Preventing Behavior Problems through Positive Parenting

Practical Tips for Supporting Healthy Social Emotional Development

Family Resource Centers Network of California Early Start Plus

Presenter Name Will Go Here

Goals for the Session

- Provide information on social-emotional development and children’s behavior
- Describe helpful tips for positive parenting that will help support healthy social-emotional development and prevent challenging behavior
- Share brochures, local options, and online resources that may be helpful for you as family members

Shared Expectations

- We Are Friendly & Kind
  - Step up/Step back
  - Stay on topic
  - Support the group
- We Are Safe & Healthy
  - Make a comfortable space for yourself
- We Are Respectful
  - Keep information shared in the group confidential
  - Value everyone’s ideas
  - Cell phones on silent or off

Sharing from Opening Activity

Every child needs one person who is crazy about him or her

Urie Bronfenbrenner
What is Social-Emotional Development?

- The developmentally and culturally appropriate ability to:
  - Experience, express, and manage emotions
  - Establish positive and rewarding relationships with others

California Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations, 2009

The Key Word is Development

- Social and emotional skills develop as children age
- All children depend on responsive, secure relationships in order to develop and learn in any domain
- Social and emotional skills may develop in different ways and at different rates, yet are very dependent on experiences, interactions, and the adults surrounding each child

Online Resource for More Information

All About Young Children
allaboutyoungchildren.org
Developed by CA Department of Education
Has information and videos about all areas of development, starting with social-emotional development, in eight languages!

What is Positive Parenting?

- Family members using what they can control to raise children who are positive contributors to the family and the community
- Positive Parenting focuses on raising ADULTS, not children!
- Being positive isn’t being a pushover
Encouraging and Clear

Positive parenting focuses on
- Staying calm and thoughtful
- Connecting deeply with your child
- Encouraging the desired behavior
- Setting clear limits without shaming and punishing

What Can Adults Control?

- We may want to control the child, but really we can’t
- What we CAN control may influence the child
  - Our own behavior
  - Our interactions with our child and the other members of our family
  - Strategies we can try based upon what we know about our child

Characteristics We Need

- A consistent, nurturing, emotionally responsive primary caregiver
- An understanding of child development and how children learn
- A view of a child’s behavior as an expression of how the child copes with the world
- The acceptance of the “urgency” of a young child’s needs
- An emotionally balanced caregiver which allows a child to predict adult behavior

Hierarchy of Brain Development

UPSTAIRS BRAIN
- Self-understanding
- Logic
- Decision Making
- Impulse Control
- Body and Emotion regulation (Executive function skills)

DOWNSTAIRS BRAIN
- Fight Flight or freeze
- Attachment
- Memory
- Emotional Reactivity
- “Gut” reactions
- Motor Regulation
- Balance
- Heart Rate/Breathing
- Motivation
- Blood Pressure
- Body Temperature
Upstairs Downstairs Brain

- Dr. Dan Siegel came up with describing our brain as having an “upstairs and a downstairs”
- The upstairs brain is where our logic and rational thinking happen
- The downstairs brain is where:
  - Our emotional reactions and experiences occur including our fight/flight/freeze response
  - And where life sustaining activities happen
  - We don’t have to think about breathing, or making our heart beat

Hand Model of the Brain

Flip the Lid (Hand Model of the Brain)

Make a fist with your thumb tucked inside your fingers. This is a model of your brain.

- Thumb = Midbrain (Stem & Limbic) = Emotional Brain. This is where emotions and memories are processed. This is when the fight, flight & freeze response is triggered.
- Fingers = Cerebral Cortex = Rational Brain. Houses our ability to think and reason.
- Fingernails = Prefrontal Cortex = Problem-Solving

When something triggers us, we are prone to “flip our lid” which means the Prefrontal Cortex (Fingernails) have a very poor connection with the Midbrain (Thumb), and we aren’t able to access the logical, problem-solving part of our brain. Our emotions are overwhelming our ability to think clearly.

