



Session **1**

Making a Connection!



Positive Solutions for Families

 The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning

Session 1 Adapted for California

Positive Solutions for Families: Making a Connection!

Learner Objectives: Discuss the purpose of the group and the importance of social emotional development for young children. Meet each other and learn about our families. Discuss goals and expectations we might have for our group. Identify the importance of building positive relationships with children. Discuss the “power” of using positive comments and encouragement with children.	Suggested Agenda: 1. Introductions & Parent Goals 2. Expectations 3. Relationships & Quality Time 4. Positive Descriptive Acknowledgement as a Parenting Tool 5. <i>Things to Try at Home Activities</i>
Materials Needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PowerPoint™ or Overheads• Solution for Families Workbook• Chart Paper, Markers, Tape• Role-Play Cards	Handouts: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Positive Solutions for Families</i> Workbook Activities 1-4• Role-Play Cards

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Slide 1



Show **Slide 1: Positive Solutions for Families** Session 1 – Making a Connection!

Begin the session by greeting and welcoming families to the first in a series of 3 sessions of Positive Solutions for Families.

My name is: _____,
(tell a little about yourself)

We are very glad that you are here! We will be working together and getting to know each other over the next 3 weeks. During this time we are going to talk about ideas for helping our children:

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

As you can see, we have a lot to accomplish in 3 sessions!

*Show **Slide 2** to give parents an idea of the main topics for the next 3 sessions. The Positive Solutions for Families series consists of 6 sessions, we will be doing the first 4 and some of you may be interested in taking the second series. See the Facilitators Guide for information describing the main focus for each session.*

1. Making a Connection!
2. Making It Happen!
3. Why Do Children Do What They Do?
4. Teach Me What to Do!

Second Series

5. Facing the Challenge: Part 1
6. Facing the Challenge: Part 2

*Show **Slide 3: What's Happening Today** to discuss the goals of the first session.*

*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 each person share: a) their name, b) how many children they have (names and ages), c) a goal they have related to the Positive Solutions for Families group and, d) anything else that they would like to share about their families!*

Note to Facilitator: List the goals on chart paper. Parents will probably begin to make connections with each other as they identify someone else with a similar background and family constellation.

Slide 2



Slide 3



Slide 4



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Slide 5



Chart Paper

Now that we have met everyone and discussed some of our goals for the group, let's generate some expectations 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.

Show **Slide 5 - Group Expectations**. We are going to list our expectations on chart paper, and refer to these each week as a reminder. We start with the expectations we often use with children: We are Friendly, We are Respectful, and We are Safe and Healthy. Let's think for a moment about what each of these things will look like in our group.

Note to Facilitator: List the ideas for behaviors the group will demonstrate under each expectation. For example, under We Are Friendly: each person is encouraged to share; We Are Respectful: one person at a time talks; We Are Safe and Healthy: if people need to take a break, they can do so at anytime.

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 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 a parent! Even knowing that most young children display some rather challenging behaviors in the course of expected development, it doesn't ease your concerns or anxieties when it is your child engaging in these behaviors!

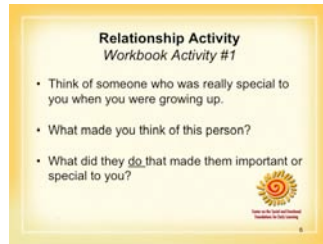
Unfortunately there are no easy cures, silver bullets, or magic potions! The *Positive Solutions for Families* series does, however, provide evidence-based strategies (strategies that have been shown to work) that have been successfully used by parents of young children.

Often when young children exhibit challenging behavior, we become so frantic for a solution to the behavior, a way to make the behavior stop, that we forget to just have fun with our child! But, have no fear! We are going to begin 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!

Think about the things you do to help your children feel loved, special, and safe. What kinds of things do you do to help your children feel confident and competent? One of *the most*

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Slide 6



Positive Solutions for Families workbook – Activity 1, Relationship Activity

Slide 7



Slide 8



Large Group Activity

important things we can do is **really** work on developing a great relationship with their child! Now let's talk about why this is so important!

