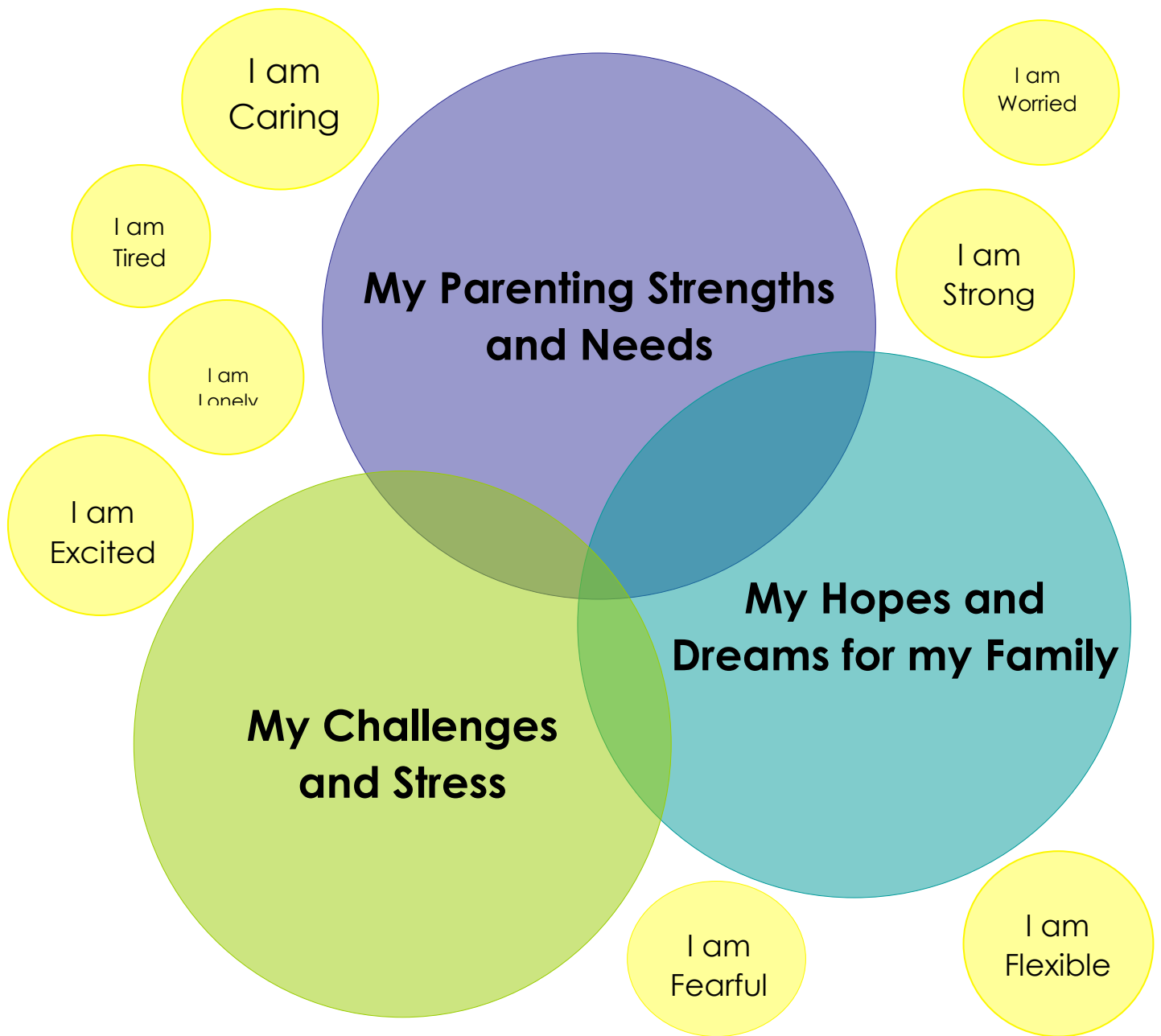


Meet Me Where I Am



a workbook for promoting resilience through nurturing relationships with families

The Strengthening Families Guidebook for Early Care and Education developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy was used as a resource for the development of this workbook

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MEET ME WHERE I AM

a workbook for promoting resilience through nurturing relationships with families

Funded by the Ohio Children's Trust Fund



Created by the Consortium for Resilient Young Children under the leadership of 4C for Children and Santa Maria Community Services



Using this Workbook

Meet Me Where I Am is a workbook for early childhood professionals, teachers and family service providers interested in supporting the wellness and resilience of families with young children. Based upon the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework developed by the Center of Social Policy, this book provides strategies for building trusting relationships through strength-based approaches that honor and support the role of parents.

The Consortium for Resilient Young Children (CRYC) under the leadership of 4C for Children offers a Strengthening Families (SF) program in Southwest Ohio and Northern Kentucky. Material contained within this book is a compilation of eight years of information, resources and strategies provided by CRYC in support of promoting the SF Protective Factors Framework. *Meet Me Where I Am* provides an overview of SF with practical information, reflective and practice activities designed to aid professionals in engaging families through the lens of the protective factors.

Options for Using this Workbook

Independent Study – use this book at your own pace to develop a deeper understanding of SF while accessing practical tips for building relationships and promoting protective factors. Be sure to complete each question and activity and allow yourself enough time to practice the tips and reflect on your results.

Shared Learning – use this book as a curriculum to lead a group through a shared learning experience. Plan your own schedule for completing each section and practice activities. Read each section, share responses to reflection activities and report back learning and results from practice activities.

Coaching Tool – this book is used as a guide for offering coaching to early childhood professionals. To access a qualified SF coach go to: 4Cforchildren.org.

TIPS FOR USING THIS WORKBOOK

- **Complete each section** before moving on to the next.
- **Set your own pace.**
- Use the reflection activities to **gain deeper self-awareness**
- **Allow enough time** to carry out the practice activities, evaluate your results and try other possibilities.
- **Set realistic expectations** by creating action plans for one strategy at a time.

UNDERSTANDING STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK

Strengthening Families™ (SF) is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs and communities in building five protective factors:

- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Social and emotional competence of children

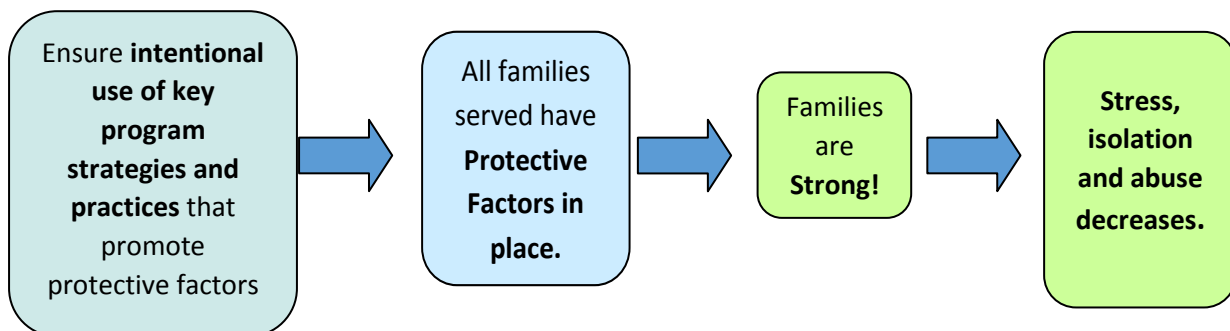
What is the Protective Factors Framework?

