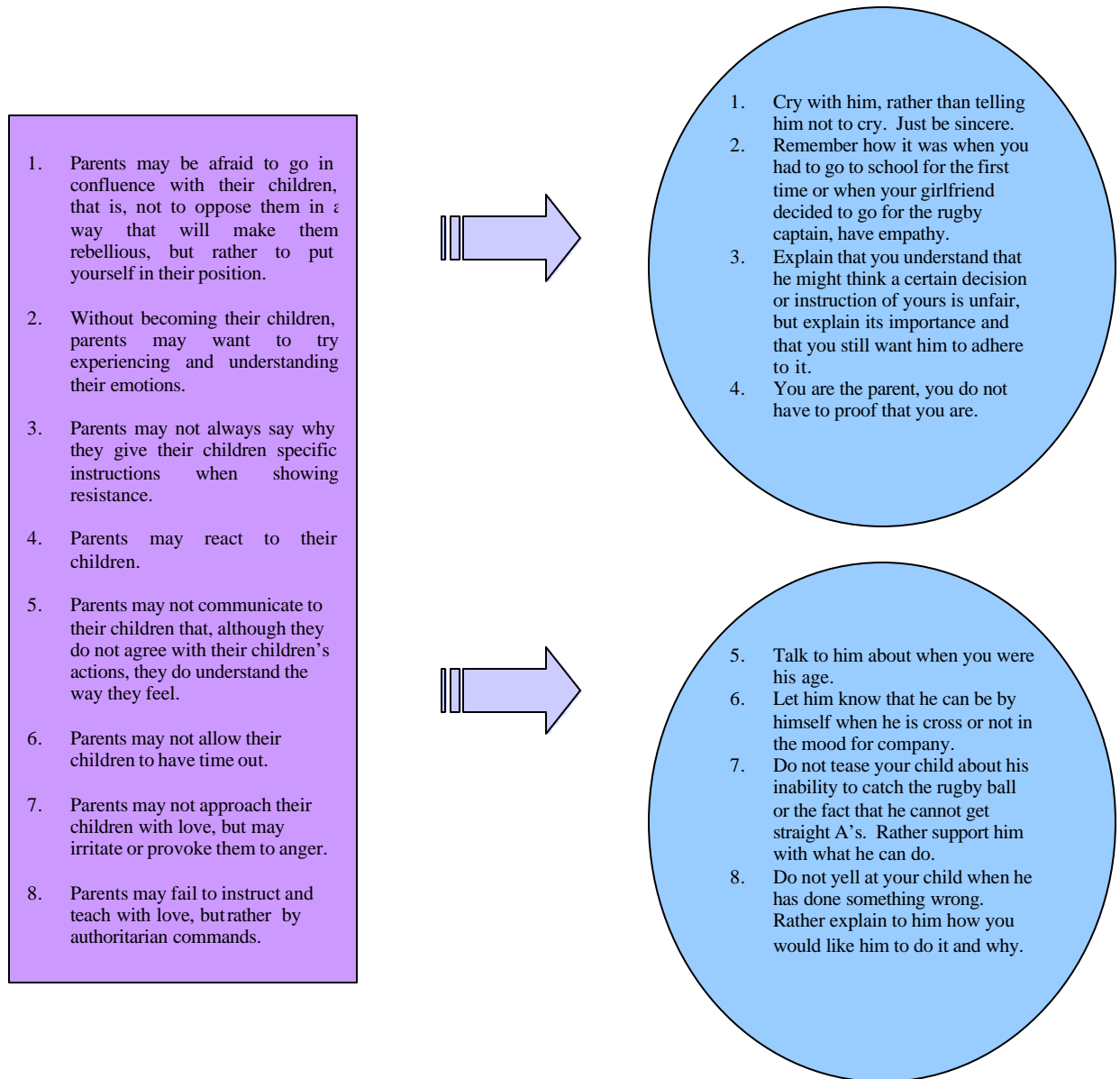


Illustration 7.1.6: Resistance

7.5.7 *Be in contact with yourself*

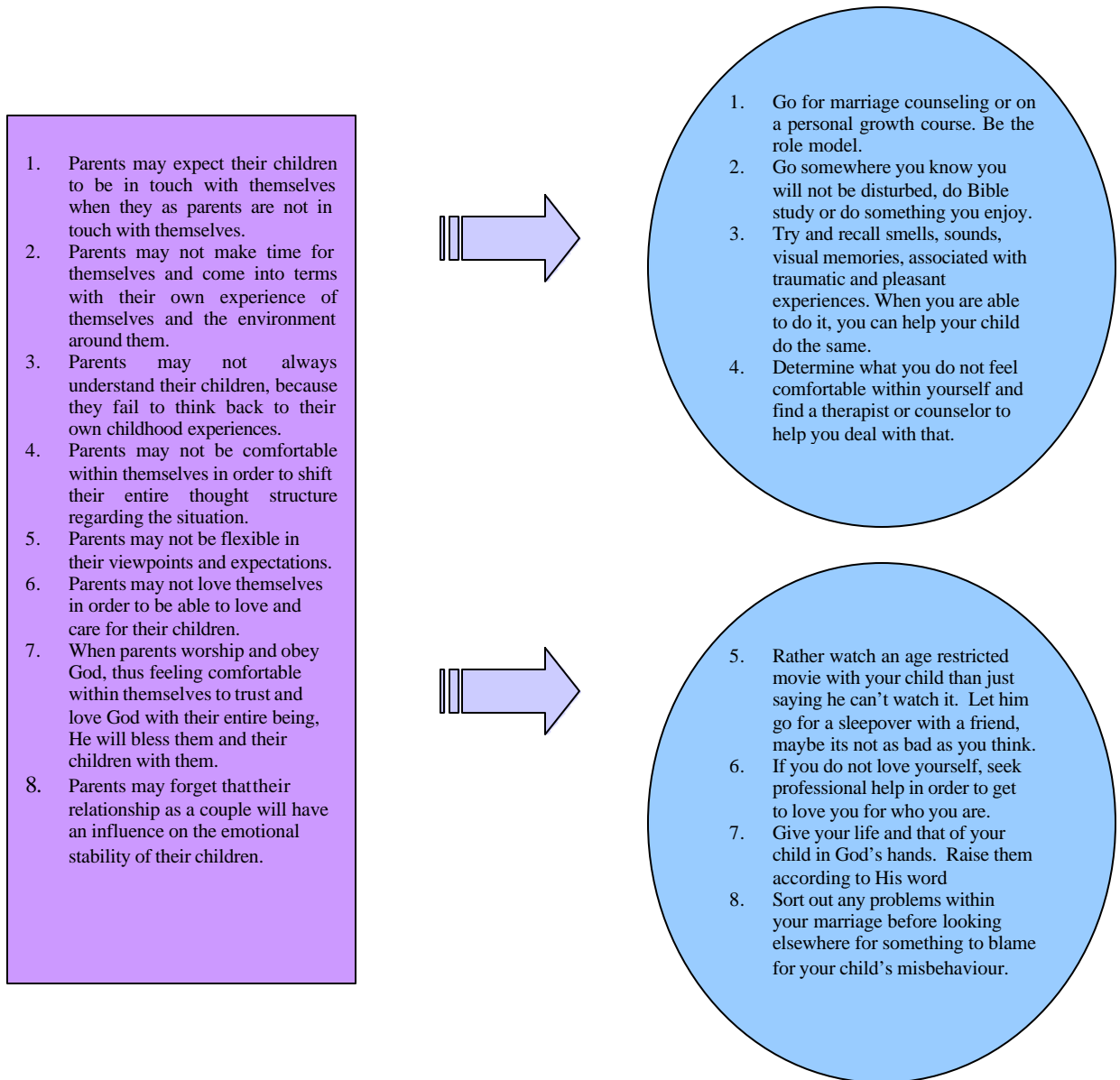


Illustration 7.1.7: Contact with Self

