

Making a Connection!

1



Positive Solutions for Families



Learner Objectives

- Discuss the purpose of the group and the importance of social emotional development for young children.
- Meet each other and learn about our families.
- Discuss goals and ground rules we might have for our group.
- Identify the importance of building positive relationships with children.
- Discuss the “power” of using positive comments and encouragement with children.

Suggested Agenda

1. Introductions and Parent Goals
2. Ground Rules
3. Relationships and Quality Time
4. Positive Comments and Encouragement as a Parenting Tool
5. *Things to Try at Home* Activities

Materials Needed

PowerPoint or Overheads
Solution for Families Workbook
Chart Paper, Markers, Tape
Role Play Cards

Handouts

Positive Solutions for Families Workbook Activities #1-3
Role Play Cards

I. Introduction and Logistics (20 minutes)



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

Begin the session by greeting and welcoming families to the first in a series of 6 sessions of Positive Solutions for Families.

My name is _____.
(tell a little about yourself)

We are very glad that you are here! We will be working together and getting to know each other over the next 6 weeks. During this time we are going to talk about ideas for helping our children:

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

As you can see, we have a lot to accomplish in 6 weeks!

Show Slide 2 to give parents an idea of the main topics for the next 6 weeks. The *Positive Solutions for Families* series consists of 6 sessions. See the Facilitator’s Guide for information describing the main focus for each session.



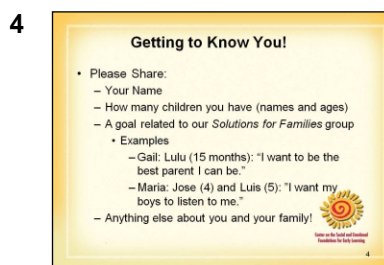
1. Making a Connection!
2. Making It Happen!
3. Why Do Children Do What They Do?
4. Teach Me What to Do!
5. Facing the Challenge: Part 1
6. Facing the Challenge: Part 2

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



Show Slide 4: **Getting to Know You!**

It is now your turn to introduce yourselves and get to know each other. Let’s go around and have each person share a) their name, b) how many children they have (names and





ages), c) a goal they have related to the *Positive Solutions for Families* group, and d) anything else they would like to share about their families!


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

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

5

Ground Rules
(Examples)

- Start on time
- Put cell phones on vibrate
- Create a safe place to share thoughts, ideas, and experiences
- Make sure everybody has a chance to share
- Don't judge each other



Show **Slide 5: Example of Ground Rules.**

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



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

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


Often when young children exhibit challenging behavior, we become so frantic for a solution to the behavior, a way to make the behavior stop, that we forget to just have fun with our child. But have no fear! We are going to begin by talking about how to nurture your relationship with your child, and in some of the other group sessions, we will talk about strategies that can help your child learn new ways to interact and behave. So, let's get started!

Think about the things you do to help your children feel loved, special, and safe. What kinds of things do you do to help your children feel confident and competent? One of the most important things we can do is really work on developing a great relationship with our child! Now let's talk about why this is so important!

6

Relationship Activity
Workbook Activity #1

- Think of someone who was really special to you when you were growing up.
- What made you think of this person?
- What did they do that made them important or special to you?




(Activity #1)

Show **Slide 6: Relationship Activity**

Look at **Activity #1, Relationship Activity in your Positive Solutions for Families Workbook**. Think about someone who was really important to you when you were growing up. Examples might include your mom, dad, grandma, teacher, or maybe even a coach! Write this person's name in your workbook. What made you think of this person? What did this person "do" that made you feel special? Examples might include always took the time to listen to me, always loved me regardless of what I had done, always made me feel like I was really important and special, etc. Write your answers in your workbook.

7

"Every child needs one person who is crazy about him."
Urie Bronfenbrenner



Show **Slide 7: Every child needs someone who is crazy about him/her**. This is such an important quote for us to remember! It is important for every child to have someone who is crazy about him/her! We want to be the person in our child's life who makes him/her feel loved and special. The person that he/she can always count on, just like the special person in our life that we just talked about.

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

8

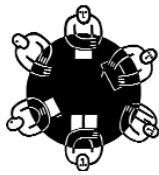
Quality Time With Your Children

- Benefits?
- Barriers?



Show **Slide 8: Quality Time with Your Children**

Let's start with the benefits of spending quality time with your children. Why do you think this is important? How would your child benefit? How would you benefit?



Large Group Activity

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

Benefits might include:

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

Barriers might include:

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

If you look at our lists, do you think the benefits seem to outweigh the barriers? Why? It looks like the benefits to our children are things that would help build positive relationships, support their social and emotional development, and help them feel loved, competent, and confident! Now that we have seen how the benefits outweigh the barriers, let's talk about "how" we can build positive relationships with our children.

