

Strong Parents, Stable Children

Strong Parents, Stable Children Building Protective Factors to Strengthen Families

Objectives:

- List the five protective factors that help strengthen families and reduce the likelihood of abuse and neglect.
- Understand how the five protective factors relate to child and family well-being.
- Recognize how you, as a parent/caregiver or you and your organization already support the development of protective factors.
- Commit to learning new strategies and resources that can support your efforts to help the families in your community.
- Identify specific program strategies to envision a healthy future together.

Materials:

- PowerPoint
- Participant binders
- Glitter Bottle (Parental Resilience)
- Blank half sheets of paper (Parental Resilience)
- Mirror (Social and Emotional Development of Children)

Session Outline

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Welcome and Brief Introductions | |
| 2. Why Are We Here? | 5 minutes |
| 3. Project Background | 3 minutes |
| 4. Objectives | 2 minutes |
| 5. P.I.G.S. | 5 minutes |
| 6. Why are Protective Factors Important? | 3 minutes |
| 7. The 5 Protective Factors | 2 minutes |
| 8. Concrete Support in Times of Need | 25 minutes |
| 9. Parental Resilience | 45 minutes |
| BREAK | 15 minutes |
| 10. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development | 45 minutes |
| 11. Social and Emotional Competence of Children | 45 minutes |
| 12. Social Connections | 25 minutes |
| 13. Other Resources and Conclusion | 10 minutes |

Strong Parents, Stable Children

1 Welcome and Brief Introductions

Slide 1 Title Slide

**** Presenter:** Welcome participants and take a moment for brief introductions.



5 minutes

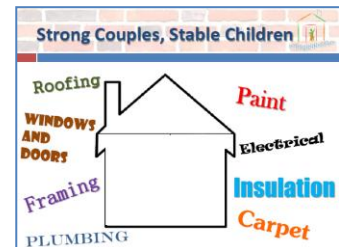
2 Why Are We Here?

Slide 2-3 Why Are We Here

As we think ahead about the topics we will cover today, let's begin with the end in mind. What's the big picture? Why are we all here? What is our collective purpose and our ultimate goal? To protect and strengthen families! Life is about relationships, and we all want to have good relationships. To thrive, children and families need healthy relationships and a safe and stable home – in terms of family members who live in the home, as well as the structure itself.

Ask: What is the purpose of a house? [Allow time for responses]

- Example: To protect us from the elements. Much like a house, a family also protects its members from the elements and predators. Families provide comfort, warmth, and an environment for growth and learning.



We chose a house as a symbol to represent parts that are necessary to hold things up and keep them together. A house requires many experts (plumbing, electrical, framing, carpet, roofing, paint, etc.), so too do strong families and parenting. A doctor helps with physical/medical needs, recognizes developmental delays, self-regulation, challenging behaviors, special needs, so they refer, support, guide; a pastor helps with spiritual and emotional needs; a neighbor addresses physical needs; and so on. The point is that strengthening families requires “experts” not only in parenting or child development, but in many other areas.

Slide 4 It Takes a Village...

Parents and children do best when they are surrounded by caring people who can help, including:

- Other parents/friends
- Educators/child services
- Clergy/Faith-based leaders
- Business professionals, and
- Health care professionals

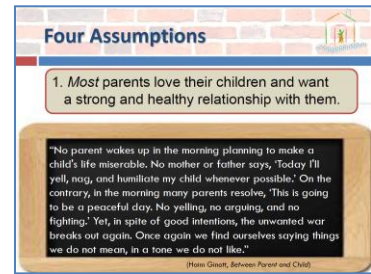


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Slide 5 Four Assumptions

This curriculum was developed with some core assumptions. We assume at least 4 things right up front.

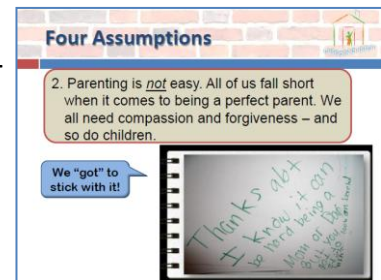
1. We assume that *most* parents love their children and want a strong healthy relationship with their children. While it is true that we see reports in the media of some parents severely abusing or neglecting their children, in this training we assume most parents want to be better and do better.



Slide 6 Four Assumptions

2. We assume all of us fall short when it comes to being a perfect parent. All of us need compassion and forgiveness – and so do children.

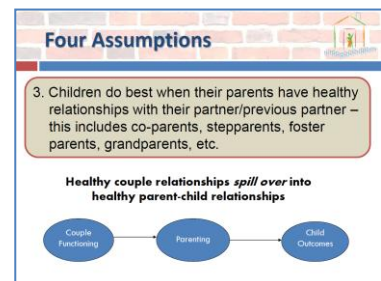
[Presenter: Include a brief statement about how this applies to your life and family. For example, "I have had 4 tries (kids) to get this right. I teach parenting classes. Do I make mistakes? Do I lose my cool? Of course I do. So it's important that I show compassion to other parents because I'm not perfect either."]



Slide 7 Four Assumptions

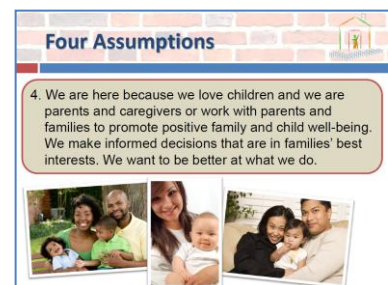
3. We assume that children do best when their parents have healthy relationships with their partner(spouse)/previous partner (spouse)—this includes coparenting, stepparents, grandparents, foster parents, etc.

When things are going well with the parents' relationship, it spills over into the parent-child relationship. So information that helps parents have happier, healthier relationships promotes positive parent-child relationships.



Slide 8 Four Assumptions

4. We assume you are here because you are a parent or caregiver, you love children, and you might also work with parents and/or families. We also assume all of us want to promote positive family and child well-being and make informed decisions that are in the best interests of children and families.



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3 Project Background

3 minutes

Slide 9 Project Background

Today's workshop is a collaboration between the Missouri Department of Mental Health/Project LAUNCH, the Missouri Children's Trust Fund, and University of Missouri Extension.



Slide 10 Project Background

The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) developed the Strengthening Families framework to:

1. Increase family strengths,
2. Enhance child development, and
3. Reduce child abuse and neglect.



And while this approach is not the only tried and true approach to strengthening families, the principles can be useful for anyone who works with parents. The material we cover today is based on this framework.

(<http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families/the-basics/protective-factors>). CSSP identified five protective factors that, when present, increase the overall well-being of children and families. We will address each of these protective factors separately and talk about how we can help support families to build each of the protective factors and enable children to thrive. We will also review some tools you can use to help families directly.

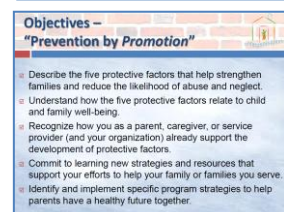
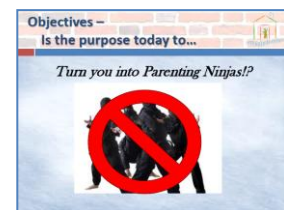
4 Objectives

2 minutes

Slides 11-12 Objectives – “Prevention by Promotion”

Some of you might already be familiar with the five protective factors. Our goal today is to help you become more familiar with each factor and help you identify ways you can promote each protective factor in your day-to-day interactions with families. After the workshop, we hope each of you will be better able to:

- Describe the five protective factors that help strengthen families and reduce the likelihood of abuse and neglect,
- Understand how the five protective factors relate to child and family well-being,
- Recognize how you, as a parent/caregiver or you and your organization already support the development of protective factors,
- Commit to learning new strategies and resources that can support your efforts to help the families in your community, and
- Identify specific program strategies to envision a healthy future together.



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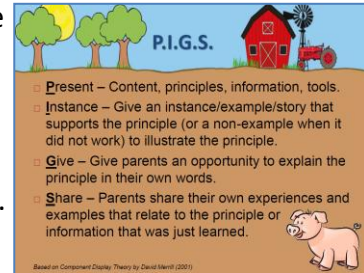
5 P.I.G.S.

5 minutes

Slide 13 P.I.G.S.

There are many ways to present information, both in a setting like this as well as with parents and families you work with. I would like to briefly describe one method of sharing information with others.

The confusing academic term is called Component Display Theory. But today we will call it PIGS. This is a fairly simple way of presenting information but it has been shown to be very effective.



[Click to advance slide and bring up first line]

We'll start with the letter "P". "P" stands for "Present". This is the content, the principles, the information, the tools, etc. For example, I might say something like, "Children are more likely to be compassionate as adults when they are cared for by people who are sensitive to their needs, and are committed to them, and build close relationships with them")

[Click to advance slide and bring up next line]

The "I" stands for "Instance". The presenter then shares an instance/example/story that supports the principle, or a NON-example when it didn't work, to illustrate the principle. (e.g. "at the end of the day, we gather together before bedtime to share what made us happy that day" or "I try to build close relationships with my children by taking turns going out one-on-one with each child, for a drive, ice-cream, park, etc. It helps children feel loved and strengthens parent-child relationships..."). Good stories can be powerful teachers.

[Click to advance slide and bring up next line]

The "G" stands for "Give". This means we give parents an opportunity to express the principles in their own way (e.g. "How would you describe the principle in your own words?")

[Click to advance slide and bring up next line]

The "S" stands for "Share". We ask parents to think of and share their own experiences and examples that relate to the principle/information that was just learned.

This model of Present, Instance, Give, Share is a common method of effective instruction. There is a PIGS handout grid in your binder that you can use as well. I will try to model it throughout the training today.

NOTES:

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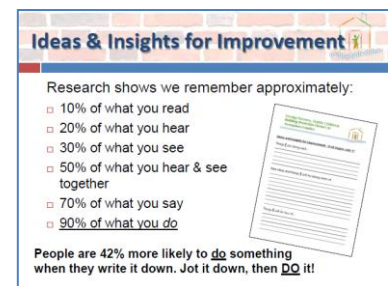
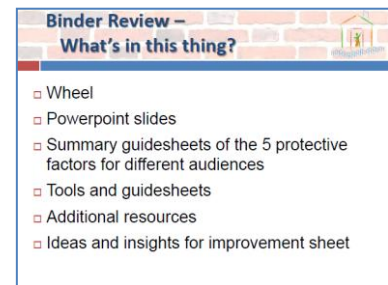
Slides 14-15

Binder Review

Presenter – Take a moment to talk about binder organization and contents, including wheels, Ideas and Insights for Improvement form (one for them and one for parents they may teach), PowerPoint slides, summaries of protective factors, tools, and other resources.