7.5.8 Empower your child

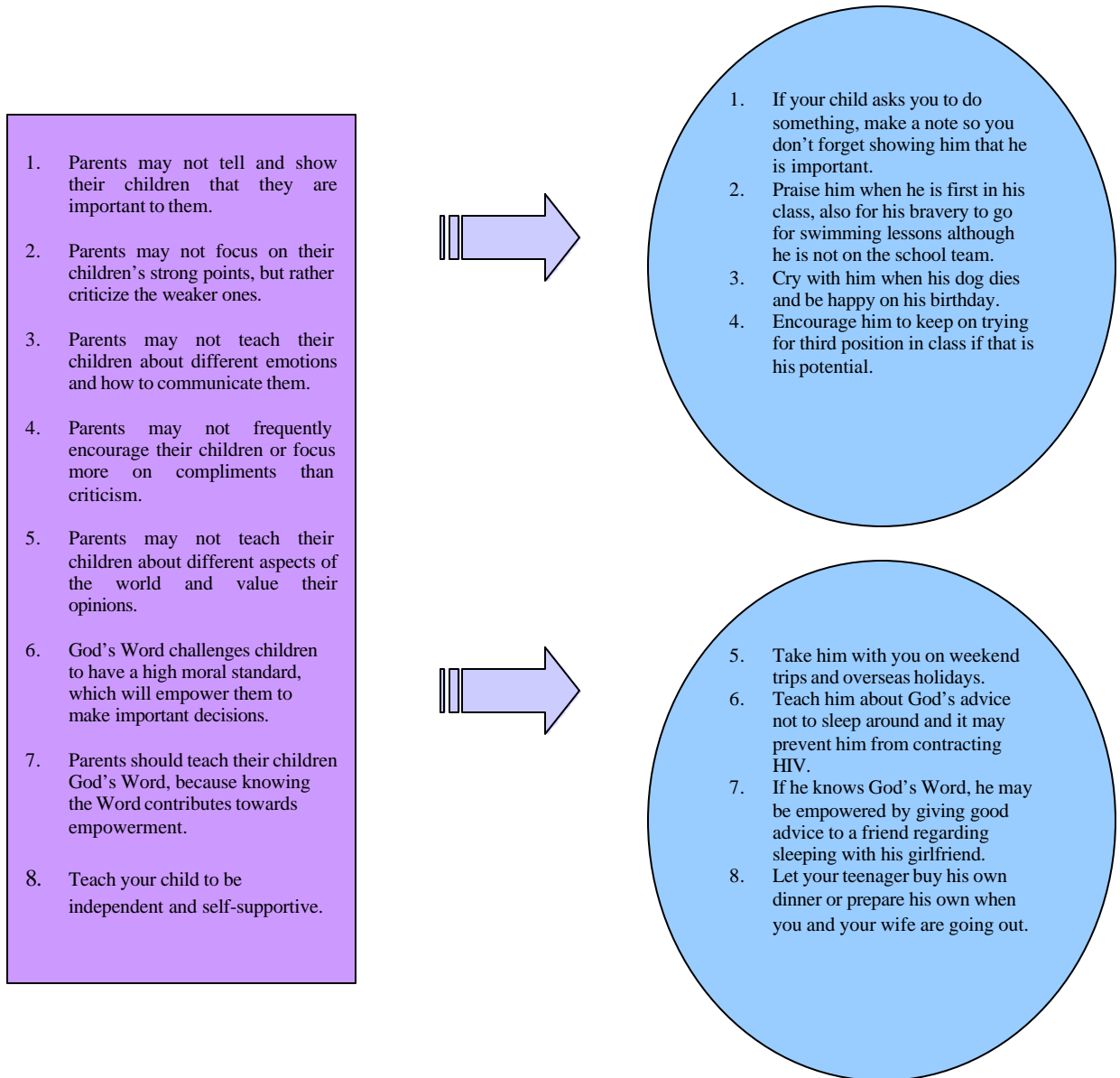


Illustration 7.1.8: Empowerment

7.5.9 Build a relationship with your child

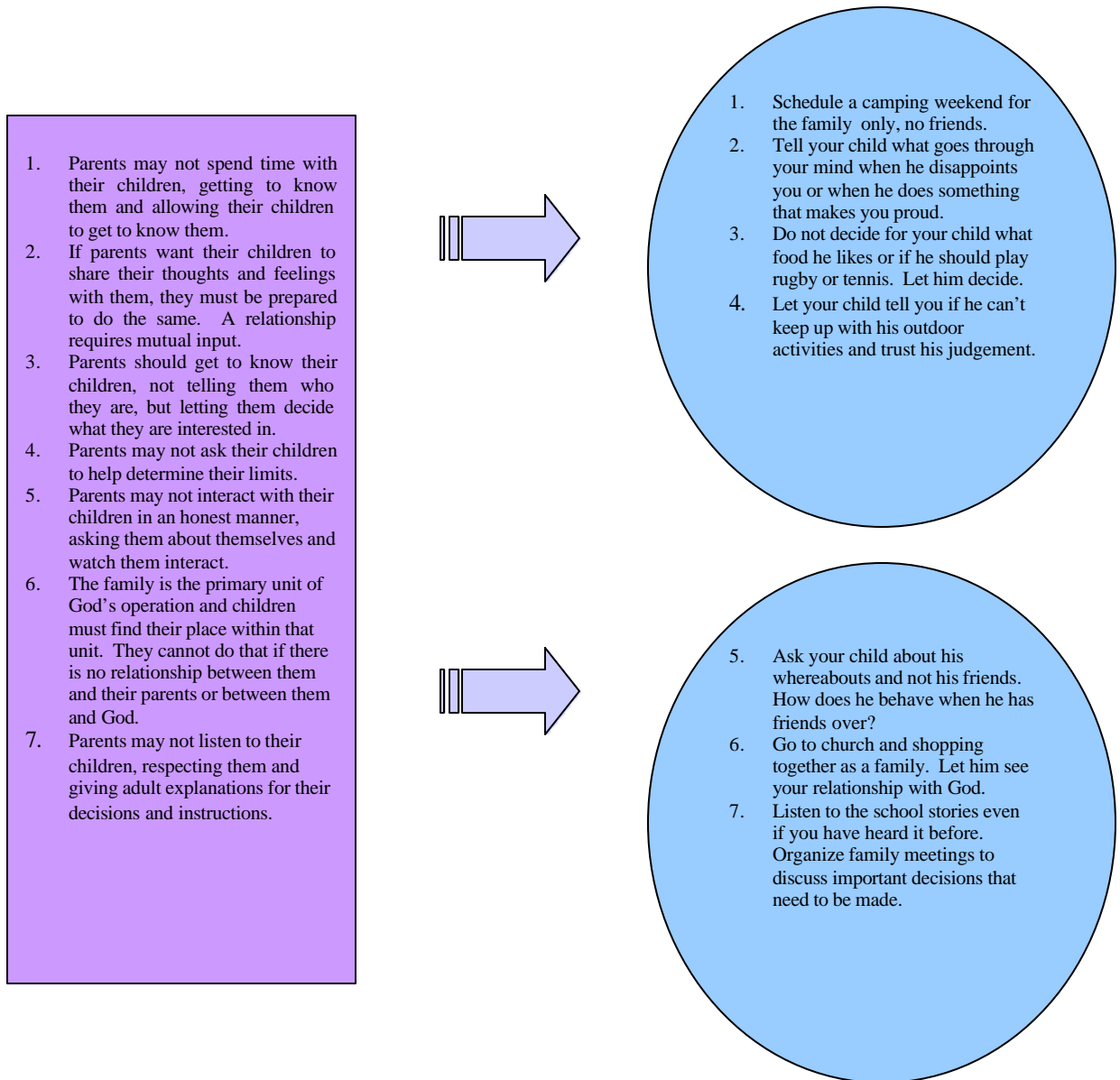


