

In This Session

Learning Objectives

- ▶ Understand how playful interactions and creating fun in everyday moments can be a powerful practice.
- ▶ Link building relationships, using positive comments and encouragement, and play to children's behavior.
- ▶ Examine why children do what they do.
- ▶ Understand how to use positive language with children.

Agenda

1. Welcome back (4 min)
2. Reflect on Apply It and Try It (12 min)
 - a. Activity 1 (4 min)
3. Fun in Everyday Moments (26 min)
4. Understanding Your Child's Behavior (25 min)
 - a. Activity 2: Apply it and Try it (8 min)
5. Keeping it Positive (10 min)
 - a. Activity 3: Apply It and Try It (15 min)
6. Closing (2 min)

Family Materials

- ▶ Positive Solutions Family Handbook

Facilitator Materials

- ▶ Ground Rules from Session 1
- ▶ Chart Paper, Markers, Tape
- ▶ PowerPoint
- ▶ Positive Solutions Family Handbook
- ▶ Role Play Cards
- ▶ Affirmation video or internet access

Icon Key



Chart Paper



Role Play



Group Activity



Discussion



Family Handbook



Apply It and Try It

Welcome

Post “Ground Rules” developed in the first session.



Show Slide 1: Session 2: Positive Solutions for Families – Keeping It Positive

Welcome Back! I am glad to join you for our second *Positive Solutions for Families* Session: Keeping It Positive.



Show Slide 2: What's Happening Today?

As you can see, we have some new topics to cover today, but first we will talk about ways to have playful interactions with your child that will be enjoyable for both of you. If you can increase the positive times you have with your child, you can strengthen your relationship, which will make it easier to teach your child new skills and behaviors. We will then spend time talking about understanding your child's behavior and talk about the meaning of behavior, which we can use in session 3 when we will be “Behavior Detectives.” We will end with another strategy to work on this week called “keeping it positive.”

Reflect on Apply It and Try It



Show Slide 3: Apply It and Try It Reflection

First, let's start by discussing your Apply It and Try It from last session. You had two Apply It and Try It activities. The first activity was to try to spend quality time with your child, even if it was building in those little moments that might fit in our busy lives. Would anyone like to share some of the things you tried and how they went?

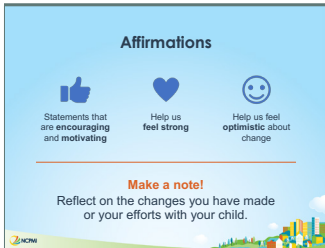
- ▶ How did your child react?
- ▶ How did it make you feel?

As families start sharing, encourage participants to talk to each other. Ask follow-up questions or connect similar responses. You might say something like, “Two of you said that your children were really excited to go on a walk after school. Did anyone else add in a walk to connect with their child?”

The second activity was to try to increase the use of positive comments and encouragement as a parenting practice. You were going to try to find at least 5 times when you could use positive comments and encouragement with your child. *Possible discussion questions:*

- ▶ How many of you were able to do that?
- ▶ Who wants to share how that went?
- ▶ What kind of things was your child doing when you used encouragement or positive comments?
- ▶ How did your child react? What happened?
- ▶ How did it make you feel?

Allow time for discussion. If any strategies were challenging for families to implement, remind them it will take time to practice new skills and to know how to implement them with their child. You can also ask participants to offer ideas. For example, you might say, “I heard you mention that it was frustrating when you kept forgetting to be more positive with encouragement. Anyone want to share an idea they used to remember to use more positive comments with their child?”



Show Slide 4: Affirmations

An affirmation is a positive reminder or statement about yourself that is encouraging and motivating. There is actually brain science about how using affirmations are helpful for feeling strong and optimistic about making changes in your life. You are here to learn how to change your child’s behavior. To do that, you will be learning new strategies. Any time you learn something new, it can be a challenge. Turn to Session 2, **Activity 1** in your Family Handbook. We want to start each session by encouraging you to take a moment to reflect on the changes you have made or your efforts with your child and make a note. If you don’t want to write it down, silently think of your affirmation. It might be “I am persistent. I have now attended 2 sessions” or “I worked hard on using encouragement last week?” or whatever affirmation is meaningful to you.

If you need some inspiration, let’s watch this video together of a child giving himself positive affirmations on his daily walk to school.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FABMuNDB-gM>

After playing the clip, allow a couple of minutes for families to write an affirmation.

