

In This Session

Learning Objectives

- ▶ Meet each other and learn about our families.
- ▶ Discuss the purpose of the group.
- ▶ Discuss ground rules we might have for our group.
- ▶ Discuss the role families have in promoting their child's social-emotional development.
- ▶ Identify the importance of building positive relationships with children.

Agenda

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Introductions | (20-25 min) |
| 2. Purpose | (2 min) |
| 3. Group Ground Rules | (5 min) |
| 4. Connecting | |
| a. Activity 1 and Share Back | (15 min) |
| b. Benefits of Connecting | (17 min) |
| c. Activity 2: Apply It and Try It | (10 min) |
| 5. Encouragement | (30 min) |
| a. Activity 3: Apply It and Try It | (7 min) |
| 6. Closing | (4 min) |

Family Materials

- ▶ Positive Solutions Family Handbook
- ▶ Resources
 1. Providing Positive Feedback and Encouragement

Facilitator Materials

- ▶ PowerPoint
- ▶ Positive Solutions Family Handbook
- ▶ Chart Paper, Markers, Tape
- ▶ Role Play Cards

Icon Key



Chart Paper



Role Play



Group Activity



Discussion



Family Handbook



Apply It and Try It

Introductions



Show Slide 1: Positive Solutions for Families Session 1 – Making the Connection

Begin the session by greeting and welcoming families to the first in a series of 7 sessions of Positive Solutions for Families.

My name is: _____, (tell a little about yourself). We are glad that you are here. We will be working together and getting to know each other over the next 7 meetings. During this time, we are going to talk about ideas for helping our children:

- ▶ feel competent and confident about all the things they can do,
- ▶ build relationships,
- ▶ learn how to follow directions,
- ▶ learn to manage their emotions,
- ▶ let us know what their behavior is trying to communicate,
- ▶ learn new skills to replace challenging behavior, and
- ▶ feel loved, safe, and special.



Show Slide 2: Overview of Sessions

As you can see, we have a lot to accomplish in seven meetings.

Review Slide 2 to give families an idea of the main topics for the next seven sessions. See the Facilitator's Guide for information describing the focus for each session.

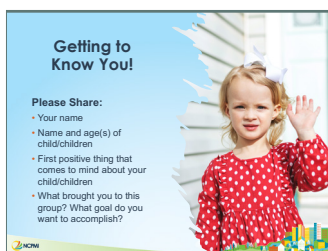
1. Making the Connection
2. Keeping It Positive
3. Behavior Has Meaning
4. The Power of Routines
5. Teach Me What to Do!
6. Responding With Purpose
7. Bringing It All Together With a Plan



Show Slide 3: What's Happening Today

Today we will be talking about these topics:

- ▶ Introductions
- ▶ Purpose of the group
- ▶ Group ground rules
- ▶ Connecting with children
- ▶ Encouragement
- ▶ Apply It and Try It!



Show Slide 4: Getting to Know You

It is now your turn to introduce yourselves and get to know each other. Let's go around and have everyone share:

1. your name
2. how many children you have (names and ages)
3. the first positive thing that comes to mind about your child/children, and
4. If you feel comfortable, what brought you to the Positive Solutions for Families group? Is there a goal you have or something you want to accomplish? *(write these down on chart paper)*



List goals on **chart paper** so that families begin to make connections with each other. This list will be revisited in the last session.

You can provide examples to family members...

Positive Thing: *child makes me laugh, she is helpful with her little sister, he is really silly and loves meeting new people.*

What brought you to group or goals: *parenting is tiring, children won't listen, feeling stressed, challenging behavior; I want to feel more skilled; I want to learn how to help my child manage their feelings.*

Purpose

Before we get started, it is important to remember that this group is for you. Living with young children can create a mixture of feelings—from joy and laughter to exhaustion and frustration. We experience the whole range of child behaviors from hugs and kisses to screaming, hitting, and refusing to stay in bed. This can take a toll on anyone's emotional, mental, and physical well-being. It's not always easy being in the parenting role. Although we know that most young children display challenging behaviors at some point in their development, it does not ease your concerns or anxieties when it is your child engaging in these behaviors.

Unfortunately, there are no easy cures, magic potions, or magic wands. In this group, we will teach you evidence-based strategies (strategies that have been shown to work) that have been successfully used by families of young children.

Now that we have met everyone and discussed the purpose of this group, let's generate some ground rules for participating in our group sessions. Think about things that would make you feel most comfortable in this group and allow you to get the most out of the sessions.

