**SAFE HEALING AND LEARNING SPACES TOOLKIT**

**PARENTING SKILLS CURRICULUM**

**FOR CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN (6–11 YEARS)**

COPYEDITING DRAFT

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**Introduction**

**Welcome to the Safe Healing and Learning Spaces (SHLS) Parenting Skills Curriculum for caregivers of children aged 6–11 years. This resource is to be used by a Parenting Skills Facilitator to help parents and caregivers promote their child’s healthy development and well-being, as part of the Parenting Skills Intervention in the SHLS Toolkit.[[1]](#footnote-1)**

The Parenting Skills Curriculum is one of the 5 components of the SHLS Toolkit: The Implementation Guide, the SHLS Approach, the Reading and Math Intervention, the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Intervention and the Parenting Skills Curriculum are complementary and contribute to the overarching outcome that **children are safe, well and learning in the SHLS.**

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Part 1: Information for the Facilitator

The first part of the Parenting Skills Curriculum provides you, the Parenting Skills Facilitator, with information to understand the content and prepare for the Parenting Skills sessions with parents and caregivers of children aged 6–11 years. It is divided into 2 sections:

1. **Background information** – This section provides information about the approach to parenting in the Parenting Skills Intervention, and the research evidence to support this approach.
2. **Delivering the Parenting Skills sessions** – This section provides guidance for the Facilitator to contextualize the training, select a venue, collect the required resources and understand the approach necessary to deliver the training with fidelity.

# Background Information

### What are ‘Parenting Skills’?

The Parenting Skills Intervention in the SHLS Toolkit aims to promote the well-being of children and adolescents through improving parents’ stress management skills, positive parenting practices and strategies for supporting children and adolescents with psychosocial needs. It is adapted from the International Rescue Committee’s *Families Make the Difference* (FMD) program. The FMD program was developed on the premise that every parent and child deserves to have a healthy, mutually enjoyable relationship that fosters optimal child growth and development. It focuses on preventing and decreasing violence against children in the home and improving positive developmental outcomes for children in developing contexts and conflict settings, with a particular interest in investing in young children.

As part of this intervention, parents and caregivers receive the following information through discussion, skills practice and handouts.

* How children’s brains develop within the context of relationships
* Ways to promote children’s positive development and behavior through positive attention and play
* Ways to decrease children’s misbehavior
* The effect of household violence and stress on children’s development and ways of decreasing parental stress and anger
* School readiness

To date the *International Rescue Committee* has completed 3 randomized impact evaluations in Burundi, Liberia and on the Thai–Burma border, and has ongoing parenting programs in Burundi, Ethiopia, Jordan, Lebanon, Liberia, Syria and Tanzania. The impact evaluations revealed that parenting programs are feasible and applicable in various contexts and that short-term parenting interventions can be effective in decreasing harsh punishment and improving positive parenting practices.

### What is the evidence to support the SHLS Parenting Skills Curriculum?

The Parenting Skills Intervention tools have been developed, based on more than 3 decades of research on the effectiveness of ‘parent training’ programs to improve child behavior, eliminate behavior problems, and prevent and mediate child abuse and neglect. Specifically, the Parenting Skills Curriculum draws on the following elements, found to be particularly effective in changing parenting behaviors and attitudes:

1. Teaching positive parent–child interaction skills
2. Increasing emotional and empathetic communication skills
3. Helping parents to support problem-solving skills and guiding children’s healthy choices
4. Teaching parents non-violent discipline strategies[[2]](#footnote-2)
5. Psychosocial support for parents and children
6. **Positive parent–child interactions:** Teaching parents how to positively interact with their children is one of the most effective components of parenting programs. Researchers have found that teaching parents to practice child-directed play for school-age children, to praise desirable behaviors, and to provide positive attention to children and adolescents decreases aggression and other misbehaviors as well as increasing parents’ self-efficacy.[[3]](#footnote-3) The Parenting Skills Curriculum focuses on how parents can interact with their children in positive ways to support healthy parent–child relationships and mediate the effects of violence on children.
7. **Emotional/empathetic communication:** This type of communication helps parents to listen actively and encourages children to regulate and express their emotions appropriately. Empathetic communication helps children feel valued, which can decrease misbehavior due to frustration and anger, and increase problem-solving skills. In the Parenting Skills Curriculum, parents will learn how to sensitively respond to children’s emotions. Parents will also learn to manage their own anger and frustration in order to communicate more effectively with each other and their children.
8. **Supportive guidance and problem-solving:** Helping parents learn to be consistent as they follow through with developmentally-appropriate expectations and limitations is an effective component of parenting programs. When children understand what is expected of them at home, at school and in the community, they have a better chance of complying with rules and decreasing behavior problems.[[4]](#footnote-4) As children grow, they need support to make healthy choices. This Parenting Skills Curriculum for parents of children aged 6–11 years specifically focuses on helping parents set these expectations for their children and provide supportive guidance. There is also a Parenting Skills Curriculum for parents of adolescents, which focuses on their unique needs.
9. **Non-violent discipline:** Research indicates that, when children are subjected to harsh physical and verbal punishments, it can have lasting negative effects on their social-emotional development and well-being – for example, causing poor school performance, poor physical health, depression, anxiety, poor impulse control and, ultimately, poor job performance and economic outcomes. The use of non-violent discipline strategies, including ignoring minor misbehavior, using logical consequences such as the loss of a privilege, and time-out to decrease annoying, aggressive and oppositional behaviors, can also increase responsible behaviors by teaching children how to manage difficult feelings and safely solve problems.[[5]](#footnote-5) The Parenting Skills Curriculum provides explicit guidance for parents on how to use these strategies with their children.
10. **Parent and child psychosocial support:** Neuroscience research suggests that, in contexts where communities have experienced trauma, it is essential to focus on both the parent’s and child’s psychosocial needs to foster a healthy parent–child relationship. Drawing on this research, the Parenting Skills sessions in this curriculum teach parents relaxation techniques and ways to help their children cope with current issues and prepare for possible future difficulties. Children who have learned and practiced these types of techniques will be less likely to need specialist treatment services in the future.[[6]](#footnote-6)

# Delivering the Parenting Skills Sessions

## **The SHLS Parenting Skills Curriculum**

The Parenting Skills Curriculum includes **12 sessions** for caregivers. These sessions focus on: teaching parents how their children are developing; positive parent–child interaction techniques; stress responses and management strategies; and non-violent discipline practices. Parenting Skills Facilitators are expected to adhere to the training received to deliver the Parenting Skills Curriculum and accurately follow each session of the curriculum in order to deliver the most effective program and ensure fidelity. In addition to detailed and scripted parenting sessions, this curriculum includes a Fidelity Checklist (Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity) to help facilitators and their managers monitor their fidelity.

### Structure of the Parenting Skills session

All 12 sessions for parents and caregivers follow the same structure. The session is divided into 2 parts – the ‘Parenting session summary’ and the ‘Steps to follow’.

1. **Parenting session summary:** The ‘Parenting session summary’ at the beginning of each Parenting Skills session provides a quick reference for key information about the session, including: objectives, duration, materials required, preparation required, session overview, timing and attendance.
2. **Steps to follow:** The ‘Steps to follow’ section under the Session plan summary provides the script you must follow to deliver the Parenting Skills session. Every session follows the same pattern:
   1. An opening activity, like a game, song or activity to start every session
   2. A brief review of the previous session and homework
   3. Presentation of new content and practice of new skills
   4. Assignment of homework
   5. An evaluation of the session at the end

Facilitation techniques

The Parenting Skills Intervention uses a participatory, active learning approach that ensures that caregivers are actively engaged in the learning material. Information is presented through questions, discussions and hands-on activities. The approach is consistent with the belief that caregivers are likely to learn best through actively participating, rather than passively receiving information. Some key techniques of this approach are outlined below.

**Facilitating discussions**: Facilitators should foster a give-and-take environment during sessions by asking parents questions that encourage them to repeat key points in their own words. This curriculum will provide several such questions to encourage active participation and learning. This curriculum will also guide the facilitator to encourage caregivers to generate ideas in collaboration with each other and the facilitator through techniques like brainstorming.

**Practicing skills through role-plays:** Drawing on strong evidence suggesting the effectiveness of role-plays in parenting programs, caregivers in the Parenting Skills Curriculum will learn several new skills and practice them through role-plays. Parenting Skills Facilitators must adhere to the following guidelines to employ the role-play strategy with success:

* Select parents and give them appropriate roles. Provide them with descriptions of their roles.
* Ask for parents to volunteer or select them. Praise them for their willingness to participate in the role-play.
* Make sure all caregivers in the role-play understand the skills they are demonstrating. Have the entire group offer suggestions about what parents can do and say.
* Stop the role-play if the caregivers use the skills incorrectly, then offer further instruction to help them practice the skill correctly.
* Debrief parents after the role-play and exchange feedback.
* The facilitator can offer detailed, descriptive praise of the role-play and what was learned.

**Encouraging peer learning:** By using group work, pair work, open discussions, debriefs and peer feedback in the Parenting Skills sessions, caregivers can learn from each other. This promotes group unity and communication and enhances the rapport in the sessions while allowing trainees to learn from each other’s advice, experience and questions.

**Using both action and reflection:** This curriculum provides facilitation strategies to ensure that parents think critically about the concepts and techniques discussed, have ample opportunities to practice applying them for themselves, and reflect on their experiences.

Preparation for the Parenting Skills Sessions

1. **Get to know the parents and caregivers:** Prior to the Parenting Skills sessions, gather relevant information to understand the community and the caregivers. The SHLS Manager or the person who designed the SHLS Program should be able to provide you with background information about the caregivers to ensure that the content is aligned with their context and culture, and is sensitive to their identities, abilities and experiences.
2. **Study and contextualize the Parenting Skills Curriculum:** In order to deliver a high-quality intervention, study the Parenting Skills Curriculum thoroughly and familiarize yourself with the content of the sessions. While studying the resource, use what you have learned about the caregivers to contextualize the content and delivery to the profile of the caregivers and the local context. Look out for specific guidance on adapting the sessions below.
3. **Select an appropriate venue:** Select a venue that ideally has:

* Space for all the caregivers to sit comfortably so they can see each other and the screen or flipcharts to be used for presentations.
* Space for whole-group and small-group activities, or for caregivers to talk privately in pairs.
* Privacy, so caregivers can participate undisturbed.

1. **Gather materials required:** Gather all necessary materials for the Parenting Skills sessions in advance. Use Resource 2: Lists of Materials for Parenting Skills Sessions for this purpose. You may need to adapt some of the materials to the context or substitute them with local alternatives that are more readily available or more appropriate for the activity.
2. **Plan facilitation:** Sessions will be held by 2 facilitators. It is recommended that you have a male and female facilitator and, if appropriate in your context, encourage both male and female parents/caregivers to attend. Decide which parts of the session each of the facilitators will be responsible for. It is recommended that you divide the facilitation equally.

Proposed Agenda for the Parenting Skills Sessions

Part 2: Parenting Skills Sessions

# Parenting Skills Session 1: Introduction to Parenting Skills Intervention

## **Parenting session summary**

### Objectives

By the end of this session parents will be able to:

* Articulate the foundational principles of nurturing and positive parenting.
* Explain the difference between sex and gender.

### Duration

2 hours, 10 minutes

### Materials required

* Parenting Skills Curriculum for parents of children (6–11 years)
* Resource 1: Session Topics and Calendar for Parenting Sessions
* Resource 3: Attendance Form
* Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report
* Resource 5: Parent Support Groups Guide
* Handouts:
  + Handout 1: Session Topics and Calendar for Parenting Sessions
  + Handout 2: Sketches: Playing with Children
* Flipcharts and markers, if available (if not, pen and paper)

### Preparation required

* Read through all the materials for this session.
* Adapt Resource 1: Session Topics and Calendar for Parenting Sessions
* Make copies of the handouts and give one to each parent at the end of the session.
* Arrange for a space that is conducive to learning and free of interruptions.
* Sit in a circle to encourage interaction with parents.

### Session overview

In this session, Parenting Skills Facilitators get to know parents and caregivers, and their goals for their children. They co-create rules for how the group will be structured and how they will interact with each other every week. Parenting Skills Facilitators explain the Parenting Skills Curriculum to parents and caregivers of children aged between 6–11 years old, and briefly introduce the concept of nurturing and supportive parenting.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Session activity** | **Time** |
| 1. Welcome and introduction | 20 minutes |
| 2. Parents’ hopes and expectations | 20 minutes |
| 3. Parenting Skills Intervention overview | 15 minutes |
| 4. Co-creating rules | 15 minutes |
| 5. What is positive parenting? | 15 minutes |
| 6. Sex vs gender: Why is it important? | 30 minutes |
| 7. Home assignment | 5 minutes |
| 8. Evaluation | 10 minutes |
| Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring |  |

### Attendance

The **date and place of the session must be written on the Attendance Form.** Each parent **must** sign the Attendance Form (Resource 3) with their name, age and sex. All parents/caregivers are encouraged to attend all 12 sessions together, as parenting is a shared responsibility. Indicate if there is someone else attending with a parent or parents (such as a child or other family member).

## **Steps to follow**

### 1. Welcome and introduction

Time: 20 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Welcome parents and praise them for attending.

Say

“We are so happy you are here today! We are excited to be able to share information about parenting that is based on biological and social science research from all over the world. This will be a collaborative process where we will all share information and learn from each other!”

2. Introduce yourself. Briefly tell parents and caregivers about your experience working with other parents and, if applicable, speak a little about your own children.

3. Ask parents to share information about their families, and their roles in their families and communities.

### 2. Parents’ hopes and expectations

Time: 20 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Have parents sit in the circle and share their expectations of the program, and one hope and one worry they have for their children.
2. Write each parent’s name on a flipchart or on a piece of paper with their expectations and hopes.
3. Say “I will keep this list to review halfway through the program and at the end of the program to ensure that your needs are being met.”

### 3. Parenting Skills Intervention overview

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Say “This intervention is called Parenting Skills for parents of children between the ages of 6 and 11 years. It is part of the Safe Healing and Learning Spaces, or SHLS, program.”
2. Say “This Parenting Skills Curriculum **is based on research and experiences of parenting programs around the world.**”
3. Explain to parents that:

* There will be **12 sessions** and parents are expected to attend all of them.
* **Each session will last around 2 hours.** Parents will sign-in at the beginning and sign-out at the end of each session. At the end of each session they will receive handouts that review important information from that session. These handouts will help them practice the skills learned in the group with their children.
* In each session we will talk about many important parenting topics, such as brain development, guiding healthy choices, parent and child stress management, and coping.
* In addition to these topics, we will explore gender differences and ways to promote gender equality for boys and girls.
* Gender equality is achieved when women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision-making, and when the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued.

1. Distribute Handout 1: Session Topics and Calendar for Parenting Sessions, discuss with parents, and have everyone enter appropriate dates for each session.
2. Explain to parents that:

* They should not hesitate to ask questions or raise concerns. Everything they say is important!
* All parents will have the opportunity to form and join a parent support group. These are small groups (4 to 6 parents ­­per group) formed so that parents and caregivers can support each other and help those who miss sessions to catch up, if necessary.
* Family and community members can join these sessions as well. Agree with members on what day is convenient for them, so that you can:
* Support each other beyond the sessions
* Share ideas and feelings with other parents
* Encourage each other to practice new parenting techniques
* Inform other parents
* Parenting Skills Facilitators may also visit parents at home periodically throughout the program to learn about how they are using their new skills with their children.

! More information about setting up parent support groups and home visits can be found in Resource 5: Parent Support Groups Guide

1. Ask parents if they have questions.

Give parents a 10- or 15-minute break.

