

I. Using Bibliotherapy for Patient Education; Addressing Issues of Parenting Through A Child's Book

Bibliotherapy has long been used as an adjunct to medical and psychological treatment and for patient education. Yet, despite its long history and its proven effectiveness for some problems, most physicians do not use or understand bibliotherapy (Anstett, 1983). I would like to explore this method in a selective project designed to educate families at the Burgdorf Pediatric clinic about child development and disciplining issues.

Educating parents about these issues has been of great interest to me since I first began my student continuity experience at the Burgdorf. My frequent discussions with parents prompted me to pursue this subject further. The result was a MAX project on child discipline which involved an exploration of disciplining techniques, cultural issues in the use of discipline and current parenting education activities available in Hartford.

For my selective experience I plan to write a children's book. The book would be written at a level suitable for ages three or four years, a time when most children require an adult companion to help them read. Since the book will have two audiences, both need to be engaged by some element of the story. For the children, I hope to create a story that will stimulate their imagination and interest in reading. For the adult readers, I hope to create a character with whom they can identify. This book will build on my previous work while challenging me to find a creative and imaginative way of educating my patients.

II. Through this project, I hope to increase my understanding and familiarity with bibliotherapy as an educational tool. This creative approach will complement the skills which I have previously gained through research (summer research project entitled, "Industrial Hygiene Recommendations as Interventions: A Collaborative Model Within Occupational Medicine"), education (docent at the Hall of Health an interactive health museum in Berkeley; Tar Wars, and sex education to sixth graders) and community health (public health coursework and interviews with community resources for Child Discipline paper).

III. Bibliotherapy is the use of literature for personal growth, adjustment, clinical and mental hygiene purposes or problem solving (Olsen, 1975). There are two basic types used in this technique - didactic and imaginative literature. Didactic literature includes the pervasive self-help books and is based on the premise that an understanding of one's actions will aid the reader in changing. Imaginative literature focuses on creating an emotional experience for the reader. It is based on the belief that the reader will gain insight into his or her own situation by living vicariously through the main character (Pardeck, 1994; Olsen, 1975). Didactic literature has been shown to be an effective method for dealing with certain problems (Marrs, 1995). Currently, there is no evidence of the effectiveness of imaginative literature

(Anstett, 1983; Olsen, 1975). Nonetheless, imaginative literature may have some benefits over didactic bibliotherapy. Imaginative literature engages the reader in an emotional experience and may be more likely to cause a change in the individual (Sclabassi, 1973). In addition, readers may find identification with a fictional character and that character's flaws more ego-syntonic than facing their own weaknesses (Olsen, 1975).

Imaginative bibliotherapy is the method given the most attention in the writings pertaining to children and adolescents. (Since many of the mothers at the Burgdorf are adolescents or first experienced motherhood as adolescents, it is pertinent to focus on this work.) Literature geared towards these age groups has undergone an evolution over the past 150 years, from didactic work emphasizing religious matters to literature which prompts thought into the complex problems facing adolescents today (Myracle, 1995). Bibliotherapy has been used by medical professionals, psychologists, counselors, social workers and educators to help individuals deal with a variety of current issues including divorce, suicide, homosexuality, AIDS, teenage pregnancy, and substance abuse (Myracle, 1995; Calhoun, 1987). In keeping with the more complex themes, the current literature offers readers thoughts and insight into the problem, not necessarily solutions (Myracle, 1995).