Fun in Everyday Moments



Show Slide 5: Fun in Everyday Moments

You might be surprised that we are spending so much time talking about how to interact with your child in positive ways, being more intentional about using positive comments and encouragement, and spending time connecting with your child. You might even be wondering when we are going to talk about those challenging behaviors that you might be seeing. Remember, making positive connections with your child creates an important foundation for helping them learn new ways to interact and to behave. So, hang in there and we will show you how all these ideas tie together.

Use Slide 5 to introduce how the type of playful interactions that will be discussed might look a little different from what you think of as typical play.

Another way to strengthen those connections with your child is to focus on playful interactions. This is a bit different than just thinking about playing with your child. When we look at the pictures of these families, you might notice that they all have something in common—fun in every day moments.



Show Slide 6: Powerful Practice

Tips for Playful Interactions with Your Child. These are some tips to help you think about playful interactions as a powerful practice.

- ▶ Tip 1: Follow your child's lead.
- ▶ Tip 2: Talk, talk, talk about what your child is doing.
- ▶ Tip 3: Encourage your child's creativity and imagination.
- ▶ Tip 4: Avoid power struggles.
- ▶ Tip 5: Have fun together in everyday moments!



We want to think about playful interactions where the **child is in control** and the **adult follows the child's lead**. You probably are using lots of these tips when playing and spending time with your children. Will someone share a few ways they use these tips when making everyday moments with their child fun?

Allow for a few participants to reflect on these tips for play. Summarize responses and try to capture the "big ideas." Here are some potential reflections participants might have or that you can share if participants need ideas to get started:

- ▶ *I ask my child to join me while doing a chore. We turn on our favorite song and make emptying the dishwasher fun. It really is a fun part of our day.*
- ▶ *I try to talk or narrate while we are playing or moving through our day. My son really likes it when I act like a sports announcer while he is brushing his teeth. I say things like, "Oh look, he's got his toothbrush, he's reaching for that toothpaste. It looks like a slam dunk-that toothbrush is in the mouth. Look at him go! Look at him brush. The crowd goes wild."*
- ▶ *When we pick a game to play together, I give a few choices that we both like.*
- ▶ *I let my child use their imagination. Like when we are at the store, she likes to pretend boxes and cans are spaceships flying in the air and landing in the cart. We have lots of fun pretending!*



Show Side 7: Role Play 1 Reflections

Let's look more closely at using the powerful practice of playful interactions. Remember, this is about connecting with children and making everyday moments fun. We are going to role-play a typical situation and think about how we might improve it or make it better

Ask for volunteers to role play. If one person volunteers to play a part (e.g., child), then let them pick their "parent" or vice-versa. Remember that participants have the right to pass if they do not want to participate in the role-play.



Role Play 1: Kenny and his mother.

Note to Facilitator: Make sure each player in the role play receives a copy of the role play cards. Make copies ahead of time from the role play cards located at the end of the Facilitator's Guide. Participants use role play cards.

After the role play, ask questions from the following list. If participants provide the responses necessary, there is no need to read through every question. These are guiding questions meant to elicit participant engagement and discussion.

Now we are going to pause and review some questions about Kenny and his mother.

- ▶ What happened?
- ▶ Was this a positive playful interaction? Why or why not?
- ▶ What was Kenny’s mother doing?
- ▶ Why do you think she was asking so many questions?
- ▶ How do you think Kenny felt?
- ▶ How do you think Kenny’s mother felt?
- ▶ Why do you think Kenny started throwing his toys at the end?
- ▶ Did this situation help build a positive relationship?
- ▶ What could Kenny’s mother do differently?

Refer back to the Powerful Practice: Tips for Playful Interactions with Your Child and have participants think about those tips (show Slide 6).



Tip: Follow your child’s lead. Did Kenny’s mother follow his lead? Following your child’s lead means you might have to give up your plan about what comes next and allow your child to guide you.

Tip: Talk, talk, talk about what your child is doing. Think about narrating your child’s play like a sportscaster – play-by-play? That means describing, commenting, and expanding on what your child is doing. When you ask a lot of questions, it often stops the interactions and then the child loses interest or becomes frustrated. Try to limit the number of questions you ask.

Next, discuss several of the tips together:

Tip: Encourage your child’s creativity and imagination.

Tip: Avoid power struggles.

Tip: Have fun together!

