Building Social-Emotional Competencies Through Everyday Parent-Child Interactions

Parent and Caregiver Facilitators: Brief Activity Sheets

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Juniper Gardens Children’s Project ~ University of Kansas
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Parent Facilitators

(1) Showing Acceptance & Warmth

(2) Using Descriptive Language

(3) Following Your Child’s Lead

(4) Maintaining & Extending Your Child’s Interest

(5) Using Stress Reducing Strategies

How to use these materials: This packet includes a set of Discussion and Activity Sheets for each Facilitator. For each facilitator, The Discussion and Activity Sheets include the following:

- Definition of the facilitator
- Discussion questions
- A practice activity that can be done with video at the visit
- A Daily Activities page to be completed with the parent and left with the parent to practice specific skills related to that facilitator between visits
Parent Facilitator (1)
Showing Acceptance and Warmth
SHOWING ACCEPTANCE & WARMTH
DISCUSSION & ACTIVITY SHEETS

Showing Acceptance and Warmth means noticing when your child is doing something that is positive or okay and showing pleasure by doing things like:

- Smiling
- Using an excited, happy tone of voice
- Making positive comments
- Gentle touch (patting back)

Example: Baby smiles and wiggles arms during dressing. Mom smiles, opens her eyes wide and says, "Oh, you like that clean diaper!" as she touches baby's tummy.

Showing Acceptance and Warmth also means noticing when your child is upset and showing care and concern by doing things like:

- Staying calm
- Providing care and/or comfort
- Showing a concerned expression
- Making a concerned comment

Example: Baby has been up for a long time. Dad says with a concerned expression, "Oh, I'm sorry you don't feel good- you're so sleepy." Dad begins to rock baby.

Showing Acceptance and Warmth is also important when your child is angry or misbehaving. This does not mean showing approval of misbehavior. Instead, it means staying calm and ignoring minor misbehavior and/or using words and actions to guide:

- Staying Calm
- Ignoring minor misbehavior
- Using a firm but calm tone of voice
- Giving guidance about What To Do with your words and with your actions

Example: Mom and child are playing when child begins screaming and throws down the toy. Mom ignores the screaming. She picks up the toy and says in a calm firm voice: 'We take care of our toys or we have to put them away.'

Why is it important to Show Acceptance & Warmth?
The first and most important relationship that your child has is with you. A key ingredient of healthy, positive relationships is Acceptance & Warmth. By showing your child Acceptance and Warmth, you are laying the foundation for a healthy relationship. You are also modeling important positive behaviors that you want your child to use with you, other caregivers, teachers, siblings, and peers as your child grows older.
Showing Acceptance & Warmth: More Examples

- Child is playing quietly and mom walks by and gives a gentle pat on the back.
- Child reaches for a ring toy and dad smiles and says, ‘You almost got it’.
- Child is lays still during dressing and dad says ‘Wow, you make it so easy to get dressed’.
- Child drops his cup, can’t reach it and begins to cry. Mom says, ‘Whoops, you weren’t done with that yet’ as she reaches for cup and gives it back.
- During bath time child gets soap in his eyes and begins to cry. Dad says with a concerned look, ‘Oh, I’m sorry that hurts- you don’t like that at all. Let’s get that soap out’.
- Toddler finishes a cookie and begins to cry because she wants more. Mom says, ‘Oh, I know you liked that cookie. We’re all done for now’.
- Child holds up her leg to help with dressing and mom says ‘Wow, you’re such a good helper- thanks for helping mommy get you dressed’.
- Child wakes up fussy from nap, and mom says, ‘I know you’re still waking up’ as she gently picks child up.
- Child is sleepy and fussy while getting ready for bed. Mom says in a gentle voice, I know you’re tired, it’s been a long day.

Discussion Questions

1. When you think about people who you like to be around, who make you feel good about yourself, think about how you liked to be talked to- What kind of words? What kind of voice tone?

2. What kind of relationship do you want your child to have with you as your child grows older?

3. How do you want your child to talk to you, other caregivers, and teachers?

4. How does Showing Acceptance & Warmth to children help show them how to act?

5. How are you already Showing Acceptance & Warmth for your child?

6. What are some ways that you can Show Acceptance & Warmth more often each day?
**Showing Acceptance & Warmth ~ Activities**

**Make a Video:**

Make a video of you and your child doing something together that your child loves to do—something that is fun, makes your child smile or laugh. *Show Acceptance & Warmth* as often as you can with your words, your tone of voice, and gentle touch.

Make a video of looking at books with your child and find ways to *Show Acceptance & Warmth* by focusing on whatever positive things your child does (e.g., looking at pictures, turning a page, making sounds, gestures, or using words).