### 4**. Co-creating rules**

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Say “In any group, it is helpful to have guidelines to help us manage ourselves and our time, and to remind us to respect one another. What rules do you think are important for us to follow in these sessions?”
2. List rules on a flipchart or piece of paper. Usually up to 5 rules are enough, but allow parents to determine the number. For example, the group may decide to list:

* Punctuality and attendance (a certificate will be given to those who attend all 12 sessions.)
* Respect and listen to each other.
* Confidentiality (information shared in the group is not exchanged outside of the group.)

### 5. What is positive parenting for children?

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Give parents Handout 2: Playing with Children

2. Ask

* “What do you think is happening in the picture?”
* “How do you think the children are feeling?”
* “How do you think the parents are feeling?”

1. Have parents volunteer to share their responses.
2. Ask “What do you think of the word ‘nurture’?”
3. Say
   * “We are going to spend the next several weeks talking about positive, nurturing parenting. We are going to talk about how you can promote your children’s healthy growth and development by enjoying time with them, praising them and loving them!
   * Positive, nurturing parenting can also create happier relationships between children and parents.

Effective parenting is **predictable, stimulating, loving** and **nurturing.**

* + - **Predictable:** Children know what is expected from them. There are clear rules and daily routine in the home to reinforce the sense of control and security.
    - **Stimulating:** Parents engage with their children, they stimulate their physical and cognitive skills.
    - **Loving and nurturing:** Parents show affection to their children, they communicate in an empathetic way and use non-violent discipline.”

1. Give parents instructions for the **‘When I was a child…’** activity:

Say

* “Recall experiences that were nurturing or positive for you when you were a child.
* Think about and complete the following statements:
  + One good memory I have of my childhood is…
  + The positivefeeling I had then was…
  + The feeling I have remembering this today is…
* Imagine what your children might say about you several years later.
* Think about and complete the following statement:
  + One memory I want my children to have of me is…
* Discuss your responses in pairs for 5 minutes.”

! Listen in as parents share their thoughts in pairs.

* “Share the memory you want your children to have of you with the whole group.”

1. Write each parent’s desired memory next to their name on a flipchart or paper, and come back to them during the last session of the program.

#### Note for Facilitator: Today, focus on the positive, nurturing aspects. In this first session, you do not need to focus on painful memories like abuse, neglect, violence or corporal punishment. It is important that parents have a positive, supportive experience in this first session. We want to emphasize how they can contribute to the healthy development of their children by being supportive!

9. Ask “What can parents do to help children develop in healthy, happy ways?”

10. Encourage parents to give real examples from their own families or others they know. Encourage parents to share and exchange dialogue based on these examples and ideas about nurturing. **Focus on the positive.**

11. Ask “How do parents nurture children?”

12. Discuss with parents different ways to nurture their children, such as: talking to their children about school and the family; hugging their children; ensuring their children have clean clothes, and so on.

13. Say “Parents can also nurture by example. Nurturing is a lifestyle, like being a good citizen, a caring person, or a faithful friend.”

14. Ask

* “How do you model kind, nurturing behaviors for your children?
* How do you nurture and take care of yourselves?
* Why is this important?”

15. Tell parents the **Story of the 2 Lions.**[[7]](#footnote-7)

Say

“An old man is teaching his grandson about life. “A fight is going on inside me," he tells the boy. "It is a terrible fight and it is between 2 lions. One lion is evil: he is anger, abuse, violence, jealousy, impatience, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, neglect, selfishness, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego."

The old man continues, "The other lion is good: he is joy, peace, love, hope, laughter, color, music, dance, togetherness, patience, intelligence, serenity, tenderness, humility, empathy, respect, forgiveness, play, happiness, gentleness, friendship, growth, safety, dignity, kindness, benevolence, generosity, comprehension and listening, truth, compassion and faith.”

Then the old man tells the boy, “The same fight is going on inside you, and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thinks about this for a minute and then asks his grandfather, "Which lion will win?" The old man looks to the young child, smiles, and simply replies, "The one you feed.” ”

16. Ask

* + “What is the moral of the story?”

### 6. Sex vs gender: Why is it important?

Time: 30 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Pairs

1. Ask “What is the difference between sex and gender?”
2. Give parents a few minutes to talk in pairs about this and then bring everyone back together to share their thoughts in the larger group*.*
3. Add the following information, if needed:

* ‘Sex’ refers to the body differences between males and females.
* Women and men have different body parts because they are 2 different sexes – the male sex and the female sex.
* ‘Gender’ refers to the social and cultural differences between men and women. For example, the social status, opportunities and restrictions faced by girls/women, are different from boys/men. Also, certain activities that girls/women are each supposed to do within a community are different from the ones boys/men are supposed to do.
* The idea of gender roles and responsibilities can be supportive in some ways but, at other times, gender may restrict people’s talents, abilities and choices in life, as well as create specific risks of violence and abuse.

1. Ask “What are the expectations or roles in your culture for:
   * Girls?
   * Boys?”
2. Ask “Do you agree with these roles and expectations? Why or why not? How do they influence the ways you parent your daughters and sons?

## Say “Gender roles are created in our cultures. Boys and girls are first introduced to gender roles in our homes. As parents and caregivers, sometimes we may treat boys and girls differently by giving boys more opportunities for education, sports and leadership, and giving girls fewer opportunities.”

## 7. Home assignment

Time: 5 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Say “This is the first session, so the assignment is an easy one. Until the next session, you should try to enjoy the company of your children, spend time with them, listen to them, nurture them and love them as much as possible.”
2. Explain the parent support groups to caregivers and help them form such groups.

! Use Resource 5: Parent Support Groups Guide for this purpose.

### 8. Evaluation

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. The evaluation of this first session should also be simple.   
     
   Ask

* “What did you like best about the session?
* What questions would you have liked to ask but did not have the opportunity to ask?
* How was this session helpful?
* Do you have any other comments or suggestions for improving this session?”

1. Praise all parents and thank them for their participation.
2. Make sure each parent signs the Attendance Form (Resource 3). If there is someone else attending (a mother with a baby on her back, for example), indicate this on the Attendance Form. If someone left or came in during the session, note this as well. If someone misses a session, remind them that they can catch up in the parent support groups or through home visits.

### Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring

After the session, both Parenting Skills Facilitators need to check-off all completed activities in Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report. If there were activities that were not completed, explain why. Facilitators also need to record parent feedback on the Fidelity Forms. This report should be attached to the session attendance record.

# Parenting Skills Session 2: Understanding Parent Stress

## **Parenting session summary**

### Objectives

By the end of this session parents will be able to:

* Identify their own psychosocial and emotional needs.
* Articulate the impact of their stress on their children’s well-being.
* Name techniques to manage their stress.

### Duration

2 hours, 5 minutes

### Materials required

* Parenting Skills Curriculum for parents of children (6–11 years)
* Resource 3: Attendance Form
* Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report
* Handouts:
* Handout 3: Identification of Parents’ Psychosocial and Emotional Needs
* Handout 4: Feeling and Action Drawings (only if the parents are not comfortable with writing)
* Handout 5: Relaxation Exercise
* Handout 6: Relaxation Techniques (@adapt to your context)
* Flipcharts and markers/Paper and pens
* Tape
* Colored pencils

### Preparation required

* Read through the session to acquaint yourself with the content.
* Be in the room 15 minutes before the session to prepare the room, to ensure that there are no disturbances during the session, and to make the place conducive for the session.
* Learn the names of parents, children and spouses.
* Adapt the scenario under Activity 2: Identification of parents’ social and emotional needs.

### Session overview

In this session parents learn about their own psychological, social and emotional needs and how, when those needs go unmet, stress is created. Parents then learn how their stress, if unmanaged, can negatively impact on their children. Finally, parents learn and practice relaxation techniques.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Session activity** | **Time** |
| 1. Welcome and introduction | 10 minutes |
| 2. Identification of parents’ social and emotional needs | 30 minutes |
| 3. The impact of parent stress on children | 30 minutes |
| 4. Relaxation techniques to cope with stress | 40 minutes |
| 5. Home assignment | 5 minutes |
| 6. Evaluation | 10 minutes |
| Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring |  |

### Attendance

The **date and place of the session must be written on the Attendance Form.** Each parent **must** sign the Attendance Form (Resource 3) with their name, age and sex. All parents/caregivers are encouraged to attend all 12 sessions together, as parenting is a shared responsibility. Indicate if there is someone else attending with a parent or parents (such as a child or other family member).

## **Steps to follow**

### 1. Welcome and introduction

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Welcome the parents. Be positive and smile! You will need all of your energy to conduct this session successfully!
2. Ask parents to remember and talk about what was learned in the previous session.
3. Ask parents about the parent support groups.
4. Ask parents to volunteer to share a way they spent time with their children since the last meeting.

### 2. Identification of parents’ social and emotional needs

Time: 30 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Individual

1. Say

* “The situations in crisis settings are very difficult. Most of you had to leave your house, your job, your life behind to come here.
* Living in a tent or limited space with other family members can be difficult. There is not enough space and tension can happen frequently. Your children are bored, can be disrespectful, and it is easy to lose patience with them.”

1. Ask “Have you experienced a similar situation or emotion?”
2. Let parents share experiences if they want to, but do not spend too much time on negative feelings and experiences. Follow up by asking about ways they coped with this situation.
3. Say

* This is normal! Anybody would experience a high level of stress in a similar situation. Crisis affects emotional comfort; it causes irreversible material and family losses, physical exhaustion, psychological breakdowns, and makes all everyday routines futile. This is why your body reacts to cope with the high level of stress.”[[8]](#footnote-8)
* “There are 3 types of stress – **positive stress**, **tolerable stress** and **toxic stress**. These levels of stress are valid for adults and for children.
* **Positive stress response** is a normal and essential part of healthy development. Indicators of positive stress include brief increases in heart rate and mild elevations in hormone levels. Some situations that might trigger a positive stress response are taking an exam or receiving an injection.
* **Tolerable stress response** activates the body’s alert systems. It is caused by more severe, longer-lasting difficulties, such as the loss of a loved one, a natural disaster, or a frightening injury.
* **Toxic stress response** can occur when an individual experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity – such as physical or emotional abuse, exposure to violence, and/or the accumulated burdens of economic hardship.[[9]](#footnote-9)

1. Explain that the following are reactions people can experience in highly stressful situations:

* Changes in behavior (aggressiveness, confinement, silence)
* All kinds of diseases (eczema, somatic pain, diarrhea)
* Hormonal impairments (cessation of menstruation)
* Neurological disorders (muscle weakness, poor coordination, loss of sensation, seizures, confusion)

! Remind parents that they can ask questions at any time. Take time to make sure they understand the concepts properly.

Parent activity: Understanding our social-emotional needs

1. Distribute Handout 3: Identification of Parents’ Psychosocial and Emotional Needs.
2. Now we are going to talk about your individual level of stress and how it affects your daily life.
3. What are the emotions and feelings that you are experiencing since you arrived in the camp/country?
4. Brainstorm examples with the parents and write their responses on a flipchart:

Example anwers:

* Sadness
* Sickness
* Aggressiveness
* Tiredness/exhaustion
* Anger/hatred
* Stress
* Depression
* Sense of control
* Happiness

1. What are the things that you do as a result of these feelings? It can be positive or negative.
2. Brainstorm examples with the parents and write their responses on a flipchart:

Example answers:

* I do not sleep, I do not eat
  + - I shout at my children, I beat my children
    - I eat a lot
    - I am obsessed with cleaning
    - I have a very clear daily schedule
    - I invite neighbors for tea to talk

1. Remind parents to ask questions at any time. Make sure they understand the material well and use examples for difficult concepts.

#### Note for Facilitator: If the parents are not comfortable writing, you can use Handout 4: Feeling and Action Drawings that represents various feelings and actions to cut and paste. Print enough copies in color (if possible) for all parents. Parents can choose to combine drawing, collage and writing as they prefer.

#### You can also do the exercise with the whole group by drawing the table on the flipchart and using basic drawing to represent parents’ answers.

1. Say

* In Handout 3, fill out the first 2 columns of the table by trying to be as honest as you can. This is a personal exercise that you do not need to share if you do not want to. You have 10 minutes for this. Leave the third column for now.

1. Ask “Who wants to share what they wrote?”

! Parents do not need to share what they wrote if they do not want to.

1. Ask “How did you feel writing down your feelings?”

### 3. The impact of parent stress on children

Time: 30 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Individual

1. Say “A parent’s stress affects the entire family. When you feel calm it’s more likely that your children and spouse will feel calm. When you feel stressed it’s more likely your family will feel tense.”

! You can use the metaphor of a sponge to explain that children are like sponges, they absorb their parents’ emotions and feelings.

1. Explain how parents’ stress affects children:

* Research has shown that there are a number of undesirable behaviors associated with parenting stress. **This means that the more stress parents feel, the more children may misbehave and show disrespect.**
* The more children misbehave, the more stress parents feel. This is like a vicious cycle and perhaps one of the most important reasons for parents to address and deal with their stress.
* Without telling them anything, children know deep inside that their parents are stressed. They also listen to what parents are saying when they discuss adult issues and this creates stress and insecurity.
* Parents are allowed to feel sad or depressed but there are ways to limit the impact on themselves and their families.

1. Ask “How can children be affected by their parents’ stress?”
2. Write parents’ answers on a flipchart.

Example answers:

* Aggressiveness, disrespect
* Scared, refuse to leave the tent/house
* Depressed, cry often, and so on

! Take the table you filled out during the previous session and see if you can link some of your feelings and action with changes in your children’s behavior.

1. Say “You have 10 minutes to **fill out the third column: Impact on children** individually. You can also use drawings to represent the impact of parents’ stress on children.”

Give parents a 10- or 15-minute break.

### 4. Relaxation techniques to cope with stress

Time: 40 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Individual

Parent activity: Relaxation exercises

1. Give trainees instructions for the **‘Relaxation exercise’ activity**.
2. Distribute Handout 5: Relaxation Exercise
3. Ask

* “What do you think is happening in the pictures?
* How do you think this parent is feeling? What do you think they are doing and why?”

1. Explain

* In the first image, the woman is counting backwards from 20 to zero. This is a relaxation technique that we will learn today.
* In the second image, the woman is thinking of a nice place where she feels safe. The man is thinking of a nice song, a happy moment. They both have their hands on their stomachs practicing deep breathing, another relaxation technique that we will learn today.

1. Say

* “Stress is necessary for life. It helps us to respond when we are in danger and need to act quickly.
* We need to distinguish between healthy stress that helps us to survive as human beings and **‘toxic stress’**, repeated or intense stress that overwhelms our systems to the point that it is harmful and becomes a problem for us and the ones around us, including children.
* We need to be aware of it and cope with it.
* Stress is only harmful when it becomes overwhelming and interrupts the healthy state of equilibrium that your nervous system needs to remain in balance.
* When stressors throw your nervous system out of balance, relaxation techniques can bring it back into a balanced state by producing the **‘relaxation response’**,a state of deep calmness that is the opposite of the stress response.”

1. Ask

* “What is relaxation?”

1. Explain

* We define relaxation as a mental and physical state in which the individual is able to feel relieved from strain or tension. Reaching a relaxed state means to control our emotions.
* When stress affects a person's normal functioning, relaxation may help to restore it.[[10]](#footnote-10)

1. Say “We are going to experiment with some relaxation exercises that you can practice at home when you feel stressed. When you feel the stress coming, when you feel that tension in your stomach or when you feel you are about to lose your temper, there are some things you can do to help yourself calm down. Here are a few techniques that are easy to use.

* Step away from the stressful event or situation.
* Deep breathing.
* Center yourself.
* Count backwards from 20 to zero.
* Practice muscle relaxation by visualizing each part of your body getting relaxed: the right foot, the left foot, the right leg, the left leg, and so on.