Show Slide 6: Relationship Activity

Look at *Activity 1, Relationship Activity* in your *Positive Solutions for Families workbook*. Think about someone who was really important to you when you were growing up. Examples might be your mom, dad, grandma, teacher, or maybe even a coach! Write this person's name in your workbook. What made you think of this person? What did this person "do" that made you feel special? 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 really important and special, etc. Write your answers in your workbook.

Show Slide 7: Every child needs someone who is crazy about them.

This is such an important quote for us to remember! It is important for *every* child to have someone who is crazy about him/her! 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!

With this in mind, let's talk a little about the idea of spending quality time with our children. We have all heard that it is important to have quality time with our children. But the reality is that getting quality time may be a little challenging! Let's talk about what those challenges might be and then what we can do about it.

Show **Slide 8: Quality Time with Your Children** Let's start with the benefits of spending quality time 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:

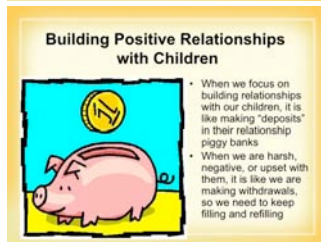
- increased self-esteem
- how a positive, secure relationship makes the child and parent feel (both immediately and long term)
- getting to know their child better
- how responsive a child is when he/she has a positive relationship with an adult
- more pleasant household
- will grow up to have good relationships with own children
- helping the child learn to interact with others
- children love it when we spend time with them, when we

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Chart Paper

Slide 9 and 10



Large Group Brainstorm

give them attention, etc.

Barriers might include:

- parents feeling they do not have enough time (work, other children)
- too stressed
- sibling rivalry
- an unsupportive partner in the household;
- having a history of unsupportive relationships (how their parents treated them)
- having a child who presents lots of challenging behavior
- not knowing how to play with their child

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! Now that we have seen how the benefits outweigh the barriers, let's talk about "how" we can build positive relationships with our children.

Show **Slide 9, then 10: Building Positive Relationships with Children**

One way to think about building your relationship with your child is to add deposits to their emotional "bank" that needs to be filled and refilled on a regular basis. One can consider times when we are negative, harsh, or critical, or when we nag our children as draining the "deposits" from their banks. Think about times when someone was harsh or negative to you. How did it make you feel?

When we actively build positive relationships with hugs, smiles, encouraging statements, listening, and playing (just a few ideas), it is as if we are filling/refilling our child's "relationship bank." When we "fill/refill" our child's bank, we are strengthening our relationships and building their competence and confidence! The more will "fill/refill" their banks, the more confidence they will have in developing relationships with others.

Ask parents to brainstorm ways they can "fill/refill" their children's relationship "banks." (You could draw a "piggy bank" on the chart paper and "fill" it with their ideas.)

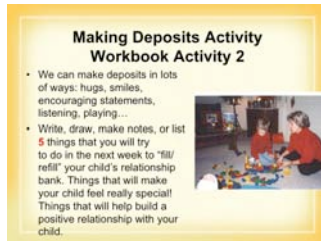
It is important to remember that building positive relationships is mainly about positive "time and attention" and not giving your child "things." Let's try to think of no-cost strategies for building positive relationships with your children. Ideas that don't take a lot of time or money!" These might be things like:

- reading a book together
- taking a walk together

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Slide 11



Positive Solutions for Families
Workbook – Activity 2 –
Filling/Refilling Activity

(Also a *Things to Try at Home*
Activity)

Slide 12



- singing favorite songs together
- eating dinner together
- talking/singing in car, on bus
- hugs, high fives, kisses, winks, thumbs-up
- saying “I love you”
- asking your child about their day
- letting your child be your special helper (helping with dinner, laundry, etc..)
- playing together

Show **Slide 11: “Filling/Refilling” Activity**. Now that we have generated a lot of ideas for filling/refilling your children’s relationship banks, let’s look at *Activity 2* in your workbooks. At each of our Positive Solutions for Families sessions, you will be given some *Things to Try at Home 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 “fill/refill” your child’s relationship bank during the next week. Try to think of things that will make your child feel really special! Let’s take a few minutes now and write down some ideas in your workbook. 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!