[Click to advance to next slide]

Invite participants to take out one copy of the “ideas and insights” form and throughout the discussion, jot down ideas and notes. It may be helpful to review these at the very end of the training.



6 Why Do Protective Factors Matter?

3 minutes

Slide 16

What Are Protective Factors?

I mentioned earlier that we would be focusing on the five protective factors today. So what are protective factors? Protective factors are attributes of families that serve as buffers, or literally “protectors”, that help them to succeed and thrive, even in the face of risks and challenges. Thinking in terms of protective factors presents a challenge. For many people, focusing on the negative comes naturally. When considering protective factors, instead of focusing on everything that is wrong, we have to think instead about helping things go RIGHT.



Numerous studies support the notion that protective factors serve to reduce the likelihood of abuse and neglect; they create healthy environments that promote optimal development of children. Parents who might otherwise be at risk of abusing their children are able to find resources, supports, or coping strategies to help them parent effectively despite risks.

I like to think of protective factors as things that can literally protect me. Most of us drove here today. What are some things you did that made it *more likely* that you would arrive here safely? (e.g. speed limit, seat belt, enough gas, tires inflated, hands at “10” and “2” positions, no texting). These things make it less likely you will have an accident. But it *doesn't* mean an accident won't happen. Similarly, when family protective factors are in place, it reduces the likelihood of abuse and neglect, but it doesn't mean abuse or neglect *won't* happen.

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Slide 17 What Are Promotive Factors?

Promotive factors are intentional activities that promote and actively improve well-being. Examples might include exercise, healthy diet or things like playing with children, reading to them, or helping them manage their feelings.

Protective factors *and* promotive factors both increase the probability of positive, resilient, and healthy child outcomes, even in the face of risk and adversity.



7 The 5 Protective Factors

2 minutes

Slide 18 The 5 Protective Factors

Strong families share some common characteristics that promote optimal child development and positive outcomes, as well as factors that protect against risk factors when families are going through struggles. A large body of research points to 5 protective factors that families have in common – factors that promote optimal development and protect against risk factors.



These five protective factors are important not only for families who may be in some way “at risk,” but they are important for the healthy development of *all* families.

The 5 Protective Factors are:

1. Concrete Support in Times of Need
2. Parental Resilience
3. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
4. Social and Emotional Competence of Children
5. Social Connections

We have created a “Parent Wheel” that summarizes the 5 protective factors and gives parental tips for each factor. We changed the title of each protective factor to make them easier to understand:

- Reach Out When You Need Help [Concrete Support in Times of Need]
- Do Your Best in Times of Stress [Parental Resilience]
- Learn More About Children and Parenting [Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development]
- Listen to Kids and Help them Put Emotions into Words [Children’s Social and Emotional Competence]
- Make Time to Unwind with Social Connections [Social Connections]
- The final slot we inserted “Helpful Parenting Resources” including books and websites we recommend.

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9 Concrete Support in Times of Need

25 minutes

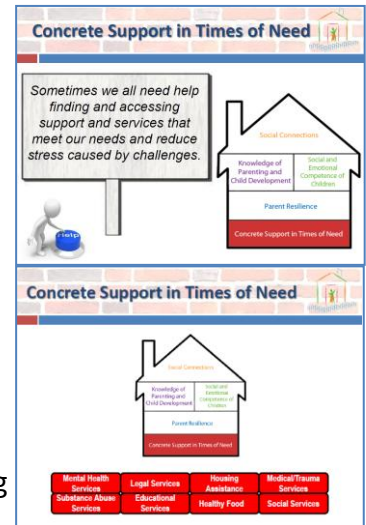
Slides 19-20 Concrete Support in Times of Need

Sometimes we all need help locating and accessing support and services that address our needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges.

Let's start with the first factor in our house. Everyone needs a safe, stable home that is built on a strong foundation that can provide protection from the ground up.

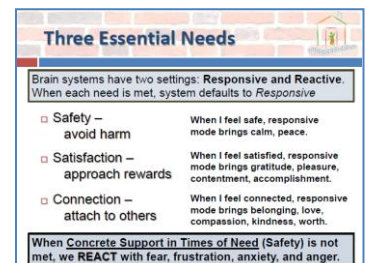
At the base of any sizeable structure, you need concrete footings. Footings are generally wider than the foundation and assure that the foundation (and the whole structure) will not settle and crack. The integrity of the structure depends on the strength and the sturdiness of those footings.

We begin with Concrete Support in Times of Need because meeting basic needs is essential for families to thrive. Without strong concrete footings, the structure may be built on a weak foundation.



Slide 21 Three Essential Needs

Research shows that humans need three essential things. The first is the need to feel safe, so we avoid harmful things. The second is the need to feel satisfied; we all like to do things that feel good and make us happy. And third, we all have a deep need for connection, or a longing for belonging. We can see how all three of these interact with a simple example. Let's say you are on your way to eat lunch with some friends. On the drive to the restaurant you are hopefully focusing on your driving and getting there safely. You sit down and eat a great lunch, which is satisfying, and you enjoy the company of your friends, which meets the need for connection. All of us are constantly striving to meet these needs, even when we aren't really thinking about it.



Inside of our brains we have two basic settings: a responsive mode and a reactive mode. When our essential needs are met, most of us default to being responsive. For example, when I feel safe, I am more likely to feel calm and peaceful. When I feel satisfied, I feel more grateful and happy with life. And when I feel connected, I am more likely to respond to other positively, feel compassion for others, and be kind.

But what happens when our basic need for safety is not met, and we lose our job, or have an accident, or don't have transportation? Our brain often switches to Reactive mode and it makes it much more difficult to connect with others or enjoy life, and we may turn to other things to temporarily meet our need for satisfaction and connection such as drugs, alcohol or risky sex. The point is that concrete support really is foundational in meeting our needs for safety.

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Slide 22 Locating Concrete Support

Discussion Questions: [Allow time for a few responses]

[Click to advance slide and bring up each question]

- *When a family's basic needs (housing, food, clothing, and transportation) are not met, how is family interaction affected?*
- *How are basic needs related to strong footings in a building or house?*



It is tough to manage personal challenges if basic needs are not met. Studies show that in chaotic environments parents are often more likely to parent harshly, which makes the environment even more stressful for children. Families whose basic needs are met have more time and energy to focus on children's safety and well-being.

[Example: Dr. Ben Carson was raised by his single African American mother who could not read. When she learned of her son's declining grades, she required him to read two books a week, though she could not even read the words off a cereal box. With the expectations his mother instilled in him, Carson went from being a failing student to a pioneering neurosurgeon, best known for separating conjoined cranial twins at Johns Hopkins for the first time in medical history (as reported on the Huffington Post, April 2, 2013)]

Discussion Questions: [Allow time for a few responses]

[Click to advance slide and bring up each question]

- *Where do you go or what types of services do you seek when you are experiencing a problem or crisis?*
- *Are families aware of these types of services?*

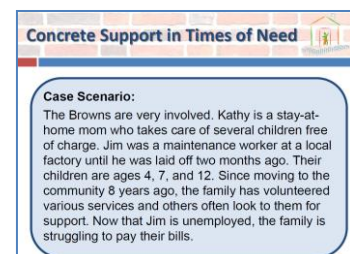
It is critical for families to receive the support they need when they need it. In times of need or crisis, parents' ability to focus on parenting and providing necessary care for their children is directly related to targeted services they receive.

Not knowing where to turn during a crisis or where to look for help can be extraordinarily stressful for families – and can cause significant trauma for children. The stress may limit parents' ability to be persistent in seeking the help they need.

NOTES:

Slide 23 Concrete Support in Times of Need

Read the slide or have a volunteer read the slide, then advance the slide for questions and discussion.



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Slide 24 How Would You Help This Family?

Discussion Questions: [Allow time for a few responses]

[Click to advance slide and bring up each question]

- How do you think this family will feel asking others for help?
- What could you do or say – either as a friend or as an agency representative – to help this family?
- What are some specific resources you would recommend?

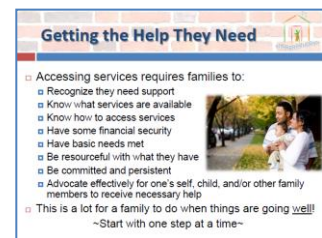


Examples: The family might feel a little embarrassed, irritated, or have a weakened sense of pride now that they find themselves in need of support. They might need help destigmatizing the need to ask others for help. It's possible, though, that they would feel relief and be grateful to be told that it is okay to ask for help from others sometimes and offer suggestions.

Slide 25 Getting the Help They Need

Accessing services to minimize stress requires families to:

- Recognize they need support,
- Know what services are available and how to access them,
- Have some financial security; basic needs being met,
- Be resourceful with what they have,
- Be committed and persistent, and
- Advocate effectively for one's self, child, and/or other family member to receive necessary help.

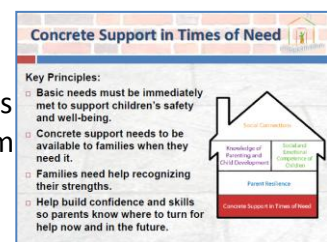


[Click to advance slide and bring up next statement]

This is a lot for a family to do when things are going *well*! Obviously it is a lot to expect when a family is struggling. Give encouragement; talk about approaching needs one step at a time.

Slide 26 Concrete Support in Times of Need

This protective factor is simply about reaching out in times of need. Sometimes we all need help locating and accessing support and services to help minimize stress caused by challenges. Helping families identify and access support needs to be done in a way that helps them build confidence and skills to get what they need. Families need to know how to ask for help, they need to know and understand their rights, and many need help navigating complex service systems.



The key principles of our discussion are:

- Basic needs need to be met to support children's safety and well-being.
- Concrete support needs to be available to families when they need it.
- Families need help recognizing their strengths.
- Help build confidence and skills so parents know where to turn for help in the future.