1. Say “Let us start with **the breathing technique**.

* Take 10 deep abdominal breaths.
* You should see your stomach moving back and forth.
* Inhale deeply, exhale.”

! Say “Inhale deeply, exhale” 10 times.

1. Ask “How does it feel?”
2. Have parents volunteer to share their experiences.
3. Say

* “Now try to **center yourself**:
* Locate your physical center of gravity.
* It’s usually around your belly button. Once you've found your center, breathe in and out deeply at least 5 times.
* Focus on your center. Feel the sensation of being stabilized and on the ground. Imagine all the negative energy in your body is collecting in one place. Find imagery that works for you.
* This could be a ball of energy that will suck in all the negative feelings. Visualize this ball of negative energy.
* As you inhale, say "Let." As you exhale, say "Go."
* If your energy is a ball, identify a spot across the room and imagine yourself throwing the ball to hit that spot.
* If your energy is a balloon, imagine it floating away above your head. Let go of everything that is stressing you.
* Now imagine your center filled with calm.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

1. Using a quiet voice, very slowly with a voice of love,

* Say “To conclude this session, let us do a **relaxation exercise**.”

1. Read Handout 6: Relaxation Techniques and guide the relaxation.
2. Distribute Handout 6 to the parents and explain that they can do this exercise with their spouse – one of them can read and guide the exercise and the other can close their eyes and listen.

@ Adapt this activity depending on the sensitivity of religion in your context.

### 5. Home assignment

Time: 5 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Say “As homework, you have to practice breathing and centering exercises from the handout at least once a day before the next session. Also, you must practice relaxation/meditation exercises from the handouts at least twice before the next session.”

### 6. Evaluation

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Ask the follow questions:

* “What did you like best about the session?
* What questions would you have liked to ask but did not have the opportunity to ask?
* How was this session helpful?
* Have you any other comments or suggestions to improve the session?”

2. Praise all parents and thank them for their participation.

3. Make sure each parent signs the Attendance Form (Resource 3). If there is someone else attending (a mother with a baby on her back, for example), indicate this on the Attendance Form. If someone left or came in during the session, note this as well. If someone misses a session, remind them that they can catch up in the parent support groups or through home visits.

### Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring

After the session, both Parenting Skills Facilitators need to check-off all completed activities in Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report. If there were activities that were not completed, explain why. Facilitators also need to record parent feedback on the Fidelity Forms. This report should be attached to the session attendance record.

# Parenting Skills Session 3: Coping and Healing Strategies

## **Parenting session summary**

### **Objectives**

By the end of this session parents will be able to

* Identify their own positive coping strategies.

### Duration

2 hours, 5 minutes

### Materials required

* Parenting Skills Curriculum for parents of children (6–11 years)
* Resource 3: Attendance Form
* Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report
* Resource 6: Coping and Healing Cards
* Handout 7: Visualization Exercise
* Flipcharts and markers/Paper and pens
* Tape
* Notebook
* Large envelopes (9 x 12 inchesis ideal; one for each parent) – preferably brightly-colored
* Colored pencils
* Glitter
* Feathers
* Fun stickers
* Magazines
* Scissors
* Glue
* Stapler
* Index cards, or paper cut into smaller pieces.

### Preparation required

* Read through the session, including the briefing notes, to acquaint yourself with the content of the session.
* Adapt the examples in the coping and healing cards.
* Obtain the required materials before the training.
* Be at the site 15 minutes before the session.
* Learn names of parents and their family members.
* Prepare the room so it is conducive to discussion, without noises or interruptions.
* Print and cut out the cards for Activity 3 (one set for each caregiver)

### Session overview

In this session parents learn 2 new strategies, writing and talking, in order to cope with and manage stress. Parents are also introduced to the idea of coping and healing kits and create their own kit.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Session activity** | **Time** |
| 1. Welcome and introduction | 10 minutes |
| 2. Talking and writing | 50 minutes |
| 3. Making your own coping and healing kit | 50 minutes |
| 4. Home assignment | 5 minutes |
| 5. Evaluation | 10 minutes |
| Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring |  |

### Attendance

The **date and place of the session must be written on the Attendance Form.** Each parent **must** sign the Attendance Form (Resource 3) with their name, age and sex. All parents/caregivers are encouraged to attend all 12 sessions together, as parenting is a shared responsibility. Indicate if there is someone else attending with a parent or parents (such as a child or other family member).

## Steps to follow

##### 1. **Welcome and introduction**

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Smile and be positive! Put all of your energy into the session, as this day can improve the lives of the families attending. Welcome the parents and praise them for being there.
2. Ask “Who can remind us what we discussed in the last session?”
3. Have parents volunteer to share their experience of the home assignment from the previous session.

Ask

* “Did you do the assignment? Was it easy or difficult to find time and space to do the relaxation exercise? Why?
* Did you see any change in the way you felt during the past week? Did you notice any change in your children’s behavior?
* Does anyone have any thoughts or reflections they want to share?”

1. Say

* “We saw during the last session how your stress can affect not just the mood but also the behavior of your children.
* Without being told anything, they know deep inside that their parents are stressed. They also listen to what parents are saying when they talk to other adults.”

### 2. Talking and writing

Time: 50 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Individual

1. Say

* “Most of you experience stress, which has various sources. The purpose of this activity is not to address the source of stress but to learn techniques to cope with the stress.
* We learned some relaxation and breathing techniques during our last session. In this session we will learn how writing or talking can help you to process all your emotions and traumatic memories from stressful events.

Parent activity: Writing

@ If parents feel uncomfortable with writing, you can replace this activity with the ‘**Safe space’ activity** (see below).

2. Distribute a notebook and pen to parents, or colored pencils and markers if they prefer to draw.

3. Give parents instructions for the **‘Writing’ activity**:

* One way of getting the stress and memories out is to write them down. Spelling and grammar do not matter. The most important thing is to get all the details of the stressful situation or event out.
* I want you to write about a particular stressful event or situation by asking yourself certain questions. This exercise is very personal. We will not read what you have written. You have 15 minutes.
* Here are some questions to think about:

! Write these questions on a flipchart as you share them with parents.

* What happened before the stressful event or situation?
* How I first knew something was wrong?
* What happened next?
* What did I do?
* How did I know it was over (if applicable)?
* What did I do afterwards?
* What did others do afterwards?
* What was the very worst moment?

4. Give parents instructions for the ‘**Writing’ activity (continued)**:

* Now you’ve written about your stressful event or memories. Afterwards, you can reread the story when you feel relaxed and comfortable. You may want to rewrite it later, with more details as you remember.
* You may want to keep the book as a kind of diary where you can write down your feelings on a regular basis.
* If writing stressful events helps to release stress, it is also important to identify some positive experiences as well. So each time you write down something negative, make sure you note down a positive event, too. It can be something related to your children, your family or yourself.

Note for Facilitator: Most of the parents have experienced very traumatic events. It is important to acknowledge it, but this session is not a therapy group. We do not have the time and the human resources to address the psychological needs of all the parents. If parents need more help, find other resources in the community to help them. If participants are showing signs of distress, you should provide emotional comfort (as culturally appropriate) such as hugging, telling the participant that he/she is very brave to have come here to share, and so on.

1. Ask “What can be a positive event?”
2. Have parents share their responses with the larger group.

Example answers:

* My daughter had good marks at school and I was very proud of her. My neighbor came yesterday. She has a good sense of humor and we laughed all afternoon.
* I received a call from my sister. She is safe.

Note for Facilitator: It is easy to fall into the trap of negativity. Try to stay focused on the positive and encourage parents to identify positive and cheerful moments. You can do this by acknowledging and empathizing with negative events your parents are telling you about, and then asking them to talk about even a small positive moment, such as sharing a laugh with their children or having a quiet cup of tea in the morning.

##### Alternative activity: ‘Safe space’[[12]](#footnote-12)

! Use this activity if parents in the Parenting Skills session are not comfortable writing or drawing.

1. Say

* “Imagine a place or scene that makes you feel calm, secure and happy. This could be somewhere real that you remember, (maybe from a holiday); or it could be somewhere you’ve heard about (maybe in a story); or it could be somewhere that you invent and make up yourself.
* Take a few deep, steady breaths. Close your eyes and carry on breathing normally. Bring up a picture of your safe place and imagine that you are standing or sitting there.
* Can you see yourself there? In your imagination, take a look around. What do you see? What can you see close to you? Look at the details and see what it is made of. See the different colors. Imagine reaching out and touching it. How does it feel?
* Now take a look further away. What can you see around you? See what’s in the distance. See the different colors and shapes and shadows.
* This is your special place and you can imagine whatever you want to be there. When you are there, you feel calm and peaceful.
* Imagine your bare feet on the ground. What does the ground feel like? Walk around slowly, and notice the things there. See what they look like and how they feel.
* What can you hear? Maybe the gentle sounds of the wind, or birds, or the sea. Can you feel the warm sun on your face? What can you smell? Maybe it’s the sea air, or flowers, or your favourite food cooking?
* In your special place, you can see the things you want, imagine touching and smelling them, and you can hear pleasant sounds. You feel calm and happy.
* Now imagine that someone special is with you in your place.”

! With younger groups especially, this might be a fantasy figure or a cartoon superhero.

* “This is someone who is there to be a good friend and to help you – someone strong and kind. They are there just to help you and they will look after you. Imagine walking around and exploring your special place slowly with them. You feel happy to be with them. This person is your helper and they’re good at sorting out problems.
* Just look around in your imagination once more. Have a good look. Remember that this is your special place. It will always be there. You can always imagine being there when you want to feel calm, secure and happy. Your helper will always be there whenever you want them to be. Now get ready to open your eyes and leave your special place for now. You can come back when you want. As you open your eyes, you feel more calm and happy.”

Parent activity: ‘Talking’

2. Give parents instructions for the **‘Talking’ activity**.**[[13]](#footnote-13)** Say

* “Talking, like writing, can help get stressful events or bad memories out of your system. Sharing problems with others helps to release stress.
* What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of talking?”

! Write their answers on a flipchart.

Example answers:

Advantages

* Makes me feel better
* Helps me clarify what happened
* Can find out if others’ experiences are the same or similar
* Helps get it all out
* Someone can help if I tell them
* I can get advice on what to do
* I can help other people

Disadvantages

* People might laugh
* I do not have anyone to talk to
* I might upset the other person
* I do not know what to say
* It is difficult to talk about my feelings
* People might tell others about my problems
* It is sometimes difficult to talk about our problems and difficulties to people who have their own problems or people we do not know well. It can be hard at times but, in the end, it helps if you can trust the person you are talking to.
* Some of you have friends or relatives to talk to. They listen to you or they make you laugh. They are your **support network.** You can also use the parent support groups to share ideas and problems. Mothers can meet on a fixed day of the week and invite each other for tea. You can also organize daycare for your younger children, where each mother takes care of other children once a week. This will help free some time for yourself. Even 2 people can coordinate and do it!”

Give parents a 10- or 15-minute break.

### 3. Making your own coping and healing kit[[14]](#footnote-14)

Time: 50 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Individual

! Encourage parents to express their creativity by praising their ideas and providing as many materials for them to work with as you can!

1. Prepare for the **‘Making a coping and healing kit’ activity:**

* On a table, set out prepared cards that represent tangible items that can reduce stress (seeResource 6: Coping and Healing Cards), as well as some blank index cards.
* Distribute large envelopes and pens to all the caregivers.
* Display an assortment of stickers depicting positive images (like smiling faces, hearts, flowers, cars,) glitter, feathers, and so on, that parents can use to decorate their cards and their envelopes.
* Give each parent a large envelope that becomes the container for their kit.

1. Give parents instructions for the **‘Making a coping and healing kit’ activity:**

* Walk around the table and pick out the cards that appeal to you. Personalize the cards. These cards have titles. You can add other categories if you have creative ideas.

@ Adapt the examples for each card to your context.

* My favorite place – a picture or description of a place (past, present or imagined) where you feel or felt a great sense of peace and safety
* Gratitude list – things for which I am grateful*.*
* Drinks that I enjoy – examples should be non alcoholic beverage available in your environment
* My favorite books – books that lift my mood

@ Remove if participants are not literate.

* My favorite music – music that makes me feel good – not sad
* Humorous or positive sayings or pictures
* Peak moments from the past – a brief reminder of a wonderful memory
* Fun activities – playing sports, playing with children
* My support network – a list of people I can visit, call and who always lift my spirits
* Comfort foods – examples should be food that you like and is easily accessible. Nothing that will make you feel bad because you ate it!
* Reminders of other things you can do to relieve stress: adapt examples to your context (taking a warm shower, taking the time to wash your hair)
* Relaxation exercises that work for you. It can be deep breathing, center yourself, muscle relaxation, praying, and so on.
* Choose those cards that represent items you would actually like to have in a Coping and Healing Kit, and then write something about your personal choices. For example, on the Gratitude List card, you can write down some things that you are grateful for, such as “My health,” or “My daughter’s smile.”
* You can make a kit with real items in it, such as some pictures clipped from a magazine or some packages of their favorite tea. You can also just use the cards as reminders of the things that you might turn to when you are feeling stressed.
* After you have assembled your kits, take a few minutes to look at them.
* Invite parents to talk about the contents of their kits. Tell parents that they can also choose not to talk, or to keep some of the items private.
* Ask if someone would like to share how they could use their kit to help cope with trauma memories, current stresses, or troubled emotions.
* Ask if someone would like to share what they want to do with their kit?

Example answers: Take them home, leave them at the group site, or destroy them.

1. Tell parents that just having gone through the process is useful, even if they do not take anything tangible home.

! If parents want to destroy their kits, they should consider safety issues.

1. Say

“Everyone needs self-care and self-nurturing.”

1. Reinforce the points from the previous sessions, about the process of healing and finding strength. Remind parents that sometimes the process of facing their situation or their past experiences can cause emotional turmoil and pain, but this is part of the healing process.
2. Ask

* “How can you participate in self-care, even when it feels like you do not have the time or space to do so?
* What do you need to do to stay safe and healthy?
* What are some ways in which you have successfully coped with difficult situations?
* What resources do you have to turn to when you feel overwhelmed?
* What are one or 2 items from your Coping and Healing Kit that you are really looking forward to using soon?”

### 4. Home assignment

Time: 5 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

Say

* “This week, use at least one of the tools you have in your kit.

! If parents chose to destroy their kit, encourage them to use the memory of the objects and images they chose.

* Practice one relaxation or breathing technique.
* Take 10 minutes to do the Visualization exercise in Handout 7.

### 5. Evaluation

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Ask the follow questions:

* “What did you like best about the session?
* What questions would you have liked to ask but did not have the opportunity to ask?
* How was this session helpful?
* Have you any other comments or suggestions to improve the session?”

2. Praise all parents and thank them for their participation.

3. Make sure each parent signs the Attendance Form (Resource 3). If there is someone else attending (a mother with a baby on her back, for example), indicate this on the Attendance Form. If someone left or came in during the session, note this as well. If someone misses a session, remind them that they can catch up in the parent support groups or through home visits.

### Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring

After the session, both Parenting Skills Facilitators need to check-off all completed activities in Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report. If there were activities that were not completed, explain why. Facilitators also need to record parent feedback on the Fidelity Forms. This report should be attached to the session attendance record.

# Parenting Skills Session 4: Understanding Brain Development – Children Need Love to be Healthy

## **Parenting session summary**

##### Objectives

By the end of this session parents will be able to

* Articulate the key concepts of brain development and the impact of toxic stress.
* Explain ways to support brain growth and development.