9



Show **Slide 9: Building Positive Relationships with Children**

One way to think about your relationship with your child is as a "tank" that needs to be filled and refilled on a regular basis. We can all relate to filling up our car's gas tank! We always need to refill the tank! It is the same way with our children—their "tanks" always need refilling! One can consider times when we are negative, harsh, or critical, or when we nag our children as draining the "gas" from their tanks. Think about

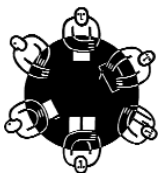
times when someone was harsh or negative to you. How did it make you feel?

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

Ask parents to brainstorm ways they can “fill/refill” their children’s relationship “tanks”. (You could draw a “gas tank” on the **chart paper** and “fill” it with their ideas.)

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

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



Large Group Brainstorm

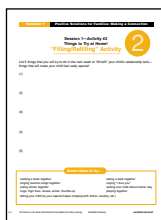


10

Filling/Refilling Activity
Workbook Activity #2

List 5 things that you will try to do in the next week to “fill/refill” your child’s relationship tank. Things that will make your child feel really special! Things that will help build a positive relationship with your child.

Also a *Things to Try at Home* Activity



(Activity #2)

Show **Slide 10: “Filling/Refilling” Activity.**

Now that we have generated a lot of ideas for filling/refilling your children’s relationship tanks, let’s look at **Activity #2** in your workbooks. At each of our *Positive Solutions for Families* sessions, you will be given some “Things to Try at Home” activities. These will be fun activities that you can do with your child to build on the things we talk about in our group. The first activity focuses on trying **five** ideas to “fill/refill” your child’s relationship tank during the next week. Try to think of things that will make your child feel really special! Let’s take a few minutes now and write down some ideas in your workbook. What do you think you might try? As you try these ideas over

the next week, write some notes about how your child reacted and how it made you feel. We will discuss what happened at the beginning of our next session.

Building on the “filling/refilling” tank idea, I would like to share a powerful tool that you can use to support your child’s competence and confidence, as well as change his/her behavior. That tool is using *positive comments and encouragement!* You can do this by catching your child doing the behaviors that you would like to see and encouraging him/her to continue those behaviors!

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

When you encourage your child, it has to be more than just saying “I like that” or “good job.” Remember to tell your child specifically what you like or what he/she did a good job with. Here are some tips for delivering positive and encouraging comments to your child (“filling/refilling their tanks”):

11

Tips for Encouraging Your Child
Powerful Parenting Practice!

- **Tip 1** Get your child’s attention.
- **Tip 2** Use behavior specific language.
- **Tip 3** Keep it simple—avoid combining encouragement with criticism.
- **Tip 4** Encourage with enthusiasm.
- **Tip 5** Double the impact with physical warmth.
- **Tip 6** Use positive comments and encouragement with your child in front of others.

Show **Slide 11: Tips for Encouraging Your Child—Powerful Parenting Practices!**

Tip 1. Get your child’s attention.

Tip 2. Be specific.

Tip 3. Keep it simple—avoid combining encouragement with criticism.

Tip 4. Encourage with enthusiasm!

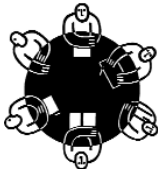
Tip 5. Double the impact with physical warmth.

Tip 6. Encourage your child in front of others.

To illustrate these powerful parenting tips, let’s look at some situations when parents use positive comments and encouragement and see what we think. (**Note to facilitator:** You can present and discuss the examples or use the **role play cards** included with the materials for Session 1 and have parents role play the situations and then discuss.)



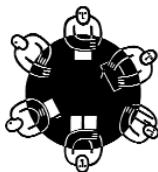
Role Play



Large Group discussion



Role Play



Large Group discussion

Example #1

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

Mom: Does not look at her daughter and says, “I like how you are playing quietly.”

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

Discussion Questions (Wait for responses):

How does the mother encourage her daughter? Is this a behavior that you would encourage? Does her daughter seem to notice? Why or why not? What would make this encouragement more effective? Allow time for discussion.

Let’s look back to the list of tips and discuss **Tip 1: Get your child’s attention.** It is important to encourage children when we have their attention. Otherwise, they may not hear our encouraging statement and the result can be ineffective. This does not mean that the child needs to stop what she is doing and give the adult her full attention, but simply that we know she can hear us. Eye contact is a good indicator of attention.

Example #2

Scene: Grandma is watching TV, and her grandson and granddaughter are playing together nicely.

Grandma: Stops watching TV and looks at the children and says, “Good job.”

Boy and Girl: Look confused and continue playing.