**** Presenter: Review Binder Resources for Concrete Support in Times of Need**

Before we move to the next factor, let's spend some time reviewing some of the tools in your binder that may be helpful in your work with families.

[Allow participants a few minutes to browse the resources]

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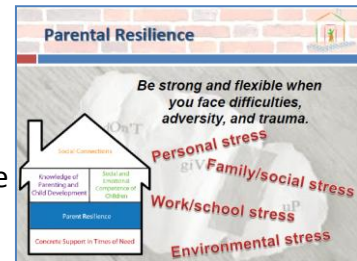
10 Parental Resilience

45 minutes

Slide 27 Parental Resilience

Be strong and flexible when encountering difficulties, adversity, and trauma.

I suggested that Concrete Support acts as the footings for the structure. Parental Resilience represents the foundation. The entire structure needs solid footings, but it also requires a strong foundation that represents the state of mind, courage, and quality of character of parents. Parenting scholars often speak of the importance of parents caring for themselves, meaning that a parent must be healthy and functional in order to be a good parent.

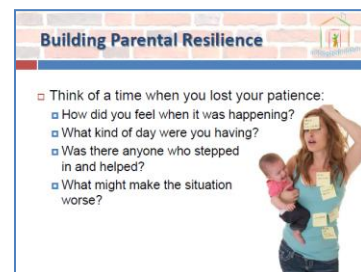


Parenting is a rewarding experience and children bring great joy, laughter, and life, but childrearing also brings many challenges. Parents are responsible for raising children to be happy, healthy, productive, and contributing members of society. Parents must possess or learn the skills necessary to simultaneously be a teacher, taxi driver, police officer, banker, chef, doctor, clown, receptionist, referee, cleaning service, nutritionist, toy maker, counselor, coach, and so on day after day. In other words, parenting is stressful! And one of the worst effects of stress can be a feeling of helplessness when we feel there is nothing we can do to fix things.

Slide 28 Building Parental Resilience

Take a moment to think of a specific situation – either in your personal or professional life – when you felt like you were completely losing your patience with a child.

- How did you feel when it was happening?
- What kind of day were you having?
- How supported or how stressed were you feeling?
- What did you learn as a result of this situation?
- Was there anyone there that stepped in and helped?



At one time or another, all parents experience shopping with a young child who throws a tantrum in the middle of the store. As parents grow increasingly frustrated, the child's tantrum gets worse. We've all been there. Sometimes we all have moments when our responses to children are not as positive as we would like them to be.

Discussion Question: [Allow time for a few responses]

- *What might be some factors that make the situation worse?*
- *Is anyone familiar with the acronym "HALT"?*

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Slide 29

H.A.L.T.

HALT stands for Hungry, Angry, Lonely, and Tired. How well do we interact with others when we are hungry, angry, lonely, or tired? How nice are we? For parents and children alike, if we are in a good mood, we communicate better and we are more sensitive to others than when we are feeling hungry, angry, lonely, or tired (HALT). After a long day of shopping, most of us feel tired, and we might be hungry as well as angry if we didn't buy everything we needed or wanted. Children feel the same way!



Oftentimes, the way we *respond* tends to be more important than the stressor itself in determining outcomes. For example, do you let it overwhelm you? Throw in the towel? Or do you face it head-on? A couple's chronic stress (i.e., conflict, finances, children, etc.) creates an emotional response that becomes a habit in the relationship and can adversely impact the health of each partner and the relationship. Elevated stress levels are known factors for increased hypertension, heart disease, and depression, and may also lead to sleep problems. Further, when individuals focus on feelings of anger or resentment, they experience a decrease in immune functioning (McCraty, Atkinson, & Tomasino, 2001).

During arguments or stressful situations, our bodies release certain stress hormones that cause us to either "flight" (e.g., walk away to avoid conflict) or "fight" (e.g., engage in unhealthy, possibly emotionally or physically abusive way).

[Presenter – Use Glitter Bottle to demonstrate stress response]

- 1) *Hold up glitter bottle without shaking it* – The bottle represents our brain and bodies when we are calm. During these times, we can listen and perceive and process information more clearly.
- 2) *Begin to swirl the glitter bottle* – But as we start to become frustrated our brains release stress hormones and they start to flood our bodies. As you can see, it is much more difficult to see through the bottle now. Similarly, stress hormones can hinder our ability to think clearly and process information before we speak, which puts us at risk of saying or doing things we might regret.
- 3) *Set the bottle down to allow glitter to settle* – After an argument is over, as we begin to calm down we are gradually able to see more clearly again.

NOTES:

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Slide 30 Why Some Adapt to Stressors Better than Others

In the book, *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*, a highly acclaimed guide to stress (for humans), Dr. Robert Sapolsky speaks about the latest discoveries in the field of stress physiology. From this research we learn that chronic stress has become one of the leading proximal causes of death, leading to strokes and heart attacks as well as decreased immunity to insomnia, anxiety, depression, addiction, obesity, heart disease, and serious memory loss.



But there's good news too. He has discovered the ways certain people adapted to the pressure and live well. According to Sapolsky, these people tend to have the following in common:

1. An outlet for frustration
2. A sense of predictability
3. A feeling of control
4. An optimistic outlook
5. Social support

No one can eliminate parents' stress, but how parents *cope* with stress can be managed. Parents who are resilient are better able to cope with stress and difficulties. They are able to identify and access outside supports, build trusting relationships, maintain a positive attitude, are less likely to take out frustration and anger at their children, and seek help when needed.

Slide 31 How Do You Best Manage Stress?

Managing stress helps us feel better, which helps us act better, which helps others treat us better, which makes us feel better!

**** Note to facilitator:** Refer to Principles of Parenting guidesheet, "Taking Care of the Parent: Replacing Stress with Peace."

Have participants review the guidesheet for a few minutes, especially the suggestions for dealing with stress. ******

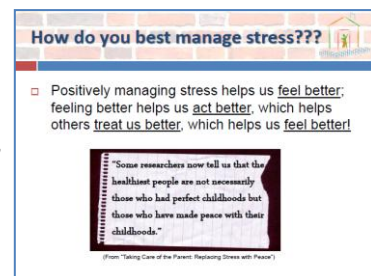
Say: I especially like #12 (from the guidesheet):

[Advance slide to bring up quote]

"Some researchers now tell us that the healthiest people are not necessarily those who had perfect childhoods but those who have made peace with their childhoods."

Discussion Question: [Allow time for a few responses]

- What do you think about that quote?



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Slide 32 Your Reality is Your Choice

Did you know that our brains are bombarded with 11 million pieces of information every second, but can only process 40 bits per second? The rest of the information is either processed by our unconscious brain or eliminated as “spam”. So our brains have to actively decide what to toss out and what to listen to and absorb. We can choose either to hear negative, flawed, or irrelevant information or absorb information that will help us accomplish our goals. But because the amount we focus on is limited, there is a trade-off; the more negative information we take in, the less positive signal we can hear, and vice versa.

Your Reality is Your Choice

- The human brain receives 11 million pieces of information every second from our environment, but can only process 40 bits per second.

The Tradeoff:
I think about negatives, and the less positives I see... **OR** ...

Change my mindset and choose to think about more positives around me!

- We have to choose what we focus on and what to dismiss or ignore (but our brains are wired to focus on threats!)
- Your reality is a **choice** – what you choose to focus on shapes how you perceive and interpret your world.

This is important because the better your brain is at using its energy to focus on the positives, the greater your chances at happiness in relationships, including parent-child relationships! But it takes a change in mindset.

Slide 33 Rethinking STRESS

Most of us are well aware of the fact that stress can be harmful for our bodies. But thinking only about the negative effects of stress can be STRESSFUL! And makes things worse.

Rethinking STRESS

BREAKING NEWS

70-90% OF DOCTOR VISITS ARE DUE TO STRESS-RELATED ISSUES

STRESS IS DESTRUCTIVE

STRESS AFFECTS THE

STRESS IS LINKED TO THE 6 LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH

DAILY NEWS DISASTER STRIKES!!

Slide 34 Rethinking and Reframing STRESS

Research also shows that stress CAN have positive effects on the brain and the body – if it is managed correctly. For example, it can create:

- Greater mental toughness,
- Deeper relationships,
- Increased awareness,
- New perspectives,
- A better appreciation of life,
- Heightened sense of meaning, and
- Strengthened priorities

Rethinking & Reframing STRESS

- Research **also** shows stress **CAN** be helpful – if managed correctly
- Stress **CAN** create
 - Greater mental toughness
 - Deeper relationships
 - Increased awareness
 - New perspectives
 - A better appreciation of life
 - Heightened sense of meaning
 - Strengthened priorities

STRESS IS ENHANCING

Strong Parents, Stable Children

Slide 35 Rethinking and Reframing STRESS

When viewed as a threat – your brain will be continually looking for escape routes and you will miss seeing those signs and seizing those resources that could help you succeed.

Think about the meaning behind the stress. After all, you wouldn't be stressed about something if it didn't mean something to you. You may be stressed about your children because you love them and you want them to behave and grow up to be kind, loving, successful people. If I tell you that a child flunked their spelling test, you probably won't be stressed. If I told you your child flunked the spelling test, now it has more meaning and you may experience more stress.

Stress can be hurtful or helpful, but often it depends on our perspective.

Rethinking & Reframing STRESS

- The lesson? Stop dwelling on it and sharing it – it leads to more stress, anxiety, & depression!
- When stress happens:
 - View it as a *challenge*, instead of a threat.
 - Recognize it can improve your productivity and performance as a person *and* as a parent.
 - Think about the *meaning* behind the stress.
 - Replace stress with strengths!

Stress is inevitable, its negative effects are not!

Slide 36 Why we React to Stress the Way We Do

Just as rain creates pathways on a new fresh pile of dirt, as it trickles down to the ground, babies are born with approximately 86 billion neurons (brain cells) that make connections in response to their environment. Warm responses from parents (touch, soothing, soft tones, reading) create connections that are positive, which helps the baby feel secure and connected to caregivers. However, when babies are exposed to yelling, harsh tones, shaking, and other factors, it creates fear, anxiety, and detachment. As children grow up they are wired to REACT instead of RESPOND to stressors.

Why we react (instead of respond) to stress the way we do

Born with 80-100 billion brain cells called neurons!



What happens when it rains on a fresh pile of dirt?