- Watch the video with a supportive home visitor and talk together about the positive things that your child is doing.
- Notice and talk about the ways that you Show Acceptance & Warmth.
- Watch and talk about how your child responds to you when you Show Acceptance & Warmth.
- Talk about why it’s important for you to continue Showing Acceptance & Warmth even if your child doesn’t seem to notice?
**Everyday Activities:** Underline the activity that has been easiest for you to **Show Acceptance & Warmth** and list things that you are already doing. Circle one or two activities that you will focus on each day to **Show Acceptance & Warmth.** List okay and positive behaviors and how you will **Show Acceptance & Warmth.** Put this list up on your refrigerator or wall and add to it each week.

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<th>Activity</th>
<th>Okay &amp; Positive Behaviors</th>
<th>Showing Acceptance &amp; Warmth</th>
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Parent Facilitator (2)
Using Descriptive Language
Using Descriptive Language
Discussion & Activity Sheets

Using Descriptive Language means talking about and describing things that your child is interested in or activities that you and/or your child are doing by:

- Making comments about things your child is interested in
- Asking ‘What’ and ‘Where’ questions
- Describing what you and your child are doing together or what you are getting ready to do together
- Describing activities and experiences that your children has- what things feel like (hot, cold, soft, scratchy), taste like, smell like, things that feel sad, things that feel happy
- Describing objects and materials (what they do, how you use them, how you treat them)
- Describing outside objects, plants, and animals (what they look like, sounds they make, what they do)

Examples:

- Mom gives child toy phone and says with a look of surprise ‘What do you hear? ‘Who is that’?

- Mom talks about what she’s doing as she puts lotion on baby, changes diaper and puts on clothes. She talks about body parts, how things feel, clothes and how they go on.

- Mom talks about what child is making- what it is, about colors, size- how tall. She uses ‘What’ questions’- I wonder what that’s going to be?

- Dad talks about feelings- It looks like it’s time for a break- you’re feeling sleepy.

Why is it important to Use Descriptive Language?
Using Descriptive Language, even before you child can talk is very important for helping your child to learn and use words. Research has shown that children who hear more descriptive language, learn more words and communicate better than children who don’t.
Using Descriptive Language  
Discussion Questions

(1) Parents and teachers often rate a child’s ability to use words to make wants and needs known as a very important skill. How important is it to you that your child grows successful in using words?

(2) Based on what we’ve talked about so far, how do parents help their children to learn to communicate?

(3) How and when are you already Using Descriptive Language to help promote your child’s communication?

(4) How and when you can Use Descriptive Language more often with your child?
Using Descriptive Language~ Activities

Make a Video:

Choose an activity below and make a video:

- Something together that your child loves to do- something that is fun, that makes your child smile or laugh. Talk to your child about what your child is interested in
- Looking at books
- Dressing
- Feeding or snack time

During the activity:

- Talk to your child about things that he or she is looking at or interested in
- Talk to your child about what you are doing or what you will do together during the day
- Describe actions and objects that your child experiences (talk about body parts, clothing, how things feel).
- Use questions ‘What’ and ‘Where’ questions- even if your child isn’t talking yet.
- Use a happy, excited, or surprised voice to show interest in the things you are talking about.

After the video activity:

- Watch the video with a supportive home visitor and talk together about the positive things that your child is doing.
- Notice and talk about the ways that you used Descriptive Language.
- Watch and talk about how your child responds to you when you Use Descriptive Language.
- Talk about why it’s important for you to continue Using Descriptive Language even if your child isn’t talking yet?
**Everyday Activities:**

Circle a number from 1 to 5 that tells how easy it is for you to think about things to talk about with your child (1=Very Hard; 5= Very Easy). If it's pretty easy to think of things to talk with your child about and to have 'conversations' about things your child is interested in, list the kinds of things you talk about. If it’s kind of hard to think about things to talk about, list words and things that you will talk about this week. Circle at least one activity and list things you talk about each day.

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Parent Facilitator (3)
Following Your Child’s Lead
FOLLOWING YOUR CHILD’S LEAD
DISCUSSION & ACTIVITY SHEETS

Following Your Child’s Lead means noticing what your child is interested in and following your child’s interest by what you say (your comments) and/or what you do (your actions) by:

- Noticing what your child is looking at and talking about it.
- Copying what your child does- copying sounds your child makes or things your child does- such as making a game of covering your eyes when your child covers his eyes; tapping a block, pretending to feed a doll.
- Using gestures to point out what child is attending to or doing.

Examples:

- Child looks up toward the window when he hears bird. Mom picks him up so that he can see better and says in an excited voice tone, ‘What do you see? Do you see that blue bird?’

