

## Strengths-based Approaches that Build Positive Parent-Child Relationships and Foster Resilience

Presented by

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## About Wingspan

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- ❖ Evidence-based programs and resources for early childhood
- ❖ Equips adults to nurture children's social-emotional development and resilience
- ❖ Practical, easy-to-use approaches and materials



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## Parenting Challenges

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What parenting challenges do the families you work with face?



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## Working with Families

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- ❖ Family management
- ❖ Child Development – ages and stages
- ❖ Behavior management
- ❖ Connect to community resources – job training, food assistance, mental health services
- ❖ Parent/child relationship



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## Workshop Goals

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Increase awareness and understanding of:

- ❖ Stressors and issues that impede positive parenting
- ❖ Strengths-based approaches that foster positive parent-child relationships
- ❖ Evidence-based strategies to support parents in building their children's social-emotional skills and self-regulation



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## That's a Good Sign...

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What is something you would see or hear that indicates progress in positive parent-child relationships?



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## ***Positive Parenting***

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- ❖ Show caring, warmth, and respect
- ❖ Listen to and validate children's feelings and experiences
- ❖ Encourage children to explore their ideas
- ❖ Help children understand feelings
- ❖ Support children's self-control
- ❖ Model healthy behavior
- ❖ Guide problem-solving
- ❖ Give clear norms
- ❖ Involve children in family life

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## ***Positive Parent/Child Relationships Tell Children:***

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- ❖ I care about you.
- ❖ I am interested in you.
- ❖ I will keep you safe.
- ❖ I know you have competencies.
- ❖ I can read your signals and will respond to them.

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adapted from "Student-Teacher Relationships" by Bridget Hamre & Robert C. Pianta

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- ❖ Blogs (sample topics: being present, cultivating cooperation, value of outdoor play, praise)
- ❖ Printables to send home
- ❖ Free tips and resources
- ❖ Fun, easy-to-use materials such as original music, books, and stickers

AcornDreams.com



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## ***Parent Handouts - Downloads***

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- ❖ Using Words to Express Feelings
- ❖ Encouraging Cooperation
- ❖ Calm Down for Parents
- ❖ Handling Anger
- ❖ Effective Consequences
- ❖ Limiting TV Time

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## ***Strength-Based Approaches***

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- ❖ Acknowledge challenges parents face
- ❖ Build parents' skills and competencies
- ❖ Emphasize "what's working"
- ❖ Move away from problem-focus
- ❖ Focus on "to do" rather than "what not to do"

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## ***20,000 Chances a Day***

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Each moment that a parent and child interact is an opportunity to develop a positive relationship.

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## ***Caring Adult – Critical for a Child’s Positive Development***

- ❖ Listen
- ❖ Empathize
- ❖ Be genuine
- ❖ Give unconditional support
- ❖ Build social-emotional skills
- ❖ Non-judgmental
- ❖ Respectful
- ❖ Calm



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## ***AcornDreams Blog: Being Truly Present with Children***

- ❖ Benefits of really tuning into children - child feels valued and develops sense of self-worth
- ❖ Tips for meaningful, in-the-moment interactions:
  - ❑ Try to stop what you are doing, and really listen
  - ❑ Look for times to connect with your child: in the car, walking the dog, settling down at bedtime
  - ❑ Put your phone away when possible. Let your child see that you value him above all else
  - ❑ Plan a 'together time' or 'just the two of us time' and let your child choose a quiet activity for the two of you.
  - ❑ Keep 'together time' media-free.



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## ***AcornDreams Blog: Cultivate Cooperation***

- ❖ Helps children become independent and have positive experiences

### ***Tips:***

- Be proactive. Talk ahead of time about expectations like being ready for school on time. When you and your child are calm and relaxed, talk together about the steps of the morning routine. Include your child in coming up with ideas.
- Use visuals to help guide and remind your child. For example, create a chart together using pictures for each step.
- Recognize when your child does cooperate – thumbs up, high fives, specific verbal comments.



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### **Take Five: Countdown to Cooperation**

#### **How Will "Take Five" Help My Child?**

Take Five helps your child do things for herself and be more cooperative.

#### **What Can I Do?**

1. If your child refuses to follow directions, do NOT try to talk her into it. Example, say once "Please pick up your blocks."
2. Calmly tell your child that you will count down from five and that she must follow your direction. **DO NOT** give rewards "later" or else and receive a consequence. Tell her what that consequence will be. Example, say "If you do not pick up your blocks by one, you will not be able to play with them tomorrow." The best consequences are loss of independent choice, time out, or loss of a privilege. (See Taking Consequences: The Right Time! handout.)
3. Calmly say the numbers "5-4-3-2-1" and count. **ONLY** count down. Don't give more warnings, don't beg, don't threaten. **DO NOT** count down from five to one.
4. If your child does not cooperate before you say "one," follow through with the consequence.
5. If your child does cooperate even if she waits until "1," make sure you say "Thanks for cooperating. You made a good decision."