Slide 37 Police Car Drawing

Explain instructions on slide and provide paper.

After 30 seconds, share picture with others in group and facilitator observes some of the drawings.

After the next 30 seconds of quickly drawing more details, ask to see more drawings of cars. Notice any words, symbols, and other details and point them out. Point out the fact that no two pictures are alike, they are all unique, yet for all their individuality, they likely have one thing in common: All of them are likely drawn from the side view rather than from above or the front or back.

WHY? We all have seen a police car from the front or back, and maybe pictures from above (some of you have seen them from the inside!). So why did none of you think of drawing the police car from a different angle? When we try to solve a problem when we are stressed, we often see things from only one narrow perspective. When we take a step back and try to see things from multiple perspectives, and even ask others about their perspectives, then we may be better able to manage stress and think of multiple ways to tackle challenges.

Police Car Drawing

On a sheet of paper, you will take 30 seconds and draw a picture of a police car.



Strong Parents, Stable Children

Slide 38 Training Your Brain to see Multiple Perspectives

Training your brain to attach more positives to each situation as a parent or caregiver will improve your brain's flexibility and significantly increase your ability to find and pursue the best action and response to stressful personal and parenting situations.

Negative Phrases (examples) +1

"Ugh, a lot of work" "Messy" "Pain in the butt" "Not fun"

Positive Phrases (examples) +3

"Chance to feel productive" "Opportunity to win points with spouse" "Way of showing love"
"Warm water feels good" "Chance to do something mindless for a moment" "Make the kitchen look great"

(After 30 seconds, stop) Tally up your points. How did you do? How many points? Read off some descriptors for the group out loud.

You might be wondering why you count the negative descriptors. After all, if we are looking to change our perspective and manage stress, isn't it counterproductive to include them? Wouldn't it make sense that including the negative words would make it easier for our brain to construct a reality around the negatives? Research shows that while listing too many negatives is detrimental, including some can actually be helpful. *IT DEPENDS ON THE RATIO!*

Our brains are wired to naturally seek and find negatives. We as human beings are already good at that. Our primitive brains (amygdala) had to respond to threats faster than to emotions like happiness or gratitude. Retraining our brains to find the positive descriptors is where the work begins. Scientists have found that a 3:1 ratio is best for our relationships because negatives far "outweigh" the positives.

Slide 39 Child's Mess

Let's try it again. Same rules, different picture. (Time the group for 30 seconds) How many did you come up with this time?

Say: Seeing things from another's perspective requires a separate part of the brain – empathy, compassion, creates understanding, seeing things from another's shoes. It's important to point out that there really is a mess here – seeing things from different perspectives doesn't mean there are not consequences or change the fact there is a disaster.

So it's not that we don't see the negative stressful reality here, but it's that we also see we have the ability to DO something about it – choose how we act instead of react.

From a child's perspective, what were they thinking? (fun, great time)



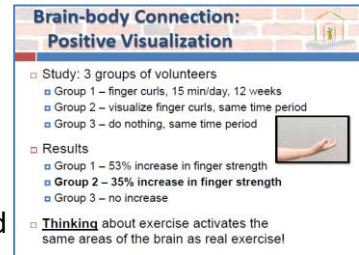
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Slide 40 Brain-body Connection: Positive Visualization

Here's an example of a study showing the power of the mind and positive visualization.


Cleveland Clinic Foundation funded the study:

"One group of healthy volunteers spent fifteen minutes a day practicing "finger abductions" which are basically like a biceps curl but with one finger. A second group of healthy volunteers was asked to practice visualizing doing finger abductions for that same time period, and the rest did nothing. After twelve weeks, the people who worked out their fingers every day showed, on average, a 53 percent increase in finger strength. The control group, unsurprisingly, showed no change. But the fascinating thing was that the people in group 2, who literally did not move a finger (except in their brains), showed a 35 percent increase in strength. Incredibly, mentally practicing an action increased physical strength."



Brain-body Connection: Positive Visualization

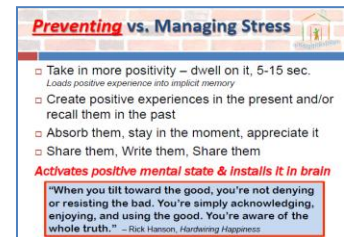
- Study: 3 groups of volunteers
 - Group 1 – finger curls, 15 min/day, 12 weeks
 - Group 2 – visualize finger curls, same time period
 - Group 3 – do nothing, same time period
- Results
 - Group 1 – 53% increase in finger strength
 - Group 2 – 35% increase in finger strength
 - Group 3 – no increase
- Thinking about exercise activates the same areas of the brain as real exercise!



IF TIME – similar study at Ohio University – wrapped a single wrist of two sets of study participants in a cast – immobilizing their muscles for 4 weeks. One group was instructed to sit still and intensely imagine exercising (devote all of their mental energy towards imagining flexing their arm muscles) for 11 minutes, five days a week. The other group was given no instruction. After 4 weeks, the mental exercisers were two times stronger than the other group. The researchers found that their mental exercises created stronger neuromuscular pathways. <http://www.breitbart.com/news/mind-over-matter-the-brain-alone-can-tone-muscle/>

Slide 41 Preventing vs. Managing Stress

We have talked about ways to *Manage* stress and we have discussed how powerful our brains can be and the influence they can have on our bodies and behavior. But the study of stress has shifted some in recent years. It still remains a fact that we will all experience stress, research now shows that we can actually perceive potential stressors as *less* stressful when our brains are positive! This is, in a way, preventing stress, or put another way, responding to stress rather than reacting to stress. We can train our brains to view things that may be stressful as less stressful over time. We can train our brains to take in the good and scan our environment for positives.



Preventing vs. Managing Stress

- Take in more positivity – dwell on it, 5-15 sec.
Loads positive experience into implicit memory
- Create positive experiences in the present and/or recall them in the past
- Absorb them, stay in the moment, appreciate it
- Share them, Write them, Share them

Activates positive mental state & installs it in brain

"When you tilt toward the good, you're not denying or resisting the bad. You're simply acknowledging, enjoying, and using the good. You're aware of the whole truth." – Rick Hanson, *Hardwiring Happiness*

Research shows that when we choose to take in more positivity, dwell on it, enjoy it for 5-15 seconds, it begins to rewire the brain and we remember it longer. If we do this ONE time, it makes it more likely that you will see positives in the future. We can also do this by purposefully creating positive experiences. Parents can do this all the time with their children. They can get on the floor and play and laugh with them. Then, in the moment, while parents are enjoying themselves, taking just a few seconds to dwell on how much fun this is, appreciate it, and absorb it, it will help keep the positive memories in our brains longer. When we do this over time, and share the good times with others, or write them down, we cement them in our brains longer. This all means that when we are feeling positive and focus on positivity, we can't, at the same time feel negativity. As a result, we begin to perceive things as less stressful and we begin to see other perspectives.

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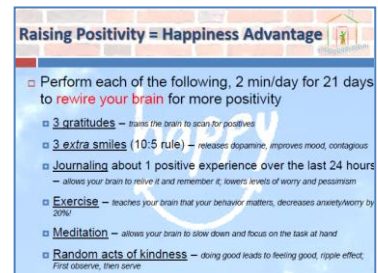
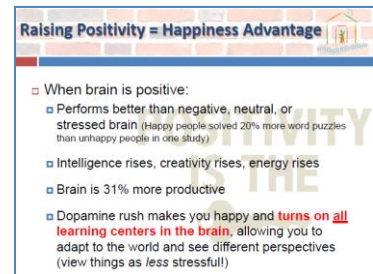
Slides 42-43 Raising Positivity = Happiness Advantage

When our brain is positive, it:

- Performs better than if it was negative, neutral, or stressed,
- Intelligence, creativity, and energy all rise,
- The brain is 31% more productive, and
- The dopamine rush makes a person happy and turns on all learning centers of the brain, which allows us to adapt to our environments and see different perspectives.

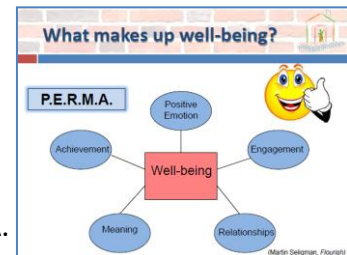
Sometimes we fall into the trap of thinking “if my kids would just listen I would be happy” or “when they can do things for themselves I will be happy”. However, this thinking is backwards! When we are happy, we tend to be better parents. To help rewire your brains for more positivity, try each of these activities 2 minutes a day for 21 days.

- 3 gratitudes. (Email someone a sincere thanks each day).
- Give 3 *extra* smiles.
- Journal about 1 positive experience in the past 24 hours.
- Exercise or meditate.
- Perform random acts of kindness.



Slide 44 What Makes Up Well-being?

Dr. Martin Seligman, one of the leading pioneers in the world of positive psychology has studied well-being for more than two decades. He has found that our well-being, or how we are doing, is heavily influenced by five factors that make up the acronym PERMA.



Positive Emotion – Can stem from the small and simple things in life such as enjoying a bowl of your favorite ice cream, enjoying a comedy on television, camping in the outdoors, spending time with family and friends, or exercising. Doing fun and enjoyable things is important in life and it makes us feel better inside.

Engagement – Seligman refers to this as “Flow”. This occurs when we lose track of time as we do something we love, such as getting a back rub, playing piano, reading a book, or using our talents.

Relationships – positive relationships are at the core of well-being. Seligman has said “Other people are the best antidote to the downs in life and the single most reliable up”.

Meaning – belonging to or participating in a higher cause; serving something you believe is larger than yourself. For some this is tied to spirituality or religion. For others it is a political cause, a charity, or raising a family.

Accomplishment/Achievement – striving to better ourselves in some way by working hard at a skill, achieving a goal or winning a competition or game. Setting our sights on something and dedicating time and attention to accomplishing something is good for us.

Becoming aware of PERMA helps us better understand that instead of focusing on happiness alone, we can have a rich meaningful life by balancing what we do and pursue in life.

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Slide 45 Tying it All Together

What have we learned? What are you committed to do? How does it all relate to parenting and stress? Visualization does NOT take the place of action. Visualization is not the MEANS to your goals; it is the accelerant that gets us on the right trajectory toward reaching our goals of better parenting and managing stress.