- Dr. Dan Siegel

Staying Calm Comes First

- When we are calm, our whole brain is ready for action
- We can take action from our upstairs brain
- When we are not calm we tend to flip our lids and react from our downstairs brain

What Challenges You?

- Some behaviors “Push our buttons”
- Behavior is in the eye of the beholder
- Not everyone has the same buttons
- Learn what pushes your buttons and have ideas for ways to ACT instead of REACTING
Positive Parenting

Are you looking for Blame or are you looking for Solutions?

Positive Solutions for Families Brochure

Eight Practical Tips for Parents of Young Children with Challenging Behavior

Positive Solutions for Families

- Tips from the “Positive Solutions for Families” Brochure
- Resource list at the end of this handout
  - There are a number of wonderful websites filled with good ideas
  - There are many good books and workshops on positive parenting and positive discipline

Tip #1: Keep Your Expectations Realistic

- Know and understand your child’s abilities and limitations
- Learn about typical development and behavior for different ages
- Think about how your child has acted in similar situations
Tip #2: Plan Ahead

- Plan ahead to set your child up for success
- Hope for the best but plan for the worst
- Children can also generate options and possible ideas

Tip #3: Clearly State Your Expectations In Advance

- Your child cannot read your mind
- Let your child know what you WANT him or her to do
- Rather than rules, think of expectations

Tell Me What To Do!

- Tell your child what to do instead of what not to do
- Children focus on the main words, they ignore the “don’t, no, stop”
- Show your child by demonstrating, modeling, or using a picture of the action
- Clearly and simply state what you expect your child to do.
- Follow up with Positive Feedback!
- We will look at a handout later

Expectations for Behavior

- Expectations can also be a framework for the behaviors that are “expected” for everyone in your home: children, teenagers, parents, and other adults
- Common expectations are:
  - We are Respectful
  - We are Safe and Healthy
  - We are Kind
  - We Contribute to the Family (Help One Another)
- Expectations are carried out in different ways for different ages
Expectations Need Examples

- Provide examples and keep examples positive – what you see when the behavior meets the expectation
- Our Family Is Friendly and Kind
  - Let your sister have a turn with the book
  - Help Mommy set the table
- Our Family Is Respectful
  - Ask before you use something that belongs to someone else
- Our Family Is Safe and Healthy
  - Get to bed on time
- Our Family Helps One Another
  - We help clean up our toys
- Now you get to think of some examples!

Tip #4: Offer Limited, Reasonable Choices

- Everyone appreciates having choices
- Giving children choices often prevents power struggles
- The choices given must be limited (start with two) and real choices
- Do you want to hold my right hand or my left in the parking lot?

Tip #5: Use When…Then Statements

- A When…Then statement is a simple instruction that tells your child what to do in order to earn the desired outcome
  - WHEN you put on your shoes, THEN you can play with Aldo.

Guidelines for Using When/Then

When using When/Then statements:
- Give it a positive focus
- State it only once
- Set a reasonable time limit
- Follow through
- Be prepared for your child’s response—it may be “NO”
Tip #6: Catch Your Child Being Good

- Acknowledge and Comment when you child is meeting your expectations, doing what he or she should
  - You two are drawing together and sharing the paper. What wonderful team work!
- Find times to give specific positive attention to behavior you want to see

What Behavior Do We Want?

- If your child has some behaviors that you do not want, write them down
- Now, think very carefully about what behavior do you want your child to do – in that same situation – and write that down
- These are the behaviors you want to be looking for!
- Commenting positively on what behaviors you want is an almost “magical” way to get more appropriate behavior!

Being Intentional

- Focus on what you want a child to do
- Acknowledge and encourage that behavior
- Praise is alright occasionally, however, it tends to increase external motivation
  - It makes me happy when you share toys with your little sister! You are a terrific big brother.
- Acknowledgement and encouragement build internal motivation
  - You really are working hard at sharing with your little sister! You are a terrific big brother.