- After mom points out baby to himself in the mirror, baby smiles and vocalizes. Mom smiles back and says ‘there you are in the mirror and positions baby to see better’.

- Auntie notices what child is looking at and lets him turn the page. She talks about what he is looking at.

Why is it important to Follow Your Child’s Lead? It’s important to follow your child’s lead when your child is playing and during other activities when your child is doing something that is okay or positive. By following your child’s lead, you are making it more likely that your child will continue what he or she is doing. This is important because children learn best when adults help them keep their attention on something instead of interrupting their attention.
Following Your Child’s Lead~ Activities

Make a Video:

Choose an activity below and make a video:
- Something together that your child loves to do- something that is fun, that makes your child smile or laugh
- Looking at books

During the activity:
- Notice what your child is interested in and follow your child’s lead when your child does something that is okay or positive.
- Talk about what your child looks at, holds, reaches for, or plays with.
- Copy sounds or actions that your child does- making a game out of it.

After the video activity:
- Watch the video with a supportive home visitor and talk together about the positive things that your child is doing.
- Notice and talk about ways that you Followed Your Child’s Lead.
- Watch and talk about how your child responds when you Follow Your Child’s Lead.
- Talk about why it’s important for you to continue Following Your Child’s Lead even if you don’t notice your child responding yet
Everyday Activities: List 4 play activities with interesting and developmentally appropriate play materials. If you’re not sure of what activities to pick, look at the Ages & Stages Activities Sheet and select activities for your child’s age. Choose an activity each day and Follow Your Child’s Lead. Make notes about what you did and how your child responded. You can also follow your child’s lead throughout the day when your child is doing okay or positive behaviors, but it’s easiest to begin practicing during play. If you don’t like to write things down, then talk through these activities with your home visitor and have your home visitor list the activities and play materials you agree to use. Then talk about the activities together at your next visit and your home visitor can take notes. Put this sheet up on your refrigerator, on a mirror, or on the wall to help you remember and add to it each week.

Activity: 

Play Materials: 

Ways that I Followed My Child’s Lead: 

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Activity: 

Play Materials: 

Ways that I Followed My Child’s Lead: 

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Activity: 

Play Materials: 

Ways that I Followed My Child’s Lead: 

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Activity: 

Play Materials: 

Ways that I Followed My Child’s Lead: 

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Following Your Child's Lead
Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to Follow Your Child’s Lead?

2. Why is it important to Follow Your Child’s Lead?

3. What are some examples that you've noticed of you Following Your Child's Lead or examples of what you can do to Follow Your Child’s Lead?
Parent Facilitator (4)
Maintaining and Extending
Your Child’s Interest
MAINTAINING & EXTENDING MY CHILD’S INTEREST
DISCUSSION & ACTIVITY SHEETS

Maintaining & Extending Your Child’s Interest means noticing what your child is interested in and building on what your child is doing to make it easier, more interesting, or more fun without interrupting your child’s attention by:

- Noticing what your child is looking at or doing and building on what your child is already doing without interrupting your child’s focus or activity.
- Positioning your child, toys, or materials so that they are easier to play with.
- Holding a toy close to your child so that your child can more easily interact with it.
- Using an excited and happy tone of voice that shows interest in what your child is doing.
- Showing how toys work without taking them away from your child- showing and saying ‘open’, ‘closed’, ‘in’, ‘out’.
- Adding something new to what your child is already doing.

Examples:

- Child is holding a doll and adult says, ‘I wonder what baby wants to drink, let’s give him a drink’.
- Child looks at toy phone and mom pushes phone close, holds up the receiver and says ‘Let’s call grandma’- ;Hi Grandma!’
- Child is taking clothes off doll and dad says, let’s get her (doll) ready for bed. Dad says, ‘Here are her pajamas’ as he hands doll clothes or pretend clothes to child.
- Child is holding a block and mom picks up another block and drops it in a plastic container as she says in an excited voice—’There it goes- IN the bowl’. She moves the bowl closer to see whether child gets it out or puts her block in.
- Child is holding stuffed animal and mom drops a small cloth over the animal and says ‘peek-a-boo’- repeating and making a game with wide eyes and smiling when she or child takes off the cloth.
- Child is pushing a truck and dad says, that truck is driving fast- it must be going to put out a fire (vroom, vroom).