##### Duration

2 hours

##### Materials required

* Parenting Skills Curriculum for parents of children (6–11 years)
* Resource 3: Attendance Form
* Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report
* Resource 7:
  + Brain development and the impact of toxic stress
  + Brain scans showing temporal lobes
  + Handout 8: Sketches: Brain Development
  + Small items such as coins, rocks or beans for the ‘Concentration game’
  + Flipchart and markers to record parents’ ideas, if available (if not, pen and paper) to record parents’ ideas.

##### Preparation required

* Read through the materials for this session.
* Make copies of the handouts for each parent. Please make sure to give each parent the handout at the end of the session.
* Arrive for the session 30 minutes before the start time.
* Arrange for a space that is conducive to learning and free of interruptions.
* Sit in a circle to encourage interaction with parents.

##### Session overview

* Parents learn about how children’s brains are developing and how they can support their children’s development at home and at school.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Session activity** | **Time** |
| 1. Welcome and Introduction | 15 minutes |
| 2. What is happening in our children’s brains? | 45 minutes |
| 3. Showing affection to your child | 25 minutes |
| 4. Education and brain development | 20 minutes |
| 5. Home assignment | 5 minutes |
| 6. Evaluation | 10 minutes |
| Post-session report: Fidelity Monitoring |  |

### Attendance

The **date and place of the session must be written on the Attendance Form.** Each parent **must** sign the Attendance Form (Resource 3) with their name, age and sex. All parents/caregivers are encouraged to attend all 12 sessions together, as parenting is a shared responsibility. Indicate if there is someone else attending with a parent or parents (such as a child or other family member).

## Steps to follow

### 1. **Welcome and introduction**

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Say

“Welcome back! We are excited to share information about brain development today and talk to you about how you are helping your children grow into healthy family and community members.”

1. Ask about the parent support group from the previous session.
   * Did you meet?
   * How was it?
   * What did you discuss?
2. Ask “Who practiced at least one of the tools from the Healing and Coping

Kit or one of the relaxation/breathing techniques? How did it feel?”

1. Praise parents and caregivers for any attempts they made to practice previously learned skills and techniques at home during the week.

Parent activity: ‘Body relaxation’ activity

1. Give parents instructions for the **‘Body relaxation’ activity:**

! One facilitator should lead the exercise and another facilitator should demonstrate the actions for parents.

6. Say

* “In the last 2 sessions we talked about managing stress. So, to get us ready for our session today we are going to do another relaxation exercise, similar to the one you did in the last session.
* When your body is relaxed, you will also feel more relaxed and less stressed! Balance can help the body, beginning with breathing!
* To start, inhale for a count of 4 then exhale for a count of 4, all through the nose. The nose adds a natural resistance to the breath, helping you control your breathing.
* We will do this 5 times together.
* Now just relax for a minute.”

7. Ask

* + “How did that feel?
  + Did it feel strange?
  + Did it feel good?”

8. Say “This is a good exercise for whenever you feel stressed or angry, as it helps to calm the body and the mind.”

### 2. **What is happening in our children’s brains?**

Time: 45 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Distribute Handout 8: Sketches: Brain Development

2. Say “Today we are going to talk about your children’s brain.”

3. Ask

* “When you look at this picture and see the brain in the middle, what do you see happening around the brain?
* What helps our children’s brains develop? Do boys’ and girls’ brains develop in the same ways? Why or why not?”

1. Have parents share their responses to the questions with the whole group.
2. Have parents look at the handout and describe each image.

Example answers:

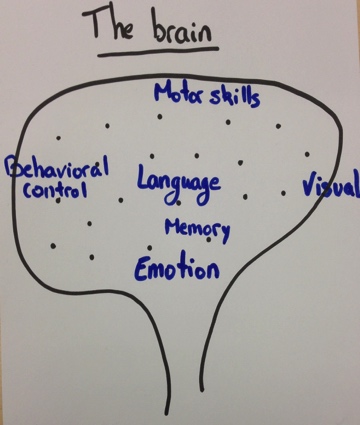
* Top left corner – a father comforting and hugging his daughter
* Top right corner – a father playing football with his son
* Top center – a father walking and holding the hand of his son
* Bottom right corner – a mother talking to her daughter
* Bottom left corner – a mother encouraging her daughter to do her homework

1. Say

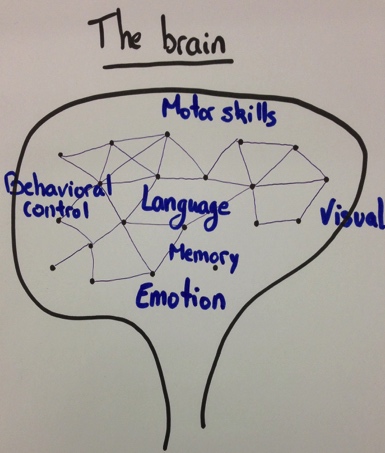
* “Children’s brains are built over time and much of their brain development depends on the care they receive from their parents.
* Child development refers to the biological, social and psychological changes that happen in children from conception through adulthood. These changes influence children’s physical, social, emotional and intellectual capacities.
* We are born with more than 80 billion brain cells called **neurons**. These neurons make us human as they work to communicate between one another via small electrical impulses that travel via cell junctions called synapses.
* So, even though all children’s brains develop in roughly the same way at the same time, there are differences among individual children. Not all children learn at the same pace. Some children have mild temperaments, while some children are very active!
* Brains of both boys and girls have the capacity to learn, to be smart, kind, or gentle, depending on the ways their development is encouraged by their caregivers and communities.”

1. To explain brain development, draw a picture of a brain on the flipchart paper as shown below:

**Image 1: The brain with neurons**

**

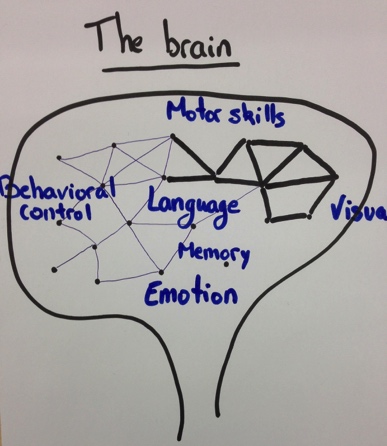
**Image 2: The brain with ‘electrical connections’ via synapses**

**

1. Say

* “Love, support, and encouragement build strong, healthy brains. These synapses, or circuits, enable humans to **learn language, think, walk, catch a ball, trust others, and manage emotions.**
* They are like electrical wires that, when connected, enable the lights to turn on. If the synapses between neurons are used repeatedly, they become permanent and strong – like exercising a muscle!”

**Image 3: The brain with stronger ‘electrical connections’ thanks to love and encouragement**

**

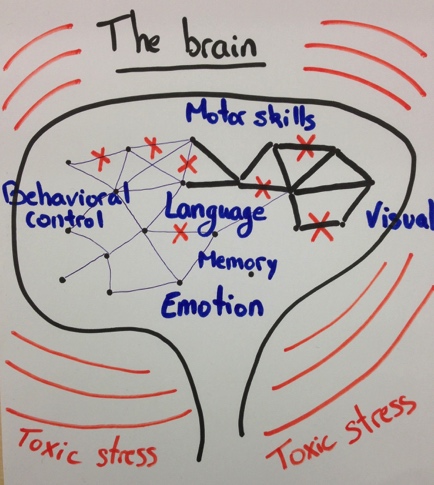
1. Explain how the brain develops.

Say

* “Unused connections in the thinking and processing part of your children’s brain (called the grey matter) are ‘pruned’ away. At the same time, other connections are strengthened.
* This is the brain’s way of becoming more efficient, based on the ‘use it or lose it’ principle. Repeated stress, exposure to traumatic events and violence (toxic stress) can destroy connections and interfere with children’s ability to make safe and healthy decisions.
* Love, guidance, problem-solving and emotional support reinforce positive connections between neurons. This provides the foundation that children need to make healthy choices and become responsible family and community members.
* This pruning process begins in the back of the brain. The front part of the brain, the prefrontal cortex, is wired or connected last. The prefrontal cortex is the decision-making part of the brain, responsible for older children’s ability to plan and think about the consequences of actions, solve problems and control impulses. Changes in this part of the brain continue into early adulthood.
* The amygdala is a part of the brain that is associated with emotions, impulses, aggression and instinctive behavior. Because the prefrontal cortex is still developing, children will often rely more on the amygdala to make decisions and solve problems than adults do.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

1. Play the video of toxic stress or use the visual aids in Resource 7: Brain Development and Toxic Stress to explain these concepts.

**Image 4: The ‘electrical connections’ are destroyed due to toxic stress and violence**

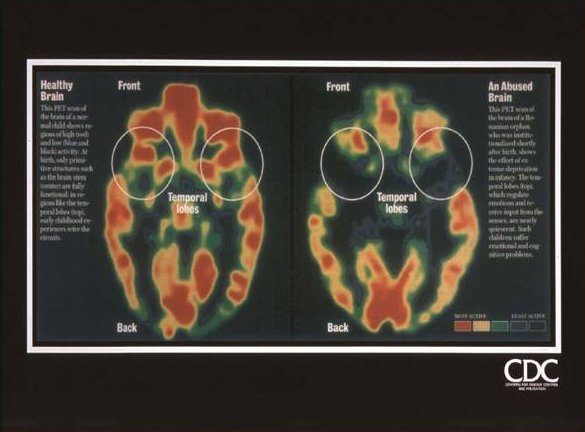
**

1. Say “Think about a path that is created and used for going to get water or going to the market. At first, the path may be a little bumpy and hard to stay on. It does not actually become a path until lots and lots of people have walked that same path over and over again. The path becomes smoother and it is easier to see where you are going. Our brains are built in the same way. The more time you spend teaching and showing children kindness and respect, the stronger the connections between the cells (neurons) in their brains become! It is these strong connections that enable your children to be healthy, happy and responsible family and community members.”

**!** We want to engage parents in a dialogue about how our parenting skills and practices directly correlate with children’s brain development.

1. Show them the color print of the two brains (Resource 7).
2. Say

“These pictures of brains were taken using scanners that produce detailed images using magnetic fields and radio waves.”[[16]](#footnote-16)



1. Discuss the image.

Ask

“What do you notice about these images? What are the differences?”

1. Say

“Notice how the nurtured child’s brain has much more activity, while the brain of the child who was subjected to abusive corporal punishment and neglect is less active and frequently smaller.”

1. Explain basic concepts of brain development to the parents, based on the following information:

* The image of the abused child’s brain is of a child who suffered severe abuse and violence.
* Our brains are not fully formed until we are in our early to mid-20s! Different parts of our brain form and mature at different rates. For example, the parts of our brain that control our senses and reflexes form when we are infants.
* The part of our brain that help us control our impulses and use good judgment is the last to mature. This part of the brain is called the prefrontal cortex and it controls our ‘executive function’. Executive function skills are mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions and juggle multiple tasks successfully.[[17]](#footnote-17)
* Our brain also has the unique ability to change or re-create itself. This is called ‘plasticity’. Brains start out in life with a lot of plasticity, but as we age, it gets harder to change our brains.
* Scientists have learned that, in adolescence, like early childhood, if the brain is exercised with positive experiences, children can learn to control impulses, order their thoughts and use good judgment – skills and abilities that will help them to become happy, healthy adults.

1. Ask “What kinds of skills do you think your children will need to be happy, healthy adults?”

Example answers:

* + - The ability to be kind
    - The skills to be a hard worker
    - The responsibility needed to be a community member
    - The ability to learn

1. Make a list of their responses on the flipchart.
2. Ask “How can we help our sons and daughters develop these skills?”
3. Say “We will spend the next several sessions talking about how to help our children learn the skills needed to live safe, healthy, happy lives. We will talk about how to support their continued healthy brain development through **predictable, stimulating and nurturing parenting practices** such as:
   * Showing affection for your child and recognizing their accomplishments.
   * Helping your child develop a sense of responsibility by asking them to help with household tasks, such as sweeping or preparing food.
   * Talking to your child about school, friends and things they look forward to in the future.
   * Talking with your child about respecting others and helping others.
   * Helping your child learn patience by letting others go first or by finishing a task before going out to play. Encouraging them to think about possible consequences before acting.
   * Making clear rules and sticking to them, such as following a rule about how long they can stay out and when they need to be home. Being clear about what behavior is okay and what is not okay.
   * Doing fun things together as a family, such as playing games, reading or storytelling and going to events in your community.

Give parents a 10- or 15-minute break.

### 3. **Showing affection to your child**

Time: 25 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; pairs

1. Say “Today we are just going to focus on the nurturing practice: showing affection to our children.”
2. Ask “What are some ways you show affection to your children?”

Example answers:

* Hugging my child
* Telling my child I love them
* Giving my child a ‘high 5’ or pat on the back
* Praising my child just for being my child

Role-play for skills practice: Showing affection to children

1. Give parents instructions for the **‘Role-play for skills practice’ activity:**
   * Today we are going to practice showing affection, because we know this is important for children’s healthy brain development.
   * Would 2 people like to volunteer to participate in this role-play activity?
   * One person will be the ‘parent’ and the other will play a 7-year-old child.
   * Now, the 2 volunteers have 5 minutes to prepare the role-play. We will be there to help.
   * Then they will present the role-play in front of the whole group, and we will debrief on what we learned.
2. Coach the 2 volunteers on the role-play to help them prepare.

This is a sample script. Please adapt to your context or create your own. Please change the names to ones that are familiar in your context.

The **7-year-old child** has just come in from school.

The **parent** is making dinner.

**Parent:** (Stops making dinner and says) “How was your day?”

**7-year-old:** “It was great, I really like school.”

**Parent:** (Gives child a pat on the back and says) “I am so proud of you for going to school.”

**7 year-old:** “Do you want to know what I learned today?”

**Parent:** “Yes, you can come and tell me while I finish making dinner!”

1. Debrief on the role-play.
   * Ask the person playing the 7-year-old child how it felt to have the parent be interested and affectionate towards them.
   * Ask parents and caregivers what they thought the parent in the role-play did well in showing affection to the child.

! If you have time, give the parents and the caregivers in the group a chance to practice the same scenario in pairs.

### 4. Education and brain development

Time: 20 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Ask “What are the challenges and worries you have around your children’s education?”

Example answers:

* Not enough schools
* Too many kids in one classroom
* Children feeling and being unsafe while traveling to and from school
* My family needs money so the children need to work

1. Thank parents for their contributions.
   * Say

* “Childhood is a time of rapid brain development and children need lots of opportunities to learn while they are young!
* Children need an education to have future opportunities of higher education and employment.”

#### Inform parents about how to enroll their children in formal or informal education opportunities, such as basic reading and math activities at the SHLS, if relevant.

! Do not talk about education opportunities in the SHLS if they are not present in your SHLS program.

1. Say “We are going to talk about school and other issues of safety in future sessions. Today we are going to do an activity to stimulate your children’s cognitive skills through continued education and learning in the home. This activity helps increase concentration and build stronger memory skills and it is fun!”

Parent activity: ‘Concentration game’

1. Give parents instructions for the **‘Concentration game’ activity:**
   * “Activities to improve memory and concentration are important for all of us!
   * I will place random objects in front of you for 10–15 seconds, then remove the objects and see how many you can remember.”
2. Start by placing 4 objects in front of the group for 5 seconds and then take them away.
3. Ask for volunteers to recall all the objects.
4. Continue the game by playing several rounds, increasing the number of objects in each round.

! You can make the task harder by asking them to recall what order the objects were placed in, as well as what colors the objects were.

1. Say “You can play this game with your children! Start with 3 objects for younger children and with 5 for older children, and keep increasing the number as they master the task. You can also help auditory memory by giving them a random list of numbers or words orally and having them repeat the list.