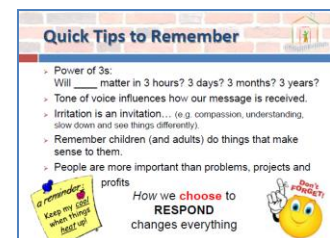
When we are better able to focus more of our brain and resources on success rather than failure, we are more likely to act in helpful ways rather than *react* in unhelpful ways. Imagine a better outcome and plan ways to make it happen.



Slide 46 Quick Tips to Remember

As we wrap up this section, here are a few tips that may be helpful:

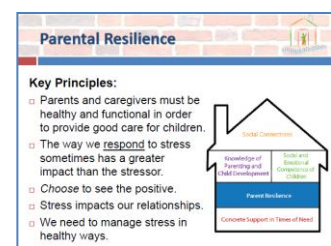
- Power of 3's: Sometimes we get bogged down in the moment, get stressed, and think an issue at hand is worse than it is. It may help to ask yourself whether it will matter over time.
- Tone: When we use a sarcastic, humiliating, or degrading tone of voice with children, remember they have already shut down, they have stopped listening. When you come from a place of anger, children will hear that. If you come from a place of love and openness, they will hear that. When we use a soft tone of voice, we are modeling for them. It's showing them a great way to speak to people, to peers, to teachers, and to others in their lives.
- We may need to pause and remember that irritations are an invitation to see things differently.
- We all do things for reasons that make sense to us. Try to see things from a child's eyes.
- Above all, remember that people are more important than problems.



Slide 47 Parental Resilience

The protective factor, Parental Resilience, emphasizes the importance of focusing on strengths and being flexible when we experience difficulties, adversity, and trauma. The key principles of this discussion are:

- Parents must be healthy and functional in order to provide good care for their children.
- The way we respond to stress sometimes has a greater impact than the stressor.
- Choose to see the positive.
- Stress impacts our relationships.
- We need to manage stress in healthy ways.



** Presenter: Review Binder Resources for Parental Resilience

Before we move to the next factor, let's spend some time reviewing some of the tools in your binder that may be helpful in your work with families.

[Allow participants a few minutes to browse the resources]

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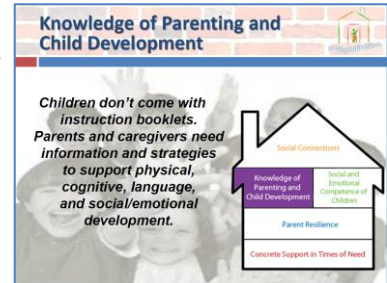
11 Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

45 minutes

Slide 48 Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

The next part of our housing structure that helps keep things stable and safe is knowledge of parenting and child development.

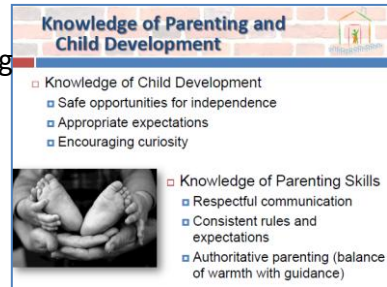
Children don't come with instruction booklets – parents need information and strategies to support physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional development.



Slide 49 Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

It is said that parenting is part natural and part learned. It also involves a lot of trial and error. A good understanding of parenting and child development can help change parents' attitudes and behaviors, promote protective factors, and lead to positive outcomes for parents and children.

We will split these up a bit and first discuss child development.

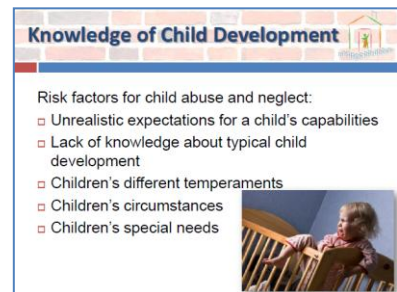


Slide 50 Knowledge of Child Development

Several risk factors for child abuse and neglect are related to a lack of knowledge related to children. These include the following:

- Unrealistic expectations for a child's capabilities

Sometimes parents expect children to behave like little adults, but young children lack the cognitive and emotional skills necessary to know right from wrong. If parents do not know when most children reach certain milestones, they might develop inappropriate expectations about children's abilities and behaviors, which leads to frustration. This lack of knowledge could put children at higher risk for child abuse and neglect. In contrast, parents who have a better understanding of children's abilities at different ages can better understand and care for their children, and they will be more patient and nurturing.



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- Lack of knowledge about normal child development

Information about child development needs to be accurate and timely – it needs to correspond with children’s ages and abilities. Infants are at high risk of abuse because they cannot say what they are feeling. Crying is their way of asking for help. They may be hungry, tired, sick, too hot or too cold, bored, lonely, in pain, or need a diaper change. Paying attention to babies’ cues can help. Parents need to get to know their babies well and take time to notice things that make the baby cry less or more.

- Children’s different temperaments

Children’s temperaments explain a lot about how they react to their environment. For example, some children are more open to new people and situations, but others are slower to warm up. Some prefer to be very active and involved with things going on around them, but others like to watch before engaging. Some cope with change well, while others struggle to adjust. Parents have different opinions about challenging behaviors – some are more patient and tolerant of certain behaviors that others view as oppositional and defiant. Regardless of children’s temperaments, parents need to show love and understanding so children feel accepted and free to become comfortable in a way that matches their temperament. Doing so will improve children’s outcomes.

- Children’s circumstances

Parents also need to consider children’s circumstances – what is happening that might lead a child to act out? Sometimes children get in trouble because they are bored and need help finding something interesting to do; other times they are upset and need help calming down. In these instances, it is helpful for parents to take a moment to talk with children to learn what is going on. This can help alleviate both the child’s and the parent’s frustration

- Recognizing and attending to the special needs of children

Some children have special needs, which can be very stressful for parents. Having a better understanding of a child’s special needs and taking a break occasionally both are important for parents to learn.

So what can you do to help parents in these areas of child development? We have included several tools and guidesheets in your binder related to child development. One in particular that we would like to look over now is called “See the World Through My Eyes” [located inside the front binder cover].

[Allow participants a few minutes to browse through the guide or get into small groups to discuss the resource and what they find useful]

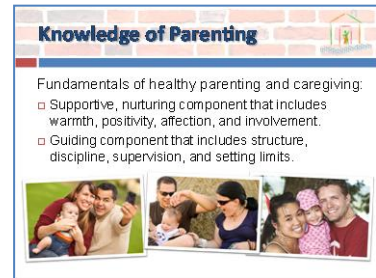
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Slide 51 Knowledge of Parenting

Let's turn now to the other part of this protective factor – knowledge of parenting. Parenting scholars have conducted several decades of research on parenting to identify some “best practices” when it comes to parenting, or certain things parents say and do that result in better outcomes for children. Most scholars agree that the following are fundamental to healthy parenting:

- 1) a supportive, nurturing component that includes warmth, positivity, affection, and involvement, and
- 2) a guiding component that includes structure, discipline, supervision, and setting limits.



In other words, some have said that a parent's job is to help their children get what they want, in a way that parents feel good about. Or put another way, respecting children's preferences while still setting limits.

Let's take a moment to think about how people learn to parent.

Discussion Questions: [Allow time for a few responses]

- *How did you learn how to parent?*

There are numerous books, web sites, parenting classes, television shows, fact sheets, and magazines with all kinds of advice about parenting. But, a lot of our knowledge of parenting comes from the way we were raised. This might be beneficial for parents who were raised in positive, nurturing homes, but those who lacked good role models might not parent very well. Thus parents who experienced harsh discipline during childhood may need to learn different techniques and alternative ways to respond to their children so they don't fall back on the way they were parented. They need to learn how to use firm but gentle discipline without yelling, arguing, or using physical punishment.

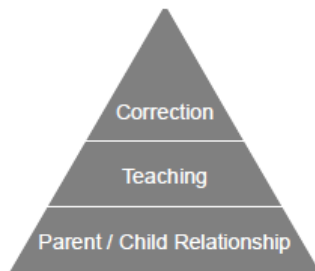
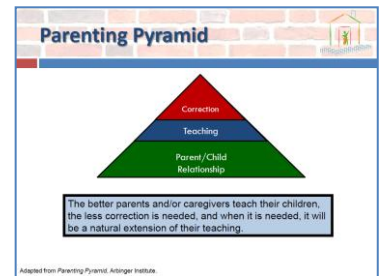
All parents *can* learn new and effective ways to support their children's development, but not every parent is ready or willing to learn new strategies. Parents must *choose* to participate and make a commitment to learn new skills. It may help to point out some specific ways that being involved is beneficial for their children's development.

NOTES:

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Slide 52 Parenting Pyramid

Many parents get caught in the trap of spending too much threatening and disciplining their children and correcting them when things go wrong. They spend money and time learning from books about ways to punish their children or learning about natural and logical consequences for misbehavior. While disciplining and correcting children is an important part of parenting, the parenting pyramid, developed by the Arbinger Institute (see www.Arbinger.com) is a model that focuses primarily on helping things go *right*, rather than spending most of the time figuring out what to do when children misbehave.



[Advance to next level of pyramid] This next level shows that the effectiveness of parents' correction of children, no matter what method is used, will always depend on the effectiveness of the prior *teaching* of them. This is because the better parents teach their children, the less correction is needed, and when it is needed, it will be a natural extension of their teaching. Rather than seeing children as ungrateful, disobedient burdens who require correction, parents can view them instead as children who have not learned yet. In other words, the pyramid suggests that parents should spend more time teaching than correcting.

[Example: We want to teach our children that rules are important. One rule might be no hitting. Young children have a tough time controlling their feelings. When they don't get what they want and get upset, they may hit. Parents can help by talking quietly and holding or rocking a child until they calm down. They can remind them that hitting hurts others and then teach better ways to act when frustrated.]

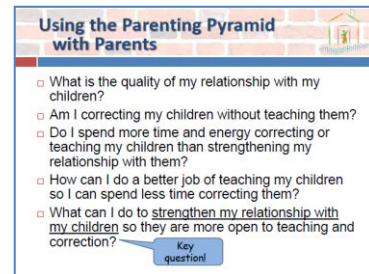
However, no matter how much time a parent spends teaching, the fact is that children are less likely to learn from parents that they do not like [advance to next level of pyramid]. The third layer of the pyramid suggests that parents should spend more time developing a strong and loving relationship with their children, if their teaching and disciplining is not working. In summary, the effectiveness of parents' correction will depend on the quality of their teaching, and the quality of their teaching will depend on the quality of their relationship with their child(ren).