Using Positive Feedback and Encouragement

- You can also use nonverbal forms of positive feedback and encouragement
  - You could arrange a special signal if your child needs lots of encouragement
- Individualize use of positive feedback and encouragement based on children’s needs and preferences
  - Some children prefer quiet, subtle encouragement
- Encourage everyone in the family to use positive feedback and encouragement
  - Children can learn to give compliments (and they enjoy it!)
Making Emotional Deposits

- Think of your child with a big piggy bank on his or her chest
- Every positive interaction is like making an emotional deposit in the bank!
- We need to have lots of deposits before we make any withdrawals

Making Deposits At Home

- You can do an activity, especially with older children
- Decorate a lunch bag and have slips of paper you can use for making emotional deposits
- On the paper, write down the person’s name, your compliments, encouragements, things you appreciate about this person in your family
- Let your child draw or dictate theirs to an older child or adult
- Put the papers in the bag and read them once a week (or more often) at dinner or breakfast!

Tip #7: Stay Calm

- Remember how children can push your buttons? Don’t flip your lid!
- The more out-of-control your child becomes, the more self-control you need to show
- We need to take care of ourselves so that we can stay calm and support our child’s return to appropriate behavior

Tip #8: Use Neutral Time

- Look for neutral time – “teachable moments” before or after a problem
- When we (children OR adults) are in our “emotional section” of the brain we are not able to problem-solve or act in more mature, appropriate ways
- Help your child to reflect. When something goes wrong, ask “What can you do differently next time?”
Identifying Neutral Time

Getting Support When You Are Concerned with your Child’s Behavior

Ideas for next steps

For Children with an IFSP

- If your child has an Individualized Family Service Plan (or an Individual Education Plan), you can ask your service coordinator to help you seek assessment and intervention for the challenging behavior.
- You may be offered services through the IFSP, delivered by someone from an agency that works with your family now, such as the regional center or an infant program.
- Your child may not qualify for specialized services in the social-emotional area.
- This Family Resource Center can also help.

For Help Outside of the IFSP

- If your child does not qualify for services in behavior or social-emotional development, there other options to explore:
  - Private Insurance may have some behavioral, psychological, or psychiatric services available.
  - Many communities have early childhood mental health consultants who may be able to provide services to families and children, often in child care and development settings.
  - There may be parent education or support groups offering guidance on parenting children with challenging behavior.
### Learning More About Temperament

- One area to explore is understanding your child’s temperament
- Temperament traits can sometimes help you understand what is driving your child’s behavior and how it may clash with your temperament
- There are several online resources and some books to assist you in learning more about this
  - kera-kids.org/ready-for-life/parents/temperament/
  - www.preventiveoz.org
  - www.spiritedchild.com

### Handle With Care

- There is a brochure that is designed to help families of children choose child care when your child has challenging behavior
- There are tips of what to look for in the people, the practices, and the program

### Words to Live By

Basic to any thinking about parenting, in my mind, is the strong realization that there is absolutely no one right way to raise kids. Children are totally unique, parental experiences and values are distinctive, and the partners coming together for child-rearing create a particular environment.

It is time to realize that parenting consists largely of some common sense, some flexibility, and a sense of humor to hold it all together, along with a lot of making it up as you go and hoping toward the future.

From the Grandma Says Newsletter

### Websites Link to Information, Books, & Resources

- Aha Parenting (Laura Markham)
  www.ahaparenting.com
- Positive Discipline (Jane Nelsen)
  www.positivediscipline.com
- Spirited Child (Mary Sheedy Kurcinka)
  www.SpiritedChild.com/
- Parenting Science (Gwen Dewar)
  www.parentingscience.com
- CA CSEFEL Teaching Pyramid
  www.cainclusion.org/teachingpyramid/materials_family.html