Parents want what is best for their children. Yet meeting all the demands of parenting can become overwhelming. Strengthening Families strives to ensure the wellness and resiliency of children by building the capacity of parents to access support and meet the needs of their children. Through the development of five protective factors, Strengthening Families helps parents gain the resources, social connections and knowledge to draw upon in times of need.

SF developed and promoted by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) offers a framework for working with and nurturing the wellness and resilience of families. This framework identifies key principles and proven strategies that ensure organizational success in promoting protective factors. However, as it is a framework, it does not support a regimented approach but instead allows for creativity and innovation – which ensures the framework is relevant to a very diverse group of families.

Implementing the Protective Factors Framework

Protective Factors strengthen the wellness of families. By using strategies that promote protective factors you help ensure positive outcomes for children and their caregivers.



THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL POLICY HAS MANY RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR DEVELOPING YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND ITS PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK

A few key resources include:

- **Strengthening Families 101: An introductory PowerPoint presentation**
- **The pathway to improved outcomes: Strengthening Families Logic Model**
- **Strengthening Families Overview (Prezi)**

To access these resources go to:

www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/about#protective-factors-framework

IMPACT OF PROTECTIVE FACTORS ON REDUCING STRESS

Consistent stress in a child's environments can negatively affect their early development. It is important to remember stress has the same impact on children as it does on adults. Unfortunately it is not possible to reduce the adversity and stress that many families experience. However there are strategies to help lessen the impact of stress for the families.

Strengthening Families Protective Factors nurture the resiliency and wellness of the entire family. Families who are connected to reliable networks of support are better positioned to respond to crisis and adversity. By promoting protective factors for families you are helping to ensure that stress does not have a lasting impact on the child's development and future learning.

Types of Stressors

Stressors are the “experiences that perceive to be challenging or threatening (Reference). There are 3 types of stressors positive, tolerable, and Toxic. It is important to remember everyone, at some point and time will experience stress. Providing families with concrete supports, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, and social emotional competency will help increase parental resilience. These supports are known as protective factors. When protective factors are in place the impact of stress is lessen on the family.

Reflection Activity:

Think about a time you went through a stressful situation. What did you do? What things could have helped to lessen the stress?

WHAT IS STRESS?

STRESS IS A FEELING OF BEING OVERWHELMED, WORRIED, TENSE, OR FEELING EXTREME SADNESS.

STRESSOR REFERS TO THE CHALLENGING LIFE EXPERIENCES THAT TRIGGER THE FEELINGS OF BEING OVERWHELMED, WORRIED, OR EXTREME SADNESS.

Examples of stressors

- **Positive stress** Transitions, First day at a new school or job, meeting new people, failing test, new places
- **Tolerable Stress** death of a love one, automobile accident, illness, discrimination
- **Toxic stress** Child Abuse and neglect, family violence, generational poverty, parental addictions, maternal depression

Positive stress is experienced when there is a brief stress reaction due to challenging life events. This type of stress is the most common stress and cannot be avoided. Positive stress is beneficial because it develops a coping mechanism to help promote a healthy response to anticipated stress. In addition, positive stress allows the child the opportunity to regulate their emotions during stressful events. Having knowledge of social emotional competence of children allow the child to navigate positive stress in an appropriate manner. Partnering with parents can help decrease the impact of stress.

Reflection Activity:

Identify the typical situations that occur in your program that could produce opportunities for children to experience positive stress. What are some practices you can put in place for families to help children learn from these experiences?

Tolerable stress is experienced when there are several challenges resulting in changes on the body occurring stronger, and for longer periods of time. Tolerable stress can result in bodily changes. Some of the physical changes that could occur during this level of stress is; headaches, changes in sleep patterns (sleeps too much, or sleeps too little), aches and pains, illness, injuries, and digestive issues. Tolerable stress can turn into toxic stress if a family has not fostered positive relationships, and environments to help support and buffer the stressors. Having a strong connection to other adults going through similar challenges can help a family feel supported. Connecting families to other adults where caring and trusting relationships are developed is a strategy to help lessen stress.

Reflection Activity:

Having someone in your life that has experienced similar challenges can be a source of support when going through a crisis. Why do you think this is? What are some similar challenges that many of your families face?

Toxic stress is experienced when the stressors are intense, with uncontrollable events or conditions occurring. During toxic stress the stress experienced is strong, frequent, and prolonged. A biological change occurs during toxic stress. This type of stress can cause deep impact on a child's development. Children who experience toxic stress may never get an opportunity to return to a calm state. The child can stay on a continual cycle of high alert and will cause them to have difficulties regulating their emotions and being acclimated into a social environment. Most adults and children experiencing toxic stress do not have positive and supporting adults in their life to help buffer the impact of the stress. By helping parents build their resiliency, you can help the family cope through such challenging times in their life.

Reflection Activity:

What are some physical and or emotional indicators that a family is experiencing toxic stress?

IMPACT OF PROTECTIVE FACTORS ON SCHOOL READINESS

Strengthening Families Protective Factors focus on connecting parents to resources, supplying knowledge and information about child development and supporting parents in building social connections and trusting relationships. This results in parents being more resilient and responsive to the needs of their children.

Research shows children benefit educationally from parents who are responsive to their needs and involved in their schooling. Based upon this view, Strengthening Families contributes to the successful transition of children to kindergarten by ensuring parents are prepared and able to support their child's education. The change model depicted below captures the impact anticipated in regards to children's school readiness as Strengthening Families Protective Factors are promoted

Theory of Change Model

Short Term Outcomes: By promoting protective factors for families, parents

- have a greater social support network including those with their child care provider.
- increase their knowledge of child development and how to support their child's learning.
- know how to support the development of their child's social and emotional competence.
- know how to access resources when needed.
- have less life and parenting-related stress.
- develop a greater future orientation.



Longer Term Outcomes:

Parents are better prepared to transition their children to kindergarten: they have knowledge of the process, can form relationships with the child's school and can support their children's growth and development.

Reflection Activity:

How do you think the parent-child relationship affects a child's readiness to learn?

In 2011 the **Strengthening Families and Parental Resiliency: Impact on School Readiness** project was conducted in Cincinnati, Ohio. The project surveyed parents to determine if the Strengthening Families protective factors framework had an impact on parents participating in their children's school readiness. **The results of this comparison indicated that on two of the three school-readiness factors, parents from programs implementing Strengthening Families scored higher or demonstrated more change than parents from programs where Strengthening Families had only been introduced.** This comparison supports the theory that:

1. Children enrolled in early childhood programs implementing Strengthening Families will enter school more ready to learn with the skills and resources needed to support their learning.
2. The Strengthening Families protective factors and program strategies influence parental school readiness indicators.
3. This project demonstrates the existence of a relationship between Strengthening Families and parents preparedness and confidence in establishing a kindergarten transition plan and supporting children's readiness to learn.

Supporting Children's Transition to Kindergarten

Parents play a critical role in ensuring their child is ready for kindergarten. Here is a list of questions you can talk to parents about in preparing for their child's transition to school.

- a. Have you looked at all available kindergarten programs?
- b. Have you made a decision on where your child will attend?
- c. Have you talked to other people about the kindergarten they've chosen?
- d. Have you met/know other parents planning to go to your child's kindergarten?
- e. Have you visited the kindergarten where you are planning to send your child?
- f. Have you set up a meeting with your child's kindergarten teacher?
- g. Have you had a meeting with your child's kindergarten teacher?
- h. Have you shared information about your child with the school you've chosen?