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Slide 53 Using the Parenting Pyramid with Parents

As you think about parenting your own kids or as you work with parents, it may be helpful to review the principles of the parenting pyramid and think about the following questions:

- Am I correcting my children without teaching them?
- What is the quality of my relationship with my children?
- Do I spend more time and energy disciplining or teaching my children than strengthening my relationship with them?
- How can I do a better job of teaching my child so I can spend less time correcting them?
- What can I do to strengthen my relationship with my child so they are more open to teaching and correction?

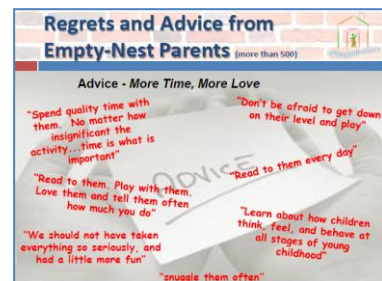
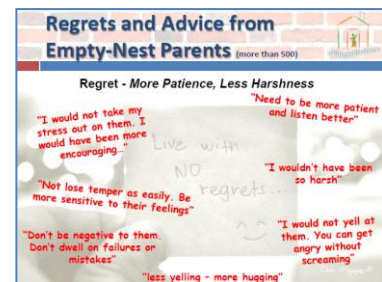


Slides 54-55 Regrets and Advice from Empty-nest Parents

In one study of empty-nest parents, they were asked to give advice to parents who still have children at home. They were also asked about what advice they would give parents, now that they have raised children and no longer have them in their home.

[Review some of the comments from parents and emphasize that many parents regret being so harsh and wished they had been more patient]

When it comes to advice, what sticks out to you? What might we learn from parents who have “been in our shoes?”



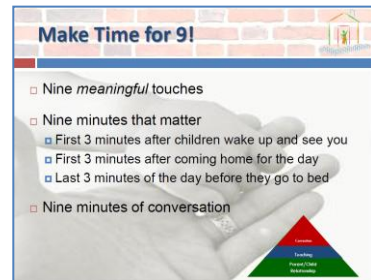
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Slide 56

Make Time for Nine

As we wrap up our discussion of the importance of knowledge of parenting and child development, I want to introduce you to the concept of “Make Time for Nine.” This concept aims at strengthening the bottom level of the pyramid between parents and children – or helping things go right. These are simple things you can share with parents that can make a world of difference. Let’s take a look at each of these 9’s.



- First, research shows that children need 8-12 meaningful (safe) touches every day to feel connected to a parent. These can be as simple as straightening a child’s shirt collar, a hug, or even playful wrestling with a child. If a child is going through a tough time, they could use even more meaningful touches. We are wired to connect with each other and meaningful touch helps with attachment, trust, healing, and health. *[Example: preterm newborns who received just three 15-minute sessions of touch therapy each day for 5-10 days gained 47 percent more weight than premature infants who only received standard medical treatment]*
- 9 minutes that matter – the first 3 minutes after children wake up; the first 3 minutes after coming home from school, child care, etc.; the last 3 minutes of the day – before they go to bed (reading, song, snuggle, words, calm). If parents work during these times, make the first and last minutes with the child count. Make those moments special and help children feel loved. These moments can be easily rushed by parents who are busy, running late, tired, or distracted. Children of all ages need parents to slow down, look them in the eyes, and talk with them or ask questions. But they are important moments for children and they often reach out for connection during these 9 minutes.
- 9 minutes of conversation – depending on age, children need at least 9 total minutes of “face time” with a parent (eye-to-eye). It may be 9 minutes straight, or a minute here and there. Infants especially need to look into their parents’ eyes and connect so attachments can be strengthened. It is important for parents to understand that even babies need to be talked to – it doesn’t matter what we say. Teenagers also need a good 9 minutes of interaction with a parent, to keep the lines of communication open.

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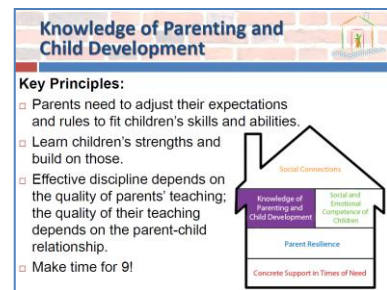
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*[Example of first 3 minutes waking up and falling asleep:]
A friend who listened to Chris Gardner's story ("Pursuit of Happyness," Will Smith and son Jaden) shared this with me. His son, Chris Jr. was only 2 years old when his father was homeless and he was asked what he remembers (born in 1981) and he says he doesn't remember much but the one thing he recalls is that his dad's face was the last thing he saw before he went to bed, and the first thing he saw when he woke up.]*

Slide 57 Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

The protective factor, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, emphasizes the importance of learning as much as we can about children's typical development and parenting strategies that work in different situations. No parent has all the answers. We need to seek out information, resources, and support in order to raise our children well. Key principles that apply to this are:

- Understand that many factors influence children's skills and abilities as they grow. Parents need to adjust their expectations and rules accordingly.
- Learn children's strengths and build on those
- Effective discipline depends on the quality of parents' teaching, and the quality of their teaching depends on the quality of the parent-child relationship.
- Make time for 9!



**** Presenter: Review Binder Resources for Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development**

Before we move to the next factor, let's spend some time reviewing some of the tools in your binder that may be helpful in your work with families.

[Allow participants a few minutes to browse the resources]

Strong Parents, Stable Children

Optional Activities

Facilitator: Following are a few scenarios you can use as discussion starters with parents, or come up with some of your own.

Imagine the following scenario:

Katie and her 2-year-old daughter are visiting a friend who does not have any children. When they first arrived, her daughter enjoyed looking through magazines, but soon she noticed a breakable candy dish on the table. She took the lid off, Katie put it back on, she took it off again, and Katie replaced it again. They repeated this until Katie finally yelled, "If you don't leave it alone, you'll be in time out when we get home!" Her daughter started screaming and threw herself onto the floor, then started grabbing the candy dish again. Katie slapped her hand and yelled, "I told you to leave it alone. Why can't you ever listen?"

Discussion Questions: [Allow time for a few responses]

- *What are some things Katie could have done differently?*

Examples:

Prevent: Ask the friend to put the candy dish out of reach before the child even notices it.

Distract: Look for different magazines or some unbreakable object; give pen and paper, etc.

Logical consequences: A time out when they get home is not logical – the child won't remember why she was in trouble.

OR

Find a sample picture of home that shows many good things but also some things that could be better to improve child safety. Talk about what's positive and negative in the photograph.

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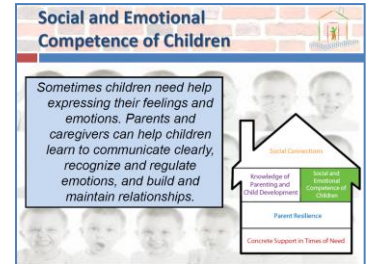
12 Social and Emotional Competence of Children

45 minutes

Slide 58 Social and Emotional Competence of Children

The next portion of the house that is critical for parents and children is social and emotional competence of children.

Sometimes children need help expressing their feelings and emotions. Parents can help children learn to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate emotions, and build and maintain relationships.



Slide 59 Social and Emotional Competence of Children

There are many things parents can do that help their children socially and emotionally.

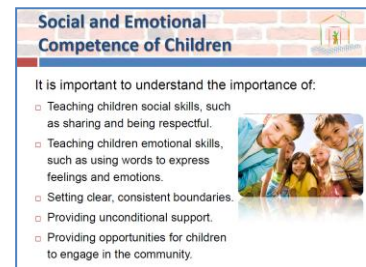
First, parents serve as primary models for their children. When children have a warm, trusting relationship with kind and loving parents they feel safe, and they develop a positive bond, which leads to being more willing to talk with their parents about their thoughts, feelings, worries, and pressures. Sometimes the best parental teaching is done by listening. When parents invest time with their children and truly listen, children feel important and loved. Additionally, parents can observe and learn about their child's strengths and weaknesses in order to better guide them.

If you think back to the parenting pyramid, much of what we are talking about here is aimed at building the parent-child relationship.

Social-emotional development begins at birth. Parents' responsiveness and interaction are key to helping children develop social and emotional competence. When parents understand and respond to children's needs, it helps shape their social-emotional development. Some characteristics of children who have positive social-emotional development include being able to make friends, expressing their emotions, in healthy ways, working through conflicts peacefully, being patient, and showing empathy when someone is hurt.

Discussion Questions: [Allow time for a few responses]

- *How do you know your child feels loved?*
- *How do you know your child feels a sense of belonging?*



NOTES:

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Slide 60 Parenting and Emotions

Some research shows there are different ways parents respond to their children's emotions. Many parents frequently use this approach with their kids, not realizing that there is a better way to manage emotions. Emotion dismissing parents are usually not cruel or mean-spirited people. They are often loving, warm and concerned, but are uncomfortable with intense emotions. They prefer the neutral state and like others to be calm and reasonable. They dislike anger, rage, sadness, despair, fear, or anxiety. They are also uncomfortable with intense positive emotions like affection, pride, excitement, and joy.

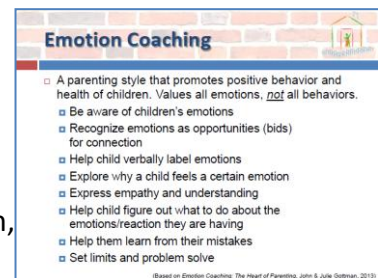


Emotion disapproving parents may feel that when their child shows emotions, it is a sign of weakness.

Slide 61 Emotion Coaching

Emotion coaching is a parenting style that promotes positive behavior and children's health. It values all emotions, not all behaviors. It is not a skill that can be developed over night. It's a process that develops over time with child. It includes:

- Being aware of children's emotions,
- Recognizing emotions as opportunities (or bids) for connection,
- Helping children verbally label their emotions,
- Exploring why children feel a certain emotion,
- Expressing empathy and understanding,
- Helping children figure out how to handle their emotions/reactions, and
- Setting limits and problem solving.