Sometimes it is hard to let our child be creative when we are trying to teach them names of animals, colors, sounds, etc. We want them to learn. But it is also important for us to sometimes “go with the flow,” follow our child’s lead, and see they go with the play situation. There will be other opportunities and times to teach your child labels, colors, and sounds.

Now let’s try the role play again and see what happens.

Role Play 2: Kenny and his mother.

Participants use role play cards.

After the role play, ask questions from the following list. If participants provide the responses necessary, there is no need to read through every question. These are guiding questions meant to elicit participant engagement and discussion.



Show Slide 8: Role Play 2 Reflections

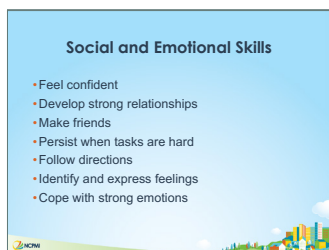
Now we are going to pause and review some questions about Kenny and his mother.

- ▶ What happened?
- ▶ How is this scene different than the last one?
- ▶ What was Kenny's mother doing this time?
- ▶ How did Kenny respond?
- ▶ Did this situation help foster creative play and build a positive relationship?
- ▶ What else was Kenny learning?
- ▶ How did they both feel?

This is a great example of following the child's lead, encouraging creativity, and having fun playing together.

We have spent a lot of time talking about ways we can build connections with children. Kenny and his mother in the role play are a great example of how we can have fun in everyday moments. We are hoping you are seeing the importance of this and how our relationships with our children can have a positive influence on their behavior. Right now, you might be thinking – “I love spending time with my child, but when they have challenging behaviors, it really makes it difficult.” We are going to switch our focus and talk about understanding challenging behavior.

Understanding Challenging Behavior



Show Slide 9. Social and Emotional Skills

To better understand challenging behavior, it helps to think about the social and emotional skills that help children be successful as they grow and develop. Let's read through this list of important social and emotional skills.

Why do you think it is so important to “teach” children social and emotional skills?
Allow participants time to respond and summarize responses.

Yes, these are some of the skills we know that children need to be more successful and to prevent challenging behavior. We tend to spend lots of time thinking and planning for helping children learn academic skills like the ABCs and counting or motor skills like catching a ball and riding a bike. We need to be just as intentional about teaching social emotional skills.



Show Slide 10: When Skills are Absent?

What happens when children do not have these skills? Allow participants time to respond and summarize responses. *Answers might include everything from specific challenging behaviors to quiet and withdrawn.*



Show Slide 11: Challenging Behavior: What we Know

Let us slow down for a moment and reflect on some basic assumptions on challenging behavior.

- ▶ Challenging behavior often occurs when children don't have the appropriate language or social skills to achieve the same purpose. Some children have not learned those skills or might have disabilities that make learning them difficult and some children might have learned them, but they don't use the skills they have been taught.
- ▶ There are also other variables that might contribute to children's challenging behavior such as lack of sleep, hunger, stress, medical factors, and different expectations across settings (e.g., home versus early childhood center).
- ▶ When children use challenging behavior over time, those behaviors are working for them. For example, a child cries to get out of dinner rather than asking to be finished. If the child usually ends up getting sent away from the meal, then the child will probably continue to cry at dinner because crying is working for them.

In future sessions we will revisit the idea that challenging behavior has a purpose, and we will discuss ways to prevent challenging behavior, how we can respond better, and how we can teach children important social and emotional skills. But right now, one of the first things we can do to determine how to address challenging behavior is understand the question, why do children do what they do? You have probably asked yourself that question many times.



Show Slide 12: Why Do Children Do What They Do?

Behavior is meaningful and communicates a message. Sometimes when children do not have an appropriate way to communicate a message (e.g., talking, signing, using picture symbols), they use challenging behavior (e.g., hitting, screaming, spitting) to communicate to others what they want and need. A child who has limited social skills or who has learned over time that engaging in challenging behavior will meet their needs effectively, might also engage in challenging behavior instead of language...even if they have language. I am not implying that children are "choosing" to use challenging behavior to communicate, but when challenging behavior occurs, it has a message.

Behavior can mean many things. Here is a list of some of the things your child's challenging behavior might be communicating. Remember, we might not like the message, but we can identify and understand it. For example, if your child has a tantrum in the grocery store because they want to buy a toy and you said, "No," we can recognize that the behavior is saying, "I want a toy," even if we don't like the message.