The following activities need to be complete by parents to plan for their child's transition to school:

- a. Register child for kindergarten
- b. Complete all the child's immunizations
- c. Arrange for transportation to/from kindergarten
- d. Arrange for before and after school care
- e. Attend an Open House at school
- f. Attend an orientation at school

Reflection Activity:

What are some other ways that you can or do help parents in preparing for their child's transition to school?

PROMOTING THE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Implementation of protective factors in a program or community helps to build stronger families which helps promotes resiliency and family wellness.

This section includes learning modules focused on increasing your knowledge of the Strengthening Families' five protective factors.

Each module will include:

- A brief review of the protective factor
- Tips for promoting the protective factor
- A reflection activity for identifying how the protective factor relates to you
- An activity to help you put the protective factor to practice

Four of the protective factors relate directly to the parent and their needs. A core Strengthening Families belief is that all families have strengths and all families will need support at some time. The focus of the protective factors is to offer supports, resources and encouragement to parents.

**A RESEARCH-
INFORMED PRACTICE
THAT IS DESIGNED TO
STRENGTHEN THE
WELLNESS OF FAMILIES
BY PROMOTING FIVE
PROTECTIVE FACTORS**

5 Protective Factors

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social & Emotional Competence in Children

PARENTAL RESILIENCE

Why is Parental Resilience important?

Everyone faces stress at some time. It is the way a parent responds to stressors that largely impact their ability to overcome challenges and ensure stress does not become toxic – for themselves and their children.

When a parent's ability to manage stress is severely low, their capacity to be consistently nurturing and responsive to their child's need decreases. This, in turn, affects the child's development of resilience because their need for nurturing attention and secure emotional attachment is not met.

When a person has resilience they are able to accomplish personal growth and change despite current or past trauma.

Reflection Activity:

How do you handle stress? What are the ways you take time for yourself and how often does that occur?

Practice Activity:

My own Strengths/Talents:	Strengths of Parents (pick two parent and identify their strengths):
I am good at:	Parent #1 _____ Strengths:
Another one of my strengths is:	Parent #2 _____ Strengths:

THE ABILITY TO BOUNCE BACK & MANAGE THE STRESS OF DAILY LIFE, CHALLENGES, AND CRISES THAT OCCUR AS WELL AS ADAPT DESPITE CURRENT OR PAST TRAUMA.

Tips for Promoting Parental Resilience

- **Encourage** parents/guardians to take care of themselves
- **Validate** that parenting can be stressful and help the parents/guardian plan ways to respond to those parenting situations
- **Support and Acknowledge** good decisions the parents make
- **Reassure** parents/guardians they do not have to do it alone and can ask for help
- **Emphasize the strengths** the parents/guardians have and help them use those strengths to support a hopeful, positive attitude

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

HAVING POSITIVE, RELIABLE RELATIONSHIPS THAT PROVIDE SUPPORT, BUFFER STRESSORS AND ENCOURAGE POSITIVE PARENTING

Tips for Promoting Social Connections

- **Invite** parents to events where they can get to know other parents
- **Reach out** to parents/guardians who may be socially isolated
- **Provide opportunities** to give back
- **Encourage** participation in groups or organizations
- **Address barriers** like anxiety or depression that inhibit the development of positive social connections

Why are Social Connections important?

Parenting can be overwhelming and reliable networks of support provide parents with individuals they can count on for emotional support, creative problem solving and as a buffer for eliminating stress or offering support when stress occurs. This encourages nurturing parenting responses that aid children in developing secure attachments.

Parents with the following supports in their lives have a more positive mind set and are generally happier as parents:

- A non-judgmental, empathic listener
- Someone they can turn to for parenting tips and topics like doctor recommendations
- Trusted people who they can turn to for things like transportation or assistance in securing job opportunities
- Positive people who can build them up and help them gain a sense of hope during those stressful times

Parents also benefit from opportunities to give back to others by connecting to places like schools, religious communities, or parent-focused programs.

Reflection Activity:

Write down the people in your life who have been supportive. How often do you talk to them?

Practice Activity:

Think of two parents who seem isolated or alone. Reach out to them this week and make a connection. Write down what worked, didn't work, and what you learned:

KNOWLEDGE OF PARENTING AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Why is Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development important?

During a child's early years the brain develops like a sponge soaking in all the information from its surroundings. For proper development a child's brain needs proper nutrition, regular sleep, physical activity, stimulating experiences, and positive relationships. A child's brain also needs protection from environmental threats like lead and adverse experiences like community violence.

Parents tend to parent the way they were parented. With the availability of new information parents can learn and choose alternative ways to parent. This may be very beneficial if the parent's own experience as a child did not support their early development. Ensuring that parents have access and support in acquiring new parenting strategies and knowledge of child development promotes positive parenting and helps reduce parenting stress.

Reflection Activity:

How does your knowledge of child development impact your interactions with children?

Practice Activity:

Identify a child who is mastering a new developmental challenge (i.e. potty-training, sharing). Discuss this milestone with their parent. Write down your experience or what you learned.

UNDERSTANDING CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE PARENTING STRATEGIES

Tips for Promoting Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

- **Provide** crucial information at the time parenting issues arise.
- **Encourage** parents to talk about expectations and engage further discussion if their expectations are not developmentally appropriate
- **Model** appropriate expectations of their child
- **Connect** parents to resources like parenting classes or home visiting
- **Validate** their role as a parent and encourage them to ask questions
- **Remember that there is no one right way to be a parent**

CONCRETE SUPPORT IN TIMES OF NEED

ACCESS TO SUPPORT AND SERVICES RELATED TO THE FAMILY'S NEEDS THAT HELP MINIMIZE STRESS CAUSED BY CHALLENGES THAT ARISE

Why is Concrete Support in Times of Need important?

Whether its help with how to calm a colicky baby, help getting to the doctor, or help with finding food to feed their family; all parents need help sometimes. When parents are faced with challenges that become overwhelmingly stressful, it is not always easy to ask for help for fear of judgement or embarrassment.

When parents have access to services or supports that are relevant to their needs they become more resilient and better at managing stress.

It is essential that the manner in which a concrete support is delivered does not increase stress. This is where having a good relationship with the parents ensures that they are not referred to a service they have already had difficulty with or don't have access to due to barriers such as no transportation to get to appointments on time. When a relationship is built the shift of thinking goes from "What's wrong with you?" to "What has happened to you?"

Reflection Activity:

In your experience, when is it easier to ask for help?

Practice Activity:

Research a resource that would benefit families. Call the resource and learn about what they offer and the process needed to go through to receive those services. Write down the information and share with a family or coworker.

Tips for Promoting Concrete Support

- **Encourage** communication
- **Understand the resources** available in your community
- **Help** the parent understand the importance of advocating for themselves and their child
- **Give parents opportunity** to help other families in the program who went through the same thing
- **Help** the families identify the concrete supports within their family or community

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF CHILDREN

Why is Children's Social & Emotional Competence important?

The ability to cope with feelings and interact positively with others affects a child's ability to adjust to school and form lasting relationships. The foundation for this development is in the first 5 years of a child's life.

Positive, trusting relationships encourage the development of social emotional competence. With the development of good social emotional skills comes the ability to:

- Express feelings without causing harm to themselves or others
- Separate from parents without distress and attach to other adults
- Form friendships with peer
- Focus on tasks and activities
- Tell you about their feelings

Reflection Activity:

Think about a child who has behaviors you find difficult. What feelings could they be trying to express?

Practice Activity:

Separate emotions from actions this week with the children in your program. (ex: "It's ok to be angry, but we don't hit when we're angry.") Write down how this went for you and the children.