Slide 62 Emotional Mirror

Another way of promoting the social and emotional competence of children is by responding appropriately to their emotions, *especially their strong emotions*.

Principle – children need an environment where they feel safe expressing their emotions. They become more resilient and are better able to soothe themselves.



Research shows that when children (and adults) are experiencing a strong emotion (fear, anger, sadness, stress, etc.) it is very difficult to learn anything or listen to anyone. Have you seen this in children's meltdowns? In the heat of the moment many parents are worked up as well and they try to work things out with a child who is an emotional mess. During these times it might be best to first deal with the emotion and show compassion by holding up an "emotional mirror". This means we simply reflect what we see in children's tone and body language. Rather

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than ignore, minimize or deny negative emotions, it is more important for parents to allow their children to express them and then to affirm those feelings. “You look angry”, “You are disappointed”, and “That is a pretty strong word” are just three ways to affirm a child’s emotion. When a child is emotional, it is an ideal time for bonding. Labeling an emotion is also powerful way for young children to better understand what they are feeling, and learn to control their emotions as they get older.

After the affirmation, parents should explore the feelings and help children manage them. Parents may say something like “Can you tell me more about that?” or “There might be another way of looking at this. Should we think about it together?” If a child is upset or experiencing a strong emotion, it may be best to simply soothe and hold the child until they are ready to talk.

[Presenter: Share a personal experience.

Example – A parent picked up their angry and frustrated daughter from dance. She climbed in the back seat and slammed the door. She then said, “I hate dance, Dad, I don’t like my teacher or the girls in there and I’m never going back. I quit!”

How might some parents respond? (allow time for responses)

The way a parent responds to this can invite a child to express her emotions further, or close things off. A parent might say, “Wow, honey, it sounds like you had a really rough day at dance. What happened?”

The child proceeded to tell the parent how some girls were laughing at her and when she went to say something to the girls, her teacher got mad at her. The parent’s soft response let the daughter know she was cared for and the parent was not going to preach and criticize.]

Principle Feelings must be dealt with before behavior can be improved. Preaching and criticizing create distance and resentment. Parents should respond to children’s feelings, not their behavior. A child’s feelings should be taken seriously, even though the situation may not be serious. When children feel understood, their frustration and hurt diminish.

[If needed/time: Example: When conversations with children get heated, children often give parents “hooks”. Hooks are anything a child says or does that immediately causes our heart rates to jump! It can be a facial expression such as rolling the eyes, a sarcastic remark, a complaint, or anything else they have said or done that makes your blood boil. As children get older they get better at giving parents “hooks”. However, it is best to not take the hook and give the child time to “cool down” in their room alone. Later, when you and your child are calm, a helpful discussion can take place.]

NOTES:

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Slide 63 Messages of Love

Every child (and adult) needs to be reminded often that people and love and value him or her. Often we get busy and forget to send messages of love to our children. Or we send messages poorly, or we send only angry messages.

At other times we may send a love message but our child doesn't get it. They may not understand that specific language (message) of love. There are at least three "languages" of love:

- Show Me
- Tell Me
- Touch Me

A "show me" child may want a parent to do things for him/her, such as buy her a gift, read with him, take her out for an ice cream, wrestle on the floor, or fix his bike (e.g. time and gifts)

A "tell me" child wants to hear words like "I love you" or "I love to be with you."

A "touch me" child may want a parent to hug them, hold their hand, snuggle, or rock them.



Sometimes parents send a message of love but it doesn't get through because the child doesn't want to hear "I love you" but wants you to fix their bike or play ball. One way parents can effectively send a message of love is to notice what the child asks for. Does he/she want time, attention, a listening ear, a ball, markers and paper to create things, or lunch in the park?

Another way is to notice how the child sends messages of love to you and others. Does she tell you, hug you, write you notes, clean up the house? Observing these can help parents know how to be effective at sending love messages to a specific child. Parents may even think about coming up with code words or special handshakes to demonstrate love, that make the child feel special.

***Refer to the guidesheet in your binders called "Sending Messages of Love" to learn more. It can be copied and shared.*

To develop good social and emotional skills, children also need caregivers who are sensitive, affectionate, observant, emotionally available, and able to consistently respond to children's needs. Such care gives rise to the development of a secure attachment between the child and the adult. Young children with secure attachments develop a sense of trust, feel safe, gain self-confidence and are able to explore their environments because they feel they have a secure base.

NOTES:

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Slide 64 Bids for Connection

The way parents respond to older children is also important to children's social and emotional development. Children of all ages reach out for attention and affection to build positive bonds. This is often referred to as making bids.

Researcher and author John Gottman describes bids as attempts to create a connection between two people. Their purpose is to keep the relationship moving forward in a positive direction.

We all make bids – to our partners, colleagues, and others.

Children constantly make bids for connection to their parents and caregivers – for attention, affection, reassurance, and help. How parents and caregivers respond to these bids has a big influence on children. It affects their sense of self, feelings about their parents, and whether or not they will continue making bids in the future.

Sometimes misbehavior is a bid for connection, especially if other bids have gone unnoticed or were not successful. Children love when parents watch them perform, try something new, and provide encouragement. Responding positively when children bid for attention or affection provides children assurance that parents care for them. Think back to our discussion about “Make Time for 9,” children make numerous bids for connection, and many of them occur during these segments of 9 minutes.

There are three ways to respond to a person's bid for connection:

- Turning away
- Turning against
- Turning toward

Example: (Share the following, or think of your own example) When a young child first jumped off the diving board with a lifejacket, he really wanted his dad to watch. He called out to his dad over and over. He wanted to connect. After he jumped in and came up out of the water where did he immediately look? What was the parent's reaction? If you were that child, how would you want your parent to react?


The father went crazy cheering for him! What would have happened if he was on his phone when he came up out of the water? Or not looking? Or said something mean, like “It's about time you jump in, you little baby!”

Questions: Why do children do that constantly?

Can you think of examples from your own children or with parents you have worked with?

Why is it important to “turn toward” bids for connection?

How can you help other parents “turn toward” bids?

Bids for Connection

- Three ways to respond to bids for connection:
 - Turning away
 - Turning against
 - Turning toward
- Why do children make so many bids?
- Can you think of examples?
- Why is it important to “turn toward” bids for connection?
- What might turning toward children's bids for connection teach them in their own relationships?

NOTES:

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This principle applies to children (and adults) of all ages; babies crying, children wanting to hold a parent's hand, a teenager showing off their new shoes, etc. When parents respond positively and consistently, children are more likely to respond positively to parents, siblings, friends, and others when they have seen it modeled. And when children have strong secure attachments with parents they have better outcomes when they experience stress and trauma. Those with insecure attachments are more likely to have long-term adverse outcomes, including cognitive problems, behavioral problems, psychopathology, and relationship challenges.

Slide 65 Granting in Fantasy What Can't be Granted in Reality

There is one final principle to discuss, related to social and emotional competence – granting in fantasy what you cannot grant in reality. This is related to holding up an emotional mirror. Sometimes children want things that parents simply cannot give them—whether it is a blanket we forgot to bring in the car, or to stay up all night watching movies. In these moments parents may feel stuck.



When a child keeps whining that they want their blanket, but it was accidentally left home, a parent may try to reason or be rational with a child, and say something over and over such as, “I don’t have your blanket! Stop asking for it! I can’t get it for you!” Instead, a parent might try “granting in fantasy what they can’t grant in reality” by saying something like, “You really love your blanket. You miss it and you are very sad. You would love to snuggle with it right now. If I could race back to our house in a rocket, I would grab your blanket and zoom back.”

It doesn’t bring the blanket back, but it shows the child you hear and understand them and see why they are so upset. Sometimes the gift of understanding is one of the most precious gifts we can give a child. A parent may not be able to get what their child wants, but they can offer the next best thing—a parent’s comfort and compassion.

Once a child realizes that getting something is not possible, they are not interested in parents’ excuses, arguments or diversions. But a parent’s validation can help them feel understood.

Each of these principles help children develop trust, attachment, and self-regulating behaviors and help them interact positively with others, and communicate their emotions effectively.

Application for Professionals Who Work with Parents

We have discussed several principles related to the social and emotional competence of children. But let’s pause for a moment to think about what you might do to help parents show more compassion, understanding, and turn toward their children’s bids for connection.

NOTES:

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One of the most influential things you can do when you interact with a parent is to MODEL the principles we just discussed. When parents see you turning toward their bid for connection, or when you hold up the emotional mirror to them, then they will be much more likely to show understanding and love to their children.

When parents experience it, they are better able to understand it and implement it.

Slide 66 How do Positive Responses to Children Build Emotional and Social Competence?

Early experiences (both positive and negative) can have a decisive impact on early brain development. Poverty influences these early experiences.

A lack of resources can also affect the stress levels experienced by parents and other caregivers. However, many children are resilient. Many factors appear to affect children's capacity to thrive in circumstances where others do not, but strong, secure relationships with consistent caregivers appear to be the most important. Research suggests that these secure, warm relationships have a protective effect, helping to buffer children from later stress. By the same token, children who are deprived of such relationships early in life are especially vulnerable to stress as they move through childhood, and may experience developmental delays.



Scientists have long believed that reading with children creates a context in which learning can occur. Today, however, they have evidence that reading is one of the experiences that actually influences the way young brains develop--that is, the way the brain's circuitry is "wired."¹ But how does this work? At birth children have most of the brain cells, or neurons, they will need for a lifetime of learning, but these brain cells are not yet linked with the complex networks that are needed for mature thought processes to take place. In the early years, young children's brain cells form connection--synapses--very rapidly.

What causes brain cells to form connections? Genes control some of the process, but experience is also a crucial ingredient. Every time a caregiver or volunteer interacts with an infant or toddler, connections are formed. Positive interactions with nurturing caregivers--like the attention children receive when they are read to--profoundly stimulate young brains. This stimulation causes new connections to form neural pathways (we might think of as "learning pathways") and strengthens existing ones.

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Slide 67 Children with Special Needs

One final thought about these principles. Parenting is more difficult when children have delays in social and emotional development. These children may be at greater risk of maltreatment because of the added stress that often arises.