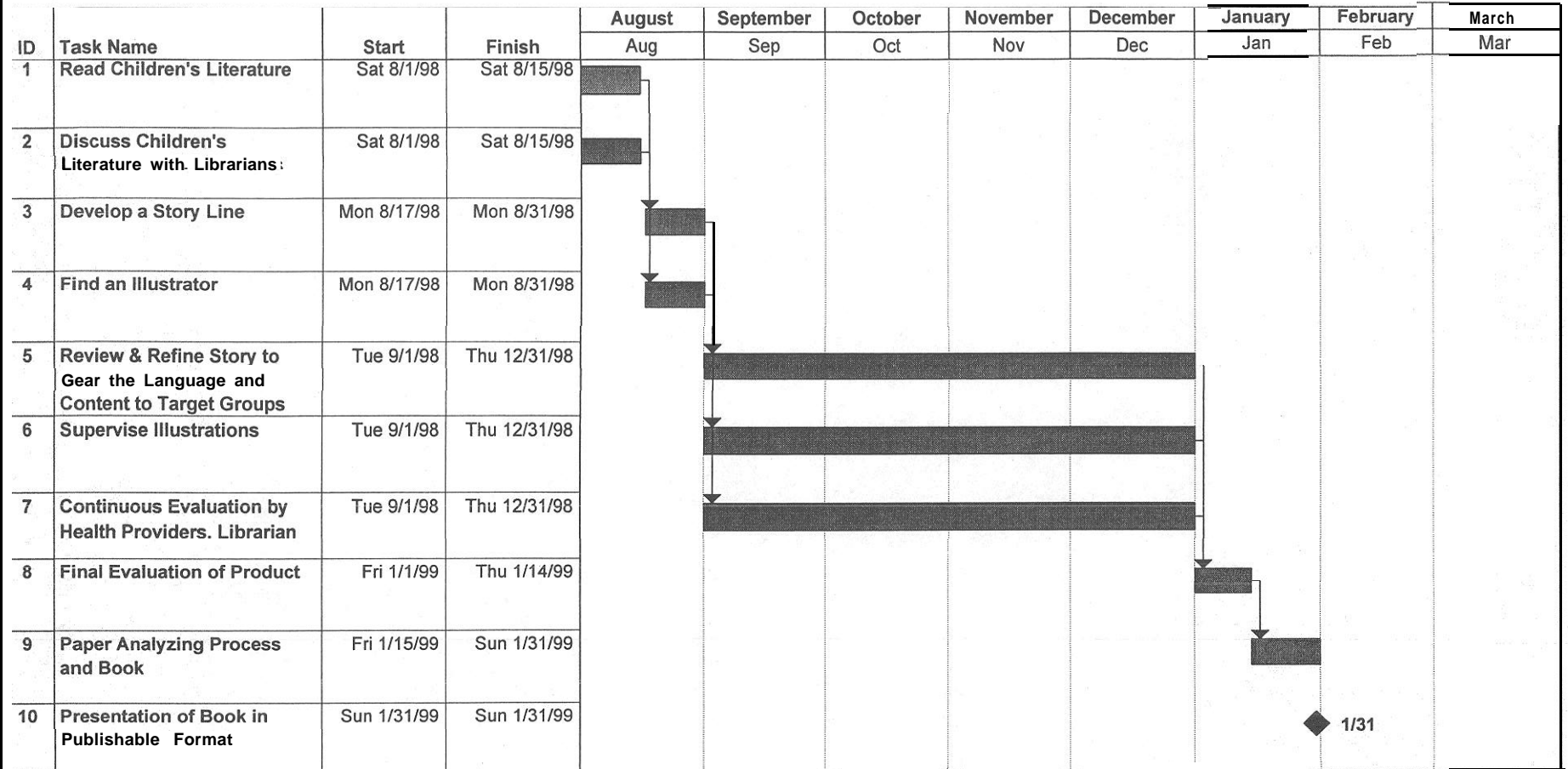
Research has documented that children of adolescent mothers have an increased risk of child abuse and sub optimal intellectual development. While some studies have shown that this does not have to do with maternal age but rather with the confounding variables of financial, social and emotional stresses that these young mothers face (Elster et al, 1983, Buchholz & Korn-Bursztyn, 1993), it is evident that these mothers face increased challenges in raising their children. Many young mothers choose to remain at home so that the maternal grandmother can aid in child-rearing. While there are many advantages to sharing the responsibility, these adolescent mothers have greater insecurity as parents (Buchholz & Korn-Bursztyn, 1993). This suggests that adolescents may defer some of their own growth and sense of self in order to meet the needs of their children (Buchholz & Korn-Bursztyn, 1993). It may be possible to facilitate a positive self image as a parent through literature. Some studies have also shown that adolescent mothers lack information on critical child-rearing topics such as early childhood development, discipline, feeding and child safety (Wayland & Rawlins, 1997). Literature may serve educate these parents in these areas.

IV. A time table of the necessary tasks and the plan for their completion is attached.

V. The project will be based out of the Burgdorf clinic. I will rely on the support of Dr. Joyce and the other health care workers at the Burgdorf as well as the resources available at the public library.

VI. The final product will include a book ready for publication. This book will be reviewed by Dr. Joyce and other health care workers at the Burgdorf, a librarian and families at the Burgdorf for an assessment of the content, entertainment value and cultural sensitivity. Burgdorf families will be asked about the extent to which they were able to identify with the characters in the book. These evaluations as well as my learning experience in writing the book will be documented in a paper describing the project.

Project Plan



Project: Book.MPP Date: Wed 7/22/98	Task		Summary		Rolled Up Progress	
	Progress		Rolled Up Task			
	Milestone		Rolled Up Milestone			

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