Ground Rules

Examples of Ground Rules

- Start on time
- Put cell phones on vibrate
- Allow everyone the opportunity to share
- Ask questions
- What is shared in group, stays in group
- Be respectful of each other and acknowledge that each family is different



Show Slide 5: Example of Ground Rules

We are going to list our ground rules for these meetings on chart paper and refer to these each week as a reminder.

Activity Instructions: Share the list of example ground rules on the PPT.

- ▶ Start on time
- ▶ Put cell phones on vibrate
- ▶ Allow everyone the opportunity to share
- ▶ Ask questions
- ▶ What is shared in group, stays in group
- ▶ Be respectful of each other and acknowledge that each family is different

Ask participants to read through the list and ask the group which of these example rules they want to keep for the group (which ones they like) and if there are other group rules that they think would help the group run smoothly. As participants share ideas for group rules, write them down on the chart paper. Before you write the exact wording from participants, you might need to rephrase the response to make them more appropriate to fit a group norm or rule (for example, no talking while others are talking might be changed to "listening to others").

We are going to begin our work together by talking about how to nurture your relationship with your child and in some of the other group sessions, we will talk about strategies that can help your child learn new ways to interact and behave. So, let's get started.

Connecting

Relationship Activity

- Think about someone who was very important to you when you were growing up.
- What did this person do that made them so important and special to you?
- How did this person make you feel?



Show Slide 6: Relationship Activity

Look at **Activity 1, Relationships, in your Family Handbook**. Think about someone who was very important to you when you were growing up. Examples might be your mom, dad, grandparent, teacher, or maybe even a coach. If you are struggling to identify important people in your life, what kind of person would you wanted to have in your life?

Write this person's name in your handbook. What made you think of this person? What did this person "do" to make you feel that way?

Some examples might be: always took the time to listen to me, always loved me regardless of what I had done, always made me feel like I was important and special, etc. Write your answers in your handbook.

We are going to share back a few of the ideas you wrote down to see if there are any patterns around these relationships. How do those people make you feel? *Call on a few participants to share back. (Themes that might emerge include safety, security, trust, love, etc.).*

Benefits of Connecting



Show Slide 7: Every Child Deserves a Champion

Every child deserves a champion, an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that become the best they can possibly be (Rita F. Pierson). This is such an important quote for us to remember. It is important for *every* child to have someone who will be their champion. We want to be the person in our child's life who makes them feel loved and special. The person that they can always count on. Just like the special person in our life that we just talked about.

Your relationship or connection with your child is crucial. When children have challenging behavior, it can be hard to make that connection. You may not be able to keep your children away from every stressful situation in their lives or control all their circumstances, but by developing strong relationships, you can give them the tools they need to *thrive and be resilient*. When you focus on strengthening your connection with your child, it makes it easier to teach your child new skills and behaviors. What are some social and emotional or new behaviors that you want your children to learn?



Call on a few participants to share back and write those skills on the chart paper. Themes that might emerge include:

- ▶ Ability to develop good relationships with peers and adults/make friends/get along with others
- ▶ Ability to persist at tasks
- ▶ Ability to follow directions
- ▶ Ability to identify, understand, and communicate own feelings/emotions
- ▶ Ability to cope with frustration.

One of the ways we then can help our children build these social and emotional skills is to strengthen our relationships with them.

We will start by thinking a little about the idea of spending quality time or connecting with our children. We all know that spending time with our children is important... and it is. But what is more important are the connections we make with our children when we spend time with them. That is quality time. Time where our connection and relationship to the child is strengthened through our focused attention and shared activities. But the reality is that getting quality time might be a little challenging. Let's talk about what those challenges might be and then what we can do about it.



Show Slide 8: Connecting with Your Children

A great way to connect with your child is to spend time interacting with them. This may mean different things for different families—it might mean going grocery shopping together, playing a favorite game or toy together, singing to the radio in the car, or going for a walk together. Children love to spend time with the adults in their lives and benefit from playful, fun interactions. Let's look at the benefits of spending time connecting with your children. Why do you think this is important? How would your child benefit? How would you benefit?



Note to Facilitator: List the benefits and barriers on chart paper. Below is a list of possible answers.