### 5. Home assignment

Time: 5 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Say “For this week’s home assignment, continue to practice relaxation exercises at home and find at least one opportunity to show affection and interest in your children’s lives.”
2. Remind parents about their support groups and encourage them to meet in between parenting sessions.
3. Ask parents who have both sons and daughters to think about how they treat their sons and daughters. Do they give them equal opportunities? Do they distribute household chores equally?
4. Say  
   “In the coming weeks, we are going to talk more about gender equality in your homes and communities and why this is important for men and women!”

### 6. Evaluation

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Ask the following questions:

* What did you like best about the session?
* What questions would you have liked to ask but did not have the opportunity to ask?
* How was this session helpful?
* Have you any other comments or suggestions?

2. Praise all parents and thank them for their participation.

3. Make sure each parent signs the Attendance Form (Resource 3). If there is someone else attending (a mother with a baby on her back, for example), indicate this on the Attendance Form. If someone left or came in during the session, note this as well. If someone misses a session, remind them that they can catch up in the parent support groups or through home visits.

### Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring

After the session, both Parenting Skills Facilitators need to check-off all completed activities in Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report. If there were activities that were not completed, explain why. Facilitators also need to record parent feedback on the Fidelity Forms. This report should be attached to the session attendance record.

# Parenting Skills Session 5: Positive Parental Time for Healthy Growth and Development

## **Parenting session summary**

### Objectives

* By the end of this session parents will be able to Explain the golden rule of psychology.
* List and use techniques to encourage positive behavior such as playing, praising and spending quality time.

### Duration

2 hours

### Materials required

* Parenting Skills Curriculum for parents of children (6–11 years)
* Resource 3: Attendance Form
* Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report
* Handout 9: Spending Time with our Children
* Flipcharts and markers/Paper and pens

### Preparation required

* + Read through the materials for this session.
  + Make copies of the handouts for each parent. Please make sure to give each parent the handout at the end of the session.
  + Arrive for the session 30 minutes before the start time.
  + Arrange for a space that is conducive to learning and free of interruptions.
  + Sit in a circle to encourage interaction with parents.

### Session overview

Parents learn about how using positive attention and praise with their children supports their self-esteem and encourages positive, prosocial behavior. Parents reflect on ways to spend quality time with their children, providing positive attention and praise.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Session activity** | **Time** |
| 1. Welcome and introduction | 10 minutes |
| 2. Mindfulness exercise: Game of 5 | 10 minutes |
| 3. What have you learned about your children so far? | 10 minutes |
| 4. The golden rule of psychology: Children need and want adult attention | 15 minutes |
| 5. Play, encouragement and praise | 45 minutes |
| 6. Spending quality time | 15 minutes |
| 7. Home assignment | 5 minutes |
| 8. Evaluation | 10 minutes |
| Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring |  |

### Attendance

The **date and place of the session must be written on the Attendance Form.** Each parent **must** sign the Attendance Form (Resource 3) with their name, age and sex. All parents/caregivers are encouraged to attend all 12 sessions together, as parenting is a shared responsibility. Indicate if there is someone else attending with a parent or parents (such as a child or other family member).

## Steps to follow

### 1. Welcome and introduction

Time 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Say “Welcome back and thanks for coming! How did the parent support groups go? Did you meet? How often? Were they helpful?”
2. Have parents volunteer to share their thoughts with the group.
3. Ask “How did your home assignment of spending time with and listening to your children go? What did you notice while you were listening to them? How did your children respond to your increased positive attention?”

! Have parents volunteer to share their thoughts with the group.

### 2. Mindfulness exercise: Game of 5[[18]](#footnote-18)

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Individual

1. Say

* “In this mindfulness exercise, all you have to do is notice 5 things in your day that usually go unnoticed and unappreciated. These could be things you hear, smell, feel or see.
* For example, you might see the walls of your front room, hear the birds in the trees outside in the morning, feel your clothes on your skin as you walk to work, or smell the flowers in the park, but think about the following questions:
  + Are you truly aware of these things and the connections they have with the world?
  + Are you aware of how these things really benefit your life and the lives of others?
  + Do you really know what these look and sound like?
  + Have you ever noticed their finer, more intricate details?
  + Have you thought about what life might be like without these things?
  + Have you thought about how amazing these things are?
* Let your creative mind explore the wonder, impact and possibilities these usually unnoticed things have on your life. Allow yourself to fall into the world and fully experience the environment.
* By becoming mindful of who we are, where we are, what we are doing, for what purpose, and how everything else in our environment interacts with our being, we cultivate a truer awareness of being.
* This helps us learn to identify and reduce stress and anxiety, and address difficult, painful, and possibly frightening thoughts, feelings and sensations.
* Mindfulness exercises help center the mind and restore balance to our lives, tempering that ‘monkey mind’ that persistently leaps from branch to branch. Rather than being led by thoughts and feelings, often influenced by past experiences and fears of future occurrences, we are able to live with full attention and purpose in the moment.”

### 3. What have you learned about your children so far?

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Ask “What have you learned about your sons and daughters, as you have been spending time with them and showing an interest in their lives? You can share their likes, dislikes, goals, dreams, talents, and so on.”

! Have parents volunteer to share their thoughts with the group.

1. Ask

* “How does it feel to know these things about your children and how has it felt connecting with them in a positive, loving way?
* How has this benefited you as parents and caregivers?
* How do you think it has benefited your children?”

! On flipchart paper, make a list of the benefits that parents talk about. You can display it on the wall of your room during your sessions, as a reminder for parents about why spending time with their children is good for them and their children.

1. Say

“Today you will be talking more about spending quality time you’re your children in order to create positive relationships and build children’s self-esteem. You will also explore how this gives them the skills they need to play well with friends, do well in school and be a good family member.”

### 4. The golden rule of psychology: Children need and want adult attention

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Say

* “All children want attention from their parents and from other adults they love and respect.
* Children can learn to get attention in both positive and negative ways.
* Attention can reinforce both positive and negative behaviors.
* When a parent praises a child for a good behavior – such as sharing – that behavior is encouraged by the parent.
* Negative behaviors – like hitting – can also be reinforced by attention (either negative or positive). If a parent gives more attention when children are misbehaving, then it is the negative behaviors that are reinforced. If a child whines and cries because the parent will not buy them a sweet, and the parent keeps arguing with the child, this is negative attention and it reinforces the child’s whining!
* As parents you need to be strategic about what behaviors you are giving attention to!
* The more positive attention that parents give to positive behaviors, the less that children will seek attention through negative behaviors.

1. Ask “What are some ways parents can encourage their children’s positive behaviors?”

Example answers: .

* Playing with their children, teaching them behaviors like sharing
* Coaching children to be kind to their friends or siblings while they are playing
* Praising them

1. Say

* “We are going to talk about 3 different techniques that will help you encourage more positive behaviors in your children and decrease negative behaviors.
* These tools are **playing, praising,** and **spending quality time.**
* Praising is **providing positive attention for positive behaviors** and qualities about your children.”

### 5. Play, encouragement and praise

Time: 45 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Distribute Handout 9: Spending time with your children
2. Ask

* “What do you think is happening in this picture?
* How are the parents feeling in this picture?
* How are the children feeling?
* What kinds of things are the children learning?

! Explanation of the handout: The whole family is contributing to the chore: boys and girls, mother and father contribute equally. They are also having a nice moment as a family – everyone is singing.

1. Ask

* “How can playing with children encourage their positive development and behavior?
* Why is it important for both boys and girls to have the opportunity to play?”

1. Give parents about 5–10 minutes to come up with some ideas and then share the following ideas, if needed:

* Playing with your children is a loving and nurturing practice.
* Children learn social skills such as taking turns and sharing.
* Children learn how to use their imaginations because play fosters creativity.
* Parents learn more about their children’s likes, preferences, skills and abilities.
* When parents play with children, it improves the child’s self-esteem because they feel that they are important to their parents.

1. Explain the following guidelines for parents to refer to when they are playing with their children:

* Sit near your child and on their level.
* Follow your child’s lead and take their suggestions of what to play.
* Pace the play to suit your child’s developmental level.
* Have fun and laugh together!
* Avoid power struggles.

! Explain the meaning of a power struggle, if needed. A power struggle is an argument that takes place because the people involved are fighting about who will control and dominate the relationship.

Share the following example of a power struggle:

A 7-year-old child is playing a game with his parent. The child decides that he wants to play a different game. If a parent tells the child they have to finish this game first, the child argues that he wants to play the new game, and the parent responds by arguing back that they should finish playing the first game, it would be called a power struggle. If the goal of play is to have fun, learn and build relationships with children, then we need to avoid arguments whenever possible!

* Encourage creativity
* Explore dreams and hopes for the future through imagination
* Describe and talk about what your children are doing
* Coach positive peer and sibling play
* Encourage independent problem-solving
* Give positive attention and approval to play

Role-play for skills practice: Playing with children

1. Tell parents that we are now going to do a role-play and select 2 parents or caregivers, preferably one male and one female. Give them the script of the role-play and let them read it.
2. Give instructions for the **‘Role-play for skills practice’ activity** to the 2 actors in the role-play only.

! This preparation should take no more than 5–10 minutes.

Say

* + In this role-play the person playing the ‘parent’ needs to be really bossy and direct everything the ‘child’ does. For example, if you are playing with a ball in the role-play, the parent might insist that the child throw or kick it a certain way for a specific number of times; or, if you are playing marbles, the parent will tell the child he is doing it wrong and insist he do it correctly.
  + I will stay close by to help out in case you get stuck.
  + You have 5 minutes to practice and prepare for the role-play.

1. Have the actors present the role-play in front of the group.

This is a sample script. Please adapt to your context or create your own. Please change the names to ones that are familiar in your context.

**Child:** Mama, can we play football?

**Mother:** Sure.

[Child begins to kick the ball to his mother.]

**Mother:** That is not how you kick the ball. Here, let me show you. [Mother takes the ball from the child and shows him how to kick.]

**Child:** Can I have a turn now?

**Mother:** Only if you play it right.

[Child tries again and again, and the mother keeps interrupting him and correcting him. Child sits down frustrated.]

1. After the role-play, ask both the actors how it felt. It is likely that both of them will report that this experience was frustrating and not much fun.
2. Tell everyone you are going to re-do this practice.
3. Instruct the 2 actors in private that this time, the parent must follow the child’s lead and play whatever the child wants to play. Tell the parent to say some kind words to the child while they are playing. Some examples of kind words are: “Wow son! Look at you kicking that ball!”; “You are going to be a great football player someday!”; “I love playing with you and am so happy you are my son!”; “Thanks for playing with me and taking turns sharing the ball.”
4. After the role-play once again, first ask the ‘child’ and then the ‘parent’, how this role-play felt. They both will likely report that this time it was more fun and it made them feel good.
5. Ask the rest of the parents to give some positive comments to the parent and child for their participation in this practice. You can praise them as well!

Give parents a 10- or 15-minute break.

1. Say

“Now we are going to talk more specifically about praise.”

1. Ask

“Why should we praise children?”

After parents have responded, share the following answers, if needed:

* Shows love and affection.
* Helps your daughters and sons to feel good about themselves.
* When you praise your children, they learn that you value them as a person and you value their responsible, respectful actions.
* Praising helps children’s brains build healthy social and emotional connections! They often face a lot of criticisms all day for all the things they do wrong. Encouraging and praising the good things is very powerful!

1. Ask

“What are the benefits of praising your daughters and sons?”

After parents have responded, share the following answers, if needed:

* Praising is another loving and nurturing practice.
* Helps parents feel good and positive about their children when they notice their positive attributes and contributions to the family.
* Builds a positive relationship between parents and their sons and daughters.
* Reinforces children’s desirable, pro-social actions.

1. Say

“Praise is telling your child that you like something that he or she is doing. What are some examples you can think of?”

After parents have responded, share the following answers, if needed:

* + - I am so proud of the way you are doing your homework so carefully.
    - Thank you for helping me work in the field today.
    - I am so happy you are my daughter!
    - I am proud you are my son!

1. Say

“Effective praise is specific and tells your child what they did well or what you appreciate about them, with a positive tone of voice and expressions.”

Role-play for skills practice: Praising children

1. Pick 2 parents for the role-play. One will be the ‘parent’ and the other will be an 11-year-old girl.
2. Present the scenario:

* In this scenario, the parent is playing with his or her child. The parent prompts the child to share or take turns.
* The child takes turns sharing, and the parent praises the child for the positive behaviour.
* The parent can also praise the child for being friendly or kind, by saying something like they love spending time with their child.
* Then the parent models sharing with the child by offering their toy to the child.

1. Coach the ‘parent’ and the ‘child’ on the role-play. You can adapt the sample script provided below, or create your own.
2. Have the volunteers present the role-play in front of the group.

This is a sample script. Please adapt to your context or create your own. Please change the names to ones that are familiar in your context.

**Mother:** Jane, would you like to play with me?

**Jane:** Sure, can we play with the new game I made? See, I made this hopscotch game in the dirt.

**Mother:** Great, Jane.

**Jane:** I will go first, okay?

**Mother:** Okay.

**Jane:** [Throws the rock and hops.]

**Mother:** Wow, Jane – that was a great throw!

**Jane:** Okay it’s your turn.

**Mother:** Thanks for taking turns with me. [Mother has her turn.]

**Jane:** It is my turn again. [Jane throws the rock and jumps again.]

**Mother:** Jane, it is so much fun playing with you!

1. Debrief on the role-play.

Ask

* “How do you think Jane felt and how do you think the Mother felt while playing?
* What are all the skills Jane was learning during this play?”

1. Split parents and caregivers into small groups to practice the role-play.

! Both facilitators should be walking around checking to see that all parents are practicing praise.

### 6. Spending quality time

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Pairs

1. Have parents partner with the person sitting next to them.
2. Have the pairs come up with a list of 5 or 6 activities that parents/caregivers can do with their children and together as a family.
3. Give parents about 5 minutes to generate their ideas and then have them share their ideas with the rest of the group.

Example answers:

* Cooking and eating dinner together
* Going for a walk
* Going shopping at the market together
* Telling or reading stories

1. Explain

* Spending time with their children does not mean asking a lot of questions about how they feel or expecting something from them.
* If they want to talk, then use the opportunity, but do not be the first one to ask. Give them time to open up to you, unless you feel that they are visibly upset about something.
* Spending quality time is a nurturing and loving practice. It means being fully available and giving children the sense that they are the priority in your life.

1. Ask

* “How do children benefit from parents and caregivers spending quality time with them and praising them?

After parents have responded, share the following answers, if needed:

* + - Passing on cultural traditions and customs.
    - Teaching life skills such as cooking and taking care of animals.
    - Children feel valued and important and this increases self-confidence and self-esteem.
    - Parents and caregivers have the opportunity to learn about and help their children solve problems.

### 7. Home assignment

Time: 5 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Say “Find time to play with your children this week and explore different ways to praise them. We would be grateful if you could share what you tried and how your child responded when we meet for the next session!

### 8. Evaluation

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Ask

* “What did you like best about the session?
* What questions would you have liked to ask but did not have the opportunity to ask?
* How was this session helpful?
* Do you have any other comments or suggestions for improving this session?”

1. Model ‘praise’ by asking parents to stand up and thanking them for their participation. Give specific praise for things they did well during the session as a group.

Examples:

* Thank you for sharing your feelings with us.
* I appreciate how hard you all tried with the role-plays.

1. Close the session with a song, saying, or group hug.

! Please avoid the group hug at any times when there are concerns about spread of disease or if it is not appropriate in your context.

1. Make sure each parent signs the Attendance Form (Resource 3). If there is someone else attending (a mother with a baby on her back, for example), indicate this on the Attendance Form. If someone left or came in during the session, note this as well. If someone misses a session, remind them that they can catch up in the parent support groups or through home visits.

### Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring

After the session, both Parenting Skills Facilitators need to check-off all completed activities in Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report. If there were activities that were not completed, explain why. Facilitators also need to record parent feedback on the Fidelity Forms. This report should be attached to the session attendance record.

# Parenting Skills Session 6: Empathy – Respecting Your Child’s Opinions and Thoughts

## **Parenting session summary**

### Objectives

* By the end of this session parents will be able to Articulate the key principles of effective communication.
* List and use the 4 steps of empathetic communication.

### Duration

2 hours, 5 minutes

### Materials required

* Parenting Skills Curriculum for parents of children (6–11 years)
* Resource 3: Attendance Form
* Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report
* Handouts:
  + Handout 10: Sketches: Empathy
  + Handout 11: The 4 Steps of Empathy
* Flipchart and markers/Paper and pens

### Preparation required

* Read through the materials for this session and make copies of the handouts for each parent. Please make sure to give each parent the handout at the end of the session.
* Arrive for the session 30 minutes before the start time.
* Arrange for a space that is conducive to learning and free of interruptions.
* Sit in a circle to encourage interaction with parents.

### Session overview

Parents learn about the benefits of effective, empathetic communication with their children. Parents learn about steps to have an empathetic conversation and practice these steps.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Session activity** | **Time** |
| 1. Welcome and introduction | 15 minutes |
| 2. Fun exercise: Categories | 10 minutes |
| 3. Effective communication takes time and respect | 15 minutes |
| 4. The concept of empathy | 15 minutes |
| 5. Showing empathy: The steps technique | 25 minutes |
| 6. Practicing the steps of empathetic communication | 30 minutes |
| 7. Home assignment | 5 minutes |
| 8. Evaluation | 10 minutes |
| Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring |  |

### Attendance

The **date and place of the session must be written on the Attendance Form.** Each parent **must** sign the Attendance Form (Resource 3) with their name, age and sex. All parents/caregivers are encouraged to attend all 12 sessions together, as parenting is a shared responsibility. Indicate if there is someone else attending with a parent or parents (such as a child or other family member).

## Steps to follow

### 1. Welcome and introduction

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Say “Welcome back and thanks for coming!

* Did you do your homework by spending quality time and playing with your children?
* How did you feel about spending quality time with your son or daughter?
* Did you praise them? How and for what reasons did you praise your children?
* Do you remember some of the ideas discussed during the last session?”

1. Have parents share their responses and praise them for their efforts.
2. If a parent is absent, encourage others in the group to reach out to that parent. They can do this through the parent support groups (if they have phones and are comfortable about it, they can exchange numbers). Encourage parents to meet beyond the sessions to share their ideas and parental strategies skills; encourage them to support and mentor each other; urge them to solve problems they might be having with their children peacefully and constructively; and, most importantly, ask them to share their happiness and accomplishments with the group when their parenting skills are working.
3. Reiterate that this is a support group, not a group for criticism or gossip. Parents are here to help each other, to nurture each other.

### 2. Fun exercise: Categories

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Individuals

1. Distribute pens and papers to all the parents.
2. Give parents instructions for the ‘**Categories’ activity:**
   * Divide the paper into 5 columns – 1 thin column and 4 thick ones.

! Show the illustration below.

Say

* + “We have 4 categories in this game – name, place, animal and food. Write the names of these categories in the columns.

! Show illustration below.

! You can change these categories.

* I will pick a parent, and when I say, ‘Go!’ that parent will start reciting the letters of the alphabet in their head, until someone else says, ‘Stop!’
* The parent who was reciting the alphabet will tell everyone which letter they stopped at, and everyone has to write down a name, a place, an animal and a food beginning with that letter.
* The person who completes all 4 categories correctly first, will win that round.”

1. Play this game for as long as the time allows.

Sample

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Name** | **Place** | **Animal** | **Food** |
| **A** | Ali | Africa | Ant | Apple |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

### 3. Effective communication takes time and respect

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Say

“Today we are going to talk more about the importance of communication between parents and children, as well as the use of empathy when communicating with your children.”

2. Ask

* “What do you think is important when communicating with your children?”

After parents have responded, share the following answers, if needed:

* Finding the right time. When children are very upset or if you are very angry at their behavior, it’s better to find the right time to talk, once the parent and child have calmed down.
* Asking about any problems they may be facing.
* Recognizing our own mistakes and taking responsibility and apologizing if needed. This lets your children know that you respect them enough to apologize. This promotes respect towards parents and encourages the children to do the same. Remember, you are a role model.
* Noticing and talking about any changes in behavior that you might be observing.
* Respecting the need for privacy, especially for older children around the age of 11.
* Listening to their opinions and ideas.
* Guiding children to find solutions to their problems when needed.

3. Say

* “Next we are going to talk about a communication skill that involves empathy.”

### 4. The concept of empathy

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Distribute Handout 10: Empathy
2. Ask “In this picture you see a mother hugging her child. What do you think happened to this child? What do you think the mother might be saying to her child?”

1. Explain: Friends are making fun of the girl. Her mother comforts her.
2. Ask

* “What would be your reaction if it was a boy? Would it be different?”

#### Note for Facilitator: It is important to know the difference between empathy and sympathy. ‘Sympathy’ is to feel pity or sorrow for someone else’s misfortune. Empathy, goes one level deeper than sympathy and joins us more to the person we are sharing with because we are feeling the same, rather than looking at what they are feeling. ‘Empathy’ is being able to step into another person’s shoes and experiencing their feelings with them, and then helping them with those feelings. We all know what it feels like to be sad when someone hurts our feelings. Empathy is about letting the other person know that you understand their feelings. All children, boys and girls, in the family need their caregivers to show empathy.

1. Write the word ‘Empathy’ on your flipchart or paper so parents can see the word.
2. What does the word ‘empathy’ mean?

After parents have responded, share the following answers, if needed:

* Empathy is the ability for one person to perceive the emotions, needs and desires of another person. It is the ability of one person to walk in the shoes of another person and feel what that is like.
* As it relates to parenting, empathy is the ability to perceive the emotions, needs and desires of a child, and to be able to respond in a nurturing and loving way, keeping the positive welfare of the child at the forefront.
* Empathy is the ability to understand and act with care.
* **Both boys and girls** need their parents to show empathy.

1. Ask “Why is empathy necessary for being a parent/caregiver?”

After parents have responded, share the following answers, if needed:

* If we show children empathy, they will be more likely to talk with us when they have a problem.
* Empathy creates positive feelings and relationships.
* When you are empathetic with your child, you are modeling how they can be empathetic with others.
* Everyone experiences problems and hard feelings and we all need help dealing with those feelings, especially children!

8. Give parents a 10- or 15-minute break.

### 5. Showing empathy: The steps technique

Time: 25 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Say

* “Being empathetic, and understanding the feelings and needs of others will help us understand why children behave in a certain way and help parents and caregivers react in a more healthy and constructive manner. Empathetic communication is a loving and nurturing parenting practice. Here is a simple technique to help you to better understand your child’s feelings and be able to respond sensitively:
  + - **Step 1:** Identify the feeling
    - **Step 2:** Determine the reason
    - **Step 3:** Validate the feeling (honor the feeling)
    - **Step 4:** Help your child with their feelings. Take action and find a solution if appropriate.

1. Share the following as an example with parents, to explain these 4 steps. Say

**@** In the example below, the child’s name is Sarah. If needed, change the name to something more familiar to parents in your context.

* “The **first step is to try to identify** or label what someone is feeling. When parents validate a feeling, they should first identify it or label it. Naming the child’s feeling helps them identify their own emotions. For example, saying, ‘Sarah, you look like you are sad right now – are you?’
* What are some emotions that your children feel?”

After parents have responded, share the following answers, if needed:

* + - Frustration
    - Sadness
    - Anger
    - Fear
    - Shame
    - Indignation
    - Joy
    - Disgust
    - Trust
    - Surprise
* “The **second step is to understand why** Sarah is feeling sad. For example, you could say, ‘Why are you sad? I would really like to help if I can.’Sarah can tell you or she may choose not to right now. You can say to Sarah, ‘Feel free to come and talk to me when you are ready.’
* The **third step is to validate the child’s feelings.** Sarah might have had a disagreement with a friend or felt rejected by her peers at school***.*** Do not dismiss that reason. Acknowledge and respect the ‘why’. If you belittle your daughter or son they might not talk to you about their feelings anymore.
* The **fourth step is to help your child with those feelings.** You can brainstorm with your child what, if anything, needs to be done. Sometimes the situation may require the parent and the child to come up with possible actions that may help remedy the situation. Help the child find an appropriate solution, but refrain from giving options right away. This will help the child develop problem-solving skills. Sometimes the situation does not need an action other than just comforting your child or sharing in their joy.”

! You can use this example to present a role-play to parents or facilitate a role-play activity for parents.

1. Ask “What are situations that would require adult help and situations that might just require listening?

After parents have responded, share the following answers, if needed:

**Situations requiring adult help:**

* Problems at school
* Being harassed by older children
* Having been in a physical fight resulting in someone being hurt

**Situations that may require help or just listening and supporting:**

* Argument with a friend
* Problems at school with peers
* Sadness about missing home or being in a camp

1. Ask “What about children experiencing a mental or physical disability?”
2. Say “Children with disabilities need care and support just like any other girl or boy. There are different kinds of barriers in families and communities that can get in the way of providing adequate educational, social and physical opportunities for disabled children. Can you think of some of these barriers?”

After parents have responded, share the following answers, if needed:

* Walking to school for a blind child
* The inability to play games with other children for a child who cannot walk
* Attitudes of other children towards boys and girls with disabilities

1. Say “Children with disabilities need their caregivers to be empathetic in order to understand and help overcome barriers to participating in important family and community activities. This will help them feel more connected to the people and world around them.”

7. Distribute Handout 11: The 4 Steps of Empathy

### 6. Practicing the steps of empathetic communication

Time: 30 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Pairs

Role-play for skills practice: The 4 steps of empathy

1. Pick 2 parents for the role-play. One will be the parent or caregiver and the other will play a 10-year-old girl.
2. Present the scenario – your daughter is sad because she is missing home.
3. Coach the ‘parent’ and the ‘10-year-old girl’ on the role-play. You can adapt the sample script provided, or create your own.
4. Have the volunteers present the role-play in front of the group.

This is a sample script. Please adapt to your context or create your own. Please change the names to ones that are familiar in your context.

**Parent:** [Notices that the daughter looks sad.]   
Oh, Sarah you look so sad, **[Step 1]** do you want to tell me what is making you sad? **[Step 2]**

**Child:** I am just really missing our home and I hate living in this camp.

**Parent:** I am so sorry that this is happening to you and our family. I miss our home too. **[Step 3]** What can I do to help? **[Step 4]**

**Child:** When can we go back home?

**Parent:** Sarah, I am not sure when we will be able to go back home and I know that is really hard for you. Let us try to think of some ways that we can feel better when we are sad. **[Step 4]**

1. Debrief on the role-play:
   * Ask the person playing the 10-year-old girl:
     + How did they feel to have their feelings acknowledged and validated?
     + How did they feel to know that their parent was going to help them?
   * Ask the person playing the parent how it felt to respond to their daughter in this way.
2. Have parents get into pairs and practice the 4 steps. They can use this same scenario or create a new one.
3. Walk around and observe/coach parents while they are doing this. This will be a new skill for many of them. Do not hesitate to make them practice as much as needed. This is a very important session.
4. Ask “How would you use the 4 steps of empathy with a boy who is disabled?”
5. Brainstorm some ideas about using the 4 steps in a scenario with a child with disabilities, and then have them practice in the same way as above.

This is a sample script. Please adapt to your context or create your own. Please change the names to ones that are familiar in your context.

**8-year-old boy in wheelchair:** Dad, some of the kids at school are playing football and having a lot of fun. I wish I could play football.

**Father:** Oh, son I am sorry and I know this must make you feel sad. I know it must be really hard to be in that wheelchair some days.

**Boy:** I wish there was someone who would play with me.

**Father:** I will play with you right now. We can go outside and play catch. How about I talk with your older brother about playing with you more often, too?

1. Debrief on the role-play:
   * Ask parents to reflect on how they felt as a ‘parent’ responding to their ‘child’ this way.
   * Ask the ‘child’ how it felt to have the ‘father’ respond in this way.

### 7. Home assignment

Time: 5 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Ask parents to use the 4 steps of empathy with their children between now and the next session.

Review the 4 steps with them:

* **Step 1:** Identify the feeling
* **Step 2:** Determine the reason
* **Step 3:** Validate the feeling (honor the feeling)
* **Step 4:** Help your child with their feelings. Take action and find a solution if appropriate.

1. Tell parents that they can also follow the 4-step process to understand their own feelings, using questions and statements like:

* What do I feel? Why?
* The way I feel is okay. I can accept the way I feel, no matter how illogical or inappropriate it is.
* I will honor my feelings. I will deal with those feelings safely and constructively*.*

### 8. Evaluation

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Ask the follow questions:

* What did you like best about the session?
* What questions would you have liked to ask but did not have the opportunity to ask?
* How was this session helpful?
* Have you any other comments or suggestions to improve the session?

2. Praise all parents and thank them for their participation.

3. Make sure each parent signs the Attendance Form (Resource 3). If there is someone else attending (a mother with a baby on her back, for example), indicate this on the Attendance Form. If someone left or came in during the session, note this as well. If someone misses a session, remind them that they can catch up in the parent support groups or through home visits.

### Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring

After the session, both Parenting Skills Facilitators need to check-off all completed activities in Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report. If there were activities that were not completed, explain why. Facilitators also need to record parent feedback on the Fidelity Forms. This report should be attached to the session attendance record.

# Parenting Skills Session 7: Encouraging Responsibility – Family Rules and Routines

## **Parenting session summary**

### Objectives

* By the end of this session parents will be able to Articulate how to support their children to make good decisions and be responsible family members.
* Name positive parenting techniques such as praise, consequences, and family agreements and rules.
* List and use the steps of family meetings and agreements.

### Duration

2 hours

### Materials required

* Parenting Skills Curriculum for parents of children (6–11 years)
* Resource 3: Attendance Form
* Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report
* Handouts:
  + Handout 12: Sketch: Family Meetings
  + Handout 13: Steps of Family Meetings
* Facilitator Fidelity Checklist
* Flipcharts and markers/Paper and pens

### Preparation required

* Read through the materials for this session and make copies of the handouts for each parent. Please make sure to give each parent the handout at the end of the session.
* Arrive for the session 30 minutes before the start time.
* Arrange for a space that is conducive to learning and free of interruptions.
* Sit in a circle to encourage interaction with parents.

### Session overview

Parents learn the steps to creating family agreements and rules, and practice praise and consequences.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Session activity** | **Time** |
| 1. Welcome and introduction | 15 minutes |
| 2. Energizer: The picture game | 10 minutes |
| 3. Supporting boys and girls to make decisions and be responsible family members | 15 minutes |
| 4. Family rules and agreements | 35 minutes |
| 5. Family rules: Praise and consequences | 30 minutes |
| 6. Home assignment | 5 minutes |
| 7. Evaluation | 10 minutes |
| Post-session report: fidelity monitoring |  |

### Attendance

The **date and place of the session must be written on the Attendance Form.** Each parent **must** sign the Attendance Form (Resource 3) with their name, age and sex. All parents/caregivers are encouraged to attend all 12 sessions together, as parenting is a shared responsibility. Indicate if there is someone else attending with a parent or parents (such as a child or other family member).

## Steps to follow

### 1. Welcome and introduction

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Welcome all the parents back and thank them for coming again!
2. Ask about the home assignment and praise parents for practicing their new skills. The home assignment was for parents to spend time communicating with their child using empathy.
3. Ask parents if they remember some of the ideas discussed during the last session. Ask them to share their experiences using empathetic communication.
4. Thank and praise parents and caregivers for the efforts they made!