Show Slide 13: Challenging Behavior Works

Simply put, children engage in challenging behavior because it works for them. It works for them by sending a powerful message, which results in the child obtaining, or getting, something or someone (e.g., attention, toy, food) or avoiding, or escaping, something or someone (e.g., an adult, an activity, or a demand).

We are going to go into more depth about the meaning of behavior in our next session where we will practice being a “Behavior Detective.” Today we will start by learning about some of the clues to look for. Right now, let’s start with this information: all behavior is meaningful and can be viewed as sending a message.



Remember Kenny, the child who was in our role play. Let’s think about what his behavior was trying to communicate. You can look up at the slide for some ideas. Behavior sends a message, that the child is either trying to:

- ▶ Obtain, or get something or someone (e.g., attention, toy, food).
 - ▶ Avoid, or escape something or someone (e.g., an adult, an activity, or an adult).
1. What was the first behavior Kenny’s mother might have found challenging? *Kenny doesn’t answer the question and turns away.* What do you think this behavior was trying to communicate?
 2. What is another challenging behavior we saw Kenny engage in? *Kenny kicked and threw toys.* What do you think this behavior was trying to communicate?

Summarize the discussion from the participants. Arrive at a summary that highlights that Kenny was wanting to play with this mother and get her attention while she was cooking dinner and was avoiding her questions. He seemed frustrated and kicked and threw toys to communicate to his mother, “stop asking me questions and play with me. I want your attention and I want to avoid all your questions.”

In our next session, we are going to learn even more about understanding your child’s behavior. There is a try it and apply it activity that will help you get ready for that discussion.

Activity 2



Show Slide 14: Apply It and Try It

For next week, think about some behaviors that you would like to see less of and more of, and ways you can encourage your child to use those behaviors. This slide shows some examples. *Discuss these examples and ask participants if they have additional ideas.* By thinking of behaviors that you want to see more of and behaviors you want to see less of, you will be ready to be the Behavior Detective we were talking about.

Turn to Activity 2, Session 2 in your Family Handbook to find a page called Encouraging Positive Behavior. Take a few minutes and write down what you would like to see change for your child.



Keeping it Positive

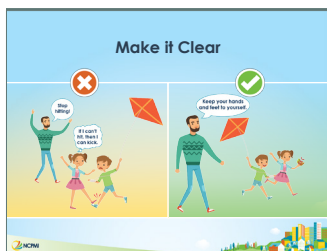
When children have challenging behavior or are not following our directions, we need to provide them with guidance. We want to let them know that what they are doing is not permissible or that we need them to follow our instructions. I want to share another powerful strategy for helping children respond positively to our guidance.



Show Slide 15: Keeping it Positive

The way we talk to our children can have a big impact. We often hear from families that a big concern is that their children just “won’t listen.” How many of you have thought this about your child? Or have thought things like, “All I do is say things like, No, Stop, or Don’t do that!” You might have even given up on asking your child to do things because you are so frustrated by their behavior.

When children engage in challenging behavior, a common reaction is to say “stop” or “don’t do that.” Or we might tell our children what we don’t want them to do, like no running in the house. These statements can lead to a feeling of frustration and challenging behavior for you and your child. What we want to focus on is telling children what to do. By using a positively stated instruction, your expectations are clear, and you are teaching your child **what to do**. This increases your child’s ability to comply with your expectations and reduces the likelihood of challenging behavior.



Show Slide 16: Make it Clear

Let’s walk through this with an example. Your child is arguing with his older brother and hits him while you are attempting to cook dinner. You tell your child, “stop hitting.” It is possible that your child is not hearing you say STOP hitting. Instead, your child may just be hearing you say the behavior they were engaging in, which is hitting. It is also possible that they continue that challenging behavior, hitting, or engage in another challenging behavior, kicking, because they don’t know or remember what else they can do. Think about it from your child’s perspective: “My dad said no hitting my brother. But if I can’t hit, maybe I can kick him instead?”

We can help children by switching our statements to include positively stated instructions that tells the child what behavior they CAN engage in. Give one clear instruction at a time. Tell the child what to do, versus what not to do. Use simple phrases and words that young children will understand. Thinking back to this example of the child hitting the older brother, a better way to stay “stop hitting” might be, “let’s use gentle hands and feet with each other” or “keep your hands and feet to yourself.”



Show Slide 17: What's a Better Way to Say?