Benefits might include (examples):

- ▶ increased self-esteem
- ▶ child is more connected to parent
- ▶ child is when more responsive to the adult
- ▶ more pleasant household environment
- ▶ will grow up to have good relationships with own children
- ▶ child learns to interact with others
- ▶ child is happy

Barriers might include (examples):

- ▶ parents feeling like they do not have enough time (work, other children)
- ▶ too stressed or tired to play
- ▶ sibling rivalry
- ▶ an unsupportive partner in the household
- ▶ child has lots of challenging behavior
- ▶ parent does not know how to play or interact playfully

If you look at our lists, do you think the benefits seem to outweigh the barriers? Why? It looks like the benefits to our children are things that would help build positive relationships, support their social and emotional development, and help them feel loved, competent and confident.

But the reality is that many of us are very busy, juggling jobs, responsibilities at home, and providing care to our children and perhaps our extended family and parents. I want to challenge you to rethink the notion of “quality time.” Why does spending time with your child have to be about finding this perfect allotted time or pre-planned, scheduled activity? Instead, think about how every moment you spend with your child can be special. When we are busy, it can help to think about finding the moments between moments. Driving your children to childcare? A chance to sing a silly song. Stuck in the long line at the grocery store? An opportunity to talk about the day. Basically, we need to capture the time we have with our children and make it fun and full of playful interactions.

Small Moments

- Building connections is about **positive time** and **attention**.
- When life gets busy, remember you can do small things often.
- Make everyday moments playful and interactive!



Show Slide 9: Small Moments

If you feel that you have barriers that get in the way of connecting with your child, remember this: You can do small things often. If you don’t have a full 30 minutes to play a board game, do you have 5 minutes to read a book or have a dance party? It is important to remember that building connections is mainly about positive “time and attention” and not giving your child “things.” Think of activities you do every day... how can you make them more playful and interactive? It will be helpful for us to first think about the times of day do you spend with your children. Think of things you do every day, like hair brushing, food shopping, and walking to school.

Pause and allow participants a few moments to think of times during the day when they are already spending time with their child.

Does everyone have a few times of the day in their mind?

Let's use example of walk to school. If you always walk to school in the morning with your child, how could you make that time in your day fun and interactive. Could you sing a song while you walk? Play a guessing game like I Spy? Find objects along the way that are a certain color?

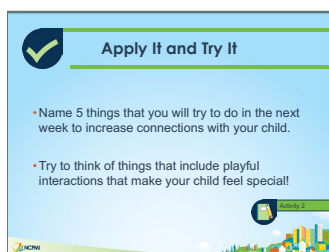
Now that you have thought of times of the day you spend with your child, let's share some ideas with each other. What are some fun activities you can do with your child in those small moments of time? I bet you all have ideas that other families might like to try.



Ask family members to share their ways to play and have fun with children in small moments of time. Validate their contributions as they share. If the list is not very exhaustive, share a few of these ideas to supplement what families share:

- ▶ Reading a book together
- ▶ Taking a walk together
- ▶ Singing favorite songs together
- ▶ Eating dinner together
- ▶ Talking/singing in car, on bus
- ▶ Talk, sing, and play games like "I spy" while waiting in line (at grocery store, waiting at bus stop, etc.)
- ▶ Asking your child about their day
- ▶ Hugs, high-fives, and affection
- ▶ Letting your child be your special helper (e.g., helping with dinner, laundry)
- ▶ Going to family sporting events or outings together (e.g., watching sibling's football game)

Activity 2



Show Slide 10: Connection Activity

Now that we have generated ideas for connecting with your child, let's look at *Activity 2* in your handbook. In each of our sessions, you will be given some "Apply It and Try It" activities. These will be fun activities that you can do with your child to build on the things that we talk about in our group. The first activity focuses on trying *five* ideas to increase your connections with your child during the next week. It will be helpful to think about things you know you will be able to fit into your family routine. Make sure they feel doable. Think of things that will make your child feel special or connected to you.

Take a few minutes now and write down some of the ideas we just discussed or ideas you have that will work for your family. What do you think you might try? As you try these ideas over the next week, write some notes about how your child reacted and how it made you feel. We will discuss what happened at the beginning of our next session.

Powerful Practice: Encouragement

Powerful Practice: Encouragement Tips for Encouraging Your Child!

1. Get your child's attention.
2. Be specific-say what you see.
3. Keep it simple-avoid combining positive feedback with criticism.
4. Be sincere and genuine.
5. Double the impact with physical warmth.
6. Use positive comments and encouragement with your child in front of others.