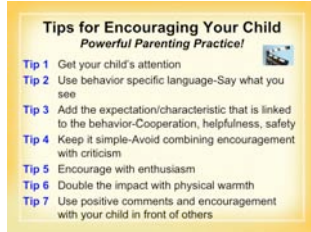
Show **Slide 12: Close to Magic**. Building on the making deposits idea, I would like to share a powerful tool that you can use to support your child’s competence and confidence, as well as change his/her behavior. That tool is using *positive, descriptive acknowledgement*! You can do this by catching your child doing the behaviors that you would like to see and acknowledging that, which encourages them to continue those behaviors! **Handout 3** in your workbook has more information about this idea.

Most adults spend their time giving children directions or corrections for inappropriate behavior. When things are going well, we don’t say anything. Remember, negative comments and experiences can make “withdrawals” in the bank. If we can spend more time focused on what we want the child to do and acknowledge the appropriate behavior when it happens, we will make more deposits and fill the bank back up.

Using positive, descriptive acknowledgement can help increase desired behaviors and decrease unwanted behaviors. That’s a good thing! A lack of encouragement can lead to increased amounts of inappropriate behavior, and fewer positive behaviors and interactions. Positive, descriptive acknowledgement takes very little time and is a very effective way to promote positive behaviors. And the good news is... it doesn’t cost anything!

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Slide 13



Role-plays

One way to give your child the credit is to make “you” statements. When describing what you see, say, “You are holding my hand. That keeps you safe.”

Show **Slide 13: Tips for Encouraging Your Child – Powerful Parenting Practices!**

When using positive, descriptive acknowledgement with your child, it has to be more than just saying “I like that” or “Good job.” Children need the description of specifically what they did a good job doing. Here are some tips for delivering positive, descriptive acknowledgement to your child and making deposits in their bank!

- Tip 1. Get your child’s attention.**
- Tip 2. Be specific. Say what you see.**
- Tip 3. Add the characteristic that is linked to the behavior.**
- Tip 4. Keep it simple. Avoid combining encouragement with criticism.**
- Tip 5. Encourage with enthusiasm!**
- Tip 6. Double the impact with physical warmth.**
- Tip 7. Use positive comments and encouragement with 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 with the materials for Session 1 and have parents role-play the situations and then discuss.)*

Example #1

Scene: Mom is doing dishes, and her daughter is playing quietly.

Mom: Does not look at her daughter and says, “You are playing so quietly.”

Daughter: Doesn’t look up or seem to hear Mom.

Discussion Questions: *(Wait for responses)*

How does the mother encourage her daughter? Is this a behavior that you would encourage? Does her daughter 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 she is doing and give the adult her full attention, but simply that we know she can hear us. Eye contact is a good indicator of attention.