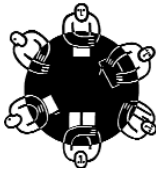
Discussion Questions:

How does grandmother encourage her grandchildren? What behavior is she encouraging? How do we know? Do you think the children know what behavior she is encouraging? What could she do differently to be more effective? Allow time for discussion.

Now let’s look at **Tip 2: Be specific.** Sometimes we give vague encouragement such as “good boy, good job, nice work.” This is not very effective at increasing a specific behavior that we would like to see more of because the child is unsure what we are encouraging. Behavior-specific or



Role Play



Large Group discussion



Role Play

labeled encouragement is more effective because it communicates to the child the behavior you like. So, instead of saying “good boy” or “good girl,” try saying, “Wow! What a fantastic job you did cleaning up your toys!” “Thank you for listening to Mommy and following directions!” or as in the example above, “Wow, you two are having so much fun playing together!”

Example #3

Scene: Dad and son are doing dishes together.

Dad: Looks at son and says, “Thanks for doing such a good job with the dishes and not rushing through like you usually do.”

Son: Smiles at first, but then looks down.

Discussion Questions:

How does this father encourage his son?

What behavior is he encouraging? How is his statement

encouraging? How do you think the child feels? What could he do differently to be more effective?

Allow time for discussion.

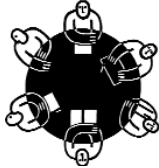
Now let’s look at Tip 3: Keep it simple—avoid combining praise with criticism, and see how it applies. Sometimes we are tempted to provide constructive criticism with our praise, for example, “Thank you for listening to me the first time and not after the tenth time like you usually do.” Or “You did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

Example #4

Scene: Mother and son are playing together with blocks.

Mother: “You are so good at building fences for the cows and horses!”

Son: Smiles and hands mom a horse.



Large Group discussion

Mother (with enthusiasm): “Wow! Thank you for sharing your horse with me. I like playing with you.”

Son: Smiles and makes an animal noise in a quiet voice.

Mother: Thank you for using a quiet voice while your sister takes a nap.” She gives him a hug.

Discussion Questions:

How does this mother encourage her son? How do you think the son feels? What behavior is she encouraging? What would you do to be more effective, if anything? Allow time for discussion.

Look at **Tip 4: Encourage with enthusiasm.**

Encouragement that is delivered with enthusiasm is more meaningful and unforgettable. Our enthusiastic responses communicate to our children that we are very happy with their behavior. Flat encouragement is not as effective!

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



Role Play

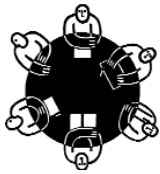
Example #5

Scene: Mom gets home from work and Dad and daughter are setting the table for dinner.

Dad to Mom: “Ally is such a good helper! She set that half of the table all by herself and was playing nicely with Madison so I could finish cooking dinner.”

Ally: Smiles a big smile.

Mom: Gives Ally a hug and says, “I am so proud of you! I bet you are proud of yourself for setting the table and helping Dad.”



Large Group discussion

Discussion Questions:

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

Let's look at Tip 6: Use positive comments with your child in front of others. When children hear you deliver praise in front of other important adults in their lives, it leaves a big impression! This strategy can also allow you and your partner to work together at acknowledging and reinforcing your child's good behavior.

12

Encouragement Log Activity
Workbook Activity #3

- Try to encourage your child at least 5 times this week! See handout in workbook.

Observation	Reflection

(Activity #3)

Show **Slide 12: Encouragement Log Activity**. Ask participants to look at **Activity #3** in their workbooks. Tell them that this is their second thing to try at home (as a reminder, the first thing to try is to “fill/refill” their child’s relationship tank). They should try to find at least **five** times in the next week when they can give their child positive comments and encouragement. We will talk about what happened and how your child reacted when we meet next week. Also watch to see how you think it makes your child feel when you give positive comments and encouragement and how it makes you feel, too. Remember that positive comments and encouragement can be done anywhere—at the grocery store, in the car, or during bath time!

Are there any questions?

13

Ways to Give Children Encouragement (examples)

- “Thank you for _____.”
- “What a good problem solver you are, you were able to _____.”
- “It’s so much fun to play with you; you are so good at _____.” (sharing, taking turns)
- “You were being so kind when you _____.”
- “Thank you for using your inside voice when your sister was sleeping.”


Show **Slide 13: Examples of Encouraging Statements**. Let’s look at some examples of encouraging statements to give you some ideas!

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

14

Ways to Give Children Encouragement (examples)

- "Thank you for _____."
- "What a good problem solver you are, you were able to _____."
- "It's so much fun to play with you; you are so good at _____." (sharing, taking turns)
- "You were being so kind when you _____."
- "Thank you for using your inside voice when your sister was sleeping."