Show Slide 11: Powerful Practice: Encouragement

I would like to share a powerful practice that you can use to help strengthen your relationship with your child. It can help build confidence and help children change their behavior. That practice is using *positive comments and encouragement*. In the research on behavior, the use of encouragement or positive reinforcement has been proven to be one of the most powerful ways to change human behavior.

Using encouragement can help your child better understand the types of behaviors you want to see them doing, so they are more likely to continue to engage in those behaviors, especially if they are getting attention for it. As a result, you may notice a decrease in your child engaging in those behaviors you don't want to see.

A lack of encouragement can lead to increased amounts of unwanted behavior because your child may not understand the expectations you have for them or may be using everything they have in their toolbox to get your attention. This can lead to less positive interactions with your child and impact your connections with them over time. Encouragement takes very little time and is a very effective way to promote positive behaviors. And the good news is... encouragement doesn't cost anything.

When you encourage your child, it must be *more* than just saying "I like that" or "good job." Tell your child *specifically* what you like or what they did a good job doing. Here are some tips for delivering positive and encouraging comments to your child. Use these tips in a way that feels good and right for your family.

Tips for Encouraging Your Child – Powerful Parenting Practices!

- Tip 1** Get your child's attention.
- Tip 2** Be specific-say what you see.
- Tip 3** Keep it simple-avoid combining positive feedback with criticism.
- Tip 4** Be sincere and genuine.
- Tip 5** Double the impact with physical warmth.
- Tip 6** Encourage your child in front of others.

To illustrate these powerful parenting tips, let's look at some situations when parents use positive comments and encouragement and see what we think. *(Note to facilitator: you can present and discuss the examples or use the role play cards included at the end of the Facilitator's Guide for Session 1, and have parents role play the situations and then discuss. Make sure that each player has a role play card to use in the role play.)*



Example #1

Scene: Mom is doing dishes, and her child is putting the toys away.

Mom: Does not look at her child and says, "I like how you are cleaning up your toys."

Child: Doesn't look up or seem to hear.



Discussion Questions:

- ▶ How does the mother encourage her child?
- ▶ Does her child seem to notice?
- ▶ Why or why not?
- ▶ What would make this encouragement more effective?

Allow time for discussion.

Let's look back to the list of tips and discuss **Tip 1: Get your child's attention.**

It is important to encourage children when we have their attention. Otherwise, they may not hear our encouraging statement and the result can be ineffective. This does not mean that the child needs to stop what they are doing and give the adult their full attention, but simply that we know the child can hear us.



Example #2

- Scene:** Grandparent is watching TV, and grandchildren are playing together nicely.
- Grandparent:** Stops watching TV and looks at the children and says, "Good job."
- Children:** Look confused and continue playing



Discussion Questions:

- ▶ How does the grandparent encourage the children?
- ▶ What behavior are they encouraging? How do we know?
- ▶ Do you think the children know what behavior they are encouraging?
- ▶ What could they do differently to be more effective?

Allow time for discussion.

Now let's look at **Tip 2: Be specific.** Sometimes we give vague encouragement such as "good boy, good job, nice work." This is not very effective at increasing a specific behavior that we would like to see more of, because the child is unsure of what we are encouraging. Behavior specific or labeled encouragement is more effective because it communicates to the child the behavior you like. So, instead of saying "good boy" or "good girl" try saying, "Wow! What a fantastic job you did cleaning up your toys!" "Thank you for listening to mommy and following directions!" or as in the example above – "Wow, you two are having so much fun playing together!"



Example #3

- Scene:** Dad and child are doing dishes together.
- Dad:** Looks at his child and says, "Thanks for doing such a good job with the dishes and not rushing through like you usually do."
- Child:** Smiles at first, but then looks down.



Discussion Questions:

- ▶ How does this father encourage his child?
- ▶ What behavior is he encouraging?
- ▶ How is his statement encouraging?
- ▶ How do you think the child feels?
- ▶ What could he do differently to be more effective?

Allow time for discussion.

Now let's look at **Tip 3: Keep it simple.** Avoid combining praise with criticism - and see how it applies. Sometimes we are tempted to provide constructive criticism with our praise. For example, "Thank you for listening to me the first time and not after the tenth time like you usually do." Or, "You did a great job cleaning up all of your blocks today unlike yesterday when mommy had to clean them up for you." These types of statements are ineffective as the child may only pay attention to or remember the criticism and not the positive comments. Keep positive statements "clean and simple," and avoid combining it with other stuff.



Example #4

Scene: Mom and child are playing together with blocks.

Mom: "You are so good at building fences for the cows and horses!"