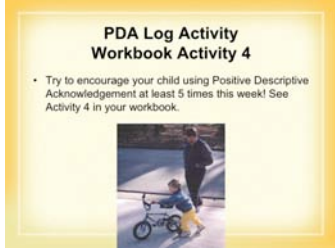

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	<p>Example #2</p> <p>Scene: Grandma is watching TV, and her grandson and granddaughter are playing together nicely.</p> <p>Grandma: Stops watching TV and looks at the children and says, "Good job!"</p> <p>Boy and girl: Look confused and continue playing.</p> <p>Discussion Questions: How does the grandmother encourage her grandchildren? What behavior is she encouraging? How do we know? Do you think the children know what behavior she is encouraging? What could she do differently to be more effective? (<i>Allow time for discussion.</i>)</p> <p>Now let's look at Tip 2: Be specific. Say what you see. Sometimes we give vague encouragement such as "good boy, good job, nice work." This is not very effective at increasing a <u>specific</u> 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!"</p> <p>Example #3</p> <p>Scene: Daughter is looking at a book. Mom is carrying a full laundry basket and several items fall out. Daughter puts down the book and comes over to help pick up the clothes.</p> <p>Mom: Looks at daughter and says, "You put down your book and are picking up the clothes with me. That is so helpful!"</p> <p>Daughter: Smiles and asks, "Do you need any more help?"</p> <p>Discussion Questions: How does this mother encourage her daughter? What characteristic is she encouraging? How did the daughter respond? (<i>Allow time for discussion.</i>)</p> <p>Now let's look at Tip 3: Add the characteristic that is linked to the behavior - and see how it applies. Just saying what we see is often enough, yet we can help children learn about larger concepts. Often the behavior is an example of a characteristic we want to encourage, like being helpful. When we use concept words like helpful, friendly, safe, respectful, and so on, that helps children understand the meaning.</p> <p>Example #4</p> <p>Scene: Dad and son are doing dishes together.</p>
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	<p>Dad: Looks at son and says, "Thanks for doing such a good job with the dishes and not rushing through like you usually do"</p> <p>Son: Smiles at first, but then looks down</p> <p>Discussion Questions: How does this father encourage his son? 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? (<i>Allow time for discussion.</i>)</p> <p>Now let's look at Tip 4: 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." <u>These types of statements are ineffective as the child may only pay attention to or remember the criticism and not the positive comments.</u> Keep positive statements "clean and simple," and avoid combining them with other stuff!</p> <p>Example #5</p> <p>Scene: Mother and son are playing together with blocks.</p> <p>Mother: "You are so good at building fences for the cows and horses!"</p> <p>Son: Smiles and hands Mom a horse</p> <p>Mother: (with enthusiasm) "Wow! You gave me your horse. That is sharing. I like playing with you."</p> <p>Son: Smiles and makes an animal noise in a quiet voice</p> <p>Mother: "Thank you for using a quiet voice while your sister takes a nap." She gives him a hug.</p> <p>Discussion Questions: How does this mother encourage her son? How do you think the son feels? What behavior is she encouraging? What would you do to be more effective, if anything? (<i>Allow time for discussion.</i>)</p> <p>Look at Tip 5: Encourage with enthusiasm. Encouragement that is delivered with enthusiasm is more meaningful and unforgettable. Our enthusiastic responses communicate to our children that we are very happy with their behavior. Flat encouragement is not as effective!</p> <p>This example also demonstrates another tip -- Tip 6: Powerful Parenting Practice: Double impact with physical warmth. When we accompany encouragement with physical warmth</p>
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<p>Slide 14</p>  <p>Positive Solutions for Families Workbook – Activity 4 <i>Things to Try at Home!</i> <i>Encouragement Log Activity</i></p> <p>Slide 15</p> 	<p>(such as a hug), it is as if we are providing two encouragement statements, or doubling the impact!</p> <p>Example #6</p> <p>Scene: Mom gets home from work, and Dad and daughter are setting the table for dinner.</p> <p>Dad to Mom: “Ally is such a good helper! She set that half of the table all by herself and was playing with Madison so I could finish cooking dinner.”</p> <p>Ally: Smiles a big smile!</p> <p>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.”</p> <p>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 (<i>reinforce Tip 5 again</i>)?</p> <p>Let’s look at Tip 7: Use positive comments and encouragement with your child in front of others. When children hear you deliver encouragement 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 noticing and reinforcing your child’s good behavior.</p> <p>Show Slide 14: Encouragement Log Activity. Ask participants to look at Activity 4 in their workbooks. Tell them that this is their <u>second</u> thing to try at home (as a reminder, the first thing to try is to “fill/refill” their child’s relationship bank). They should try to find at least five times in the next week when they can give their 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!</p> <p>Are there any questions?</p> <p>Show Slide 15 – Examples of Encouraging Statements. Let’s look at some examples of encouraging statements to give you some ideas!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It’s so much fun to play with you – you are so good at sharing your toys.” • “You were being such a great helper when you helped
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Slide 16



me bring the groceries inside.”

- “Thank you for using your inside voice when your sister was sleeping.”
- “Wow! You did such a great job picking up your toys tonight. You put everything in the toy box!”

Show **Slide 16: Things to Try at Home – Reminder**

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.

Please remember that you will need to bring your workbook 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 *Things to Try at Home Activities*. I look forward to seeing you at our next *Positive Solutions for Families session*!