THE ABILITY FOR A CHILD TO
COMMUNICATE CLEARLY,
RECOGNIZE AND REGULATE
THEIR EMOTIONS, AND FORM
AND KEEP RELATIONSHIPS

Tips for Promoting Social & Emotional Competence of Children

- **Model** ways to effectively express feelings
- **Create an environment or experience** where children feel safe and can express their emotions
- **Discuss behaviors** with the parent and work with parents to find the reason behind the behavior as well as possible solutions
- **Encourage** parents to share in activities with their child that demonstrates love, care, and affection
- **Behaviors are feelings to be understood.**

BUILDING EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES

UNDERSTANDING YOUR OWN PARENTING VALUES

- Values are those things that really matter to each of us ... the ideas and beliefs we hold as special.
- Most of us learned our values at home, at church or synagogue, or at school.

We each have our own set of values related to parenting and how children should or should not be raised. These beliefs are a result of our own experiences and upbringing. The things we hold as true are often a result of what worked or didn't work for us. Values about parenting can be heard in the statements we or others make, like "when I was raised I was taught to respect my elders" or "my mom always made sure we sat down and had dinner together as a family".

Parenting is Personal

How parents choose to raise their children is very personal. The majority of parents, "*parent the way they were parented*". Meaning that most parents learn to parent from how they were raised by their own parents. This results in strong feelings of loyalty and anger if it feels that their parenting is being questioned.

In addition, all parents learn from trial and error. Meaning that parents try different strategies before figuring out what works. In addition as children grow, the strategies that previously worked are no longer successful. Because every parent-child relationship is different, parents are personally engaged and feel an incredible sense of responsibility for their child's success.

Reflective Activity:

List a few of the common statements you make about parenting? Who else have you heard make those same comments?

FACTORS AND EXPERIENCES THAT INFLUENCE VALUES ABOUT PARENTING

- **Your own childhood:** how were you raised?
- **Community factors:** what are the needs of families and children?
- **Education:** what have you learned about child development?
- **Job experience:** what have you learned that benefits children and their families?
- **Your own parenting:** what have you learned about your own parenting style?
- **Other parents:** what have you observed that works or doesn't work?
- **Media:** what are the current trends and expectations about parenting?

Trip Down Memory Lane Activity

One way to become more aware of your parenting values is to think about your own upbringing. This activity is intended to help you recall key aspects of your childhood.

Directions: Answer each question based upon your early childhood experiences. Focus on the caregivers, places and memories that are most important to you.

Question	Response
Where were you raised? How would you describe your neighborhood or community?	
Who was your primary caregiver/s? How would you describe your relationship?	
Did you grow up in a home, apt., etc.? Who else lived in your home?	
What was your religious faith? What religious practices were you taught?	
What is your family heritage? What food or practices were handed down?	
What were some of your family traditions?	

Question	Response
How did your family celebrate or acknowledge success?	
As a child, what were some of the important rules you were expected to follow?	
How did your family express feelings? Specifically related to anger or sadness.	
Who disciplined you? How were you disciplined?	
Who did your family rely on for support in times of need?	

Reflection Activity:

In caring for children today what is one thing you do that matches what your caregiver did when raising you? What is one thing you do that is different than your caregivers?

Identify Your Parenting Values:

Directions: Based upon your childhood experiences and your current experiences in raising or caring for children, answer the following questions:

Reflection Question	Response
What is a belief you have about what parents should do?	
What is a belief you have about what parents should not do?	
What belief or value do you have about expressing feelings that is a result of your childhood experiences?	
What beliefs do you have about disciplining children that is a result of your childhood experiences?	
What values or beliefs do you have about raising children that have changed over time?	
What values or beliefs do you have about raising children that you believe will never change?	

Pay Attention to Your Values

Your values about parenting or caring for children will impact your opinion of parents and your expectations of how parents should act. Once you become aware of your values you may find that you connect more easily with parents whose values match your own. Be aware of labeling or judging parents whose values differ from yours. Remember – just like you – parents make choices about how they care for their children based upon their own values and experiences.

TAKING-OFF THE LENSE OF JUDGEMENT

Your values about child rearing are just that, your values. The problem is not your values, the problem arises when you are not aware of when your values are in play and you act on beliefs or perceptions before you have all of the Information.....these are considered Mental Models.

Mental Models are the images, assumptions and stories you have about yourselves, other people and establishments. Typically based upon your beliefs, values and experiences, mental models become the “lenses you use to view the world”. When mental models are in play, you make quick conclusions based on assumptions versus looking at the facts.

For example, you believe that parents should put their child’s needs before their own. A child in your program wears tattered cloths yet her parent is nicely dressed. Your strong belief about parents putting children’s needs first causes you to assume the parent is not paying attention to the child’s needs. You then conclude that the parent is uncaring. This is a mental model or story you have formed in your head about this parent before you learned the facts – which is the child likes wearing her favorite dress.

The Ladder of Inference

An easy concept that describes how mental models are formed is the ladder of inference. The ladder of inference captures what happens in our mind when we move from an experience to action. It refers to all the steps that happen inside our head that form mental models – which in the end influences us to arise to conclusions and then take action based upon what we “think” is true.

Mental models begin when you select a detail about an experience to focus on – this is the bottom or first rung of the ladder. As you move up the ladder you:

1. add meaning to the experience,
2. make assumptions about what it means
3. draw a final conclusion and
4. leap into action based upon your conclusion.

Reflection Activity: Describe a situation when you made an assumption about someone you later learned was incorrect.

MENTAL MODELS ARE:

- The **images, assumptions and stories** we carry in our minds about ourselves, other people and establishments.
- The mental maps we use help us **“frame” our experiences.**
- Usually **not a part of our awareness** until we “look” for them.

Peter Senge, The Fifth Discipline:

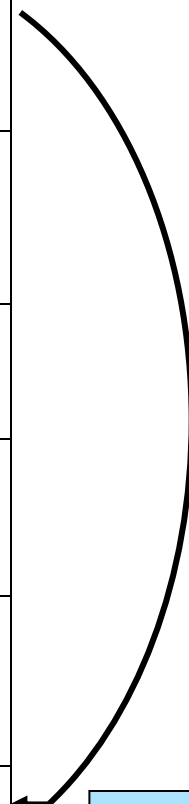
The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization

Ladder of Inference Example

The grid on this page is a depiction of steps that occur along the ladder of inference.

Directions: Begin by reading the bottom box defined as experience and observable data. Continue reading "up" the grid until you arrive at the final box – Takes Action.

6. TAKE ACTION based upon your beliefs	The belief you adopted leads you to take action: You make a negative comment under your breath about the parent.
5. ADOPT BELIEF about the world	You make adopt a belief about out of control mothers: Children are mistreated when parents are out of control.
4. DRAW CONCLUSION	You make a conclusion: She (the mother) is unaware of how she is hurting her child.
3. MAKE ASSUMPTION	You begin to make assumptions about the mother: She (the mother) is unable to control her own emotions.
2. ADD MEANING (Based on cultural and personal values)	You add meaning to what you observed. Notice that the meaning added is based upon a value: She (the mother) is out of control.
1. SELECT DATA	Based on what is observed you choose one data point to focus on: "This mother is calling her child a brat!"
OBSERVABLE DATA AND EXPERIENCES	You are at the grocery store and observe a parent with two children. She is scolding her daughter who is having a temper tantrum. You hear the parent say "you are being a brat!"



THE REFLEXIVE LOOP

Over time your beliefs will effect the data you select or focus on.