Why is it important to Maintain & Extend Your Child’s Interest? Just like following your Child’s Lead, Maintaining and Extending Your Child’s Interest is important because children learn best when they are engaged in an activity that they are interested in. By Maintaining & Extending Your Child’s Interest, you are helping your child do something new (focusing attention a little bit longer, playing with something for a little bit longer) than your child could do alone, but with something that your child is ready for or already showing interest in.
Maintaining & Extending Your Child's Interest

Make a Video:

Choose an activity below and make a video:
- Something together that your child loves to do- something that is fun, that makes your child smile or laugh. Maintain and extend your child’s interest by:
  - Looking at books

During the activity:
- Notice what your child is interested in and Maintain or Extend Your Child’s Interest
- Talk about what your child looks at, holds, reaches for, or plays with.
- Think about and do things that make your child’s activity easier to do or more interesting and fun by building on what your child is already doing.
- Position your child and/or materials or toys so they are easier for your child to reach and explore.
- Use your voice tone and elaborate on what your child is doing without taking over or completely changing the focus.

After the video activity:
- Watch the video with a supportive home visitor and talk together about the positive things that your child is doing.
- Notice and talk about ways that you Maintained & Extended Your Child's Interest.
- Watch and talk about how your child responds when you Maintain & Extend Your Child’s Interest.
- Talk about why it’s important for you to continue Maintaining & Extending Your Child's Interest even if you don’t notice your child responding yet.
**Everyday Activities:** List 4 play activities with interesting and developmentally appropriate play materials. If you’re not sure of what activities to pick, look at the Ages & Stages Activities Sheet and select activities for your child’s age. Choose an activity each day to Maintain & Extend Your Child’s Interest. Make notes about what you did and how your child responded. You can also Maintain & Extend your child’s interest throughout the day when your child is doing okay or positive behaviors, but it’s easiest to begin practicing during play. If you don’t like to write things down, then talk through these activities with your home visitor and have your home visitor list the activities and play materials you agree to use. Then talk about the activities together at your next visit and your home visitor can take notes. Put this sheet up on your refrigerator, on a mirror, or on the wall to help you remember and add to it each week.

Activity: ________________________________________________________________

Play Materials: ____________________________________________________________

Ways that I Maintained & Extended My Child’s Interest _____________________________

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Activity: ________________________________________________________________

Play Materials: ____________________________________________________________

Ways that I Maintained & Extended My Child’s Interest _____________________________

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Ways that I Maintained & Extended My Child’s Interest _____________________________

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Parent Facilitator (5)
Stress Reducing Strategies
Using Stress Reducing Strategies means noticing when your child is upset (fussing or crying) and using words and actions to help soothe and calm your child by:

- Staying calm
- Slowing pace
- Checking for and meeting needs for comfort
- With an infant, using specific calming strategies such as swaddling, providing a pacifier, vertical rocking (rocking up and down by your heart/against your shoulder).

It also means, noticing when your child is loosing interest or becoming frustrated or upset (turning eyes away, turning away from an activity, pushing things away) and giving a break by:

- Slowing down
- Talking softer or being quiet
- Giving a break by waiting before continuing or introducing a new activity
- Using distraction- talking about and pointing out something positive to focus on.

Examples:

- Toddler becomes upset and begins to cry when it’s time to leave, Mom picks him up and says ‘I’m sorry you’re sad that it’s time to go. Let’s see what we can find for you to do on the way home’ (uses distraction- getting child interested in something else).

- Baby begins to cry and after dad checks diaper and determines baby is not hungry, he begins rock baby by his heart and pat baby’s back quietly without talking.

- Child has been putting a puzzle together with mom, mom had been encouraging him to put pieces in, but she slows down when she notices that child has turned away and looks frustrated. She waits for child to look up and then says shall we try one more (puzzle piece) or are you all finished?

Why is it important to use Stress Reducing Strategies: Sometimes parents are afraid that if they physically comfort their child that they will ‘spoil’ their child. In fact, children and especially young babies who receive prompt physical comfort when they are crying actually become better at calming themselves down than babies who do not. When you reduce stress by slowing down and when you use soothing strategies, you are actually teaching your child how to calm- this is especially true for young babies, but it’s also true for young children who are hurt.
Stress Reducing Strategies
Discussion Questions

1. What have you heard other parents say about ‘spoiling’ their baby by providing comfort? What do you think is meant by ‘spoiling’?

2. Do you think that young babies can be ‘spoiled’ in a bad way by providing comfort? Why or why not?

3. Are there people in your life who tell you that comforting your baby will spoil your baby? If so, how do you deal with that?

4. What are some times of the day that are stressful for your child?

5. How can you tell when your child is feeling stress- what do they do?

6. What can you do to make stressful times less stressful for your child?
**Everyday Activities**: List activities or times of the day that are stressful for your child. Next to each activity, list the behaviors your child does that show you your child is stressed or starting to get stressed. List steps that you can take to make things less stressful and things that you can do to help your child calm.

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<td>What signs does your child show just before your child cries or fusses?</td>
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<td>What steps will you take to help reduce stress and/or help your child calm?</td>
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