Child: Smiles and hands mom a horse

Mom: (with enthusiasm) "Wow! Thank you for sharing your horse with me. I like playing with you."

Child: Smiles and makes an animal noise in a quiet voice

Mom: "Thank you for using a quiet voice while your sister takes a nap." She hugs her child.



Discussion Questions:

- ▶ How does this mother encourage her child?
- ▶ How do you think the child feels?
- ▶ What behavior is she encouraging?
- ▶ What would you do to be more effective, if anything?

Allow time for discussion.

Look at Tip 4: Be sincere and genuine. Encouragement that is genuine is more meaningful. Offer encouragement in a way that seems authentic and sincere. For example, if you are comfortable being enthusiastic, do so. If that is not a fit with the way you interact with others, that is okay too. How can you let your child know that notice them and are feeling good about what you see?

This example also demonstrates another tip: **Tip 5: Double impact with physical warmth.** When we accompany encouragement with physical warmth (such as a hug) it is as if we are providing two encouragement statements or doubling the impact.



Example #5

- Scene:** Mom gets home from work. Dad and daughter are setting the table for dinner.
- Dad to Mom:** “Ally is such a good helper! She set that half of the table all by herself and was playing nicely with Madison so I could finish cooking dinner.”
- Ally:** Smiles a big smile!
- Mom:** Gives Ally a hug and says, “I am so proud of you! I bet you are proud of yourself for setting the table and helping Dad.”



Discussion Questions:

- ▶ How does this father do with encouragement?
- ▶ What behavior is he encouraging?
- ▶ Are these behaviors you would encourage?
- ▶ How does he involve the mother?
- ▶ How do you think the child feels?
- ▶ Did you notice that mom gave Ally a hug (tip 5)?

Allow time for discussion.

Let’s look at Tip 6: Use positive comments with your child in front of others. When children hear you encourage them in front of other important adults in their lives, it leaves a big impression. This strategy can also allow you and your partner to work together at acknowledging and reinforcing your child’s good behavior. If this fits with how you do things in your family, consider trying this tip. If your child does not like to be praised or noticed front of others or if you only give encouragement in private, that is okay. Remember, each family is different.

Activity 3



Show Slide 12: Encouragement Log Activity

Ask participants to look at **Activity 3** in their handbook. Tell them that this is their *second* thing to try at home.

I want you to find at least *five* times in the next week when you can give your child positive comments and encouragement. We will talk about what happened and how your child reacted when we meet next week. Also watch to see how you think it makes your child feel when you give positive comments and encouragement and how it makes you feel too. Remember that positive comments and encouragement can be done anywhere. At the grocery store, in the car, or during bath time.

Are there any questions?



Show Slide 13: Encouraging Statements

Let's look at some examples of encouraging statements to give you some ideas. A helpful hint for encouragement is to state what you see, then add the sweet stuff.

- ▶ “You put everything in the toy box! Wow! You did such a great job picking up your toys tonight.”
- ▶ “You shared your toys with me! It's so much fun to play with you!”
- ▶ “You were being such a great helper when you helped me bring the groceries inside.”
- ▶ “Thank you for using your inside voice when your sister was sleeping.”

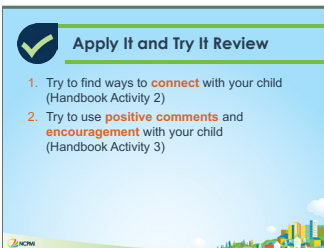
Note to Facilitator: Depending on how you distributed resources or assembled the Family Handbook, the directions for sharing resources might be different.

Pass out Resource titled, Providing Positive Feedback and Encouragement, or guide participants to their Family Handbook, folder, material set, etc.

I want to share a family resource that lists ideas for encouragement statements. We all need reminders now and again.

Closing

We have discussed many ways for you to make connections with your children. Through these positive connections, we can help our children feel more confident and learn important social skills.



Show Slide 14: Apply It and Try It Review

I hope that this has been a good beginning for you. And I hope that as we work together in the *Positive Solutions for Families* sessions, you will continue to gain useful information, ideas, and practical tools. In our next session, we will be focusing on more ideas for connecting with children, ways to understand your children's behavior, and using positively stated directions.

Please remember that you will need to bring your family handbook and the completed activities to our next session. If you don't like to write, see if you can get a family member or friend to help with your *Apply it and Try it* activities.

I look forward to seeing you at our next *Positive Solutions for Families* session.