For example, if you believe a parent is out of control you will want to prove your belief is right by gathering more data.

Practice Activity:

In the example above, based on #2 – **the mother is out of control**, what other assumptions could you make about why she is out of control?

Ladder of Inference Activity

Directions:

1. Read the experience or observable data in the bottom box.
2. Select one of the parents' behaviors (bolded text) and write that behavior as the data selected in box #2.
3. Run up the ladder by adding an assumption, drawing a conclusion, adopting a belief and finally identifying an action you would take.

I TAKE ACTIONS based upon my beliefs	
I ADOPT BELIEFS about the world	
I DRAW CONCLUSIONS	
I MAKE ASSUMPTIONS based upon the meaning I added	
I ADD MEANINGS (cultural and personal)	
2. I SELECT DATA from what I observe	
1. OBSERVABLE DATA AND EXPERIENCES	<p>A 5 year-old in your program is always "on the go". He struggles in being able to focus and often does not finish tasks. He also has problems with some of the other kids as he can be somewhat of a bully and has gotten into a few fights. You have talked to his mom about these behaviors and nothing seems to work. His mom states that she does not have these problems with him at home. You have suggested several times that maybe he be evaluated by a doctor, but his mom has refused. You also have set up a meeting with the mom to address the issue but she called and cancelled on the day of the meeting.</p>

Coming Back Down the Ladder

There are three things you can do to avoid adding incorrect meaning or drawing faulty conclusions:

Reflection: become aware of your own mental models and values. Slow down and replay in your head what you observed. Ask yourself questions about the mental models or values that may be clouding what you observed.

Advocacy: to make your thinking and reasoning visible to others. Share your perceptions and beliefs with others. Make your own reasoning clear by sharing how you arrived at your conclusions and what data you used, encourage others to explore your view – do you see any gaps in my reasoning, ask for others to provide a different view for you to explore.

Inquiry: ask questions to gather more data. Ask others what they observed and notice if their perceptions of the experience match yours. Again share your assumptions and the data you used, ask specifically the questions that will allow the other person to share their view or thinking, for example: Is this what you meant when you said?

Reflection Activity:

Question	Response
Describe something a parent does or doesn't do that upsets or frustrates you:	
Reflection: What is your parenting value that causes this behavior to upset you?	
Advocacy: What about this behavior concerns or worries you?	
Inquiry: What questions could you ask to get more data or check the accuracy of your assumptions?	

PRACTICES FOR PARENT ENGAGEMENT

An essential component of Strengthening Families is family engagement. In order to promote the protective factors it is essential that parents trust that you are invested in the well-being of their entire family. Two key engagement principles of Strengthening Families are:

- All parents have strengths
- All families benefit from support

By building effective relationships with parents; parents will more likely ask for help when needed and share their wisdom and values with you.

In this section you will learn five engagement practices or tactic for strengthening your relationships with families. For each tactic there is:

- A brief description of the practice
- Anticipated outcomes
- Easy to follow steps
- Examples
- Follow-up activity

Building Relationships with Parents

5 tactics for Building Relationships

- Greeting Parents
- Fact Finding
- Storytelling
- Identifying Strengths
- Learning Parents Hopes and Dreams

GREETING PARENTS

A GREETING SENDS A MESSAGE OF CONSIDERATION, RESPECT AND FRIENDSHIP.

Steps:

1. Learn the first and last name of parents or caregivers.
2. Greet each parent or caregiver by name.
3. Smile and make eye contact during greeting.

Questions to consider:

What crosses your mind when you come into work or go to a friend's home and you are not greeted? _____

How does this set the tone for your interactions or visit? _____

Why greeting parents by name is important?

When you greet a parent by his/her name you are acknowledging the parent. This shows parents that you value him/her as an individual and you establish a relationship of courtesy and kindness.

For new parents introduce yourself and ask them who they are:

Hi, I am ___ your child's _____ and you are?

Parent answers.

(Repeat their name) it is very nice to meet you.

For parents you are familiar with but have not greeted by name, ask again who they are and offer your intention to learn their name:

Hi, I know we have met before, I am ___, can you tell me your name again?

Parent answers.

Thanks (Repeat their name) I am not always good at remembering names but I am going to do my best

For daily greetings:

Hi ___ it's good to see you.

Hi ___ how are things?

Hi ___ how was your day?

The Outcome:

1. Parents feel welcome
2. Parents perceive you as friendly and approachable
3. You open up the opportunity for parents to share information or ask questions
4. You recognize the parent as an individual

Putting it to practice:

This week learn and greet each parent by name. What barriers did you face in greeting parents? How can you get past those barriers to begin connecting with those parents?

FACT FINDING

Questions to consider:

How do you feel when someone asks you about your interests?

How does having something in common with a friend or coworker strengthen your relationship?

Why fact finding is important?

By asking specific questions and following up on those same subjects it shows to the parent that you are listening to them. Gathering facts is also a way to learn more about him/her and make a connection with that parent.

Example:

Hi _____. So I see you are wearing a Bengals hat...are you a fan? Do you ever get to a game? What do you think their chances are for this year?

Connection: I am a diehard Bengals fan – hoping this is their year!

Hi _____ how was your day today? You know I never really asked but what kind of work do you do? Do you like your job?

Follow-up: How was work today?

Fact Finding Ideas:

- Something you observe – dress, hairstyle, accessories
- Employment/work
- Interests/leisure activities

Putting it to practice:

Think of a parent who you feel you have trouble connecting with. Talk to them this week and learn something new about them.

Write down what you learned and how you are going to follow-up with this parent.

LITTLE FACTS WE LEARN CAN HELP US TO BETTER UNDERSTAND AND CONNECT WITH A PARENT.

Steps:

1. Greet parent by name
2. Mention to the parent something you have noticed or ask a question about an interest of the parent
3. Show you were listening by sharing something similar about yourself or follow-up later

The Outcome:

1. Parents perceive you as friendly and approachable
2. Parents see that you are interested in them
3. Parents connect with you on an “individual” level
4. You open up the opportunity for parents to share information or ask questions
5. You learn facts about a parents that may help you be able to make connections between parents

STORYTELLING

SHARING STORIES IS A WAY TO CONNECT WITH PARENTS AND CONNECT THEM TO THEIR CHILDREN

Steps:

1. Greet parent by name
2. Mention to the parent that you have a story to tell them
3. Share a story

Questions to consider:

How does sharing stories with your friends or coworkers impact your relationship? _____

Why is storytelling important?

Storytelling provides an opportunity to share experiences and also encourages parents to share similar experiences. Stories are a way to store memories, mark time, express feelings and build relationships. By sharing a story with a parent about his/her child you help the parent to mark time and build memories of their child's development.

The Outcome:

1. Parents perceive you as friendly and approachable
2. Parents see that you are attentive to their child
3. Parents are able to share in a memory of mark time about their child's development
4. Parents connect with you on a "feelings" level
5. You open up the opportunity for parents to share information and ask questions

Example:

Hi _____ it's good to see you. I wanted to take a minute and tell you a story about (child's name). When we were working on our art project today I noticed that (child's name) was helping another child cut with scissors. I was so impressed with how patient she was and wanted to let you know what a great job she did.

Story Ideas:

- Developmental marker
- Positive social skill
- Reaction to new activity
- Expressions of feelings
- Funny "happening"

Putting it to Practice:

Share a positive story with a parent about their child? Think of what you hope to gain by sharing the story. Write down how the interaction occurred and anything new you learned from it.

IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS

Questions to consider:

What do you identify as your talents or strengths? How do your strengths show-up at work? _____

Why is important?