Illustration 7.1.9: Relationship

7.5.10 Love your child and keep on loving him

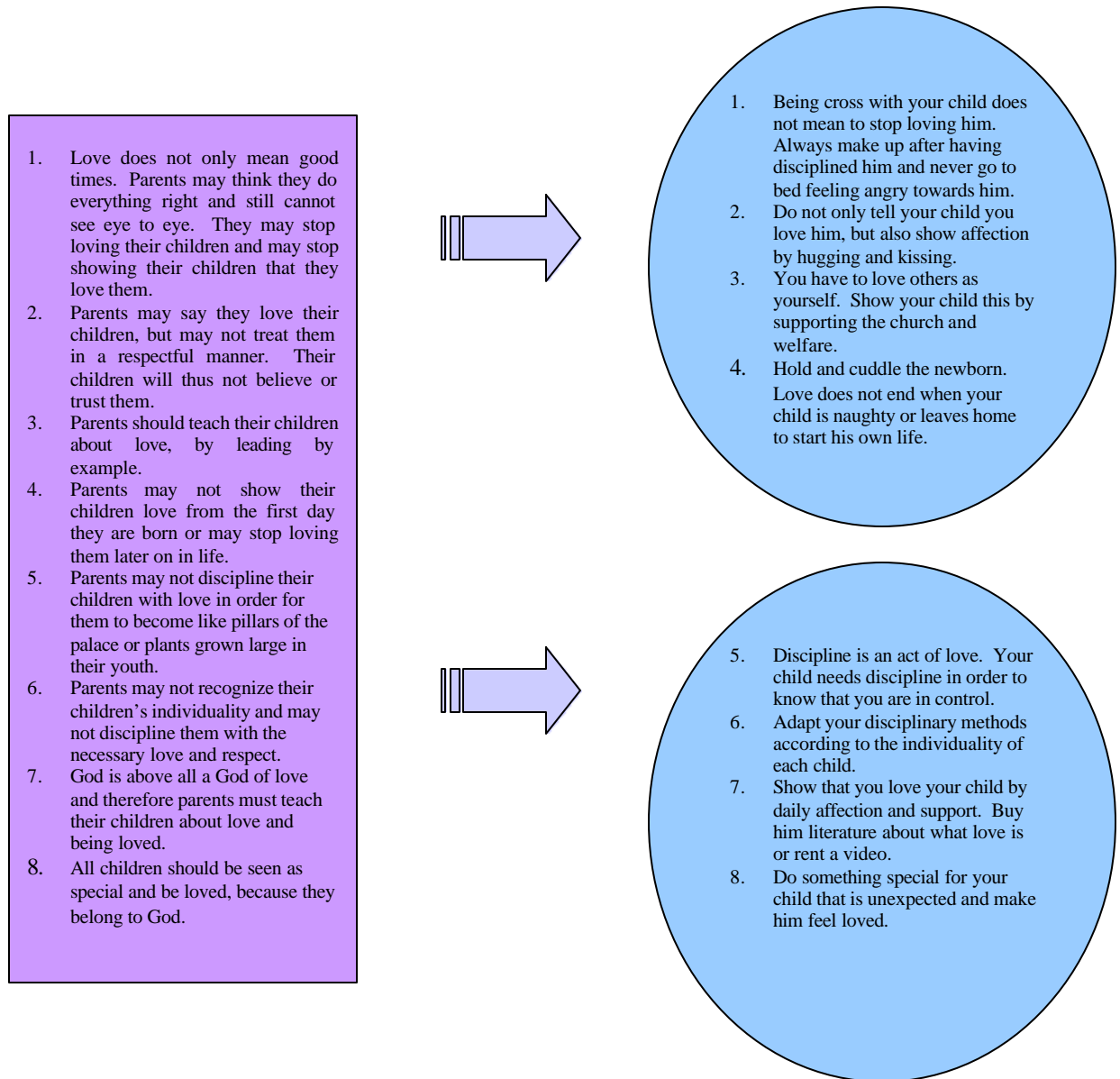


Illustration 7.1.10: Love

7.6 Conclusion

By means of the above guidelines the researcher wanted to emphasize the importance of effective discipline. It is important that parents know and respect their children, and guide them by proper example and discipline to a well-balanced life. However, although the importance of the child is emphasized, the importance of God's Word in the upbringing of children should by no means be underrated.