### 2. Energizer: The picture game

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Small groups

1. Divide your group of parents into 3 teams, with about 4 or 5 parents on each team.
2. Give each team a piece of paper and a pen or pencil.
3. Give parents instructions for **‘The picture game’ activity:**

* “Each team will choose one parent to draw a picture of the place, thing, or animal I tell them to draw.
* Each team will draw the same thing.

The team that guesses what their artist is drawing wins!” 4. Play once or twice, depending on time. If you play a second time, choose a new team member to draw in each group.

5. Emphasize to parents that this is a game they can play with their children at home after a family meeting.

### 3. Supporting boys and girls to make decisions and be responsible family members

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Pairs

1. Ask “Do you remember what the difference between sex and gender is?
2. Remind parents of the following, if needed. Say

* “Sex refers to the body differences between males and females.
* Women and men have different body parts because they are 2 different sexes – the male sex and the female sex.
* Gender refers to the social and cultural differences between men and women. For example, the social status, opportunities and restrictions faced by girls/women are different from boys/men. Also, certain activities that girls/women are each supposed to do within a community are different from the ones boys/men are supposed to do.
* The idea of gender roles and responsibilities can be supportive in some ways but, at other times, gender may restrict people’s talents, abilities, and choices in life, as well as create specific risks of violence and abuse.”

1. Say “Let us think for a moment about how we can treat girls and boys more equally in our homes. Then we will talk about how to create a structure for this in your homes by creating family rules and agreements that respect everyone in the home.”
2. Have parents pair-up with a partner. Give them about 5 minutes to talk about some ideas for making things more equal between boys and girls at home and then have them share their ideas with the rest of the group.

After parents have responded, share the following answers, if needed:

* Both boys and girls have the same amount of chores.
* Both boys and girls are encouraged and praised.
* Both boys and girls get to attend school.
* All children are given time for homework.

! Please also note that, depending on where you are working with parents and caregivers, some parents may be able to propose big changes at home, while for others the changes may be much smaller. Any ideas that support giving girls and boys equal opportunities are welcome!

### 4. Family rules and agreements

Time: 35 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Small groups

1. Distribute Handout 12: Family Meetings.
2. Ask

* “What is happening in this picture?
* What do you think this family is discussing?
* Why is it important to include all family members in important discussions?”

1. Say

* “Regular family meetings are a great way to keep the lines of communication open between you and your children.
* During family meetings you can get updates on how your children are doing in school, divide up the household work and have fun together as a family. Creating family rules and agreements will promote a predictable and secure environment for children.
* Children have a sense of control and security when they know what is expected from them.
* Ensure that all family members attend the family meeting.
* The idea behind family meetings is to give children space to voice their changing developmental needs as they get older, discuss household responsibilities and find solutions to improve family life.

Creating time and space for family meetings**[[19]](#footnote-19)**

4. Say “It can be hard to find time to meet together and talk as a whole family. Why is it important to create time to meet as a family?”

After parents have responded, share the following answers, if needed:

* + - * Strengthens the sense of belonging to a family
      * Makes children feel valued and loved
      * Creates and maintains positive parent–child relationships
      * Encourages children to express their points of view, frustrations, and concerns in a positive way. This makes them feel listened to
      * Promotes equality among family members and reduces power struggles

5. Ask “When are some good times to meet together as a family?”

After parents have responded, share the following answers, if needed:

* + - * At a regular day and time in the week
      * When everyone is calm and peaceful
      * Right after having dinner together
      * Friday after mosque or Sunday after church
      * On a weekend when everyone is home

6. Explain that family meetings are more effective when:

* They are regular and not only set up to manage a family crisis.
* You keep an open discussion until family consensus is found, even if it takes more than one meeting to find a solution.
* All concerns and questions are welcomed, as common or extraordinary as they may be.
* The meetings are not too long – 30 minutes is a good average time; one hour is too long.
* Older children are genuinely able to talk and be listened to. It is important that they get a chance to speak and express their thoughts and ideas.

7. Explain the 4 steps of organizing a family meeting:

**@** Adapt the names to ones that are familiar in your context.

**Step 1:** Family meetings always start best with a round of positive feedback on family life. Ideally, each family member has a chance to say something positive about every other family member. This encourages children to appreciate good times they spend together, to express gratitude and appreciate other family members. For example,“Esther, thank you for preparing dinner yesterday. John, I appreciated how you looked after your younger brothers while I was at the market.”

**Step 2:** The family follows up on the solutions adopted during the last meeting. For example,“We agreed during our last meeting that everybody should be home by 6 o’clock. How did it work this week? Did everybody arrive home on time?**”**

**Step 3:** All agenda items are identified. Everyone gets a chance to say what they would like to talk about. All conflicts and issues will not be solved but this is to provide an opportunity and give space to anybody to share their thoughts and to listen. Listening does not mean that we agree, but is an opportunity to better understand each other’s perspectives. Items on the agenda are not necessarily issues, they can also be family projects. For example, ***“***Gertrude, you expressed your frustration about not being able to come to the market with me. As you know, for security reasons, we cannot let you go. Is there something else that you would like to do, that would be safer? Would you like to attend weekly classes at the Safe Healing and Learning Space?”

**Step 4:** Enjoy family time together. Have fun, plan family events together. For example, **“**Who has an idea for something fun we can do together? What about taking a walk and having a picnic together next Saturday?”

Give parents a 10- or 15-minute break.

8. Distribute Handout 13: Steps of Family Meetings.

Setting rules for the house

9. Say

* “To live in harmony as a family, we need clear rules. For discipline to work, **parents must be consistent, yet flexible. Do not threaten children, you do not need to –** if you have clear rules with predictable consequences, children agree to the rules and consequences beforehand.
* Clear rules in the home promote **predictability** and a sense of security for children.
* Just talk to your child, **explain** what has to be done or how you expect them to behave, in a language they can understand.
* When rules are set up and agreed on, you do not need to threaten, because the children know the consequences. Just follow the pre-determined consequences.
* Rules in the house should be **fair and equal** between all family members, including boys and girls.

For example, you agree with your children that, after dinner at 8 o’clock, they will go to bed. If they do not follow this rule, the next day they will not be allowed to play outside.

* So when the child does not listen, they know that they will not be allowed to play outside. **The consequences should also be equal for all family members.**”

10. Give parents guidelines on setting rules. Say

* “Do your children know what you want from them? Many times we assume that children know the rules of the house and the community, but they have never been told.
* If you want a certain behavior from your child, ensure that your child knows what is expected. Remember that expectations need to be age-appropriate and be communicated effectively.
* If the child obeys, give them specific praise for listening to you. If the child does not listen, follow through with a consequence. We will talk more about consequences a little later.
* **Only use rules when you really need them!** Some rules might be unfair or unnecessary. A small number of important rules means it will be easier for your children to follow them, and easier for you to follow through with them.

11. Divide parents into groups of 4.

12. Have parents think of 3 agreements or rules for their children and family. Encourage parents to be clear and concise with their rules.

13. Say “This is an example of something the parents could say – ‘We are really proud of you and enjoy spending time with you! We want you to know that we value your opinions and ideas about how to spend your time and contribute to our household. From now on, we will have dinner and family time every Wednesday night. This will be a time when we can talk about life, have fun together, and review how things are running in the house. What do you think about this idea? Let us go ahead and talk about some rules and agreements that are important for our family.’”

14. After parents have shared their agreement/rules with the whole group, share the following examples, if needed:

* All homework must be done before dinner. If you do not complete your homework, you will not be allowed to go outside and play after school.
* Everyone will be treated with respect in our house. We will use kind words with each other.
* Everyone is expected to do their chores. If you choose not to complete your chores, then you will have to do an extra chore the next day.

### 5. Family rules: Praise and consequences

Time: 30 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Individuals

1. Explain

* It is important to let children know that you are happy and proud of them when they follow rules at home!
* This will let children know that it is important to follow rules and that you appreciate the effort they are making.

Some examples of rules that children follow at home:

1. Say

“Think of a praise statement for each of the following behaviors:

! Have 3 or 4 parents volunteer to respond to each statement

* Doing well in school

Example answer: I am so proud that you are working hard and doing well in school.

* Being kind to siblings

Example answer: It makes me so happy to see you spending time with your younger sister.

* Completing homework

Example answer: Good job for completing your homework. You are so smart!

* Completing chores or housework

Example answer: Thank you for completing your chore. It really helps our family when you help out.

1. Say

* “When family rules are set up and agreed on, you do not need to threaten, yell, or use corporal punishment because your child broke the rules or made a mistake. This is a normal part of being a child. This is part of the learning process!
* Mistakes are opportunities for learning so it is important that you stay calm and help your children learn from their mistakes.
* For example, suppose you agree with your children that they need to come home before dark on the weekends. It is Friday night and they come home after dark. How should you react?
  + You do not need to yell at or hit them.
  + You can talk to them about what happened – maybe there is a good reason for being late.
  + You can tell them that you were worried about them.
  + Then you can problem-solve with them so that, next time they are out with friends, they can make it home on time.
  + Remember your empathetic communication from the last session.
  + You can also let them know that, if it happens again, they will not be allowed to go out and play with friends the following weekend. It is important that you give your children a chance to learn from their mistake, and then if they make the same mistake again, you can give them a logical consequence such at the one above.

1. Say “Let us brainstorm a few ideas for some logical consequences for the following rule violations:
   * Not completing homework
   * Not finishing chores
   * Being unkind or violent to other family members”

After parents have responded, share the following examples, if needed:

* All homework must be done before dinner. If you do not complete your homework, you will not be allowed to go outside and play after school.
* Everyone will be treated with respect in our house. We will use kind words with each other.
* Everyone is expected to do their chores. If you choose not to complete your chores, then you will have to do an extra chore the next day.

Role-play for skills practice: Helping children learn from mistakes

5. Say “Let us practice helping children learn from their mistake.”

6. Pick 2 parents for the role-play. One will be the parent and the other will be an 11-year-old boy.

7. Present the scenario – A parent tells the child that they noticed that the boy had broken an agreement. The boy explains why he broke the agreement. The parent reminds the boy why it is important to fulfill his agreement. The boy explains how he will fulfill the agreement. The parent praises the boy and says that they will see how the boy fulfills his agreement the following week.

8. Coach the ‘parent’ and the ‘boy’ on the role-play. You can adapt the sample script provided, or create your own.

9. Have the volunteers present the role-play in front of the group.

This is a sample script. Please adapt to your context or create your own. Please change the names to ones that are familiar in your context.

**Parent:** Ahmed, when I came down to fix breakfast this morning, I noticed that you did not complete your family chore.

**Ahmed:** I know, I was really busy yesterday with my homework and I forgot about it.

**Parent:** I know you are working very hard in school Ahmed and I am really proud of you for that, but it is important for our household that everyone does their part. How can you remember to do your chores?

**Ahmed:** Well, I suppose I can do it as soon as I come home from school and then do my homework.

**Parent:** Okay, Ahmed that sounds good. Should we give that a try for the rest of this week and see how it goes?

**Ahmed:** Yes, I think that will be okay.

10. Debrief on the role-play:

* Ask the person playing the ‘child’, how they felt about the conversation.
* Ask the person playing the ‘parent’, how they felt about the conversation.

### 6. Home assignment

Time: 5 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

Say “You have to do 2 things between now and when we next meet:

1. Praise your sons and daughters for who they are and the ways they contribute to your family and their future.
2. Hold a family meeting to create some family rules.
3. Remember that you are a powerful role model for your children.

### 7. Evaluation

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Ask the follow questions:

* What did you like best about the session?
* What questions would you have liked to ask but did not have the opportunity to ask?
* How was this session helpful?
* Have you any other comments or suggestions to improve the session?”

2. Praise all parents and thank them for their participation.

3. Make sure each parent signs the Attendance Form (Resource 3). If there is someone else attending (a mother with a baby on her back, for example), indicate this on the Attendance Form. If someone left or came in during the session, note this as well. If someone misses a session, remind them that they can catch up in the parent support groups or through home visits.

### Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring

After the session, both Parenting Skills Facilitators need to check-off all completed activities in Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report. If there were activities that were not completed, explain why. Facilitators also need to record parent feedback on the Fidelity Forms. This report should be attached to the session attendance record.

# Parenting Skills Session 8: Discipline with Dignity

## **Parenting session summary**

### Objectives

* By the end of this session parents will be able to Name and use non-violent discipline approaches with their children, such as ignoring or time-out.

### Duration

2 hours

### Materials required

* Parenting Skills Curriculum for parents of children (6–11 years)
* Resource 3: Attendance Form
* Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report
* Handout 14: Time-out
* Flipcharts and markers/Paper and pens

### Preparation required

* Read through the materials for this session and make copies of the handouts for each parent. Please make sure to give each parent the handout at the end of the session.
* Arrive for the session 30 minutes before the start time.
* Arrange for a space that is conducive to learning and free of interruptions.
* Sit in a circle to encourage interaction with parents.

### Session overview

Parents learn about toxic stress and the importance of taking personal time to calm down. Then they practice using the ‘ignoring’ and ‘time-out’ techniques to teach parents non-violent ways of disciplining their children.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Session activity** | **Time** |
| 1. Welcome and introduction | 15 minutes |
| 2. Energizer | 10 minutes |
| 3. Remember toxic stress? | 5 minutes |
| 4. Taking personal time to calm down | 15 minutes |
| 5. Using ignore for minor misbehavior | 30 minutes |
| 6. Using time-out to help children calm down | 30 minutes |
| 7. Home assignment | 5 minutes |
| 8. Evaluation | 10 minutes |
| Post-session report: fidelity monitoring |  |

### Attendance

The **date and place of the session must be written on the Attendance Form.** Each parent **must** sign the Attendance Form (Resource 3) with their name, age and sex. All parents/caregivers are encouraged to attend all 12 sessions together, as parenting is a shared responsibility. Indicate if there is someone else attending with a parent or parents (such as a child or other family member).

## Steps to follow

### 1. Welcome and introduction

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Welcome all the parents back and thank them for coming again!
2. **Ask about the homework** and praise them for trying. Ask if their children followed the household rules, and if they praised their children or resorted to a consequence? Praise parents for any efforts they made.
3. Ask parents about their use of the handouts in their parent support group meeting. Did they review the handouts and practice the skills? How did it go?
4. Encourage parents to keep practicing the skills in their support groups and to continue to support each other in their learning!

### 2. Energizer

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Ask if any of the parents want to engage the group in an ‘icebreaker’ by singing a song or leading a game that they played as children. Encourage participation, imagination and joy!

2. If no one wants to sing or share a game, teach the ‘I spy’ game. Give parents instructions for the **‘I spy’ game**:

* One person silently identifies something they can see around them.
* Then they say, “I spy with my little eye, something…” and give a hint about the thing they have identified.

For example, “I spy with my litle eye, something that is straight.”

* Others try to guess what that something is by asking questions which will only be answered in ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

For example, is it:

* + - * part of the building? No
      * small? Yes
      * bigger than a book? No
      * brown? No
      * blue? No
      * expensive? No
      * your phone? No
      * sharp? Yes
      * a knife? No
      * a pencil? Yes! Congratulations!

### 3. Remember toxic stress?

Time: 5 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Say

* “When children experience harsh physical discipline or are exposed to violence, when they are neglected or mocked, when their parents drink too much alcohol, they can suffer **toxic stress.**
* Toxic stress can disrupt the development of a child’s brain, increase the risk of illness and interfere with the child’s ability to think and solve problems, even into their adult years.
* Children learn that violence is an acceptable way of reacting when angry, and so will be more likely to use violence when they are angry.”