Helping a parent recognize their own strengths helps him or her more intentionally pull from that strength and use it in times of difficulty. Likewise, when a parent knows the strengths of his/her child, the parent is able to encourage and support the child in using those strengths.

Example:

Compliment:

I admire you as a full time working parent with three children. It's really great, you are so good at communicate what's happening at home – I can count on you.

Having a difficult conversation:

You are so good at hugging your child when you pick her up. She is really struggling in the mornings and I wondered if you could do the same when you drop her off.

Sharing the child's strength with the parent:

1. Initiate a conversation with the parent
2. Share a story with the parent that hi-lights the child's strength
3. Ask the parent if they noticed that strength in their child before and ask to share a story with you.

Putting it to practice:

Observe a parent this week and try to find or identify one of their strengths. Initiate a conversation with the parent and compliment the parent on that strength. How did it go and what could you do different next time?

**RECOGNIZING STRENGTHS
BUILDS ENCOURAGEMENT,
MOTIVATION, AND SELF-
ESTEEM.**

Steps:

1. Take time to observe the parent when they interact with their child
2. Identify strengths in the parent. Look for the positive in something you may consider a deficit
3. Compliment the parent on their strength
4. Use a parents strength to start a difficult conversation

The Outcome:

1. Parents will feel more confident and capable
2. Parents will use their strengths more consciously when faced with adversity
3. "Mutual Respect" is established between you and the parent
4. Parents will feel appreciated and valued by you

LEARNING PARENTS' HOPES AND DREAMS

LEARNING ABOUT A PARENT'S HOPES AND DREAMS FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHILD IS A LINK TO THEIR DESIRES AND SHEDS LIGHT ON WHAT MOTIVATES THE PARENT/CAREGIVER

Questions to consider:

What are your hopes and dreams for the next year? How do these help to motivate you?

Why is learning hopes and dreams important?

Learning about parent's hopes and dreams shows that you are interested in their future well-being and happiness which will transfer to their child's well-being. It also provides an opportunity to become a resource that can connect the parent to their future goals.

The Outcome:

1. Parents feel like you not only care about their child, but also them
2. You learn what is really important to the parent
3. You become more in touch with their own hopes and dreams
4. You role model to the parent how to more concerned with others' future well-being and the parent will feel appreciated by your effort
5. The parent will in turn want their child to feel that same appreciation and value and will then demonstrate that same concern shown to them to their child.

Steps:

1. Ask a parent about their day, their job or their family life. Listen for cues about:
 - What they do for a living and how they feel about what they do
 - What they are in school for? What their future career goals are
 - What their hobbies are
 - What their housing situation is and if they are happy with it
 - What wishes and goals they have for their family such as vacations, or more children
2. Show interest and/or concern and follow-up with parents when applicable by remembering to ask how a work project, test, or vacation turned out.

Putting it to practice:

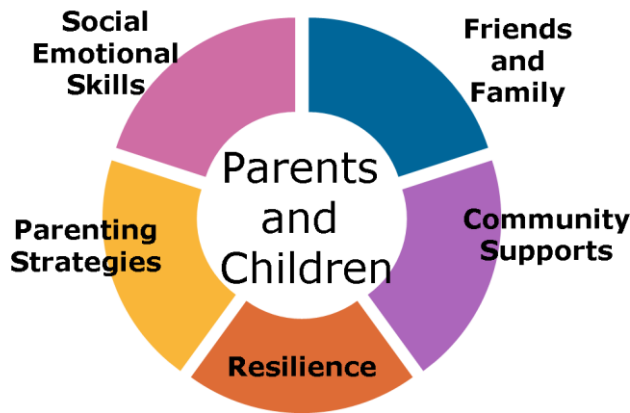
Learn a parent's hopes and dreams for their job or their family. What do you think motivates that parent? How can you use this knowledge to help them and their children?

USING A STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH

Strengthening Families Guiding Principles

Strengthening Families is built on the belief that all families have strengths. That is, the belief that all families possess and have the ability to use “strengths.” By adopting this approach you value the wisdom and experience of parents and support the idea that there is no one right way to parent. Parenting is personal and it is not your job to “improve parents” your job is to improve how you value and respect what parents desire and want for their family.

Strengthening Families is different from many other prevention programs that target certain families because of risk factors. Instead by using this strength-based approach you do not focus on *what is wrong* but instead focus on supporting what all families need. This approach acknowledges that parents are experts on their family and want to do right by their child. Your role is to connect parents to resources and solutions by nurturing the protective factors.



Reflection Activity:

What are all the ways parents are bombarded with information about parenting? What are some tactics you could use to acknowledge their role as experts on their families?

GIVING ATTENTION TO MULTIPLE GENERATIONS

Families are made up of individuals from multiple generations. To strengthen the wellness of the entire family, Strengthening Families uses strategies that support children and their primary caregivers.

By focusing on the parent, the child, and the parent-child relationship together, Strengthening Families ensures parents raise healthy children and respond to their needs.

PUTTING IT TO PRACTICE

Strengthening Families Self-Assessment and Action Plan

In this section you will explore practical strategies for integrating the protective factors into your daily interactions with families. Through a self-assessment process you will determine current practices that promote family wellness while identifying additional ways for nurturing resilience for parents and their children.

- Brief description of the Strengthening Families program strategy
- Self-assessment
 - Directions: answer each item on the assessment by checking the box that best describes your interactions with or support you provide to families
- Action Plan
 - Directions: based on the responses on your self-assessment identify one activity or practice you would like to implement. Be sure to identify the steps, time frame, and supplies needed to carry out the activity or practice

PROGRAM STRATEGIES – TARGETED ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE FAMILY WELLNESS

Strengthening Families Program Strategies

- Facilitate friendship and mutual support
- Strengthening Parenting
- Respond to family crises
- Link families to services and opportunities
- Facilitate children's social and emotional development
- Observe and respond to early warning signs of child abuse or neglect
- Value and support parents

Facilitate Friendship and Mutual Support

Why is it important?

Parenting is overwhelming and even more so for parents with limited networks of supports. It seems that more and more parents report feeling isolated and alone. And many new and working parents struggle to find time for peer friendships due to conflicting priorities. Being a parent can create opportunities to connect with others. You can help to create connections between parents. By making connections between and with parents; you promote trusting relationships and give parents a sense of belonging. As a result parents no longer feel alone and begin to establish reliable networks of support.

Fill out the self-assessment below based on your interactions with families

		I do this	I don't do this	I'd like to try this
1.	A comfortable space or opportunities are available for families to meet informally			
2.	I help parents set up formal and informal support mechanisms, such as phone trees, car pools babysitting co-ops, and play groups.			
3.	I connect families with similar interests, children's ages, and circumstances (such as those with twins, parents of infants, or those who speak the same language)			
4.	I provide opportunities for families to socialize and foster a sense of community through:			
	Periodic events like coffee breaks and breakfasts			
	Events celebrating cultural customs, potlucks, and other opportunities for parents to share and learn about each other's home lives and cultural backgrounds.			
	Special programs for dads, grandparents, teen moms, and other caregivers.			
5.	I make information available on activities for parents to attend together within the community/neighborhood – for example, fun fairs or library events.			
6.	I offer opportunities for parents to talk with each other			
7.	I reach out to isolated families by:			
	Calling, sending notes, or making home visits			
	Inviting them to social activities or community events			
	Making special efforts to connect them with other families			
	Connecting them with resources, such as mental health consultation, that can help them explore difficulties with forming social connections			
8.	I model positive social skills and community building by:			
	Being warm and welcoming to all families			
	Inviting all children and families to parties or social events			
	Helping to resolve issues among families			
	Promoting understanding of different family values and backgrounds			

Based on your responses how do you promote friendships and mutual support?