It is not only the children that should be respected, but they should also respect the parents. God has placed the parents above the children to guide and to love them. Although children have an important role to play in God's created world, they were not placed above their parents. They should still show obeisance to their parents. Parents, on the other hand, should not misuse their authority over their children, but should treat them with love and kindness.

God's Word is clear when it says in Colossians 3: 20 (Amplified Bible) that children should obey their parents and that they should treat their parents with respect (Exodus 20: 12, Amplified Bible).

According to the researcher, there must be a balance in the parent-child-relationship. There must be mutual love and respect. Parents cannot expect their children to obey them if they treat them with disrespect. Children, on the other hand, cannot expect their parents to treat them with respect if they don't the same. Although parents can always learn from children, it is not the children who are teachers. They are not wise old souls from other dimensions, arriving on earth to teach their parents.

Children will be children, and that includes Indigo Children. Children are seen as being different from one another, but ultimately all of them share the common ground of being children, without some being kings and queens from other planets.

Chapter Eight

Phase Three

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

8.1 Introduction

During the course of this study guidelines were set up in order to guide parents and caretakers in dealing effectively with Indigo Children. These guidelines were composed with a Gestalt therapeutic approach, as well as from a Christian perspective.

It was not the aim of the researcher to set up detailed guidelines that parents and caretakers could simply apply literally, but rather to establish broad guidelines that could help them adapt their general approaches and disciplining techniques.

As stated earlier, the researcher is of opinion that all children should be treated according to these guidelines, and not only so-called Indigo Children. In the absence of research, which proves that Indigo Children actually do exist, the researcher is also of opinion that Indigo Children are ordinary children, influenced by non-effective disciplining techniques and parental styles. The guidelines in chapter seven are therefore not only applicable to Indigo Children, but to all children.

Within this chapter the researcher will again highlight his aim and objectives, discussing whether they were attained and relevant. He will also draw conclusions regarding his research on Indigo Children, and in closure will make certain recommendations.

8.2 Aim and objectives

8.2.1 *Aim*

As stated in Chapter one, the aim of the study was to set up Gestalt therapeutic guidelines from a Christian perspective in order to assist parents and caretakers in the management of so-called Indigo Children. These guidelines were set up and were outlined in Chapter seven. The guidelines do not exist of numerous detailed guidelines regarding what to do in specific situations, e.g. when the child does not want to do his homework. It consists of ten broad recommendations on how to approach and treat all children, not only Indigo Children, so that implementing these might become a general parental style.

8.2.2 *Objectives*

By means of the following objectives the researcher wanted to obtain knowledge regarding Indigo Children. He also wanted to gain information regarding the Gestalt and Christian perspectives in order to support his proposed guidelines from a Christian and Gestalt perspective. These objectives were obtained and applied.

8.2.2.1 *Looking at the child from an Indigo perspective*

In order to meet the requirements of this objective, the researcher made an intensive literature study of the topic. While doing the research, he found the literature to be limited. He also had conversations with experts in their specific fields, which made him realized that this phenomenon was not so well-known in South Africa. The expert fields included psychology, education, social work, theology, and youth work. From the questionnaires that were completed by parents from various professions their lack of knowledge regarding the topic was also evident.