Show **Slide 14**: Things to Try at Home – Reminder
 I hope that this has been a good beginning for you. And I hope that as we work together in the *Positive Solutions for Families* sessions, you will continue to gain useful information, ideas, and practical tools.

Please remember that you will need to bring your workbook and the completed activities to our next session. If you don't like to write, see if you can get a family member or friend to help with your *Things to Try at Home* activities. I look forward to seeing you at our next *Positive Solutions for Families* session!



The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning



Administration for Children & Families



Child Care Bureau



Office of Head Start

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Role Play Cards



Directions:

Print the role play cards before the session begins. Make 1 copy of each role play and cut each page in half so there is a card for each actor.

Give the role play cards to the volunteer “actors.”

Give role play volunteers a few minutes to read over the cards and familiarize themselves with their roles.

Have volunteers “act out” their roles to the group.

Discuss what happened!

**Example #1**

Mom is in the kitchen doing dishes, and her daughter is playing quietly with her doll.

Mom: Pretend that you are washing dishes. Your daughter is in the kitchen playing quietly with a doll. Without looking at your daughter, say, “I like how you are playing quietly.”

Daughter: Pretend that you are in the kitchen with your mom quietly playing with your doll. When your mom says something to you, don’t look up. Continue to play with your doll and pretend that you don’t even hear what she said.

**Example #1**

Mom is in the kitchen doing dishes, and her daughter is playing quietly with her doll.

Mom: Pretend that you are washing dishes. Your daughter is in the kitchen playing quietly with a doll. Without looking at your daughter, say, “I like how you are playing quietly.”

Daughter: Pretend that you are in the kitchen with your mom quietly playing with your doll. When your mom says something to you, don’t look up. Continue to play with your doll and pretend that you don’t even hear what she said.

**Example #2**

Grandma is watching TV, and her grandson and granddaughter are playing nicely together.

Grandma: Stops watching TV and looks at the children and says, “Good job.”

Grandson and Granddaughter: Look confused and continue playing.

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**Example #3**

Dad and son are doing dishes together.

Dad: Looks at son and says, “Thanks for doing such a good job with the dishes and not rushing through like you usually do.”

Son: Smiles at first, but then looks down.

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**Example #4**

Mother and son are playing together with blocks.

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

Son: Smiles and hands mom a horse.

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

Son: Smiles and makes an animal sound in a quiet voice.

Mom: “Thank you for using a quiet voice while your sister takes a nap.” She gives him a hug.

**Example #4**

Mother and son are playing together with blocks.

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

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Mom: “Thank you for using a quiet voice while your sister takes a nap.” She gives him a hug.

**Example #5**

Mom gets home from work and Dad and daughter are setting the table for dinner.

Dad to Mom: “Ally is such a good helper! She set that half of the table all by herself and played with Madison so I could finish cooking dinner.”

Ally: Smiles a big smile.

Mom: Gives Ally a hug and says, “You are such a great helper! I bet you are proud of yourself for setting the table and helping Dad!”

**Example #5**

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Dad to Mom: “Ally is such a good helper! She set that half of the table all by herself and played with Madison so I could finish cooking dinner.”

Ally: Smiles a big smile.

Mom: Gives Ally a hug and says, “You are such a great helper! I bet you are proud of yourself for setting the table and helping Dad!”

Session 1—Activity #1
Relationship Activity



(1) Think of someone who was really special to you when you were growing up. Write this person's name below. What is/was your relationship to this person?

(2) What made you think of this person?

(3) What did this person do that made him/her so important or special to you?

Session 1—Activity #2
Things to Try at Home!
“Filling/Refilling” Activity



List 5 things that you will try to do in the next week to “fill/refill” your child’s relationship tank—things that will make your child feel really special!

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

Some ideas to try...

reading a book together
singing favorite songs together
eating dinner together

hugs, high fives, kisses, winks, thumbs-up

letting your child be your special helper (helping with dinner, laundry, etc.)

taking a walk together
saying “I love you”
asking your child about his/her day
playing together

Session 1—Activity #3
 Things to Try at Home!
Encouragement Log



- Tip 1** Get your child's attention.
- Tip 2** Be specific!
- Tip 3** Keep it simple (try to avoid combining encouragement with criticism).
- Tip 4** Encourage your child with enthusiasm!
- Tip 5** Double the impact with physical warmth.
- Tip 6** Use positive comments and encouragement with your child in front of others.

Try to **encourage** your child at least **5** times this week.

I encouraged my child or used positive comments when...	What happened? How did your child respond? How do you think your child felt? How did you feel?