What item do you feel would be difficult? Why? _____

In the table below, create a plan for an activity or practice you will implement in order to support facilitating friendship and mutual support. (Note that the self-assessment you completed may give you an idea. Refer to example on page. 48)

PROPOSED ACTIVITY/PRACTICE:			
Steps	Time Frame	Owner(s)	Supplies needed
OUTCOMES (What were your results? Number of parents attended, engagement level of parents, did parents make interact with each other, etc)	SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:		

Strengthen Parenting

Why is it important?

There is no one right way to parent and many parents are seeking new and different ways to care for and meet the needs of their children. Information about child's development and different ways to manage children's behaviors can help parents work through issues as they arise. As professionals who are interacting with parents, you have the opportunity to collaborate and assist parents with these different learning opportunities. A lot of parents need just-in-time support. This means that the parents are given information that is convenient and when the parent needs it. An example of this would be giving a parent information or talking with them about teething when their child is teething rather than when information is available.

Fill out the self-assessment below based on your interactions with families

		I do this	I don't do this	I'd like to try this
1.	Information on parenting is available through			
	Regular postings on bulletin boards in public spaces			
	Take-home materials distributed regularly to parents			
	Specific information on Shaken Baby Syndrome, SIDS, scalding, toilet training, routine preventive health care, nutrition, and sleep patterns			
2.	I share parenting tips and discuss parenting issues with parents during:			
	Pick-up and drop-off times			
	Parent visits or conferences			
	Occasions when it appears that a parent is frustrated or stressed and needs support			
	Times when I notice a parent having difficulty relating to or communicating with their child(ren)			
4.	I regularly provide information to parents about their child's developmental progress			
5.	Information is provided on regular developmental challenges such as bed wetting, potty training, appropriate discipline, eating, sleeping, and aggression			
6.	When I am concerned about parenting techniques or behavior, I:			
	Proactively and respectfully reach out to parents and share my concerns about the children or about the parents' parenting practices			
	Acknowledge young children's frustrating behavior and recognize parents' efforts			
	Connect parents to other parents who can share/model positive parenting approaches			
	Connect parents to resources and supports that may help to address the parenting issues			
7.	I reinforce positive parenting by telling parents something positive about what their child has done each day			

Based on your responses how do you strengthen parenting? _____

What item do you feel would be difficult? Why? _____

In the table below, create a plan for an activity or practice you will implement in order to strengthen parenting. (Note that the self-assessment you completed may give you an idea. Refer to example on page. 48)

PROPOSED ACTIVITY/PRACTICE:			
Steps	Time Frame	Owner(s)	Supplies needed
OUTCOMES: (What were your results? Number of parents attended, engagement level of parents, did parents make interact with each other, etc)		SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:	

Respond to Family Crises

Why is it important?

All families need support; and some families need more support than others – especially during a time of crisis. Asking for help and knowing where to turn for help is an obstacle for many families. Positioning yourself as a caring resource can make all the difference. Your ability to collaborate with parents to ensure they have the needed resources enables parents to meet the needs of their family. In addition as a parent feels supported, he or she will be more likely to ask for help. You can reduce further stress on families by providing emotional support, problem solving and sharing information about local resources.

Fill out the self-assessment below based on your interactions with families

		I do this	I don't do this	I'd like to try this
1.	I develop personal relationship with parents by taking time to get to know them individually – listening and learning about their interests, families, current activities, and hopes and expectations for their children.			
2.	The message that parents can turn to me in the event of a crisis is conveyed informally in day-to-day interactions that I have with parents – by listening, showing concern, and sharing their own personal challenges or desires.			
3.	I have access to resource and referral links to such crisis services as:			
	Food Pantries			
	Domestic Violence services			
	Shelters and housing needs			
	Respite care for children			
	Alcohol and Substance abuse services			
	Mental health services			
	Economic supports			
	Legal assistance			
4.	If parents bring up issues I feel are beyond my ability to solve, I can refer them to a supervisor			
5.	I proactively respond to signs of parent or family distress by:			
	Expressing my concern and offering help			
	Offering to connect families to resources			
	Being sensitive and responsive to the impact of family stress on children			
6.	I know how to respond appropriately to family crises. I received training on:			
	Resolving conflicts			
	Talking to families about difficult issues			
	Understanding the impact of family crises and/ or loss on a family members – especially children – and how to respond appropriately			
	Talking to parents about helping children in times of crises			

Based on your answers how do you respond to family crisis? _____

What item do you feel would be difficult? Why? _____

In the table below, create a plan for an activity or practice for responding to family crisis.

(Note that the self-assessment you completed may give you an idea. Refer to example on page. 38)

PROPOSED ACTIVITY/PRACTICE:			
Steps	Time Frame	Owner(s)	Supplies needed
OUTCOMES: <i>(What were your results? Number of parents attended, engagement level of parents, did parents make interact with each other, etc)</i>	SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:		

Link Families to Services and Opportunities

Why is it important?

Working with families to help them meet their health, social, psychological, economic, and career goals is an important part of shoring-up the well-being of children and their parents. By making a conscious effort to understand families' goals and needs; you are able to connect families to different supports that will assist them with achieving those goals and filling their own needs.

Fill out the self-assessment below based on your interactions with families

		I do this	I don't do this	I'd like to try this
1.	I ask parents about the needs and goals they have for themselves and their children			
2.	Parents have access to up-to-date information about services that are available in the community that includes hours of business, fees, location, eligibility, language capacity, etc.			
3.	I actively build collaborative links with other service providers in order to share information with parents about resources			
4.	I encourage parents to share information about community resources for families – such as toy exchanges, resale shops, play lots, family activities, and more formal services			
5.	Brainstorm with families about what resources would be helpful			
6.	I provide parents information and guidance on:			
	Transitioning children to school			
	The importance of parents staying involved with their children's education and school			
7.	Try to make a personal connection between families and service providers			
8.	Follow up with families to see if they used the referral and ensure that they were satisfied with the services they received			
9.	I connect parents to opportunities that promote:			
	Their continued growth and development, i.e. work force development or education services			
	Family enrichment, i.e., reading hours at the library, parent-child book groups, and cultural heritage events			
	Economic stability, i.e. financial counseling, housing services			
	Their health and wellness			

Based on your responses how do you link parents to services or opportunities? _____

What item do you feel would be difficult? Why? _____

In the table below, create a plan for an activity or practice for linking parents to services and opportunities. (Note that the self-assessment you completed may give you an idea. Refer to example on page. 48)

PROPOSED ACTIVITY/PRACTICE:			
Steps	Time Frame	Owner(s)	Supplies needed
OUTCOMES: (What were your results? Number of parents attended, engagement level of parents, did parents make interact with each other, etc)	SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:		

Facilitate Children's Social and Emotional Development

Why is it important?

Children learn to form relationships and manage their feelings by being in supportive environments with adults that nurture and care for them. A child's ability to recognize, communicate and regulate their emotions effects their interactions with others. You can help children develop their social-emotional skills through curriculum, activities, and play. In addition you can help parents understand their role in teaching children how to express their feelings and develop positive relationships with other children and adults. Research has shown that children having a caring relationship with consistent caregivers positively impacts their future success in school and life.