Discussion Questions: [Allow time for a few responses]

- *If you have a child with special needs, what do you need from others to support his/her social/emotional development?*
- *If you work with families who have children with special needs, how do you support their needs?*

Example: Listen to parents' worries and concerns, learn how the parent-child relationship is affected, and focus on the positive (hold up the emotional mirror)

Discussion Questions: [Allow time for a few responses]

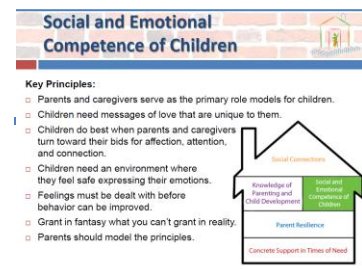
- *Can you think of some ways you could integrate this in your interactions with parents?*
- Example: One way to integrate this into your interactions with parents is to model and demonstrate each type of response and talk about how it feels to have someone turn toward, away, or against us when we say something.



Slide 68 Social and Emotional Competence of Children

The protective factor, Social and Emotional Competence of Children, helps us think about ways we can encourage children to put their emotions into words. Key principles include:

- Parents serve as the primary role models for children
- Children need messages of love that are unique for them
- Children do best when parents turn toward their bids for affection, attention, and connection
- Children need an environment where they feel safe expressing their emotions
- Feelings must be dealt with (emotional mirror before behavior can be improved)
- Grant in fantasy what you can't grant in reality
- Model the principles for parents



**** Presenter: Review Binder Resources for Social and Emotional Competence of Children**

Before we move to the next factor, let's spend some time reviewing some of the tools in your binder that may be helpful in your interactions with families.

[Allow participants a few minutes to browse the resources]

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13 Social Connections

25 minutes

Slide 69 Social Connections

The same way that several trusses of a roof work together to provide support for the roof and shingles. Social connections provide support when we need someone to lean on.

Build and maintain positive relationships that can provide emotional, instrumental, informational, spiritual, and other helpful support.



Slide 70 What is the #1 Predictor of How Long and how Well You Will Live?

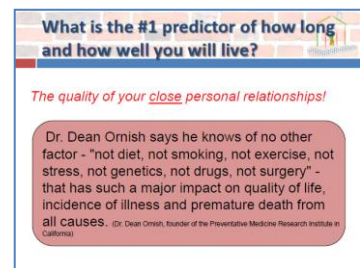
“Loneliness raises blood pressure to the point where the risk of heart attack and stroke is doubled.”

Sociologist James House – U. of Michigan – emotional isolation is a more dangerous health risk than smoking or high blood pressure. Stress in our relationships affects immune system, digestive system, metabolism and our ability to heal – researchers used vacuum pumps to produce small blisters on the hands of women volunteers, and then had them fight with their husbands. The nastier the fight, the longer it took for the women’s skin to heal.

Marital distress is related to anxiety and depression. In fact it raises the risk for depression 10 fold!

But there is positive news, too. Hundreds of studies show that positive loving connections with others protect us from stress and help us cope better with life’s challenges and traumas. Simply holding the hand of a loving partner can affect us. Shock experiment – holding hands those with spouses with strong emotional connections – reported less pain with the shocks compared to people holding the hand of a stranger and even cohabitation! It acted as a buffer against shock, stress, and pain.

When love doesn’t work, we hurt. We say “hurt feelings” and this is true. Brain imaging studies show that rejection and exclusion trigger the same circuits in the same part of the brain as physical pain! In fact, this part of the brain turns on anytime we are emotionally separated from those who are close to us. (oxytocin, vasopressin – cuddle hormones – calm happy chemicals like dopamine, turn off stress hormones like cortisol)



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Slides 71-72 Benefits of Social Connections

Research shows a strong correlation between social support and happiness. This correlation is even higher than the connection between smoking and cancer. Social support also affects our health, and high levels of social support are as predictive of living a long time as regular exercise. Oxytocin is released, which reduces anxiety and depression, which improves our heart and immune systems. Research also shows those who receive emotional support during the first 6 months after suffering a heart attack are 3 times more likely to survive.

[Advance to next slide]

Children's safety depends on strong families, and strong families depend on good connections with other families, local organizations, and community institutions. Parents who are isolated and have few connections are at greater risk of abusing and neglecting their children than those who have a network of family, close friends, neighbors, and others.

When parents have good social connections, their children are also more likely to have access to caring adults in their family and community. Children also learn about building and maintaining friendships by watching their parents and caregivers interact with others. As children grow older, their friendships and peer networks will serve as another important social connection.

Benefits of Social Connections
(one of our 3 basic needs)

- Strong connection between perceived social support and happiness (.70 correlation)
- Social support affects health – high levels are as predictive of living a long time as regular exercise (low levels are as damaging as high blood pressure)
- Oxytocin is released, reducing anxiety, depression, improving heart & immune systems
- People receiving emotional support during 6 months after heart attack were 3x more likely to survive



Benefits of Social Connections

- When parents have good connections, children have access to more caring adults.
- Children learn about building and maintaining friendships by watching how adults interact.
- Children's safety depends on *strong families*; *strong families* depend on *strong connections*.



Slide 73 Quality Connections vs. Quantity Connections

- How many “friends” do you have on Facebook or other forms of social media?
- How much support do you feel from them?
- Research shows it is not how *many* people an individual knows, but the quality of the relationships people have and the support they feel.

Quality Connections vs. Quantity Connections

- How many “friends” do you have on Facebook or other forms of social media?
- How much support do you feel from them? 😊
- Research shows it is not how *many* people an individual knows, but the quality of the relationships people have and the support they feel.



Strong Parents, Stable Children

Slide 74 Social Support – Reaching Out

Most of the research focuses on the importance of *receiving* social support. But more recent research shows the importance of *giving* social support as well.

Social Support – Reaching Out

- Most research focuses on what people *receive*.
- Benefits of providing social support to others:
 - Giving* feels better, does more for you, and has more benefits in the long run than *getting* support.
 - A “good life” focuses on what we *receive*. A “meaningful life” focuses on what we *give*.

“Even people who think they don’t want a lot of social contact still benefit from it. And it’s not just that we ‘all need somebody to lean on’; recent work on giving support shows that caring for others is more beneficial than is receiving help”

Slide 75 Ways to Build Connections

Volunteering is a great way to meet people and create social connections. Martin Seligman, a prominent positive psychologist, identified service (i.e., dedicating part of our lives to improving the world around us) as one key kind of happiness. Giving back and serving in their communities helps people feel better about themselves. Service opportunities often include other people, so it also helps us build social connections. Another helpful way people can volunteer is to offer transportation to church, community centers, or other resources if friends or neighbors lack transportation.

Ways to Build Connections

- Giving back by volunteering and serving in one’s community helps people feel better about themselves *and* they can connect with others.
- What are some other ways families can build connections in your community?



In addition to volunteering, there are many other ways to help people build social connections. Think about the other types of social opportunities that exist in your community – faith-based groups, classes to learn new skills, places that offer babysitting to give parents an evening out, etc. In recent years, a growing number of “mommy blogs” and Internet sites have also helped encourage social connections.

It is important to remember the principle of “bids for connection” as a parent or in relation to your work with parents. How might that apply with regard to Social Connections? As parents we can make bids for connections with others, including other parents, and organizations. If you work with parents it is important to be aware of their bids for connecting with you. Often these may be subtle. When parents reach out, we can all turn toward, rather than away or against.

NOTES:

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Slide 76 Helping Families Build Connections

Some families need more help getting connected in the community than others. In particular, families that recently moved to a new community, recently divorced parents, and first-time parents all may need help building and expanding their social networks. Some may need help developing confidence and social skills that will help them meet others and build relationships.



Often, many of us serve as social connections for each other. If you work with other parents, you can talk with them about their strengths, challenges, and goals; their background; and, their family.

(For those who work with families) Ask: What does your agency/organization already do to help families build social connections?

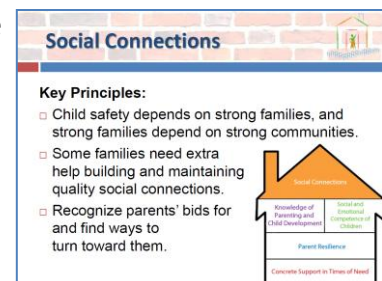
Sometimes parents have a hard time finding and keeping social connections for several reasons. The following questions may be helpful as a way to think about possible social connections.

- Who can you call for advice or just to talk?
- How often do you see them?
- Do you have family members, friends, or relatives nearby who can help you out once in a while?
- Do you belong to a church, temple, mosque, or other faith-based group?
- Do you have a child in a local preschool, school, or Head Start program?

Slide 77 Social Connections

The protective factor, Social Connections, emphasizes that people need people. Parents need others they can turn to when they need advice, support, and guidance.

- Child safety depends on strong families, and strong families depend on strong communities.
- Some families need extra help building and maintaining social connections.
- Recognize parents' bids for connecting with you and others and find ways to turn toward them.



Strong Parents, Stable Children

**** Presenter: Review Binder Resources for Social Connections**

Before we conclude, let's spend some time reviewing some of the tools in your binder that may be helpful in your interactions with families.

[Allow participants a few minutes to browse the resources]

Slide 78 Summary – Five Protective Factors

Let's take a moment to review the five protective factors:

Concrete Support in Times of Need – A family's basic needs must be met for them to thrive. They need access to a variety of services and supports during crises.

Parental Resilience – This is about bouncing back from challenges and being able to manage stress and problems in healthy ways. This includes being willing to reach for help when it is needed.

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development – Parents and caregivers need accurate, timely information about child development. They need to understand the importance of having appropriate expectations for children's behavior. Parent-child relationships are built through nurturing and guiding.

Social and Emotional Competence of Children – Parents and caregivers can help children by effectively communicating and reflecting feelings. Children sometimes need help interacting positively with others. Parents and caregivers need to notice and turn towards bids for connection.

Social Connections – Finally, social networks provide emotional support, they help with problem solving, and they offer opportunities for families to give back.



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15 Other Resources and Conclusion

10 minutes

Slide 79 Ideas and Insights for Improvement

We have covered a lot of information today. I am curious how you plan to apply what you have learned – in your personal lives or in your work.

What have you learned today?

What have you committed to do with the information and resources you have learned about today?

[Allow time for a few responses]



Slides 80-81 Resources

What principles and tools have stood out today? What are you most likely to use or start doing?

No single factor is responsible for child abuse and neglect, thus no one resource, public agency, or organization can safeguard children. It must be a group effort.