#### **Notes & Tips for my child:**

#### **Rewards for Life!**

Teens and adults who are cooperative and independent are able to take on the challenges of school and work. They tend to have healthier relationships and more success in life.

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## ***Parent Education Program***

- ❖ 13 experiential learning modules, 45 minutes each
- ❖ Strengths-based approach
- ❖ Conducted by parent educators leading parent groups
- ❖ Builds positive parent-child relationships
- ❖ Topics include: feelings, calming down, problem-solving, clear norms, high expectations, caring.



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## ***Comments from Parents about Here, Now and Down the Road***

- ❖ *I don't feel as stressed. I don't yell as much. I think before I speak.*
- ❖ *I've learned to get my children involved in decisions every day.*
- ❖ *I'm less demeaning. I treat the children in a more respectful manner. That makes them feel better about themselves. Our house is a happier place to be now. The kids treat us with more respect, too.*
- ❖ *I know now how important it is to give children all the love and understanding you can. Let them know how important they are every day and they can do anything and everything.*



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## Parents Show Caring In Many Different Ways

“Caring for the Sunshine of your Life” HNDR module:

- ❖ Give unconditional love
- ❖ Show interest in children’s ideas, feelings, activities
- ❖ Provide safe, predictable home (physical and emotional safety)
- ❖ Show affection
- ❖ Recognize positive behavior
- ❖ Spend time together



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## How Parents Can Help their Children Understand and Express Feelings

- ❖ Name and use words for feelings
- ❖ Talk about feelings when reading books
- ❖ Role Model (try for once a day)
- ❖ Ask about, listen, and validate feelings



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The image shows a screenshot of a webpage. The main content area is titled "Free Resources" and contains several sections: "Uncomplicated and to-the-point, these handouts target specific areas of social-emotional development to help parents, caregivers, educators, and other caring adults support healthy development in young children.", "Self-Control" (Using time out effectively is one way to help children manage their own behavior), "When parents can calm down everyone benefits.", "Helping children learn to stop and think is the first step to self-control.", "Teach children to use words when they feel angry.", "Communicate with children in ways that increase cooperation.", "How to set up a calm down spot in a classroom.", "How to set up a calm down spot at home.", "Guidelines for Reducing Temper Tantrums.", "Reproducible mini version of Calm Down steps.", "Social Skills". An arrow points from the "When parents can calm down everyone benefits." section to a sidebar on the right titled "Free Resources" which lists "Checklist to access digital app for parents and educators to develop children's social skills and healthy habits" and "Healthy At Healthy Me Resources".

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## The Value of Listening

Listen earnestly to anything children want to tell you, no matter how trivial it may seem.

If you don't listen eagerly to the little stuff, they won't tell you the big stuff

...because to them, it has always been big stuff.



Adapted from Catherine M. Willcox

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## Validate

- ❖ Stop what you are doing. Look at the child.
- ❖ Respond to the feeling. Show empathy.  
"I see how sad you are that your friend moved away. I miss my friends, too, when they move away."
- ❖ Pause for a moment – let the validation soak in.
- ❖ Don't always have to fix it or solve it.



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## Managing Strong Feelings

- ❖ Help children prepare for disappointment
  - Anticipate and talk ahead of time
  - The weather changed. Instead of being sunny it is supposed to rain. How will you feel if we can't go to the park?
  - What will you do?
- ❖ Help children cope
  - What to do when you feel scared



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## Self-Regulation

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- ❖ Teach and model how to:
  - Calm Down
  - Stop and Think
- ❖ Give clear expectations and reinforce prosocial behavior – use kind words, include others, take turns

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## CALM DOWN STEPS

1.  Take three deep breaths.
2.  Count to five slowly.
3.  Say "calm down" to yourself.

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## Calm Down Package

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## Problem-Solving Steps

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1. Stop. Think about the problem.
2. Say how you feel.
3. Brainstorm ideas.
4. Try the best one.
5. What happened?

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## Guiding Positive Behavior Program

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- ❖ Derived from the evidence-based work of the *AI's Pals: Kids Making Healthy Choices* program
- ❖ Same strengths-based strategies and approaches to foster young children's resilience
- ❖ Two versions:
  - one is designed for use with small groups
  - one is for use with individual children

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## Guiding Positive Behavior Materials Help Young Children:

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- ❖ Express feelings appropriately
- ❖ Self-regulate
- ❖ Acquire and use social skills like sharing, taking turns, using kind words
- ❖ Cope in healthy ways
- ❖ Problem-solve peacefully

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***"This work is never boring but it is demanding. It is very meaningful work in which you will see the best and worst of life. You will experience moments of despair as you witness the damage done by uncontrolled evil. You will also experience moments of sublime beauty as you witness the efforts of the human spirit to wring meaning out of chaos, transcend destruction, and birth new coping mechanisms. Take care of yourself; it's a wonderful journey."*** Professor of Social Work Linda Ayscue Gupta, LCSW

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**Thank You**

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