Fill out the self-assessment below based on your interactions with families

		I do this	I don't do this	I'd like to try this
1.	I encourage children to name and express their feelings			
2.	I encourage sharing, taking turns, and cooperative play			
3.	I introduce parents to social and emotional development by:			
	Informing parents of the importance of supporting children's healthy social and emotional development – and its connection to success in school			
	Helping parents understand age-appropriate social and emotional skills and behaviors			
	Encouraging parents to be aware of their children's social and emotional development			
	Offering parents ideas on how to foster a child's social and emotional learning at home			
4.	I make sure that parents understand how their child(ren)'s positive relationships with teachers positively impact their own relationship with their child(ren)			
5.	I coach parents about how to interact effectively with their children (listening; appreciate ideas, efforts, and feelings; creating a non-threatening environment)			
6.	I model behavior toward children that encourages social and emotional expressiveness			
7.	I encourage children to express their feelings through words, artwork, and expressive play			
8.	I understand and respect the relationships and attachments that children have by:			
	Supporting the values and role of their parent			
	Helping children build relationships with other children			
9.	If I am concerned about a child's social and emotional development, I:			
	Discuss concerns with the child's parent(s)			
	Help the parent(s) develop strategies for addressing the issues at home			
	c. Connect the family to resources that can support the child's social and emotional development (such as play			

Based on your answers how do you facilitate children's social and emotional development?

What item do you feel would be difficult? Why? _____

In the table below, create a plan for an activity or practice for facilitating children's social and emotional competence. (Note that the self-assessment you completed may give you an idea. Refer to example on page. 48)

PROPOSED ACTIVITY/PRACTICE:			
Steps	Time Frame	Owner(s)	Supplies needed
OUTCOMES: (What were your results? Number of parents attended, engagement level of parents, did parents make interact with each other, etc)		SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:	

Observe and Respond to Early warning Signs of Family Stress

Why is it important?

Adversity and ongoing stress can greatly impact the well-being of parents and children's early development – especially when that stress becomes toxic. Children living in poverty, exposed to violence or who experience the loss of a significant caregiver; are more likely to experience future health, emotional and educational issues. By monitoring levels of stress and supporting the resilience of families; you can lessen the impact of stress and ensure families have the resources and supports needed to overcome obstacles and maintain their resilience.

Fill out the self-assessment below based on your interactions with families

		I do this	I don't do this	I'd like to try this
1.	I monitor the following signs that a family may be under stress including:			
	Physical signs (such as bruises), acting out, distress, challenging behavior, fearful behavior, inappropriate language/behavior (such as sexual acting out), or other child symptoms			
	Unusual or withdrawn parental behavior			
	Repeated missed appointments or unexplained absences			
	Divorce, job loss, or other family crises			
	Statements made by parents that they are overwhelmed or feeling hopeless			
2.	When a family is experiencing extreme difficulties but there is no sign of imminent harm to the child or other family members:			
	I work with the family to discuss concerns and appropriate actions			
	I help families think about alternative solutions when they are out of ideas			
	I reach out to the family to address the issues causing concerns			
	I attempt to connect the families to resources that can help address the issue including such intensive services respite care, shelters or emergency crisis services			
	I continue to support families and monitor the situation daily until the situation is resolved			
3.	I am trained to follow to the programs protocols for reporting child abuse, neglect, and navigating the child welfare system			
4.	I ensure parents are informed of:			
	My status as mandatory reporters			
	What constitutes abuse and neglect within the state			
5.	I assist parents in helping their children cope with stress by:			
	Providing reassurance by keeping their children's daily routines intact i.e. bedtime, mealtime etc.			
	Helping parents determine how much information to share with children about current stress or challenge			
	Encouraging children to name and express their feelings			

Based on your responses how do you observe and respond to early warning signs of family stress? _____

What item do you feel would be difficult? Why? _____

In the table below, create a plan for an activity or practice for observing and responding to early warning signs of family stress. (Note that the self-assessment you completed may give you an idea. Refer to example on page. 48)

PROPOSED ACTIVITY/PRACTICE:			
Steps	Time Frame	Owner(s)	Supplies needed
OUTCOMES: (What were your results? Number of parents attended, engagement level of parents, did parents make interact with each other, etc)		SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:	

Value and Support Parents

Why is it important?

Small gestures add up and create a warm and nurturing environment for parents to feel comfortable enough to confide in you about their needs and concerns. Viewing parents as the expert of their own child and honoring their family values elevates the parent as their child's first and best teacher. By valuing and supporting parents you show confidence in the parents ability to meet the needs of their family. In addition parents who feel more confident in their parenting are more likely to advocate for their child and engage in their child's learning and development.

Fill out the self-assessment below based on your interactions with families

		I do this	I don't do this	I'd like to try this
1.	Parents are active in making decisions about their children's education			
2.	I get to know parents individually and regularly inquire about how they are doing			
3.	I get to know and greet all family members by name			
4.	I ask parents to share their experience raising and caring for their children			
5.	Parents have opportunities to share skills, talents, and cultural traditions with children and other parents			
6.	I encourage intentional parenting by asking parents to:			
a.	Think about the type of relationship they want to have with their children			
b.	Reflect on the way they were parented and consider what they want to or don't want to repeat			
c.	Develop individualized parenting strategies that will support the various needs of their children			
7.	I connect parents to resources to help them explore different ways of parenting			
	Parent Cafe or Parent education groups			
	Counseling and support groups			
	Mentors/coaching and faith-based activities			
8.	I provide emotional support and encouragement to parents			
9.	I do not blame parents for children's challenging behaviors			
10.	I recognize parents' strengths, growth and efforts			
11.	I am accepting and supportive of diverse family constellations, i.e. single parents, grandparents, foster parents, gay/lesbian couples, etc.			

Based on your responses how do you value and support parents? _____

What item do you feel would be difficult? Why? _____

In the table below, create a plan for an activity or practice for valuing and supporting parents. (Note that the self-assessment you completed may give you an idea. Refer to example on page. 48)

PROPOSED ACTIVITY/PRACTICE:			
Steps	Time Frame	Owner(s)	Supplies needed
OUTCOMES: (What were your results? Number of parents attended, engagement level of parents, did parents make interact with each other, etc)		SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:	

SAMPLE ACTION PLAN

PROPOSED ACTIVITY/PRACTICE: Cultures in our Classroom			
Steps	Time Frame	Owner(s)	Supplies needed
Notify administrator and set date of event	July 12 th	Lead- Angie Assistant-Bob Administrator - Candy	cups plates plastic silverware napkins tablecloths arts and craft supplies Drinks Snacks Decorations
Inform parents/encourage parents to share cultural customs	July 14 th	Lead-Angie	
Create sign-up sheet	July 17 th	Assistant-Bob	
Plan activities	July 21 st	Lead-Angie	
Purchase supplies (refreshments)	July 26 th	Administrator- Candy	
Host event	July 28 th	Lead- Angie Assistant-Bob Administrator- Candy	
<p>OUTCOMES: <i>(What were your results? Number of parents attended, engagement level of parents, did parents make interact with each other, etc)</i></p> <p>Parents talked to one another and found similarities with cultural customs.</p> <p>4 families shared their cultural foods</p> <p>7 families attended with 11 children total</p> <p>2 families scheduled play dates with their children</p>	<p>SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:</p> <p>Include other leads and their participation in the event</p> <p>Personally call all families to invite them to the event and bring something to represent their culture</p> <p>Send out reminder calls the day before</p> <p>Plan icebreaker activity</p>		



**NOTE AND
RESOURCE PAGES**