Stating directions in positive terms is another powerful practice for preventing challenging behavior. Let’s think of some more appropriate and effective directions for this list. *You can also ask participants to think of directions that they often give their child to add to the list. (If you feel that the participants have a good understanding, quickly go over a few and skip down to the next point.)*

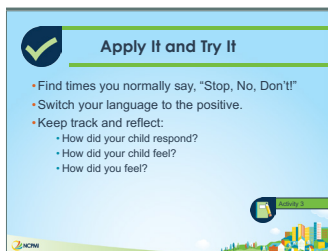
- ▶ Stop yelling.
- ▶ Don't throw your toys.
- ▶ Stop bothering your sister.

And, like we said, some directions that we give our children are just too vague, and the child is not sure what we want them to do. What are more clear and positive directions for this list?

- ▶ Be nice.
- ▶ Watch out.
- ▶ Be good.

Remember, directions are more effective when they are stated in terms of what you would like the child to do instead of what you would like the child to stop doing.

Activity 3



Show Slide 18: Positive Words

Open your handbook to **Activity 3, Positive Words Activity**. First, I want you look at top of the page. How we deliver directions is important too. Sometimes even if they are positive, young children might not understand due to language delays, disability or just the fact that it is a new skill, and they need help learning how to do it. A few tips to use when giving directions are included in your handbook if you need some additional ideas.

1. Tell child what to do.
2. Pause allow time for child to respond.
3. Provide encouragement or prompt.

Second, this page has an activity. You will be working in pairs for this activity. First look at the “don’t” column. At times, we may use phrases like this when talking to our children. However, young children often cannot figure out what our expectation is when we say “no, don’t, or stop.”

Let’s look at the first example together. Instead of saying “Don’t run,” what could we say instead? *Allow for responses. Possible correct responses might include walk or use walking feet inside.*

With a partner, try to come up with alternative phrases to use so your child would know exactly what to do. Write your responses in the “do” column. *Allow time for participants to find a partner and time to write responses.*

How did it feel doing this activity? Was it hard to rephrase the statements? Do you think this might be part of the reason why your child continues to use challenging behavior in some situations... because they don’t understand what you expect them to do?

This is your Apply It and Try It activity this week. Your task is to find times that you normally would say *Stop, No, Don't* and switch your language to the positive. You have

a page in your Family Handbook where you can record the times you were “keeping it positive.” If you said, “We sit in our chairs” instead of “No jumping on the chairs,” you can write that down. Imagine if you also said, “awesome job sitting in your chair! You are such a big kid!” Let’s see how many times you can tell your child what to do (and not what not to do this) this week. A bonus will be if we work encouragement and positive feedback into it.

The Power of Encouragement with Positive Comments

Behavior	Desired Behavior	Positive Encouragement and Feedback
Not listening	Follow directions	"Thank you for listening, Asha, and for putting your books away." (gives a hug)
Yelling	Use inside voice	"Wow, Jayden! You are using an inside voice. You are such a big kid." (gives a high five)

Show Slide 19: The Power of Encouragement and Positive Comments

We are going to end our session with revisiting using positive comments and encouragement in relation to child behaviors. Here you see examples of children, the challenging behavior they engage in, and the behavior the family would like to see more of. In the last column you will see examples of the positive comment/encouragement that families could use. When children hear positive comments – it makes them feel competent and confident and helps the child use the appropriate behavior more often.

Closing

In this session, we discussed having fun in everyday moments and the use of positive words as ways to strengthen connections with your child. We also spent some time on the powerful idea that all behavior communicates a message. The more we understand challenging behavior, the better able we will be able to support children learn to new skills that will replace the behavior.

Apply It and Try It Review

Things to Try at Home:

1. List behaviors you want to see **more of** and **less of** at home (Handbook Activity 2)
2. Try to **keep it positive** with your child and use positive words (Handbook Activity 3)

Show Slide 20: Apply It and Try it Review

As a reminder, you have two activities to try at home this week. First, you are going to write down at least one behavior that you would like to see less of and at least one behavior you want to see more of. Second, try using positively stated and simple instructions with your child. Write down a few of the times that you told your child what do to instead of what not to do. There are pages in the Family Handbook to guide you in these activities.



I hope that as we work together in the sessions you will continue to gain useful information and practical parenting practices. I look forward to seeing you in our next session, Behavior Has Meaning. We will be discussing how to determine the meaning of children’s behavior and we will get to practice being a Behavior Detective.