8.2.2.2 *Looking at the child from a Christian perspective*

In order to gain insight into the Christian perspective, the researcher did a literature study and also utilized relevant passages from Scripture. From this study the researcher concluded that most guidelines set up by Carroll & Tober for Indigo Children correlated with what the Bible says on disciplining and teaching children. However, emphasis should not fall exclusively on the child, so that the role of the parent is underplayed. God has put the parents in charge and they have to love their children, guide and teach them, and not the other way round.

8.2.2.3 *Looking at Gestalt philosophy*

The researcher found Gestalt philosophy to be of additional value in setting up the proposed guidelines. Gestalt therefore forms the core of the guidelines, with the Christian and Indigo perspectives as support. In order to utilize the Gestalt philosophy, a literature study was done.

8.3 Shortcomings and recommendations

In the light of this study the researcher recommends that parents implement the proposed guidelines and make it part of their daily interaction with their children.

These guidelines form a basis from which the parents can work, rather than a detailed guidance framework of how to deal with their children in specific situations.

According to the researcher, each child is an individual and should thus be treated accordingly. The proposed guidelines thus provide for the child as individual and do not consist of hard-and-fast rules to be followed meticulously by the parents.

No in depth research was conducted regarding the existence of the Indigo Child and, except for one mother who investigated the possibility of her child being an Indigo Child, no interviews were held with parents who believe their children to be Indigo Children or with “Indigo Children” themselves. These issues could provide for further research and investigation.

For the researcher, the real value of the study lies in the Christian perspective, from which the guidelines were constructed. The Gestalt therapeutic approach also adds value to the guidelines in the sense that it is directive and effective. The focus is on the child as a whole individual, a spiritual being who should be treated with love and respect.

8.4 Conclusion

During the course of the study the researcher came to the conclusion that the proposed guidelines for Indigo Children were also applicable to non-Indigo Children. According to him, Indigo Children are not being sent to earth by a god in order to bring about peace and balance, as conceived by New Age thinkers. They are mere ordinary children with special talents, acting in a specific way. The researcher could not find any research relevant to the study that proves the existence of Indigo Children. According to him, it is only a new and glamorous name given to children whose way of doing things have existed from the beginning of time.

Children who display the characteristics of Indigo Children will probably receive another name within a few years from now. They might just as well be overly sensitive children who have the ability to be more open to others and their surroundings. The “creators” of the Indigo Child look at these children from a specific point of view. They are all New Age followers who look with “New Age eyes”. The researcher can look at the same Indigo Child and state that this child has the characteristics of a God-given child, a child saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, given special talents that should be appreciated by himself, as well as by his parents.

The proposed guidelines were therefore composed for all parents who have difficulty dealing with and bringing up their children. It forms a broad framework from which the parent can work towards a better understanding of the child. The intent is to guide the parent to walk a close and personal path with his children, to acknowledge their individuality, and to love and respect them for who they are.

APPENDIX 1

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

1. Do you value your children's opinions and do you think you can learn from it?
2. Do you listen to your children when complaining about being lonely or depressed?
3. Do you respect their privacy and personal space?
4. Do you explain why you make certain decisions?
5. Do you constantly praise them?
6. Do you criticize more than paying compliments?
7. Can you tell them that you are sorry when you are wrong?
8. Do you teach them to respect others?
9. Do you constantly encourage your children?
10. Do you do things for them when they are able to do it themselves?
11. Do they have responsibilities around the house?
12. Do they have a choice regarding responsibilities?
13. Do you overcorrect your child?

14. Do you have family meetings where you discuss important issues and make decisions together?
15. Do you teach your children how to communicate different emotions?
16. Do you really listen to your children's needs and have fun together?
17. Are you feeding them excessive amounts of sugar and preservatives?
18. Do you have any knowledge of Indigo Children? If so, what do you know?
19. What is your parental style?
20. Is this style (method) successful?
21. Why did you decide to use this method?
22. If more than one child, do you use different methods for different children?
23. What do you think about Carroll & Tober's disciplinary methods for Indigo Children?
24. Would you say that "special" children need different disciplinary methods?
25. Would you say that your child is an Indigo Child?

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