### 4. Taking personal time to calm down

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Say

* “It is important for parents to take care of themselves in order to respond to their children’s needs in a calm, nurturing way.
* You are not the only parents in the world who get angry at your kids. We all do.
* But we learn to stay in control, not only to spare our children the anguish of having an angry parent who yells at them, but also because screaming and hitting your child only teaches them to do the same when they are upset.
* When parents control their tempers, they are showing and teaching appropriate skills to their children.”
* Remind parents about their breathing exercises and the power of positive thinking.

2. Ask

* “Have you used these relaxation strategies?
* Have you praised your children for their efforts?
* Have you used your coping and healing kits?
* What are your physical reactions to anger?”

Example answers: Clenched fists, tight jaws, tense muscles.

3. Say

* “Now let us practice deep breathing and positive thinking in pairs.
* One person should play the ‘parent’ and another a ‘misbehaving child’ who did not complete his/her chore.
* The parent should get angry, walk away, take deep breaths and respond calmly to the child with a consequence – assigning an extra chore for the misbehavior.”

### 5. Using the ‘ignore’ technique for minor misbehavior

Time: 30 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Pairs

1. Say “We will now discuss 2 non-violent displine techniques that promote a nurturing environment: ignoring and time-out. We know that **children love their parent’s attention, whether it is positive or negative**.

2. There are important principles to ignoring:

* Ignore the negative behavior that is not harmful for the child or others, and is typically a tantrum.
* If your child starts crying because they want a sweet and you do not have money for a sweet, do not pay any attention to the crying. Do not say anything to them, do not look at them, do not even smile. You might even turn your back and start walking.
* You **do not** need to hit or shout at them; ignoring them will send the message that their crying will not work and, eventually, they will stop.
* **Ignore the behavior all the way through!** Ignoring might sound easy but it can actually be very difficult. Children do not like being ignored and, sometimes when you start ignoring them, they will act up even more! They will try different things to see if they can get your attention. For example, they might start to cry or yell even louder.
* Make sure you keep ignoring those negative behaviors. You **do not** want to start ignoring and then give your attention when they start yelling louder. That will teach them to get your attention through the more negative behavior.
* **The most important part of ignoring is to praise your child once the negative behavior stops.** So if they are yelling, as soon as they stop, tell them, “I really like it when you are quiet” or “Thank you for calming down.”
* This will teach your child that negative behavior gets no attention, but positive behavior gets a lot of attention.
* **Some behaviors cannot be ignored, such as when the child is hurting someone else or themselves**. Such behaviour can require other techniques like a time-out, losing a privilege, and so on.

Role-play for skills practice: ignoring minor misbehavior

3. Brainstorm a list of behaviors they think parents can ignore.

Example answers:

* Yelling
* Screaming
* Crying when they are not hurt or tired

4. Have 2 parents volunteer for the next role-play. One person will play the role of an 8-year-old son or daughter, and the other will play the role of the parent. Share the script of the role-play and give them 5 minutes to prepare.

This is a sample script. Please adapt to your context or create your own. Please change the names to ones that are familiar in your context.

**Child:** Mom, I really want a biscuit from the shop.

**Parent:** I am sorry, you cannot have a biscuit now, but you can have a banana.

**Child:** But, Mom, I really want a biscuit. You are so mean.

[Parent ignores the comment, begins to sweep or do other housework.]

**Child:** [Louder] Mom! I really want a biscuit! [Begins yelling]

[Parent continues to ignore, keeping busy with something]

! Parent can also practice deep breathing to stay calm.

[Child stops yelling]

**Parent:** [Walks over to the child] I see you are calm now. Would you like to help me make dinner?

**Child:** Yes [They go to make dinner together]

5. Ask

* “What did the parent do well ignoring?
* What was the message for the child?”

6. Repeat the role-play a few times with different parents.

! This should be fun. Be sure parents understand how both the ignoring and praising techniques work. This is not only an exercise – they need to practice at home. It is one of the most effective ways to help your children achieve behaviors that will help them socially and in life.

Give parents a 10- or 15-minute break.

### 6. Using time out to help children calm down

Time: 30 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Pairs

Distribute Handout 14: Time-out

1. Ask

* “What do you think is happening in this picture?”

! Explanation of the sketch:

* The boy is misbehaving and punching his brother.
* The boy is asked to calm down on his own – this is ‘time-out’.
* The father explains to his boy what he did wrong and praises him when he has calmed down.

2. Explain

* “‘Time-out’ is a positive discipline technique, an alternative to corporal punishment.
* It is **related to the concept of ignoring**. When a child exhibits negative behavior, parents should place them in a ‘time-out space’ – a separate area with no contact or communication with adults or other children.
* Parents should keep the child in time-out until he/she has calmed down.
* Remember that young children love attention and, in a time-out, parents remove all attention.
* Time-outs are best used when children behave aggressively.
* **Time-out will only work if ‘time-in’ is quality time**. Parents and children need to enjoy quality time together if they are to develop loving and nurturing relationships.
* Time-outs work best when parents observe the following guidelines:
* Time-out will not work for children younger than 3 years, because younger children need their parents to help them calm down. It is best to use distraction and redirection for children under 3 years of age.
* Time-out works best for children between the ages of 3 and 10 years.
* For children around 11 or 12 years old, it is best to ignore or use a consequence.
* Be sure to explain clearly the reason for a time-out: ‘You hit your brother and that is not acceptable, so you have to go to time-out.’
* Make sure you have an appropriate area to use for time-out – a place that is quiet and away from other people engaging in fun activities.
* Everyone in the home needs to understand and respect the rules of time out. No one should talk to or interact with the child until time-out is over and the child has calmed down.
* Establish (if possible) the duration of a time-out. It usually takes 3 minutes for a child to calm down. A child is ready to come out of time-out when he or she:
* No longer yells and screams
* Sits quietly
* Breathes slowly and peacefully
* It is critical that parents re-engage the child soon after he or she has calmed down. Parents should give positive attention to any positive behavior they observe after time-out ends.
* Time-out works best for aggressive behavior. Parents have learned other strategies for other misbehaviors.
* Remember to **first explain time-out to your child and then practice it**. Tell children, ‘From now on, when you hit or hurt another person, you will need to take a time-out to calm down.’
* Once you tell the child that he or she is going to time-out, they must go, no matter what they do or say. They may say, ‘I promise to be good now’, or ‘But I love you!’ You should ignore such statements and lead the child to the time-out place peacefully (or with minimum force, such as calmly taking the child by the arm).
* After time-out, praise the child for any good or appropriate behavior.”

Demonstration: Time-out

3. One facilitator will play the ‘parent’, the second facilitator will be ‘child 1’, and a parent volunteer will play ‘child 2’.

This is a sample script. Please adapt to your context or create your own. Please change the names to ones that are familiar in your context.

**Child 2:** [Crying] He took my ball and then he hit me!

**Parent:** You hit your sister, you need to go to time-out.

**Child 1:** [Walking towards the time-out corner] This is not fair!

[Sits in the time-out corner, then screams] This is not fair! It was my ball!

**Parent:** [Ignores the child’s complaining, asks Child 2] Are you okay?

[Waits for 3 to 5 minutes, and goes to get Child 1]. Thank you for completing your time-out. You can go back and play with your sister.

**Child 1:** [Begins to play cooperatively with a ball]

**Parent:** You 2 are playing so well together as friends. Thanks for sharing your toy!

4. Have parents practice this same role-play. Facilitators should coach 2 parents in front of the group.Then parents and caregivers can practice in groups of 2 where one adult is the ‘parent’ and the 2 others are ‘child 1’ and ‘child 2’.

5. Ask

* “What would you do if 2 siblings were hitting each other?”

6. Have parents share their ideas with the whole group.

7. Suggest that, if both children are hitting and fighting, the parent or caregiver can send both of them to time-out, but in different places. Maybe one child can sit under the tree and the other sitting next to the hut, house or tent.

### 7. Home assignment

Time: 5 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

Assign the following homework tasks until the next session:

* Parents should sit with their children at home and explain the concept of time-out. Parents should practice time-out with their children so they understand the concept and the goal of the strategy, which is to help them calm down.
* Parents should take personal time when they find themselves becoming angry. They should remember that the most effective way to respond when a child behaves aggressively is to stay calm because children learn from watching their parents.

### 8. Evaluation

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Ask the following questions:

* “What did you like best about the session?
* What questions would you have liked to ask but did not have the opportunity to ask?
* How was this session helpful?
* Have you any other comments or suggestions to improve the session?”

2. Praise all parents and thank them for their participation.

3. Make sure each parent signs the Attendance Form (Resource 3). If there is someone else attending (a mother with a baby on her back, for example), indicate this on the Attendance Form. If someone left or came in during the session, note this as well. If someone misses a session, remind them that they can catch up in the parent support groups or through home visits.

### Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring

After the session, both Parenting Skills Facilitators need to check-off all completed activities in Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report. If there were activities that were not completed, explain why. Facilitators also need to record parent feedback on the Fidelity Forms. This report should be attached to the session attendance record.

# Parenting Skills Session 9: Talking, Storytelling and Playing Games

## **Parenting session summary**

### Objectives

By the end of this session parents will be able to:

* + Name and use techniques to engage and stimulate their children.
  + Articulate how they can help their children learn and perform well in school.

### Duration

2 hours, 10 minutes

### Materials required

* Parenting Skills Curriculum for parents of children (6–11 years)
* Resource 3: Attendance Form
* Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report
* Handout 15: Storytelling
* Flipcharts and markers/Paper and pens
* Pictures for the energizer

### Preparation required

* For the storytelling activity, prepare a popular story that parents and adults tell children in the community.
* Read through the materials for this session and make copies of the handouts for each parent. Please make sure to give each parent the handout at the end of the session.
* Arrive for the session 30 minutes before the start time.
* Arrange for a space that is conducive to learning and free of interruptions.
* Sit in a circle to encourage interaction with parents.

### Session overview

Parents learn how to use conversation, word games and other ways to support their children’s learning.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Session activity** | **Time** |
| 1. Welcome and introduction | 15 minutes |
| 2. Energizer | 10 minutes |
| 3. Use of conversation and word play to support our children’s literacy skills and school success | 45 minutes |
| 4. Word games | 30 minutes |
| 5. What other ways can parents help children with school? | 15 minutes |
| 6. Home assignment | 5 minutes |
| 7. Evaluation | 10 minutes |
| Post-session report: fidelity monitoring |  |

### Attendance

The **date and place of the session must be written on the Attendance Form.** Each parent **must** sign the Attendance Form (Resource 3) with their name, age and sex. All parents/caregivers are encouraged to attend all 12 sessions together, as parenting is a shared responsibility. Indicate if there is someone else attending with a parent or parents (such as a child or other family member).

## Steps to follow

### 1. Welcome and introduction

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Welcome parents and praise them for being there. Acknowledge that parenting is a difficult job – the most important job of our lives.

2. Ask about their families and children. Have they noticed changes in the way they interact with their children?

3. Ask about the home assignment and praise them for trying. This was an important assignment, because parental skills need to be tried continuously.

4. Ask

* “Which parenting skills did you try?
* Did you praise your children for what they did and who they are?
* Did you ignore negative behaviors?
* Did you use positive discipline instead of screaming, criticizing or hitting? How did they work?
* Did you use time-out? Were both parents/all caregivers practicing the same techniques and supporting each other in the parental practices?”

5. Reassure parents that it will take time to make positive ‘discipline with dignity’ a habit.

6. Remind them of the group guidelines you developed in Session 1, if needed.

### 2. Energizer

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Small groups

1. Check if any of the parents prepared an icebreaker? If they did, use that one.

2. If no parents want to lead an icebreaker, introduce the planned icebreaker as a game which uses memory, words, body language and drawing.

3. Tell parents they can play this with their children.

4. Divide the parents into 3 small groups.

5. Explain the instructions for the icebreaker:

* A volunteer from group 1 will come up to the Parenting Skills Facilitator who will show them a picture.
* The volunteer has to describe the picture with non-verbal communication only.
* The other groups, using verbal communication, have to figure out what is being described.
* The first of the 3 groups to guess the picture gets a point.
* The game will be repeated with volunteers from the other 2 groups.

### 3. Use of conversation and word play to support our children’s literacy skills and school success

Time: 45 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Pairs

1. Distribute Handout 15: Storytelling

2. Ask

* “What do you think might be happening in this picture?
* What do you think the parents and children are doing?
* What do you think the child might be learning?”

! Explanation of the handout: A father is going to the market with his daughter. She is re-telling the story of the day, what they bought and at what price.

Memories of storytelling

3. Divide parents into pairs.

4. Say “Think back to when you were very young.

* Did anyone tell you stories?
* If so, who told you those stories?
* What were the stories about?
* Is there one you remember most of all?
* Tell your partner about this story.”

5. Give parents 5 minutes to share their memories with each other in the pairs.

6. When you bring them back together, have 2 or 3 parents share their stories with the whole group.

7. Ask “What did you gain from the experience of being told stories?”

Example answers: Bonding with the storyteller, learning cultural traditions, learning history, learning about family, learning to listen for information, words, storytelling skills.

8. Say

“The activities we will learn today are designed to help children do well in school, in addition to all those other benefits listed above. Research has taught us a few important lessons:[[20]](#footnote-20)

* There is a **relationship between listening comprehension (understanding) and reading comprehension**. Children who have more conversations understand things better than other children, read better than other children, and do better in school overall. Parents and caregivers talking with children can improve school performance.
* Playing word games with children helps **build their vocabulary (that is, it helps them learn more words**), and this helps them learn to read and write in school, even if they are being taught in a different language.
* When children master the language spoken at home, they are **better at learning a new language in school**. This requires a lot of language use – both listening and speaking.
* Are there any questions?”

Activity 1: Storytelling

9. Say “Today we want to talk about ways you can use the storytelling to help your children learn skills for school.”

! Use the story prepared in advance to help parents understand the activity better.

10. Give parents the following guidance to improve children’s conversational skills, so the storytelling is more of a dialogue:

* **“Ask questions**: When you tell the story, you can ask your child questions about the most important facts, such as:
  + Who is the story about?
  + Where does the story take place?
  + What is your favorite part of the story, and why?
  + Tell me 3 things that happened to the main character?
* **Child predicts ending**: You can ask the child to predict what will happen next. You can do this by stopping at an important point in the story and asking your child, ‘What do you think will happen next?’”

Role-play for skills practice: Storytelling part 1

11. Ask for 2 volunteers, one will play the ‘child’ and the other will be the ‘parent’. This skills role-play should not last more than 3 minutes.

12. Remind parents to use the parenting skills introduced during previous sessions during the role-play. So, for example, the volunteer who is acting as the ‘parent’ should use good communication skills and praise the ‘child’. You might say “That is a really neat ending! I like how creative you are being with the story.” The ‘parent’ can also praise the child’s behavior and say things like: “You are doing a great job listening to the story! Thank you for sitting still beside me.”

Activity 2: Storytelling part 2

13. Say “Some other ways to build your child’s brain while storytelling includes directing more of the thinking and speaking to the child. These techniques are better to do after you have practiced the earlier techniques for a while. Once the child has mastered the ability to answer questions and predict endings, use the following storytelling techniques:

* **Child changes ending:** You can ask the child to change the ending of the story by making up their own ending.
* **Child retells story:** You can ask the child to retell the story to you. The child should be able to convey the main ideas of the story, even if they use different words. This helps develop their verbal skills. The important thing here is to make sure the child understands the key elements of the story. If the child cannot retell the story, do not criticize them. Simply repeat the story. If the child is enjoying trying, ask them to try to retell the story again and make all the changes they want.”

Role-play for skills practice: Storytelling part 2

14. Say “Now let us try those skills in a role-play.”

15. Model the role-play in front of the parents. The ‘parent’ will tell the story, the ‘child’ will retell the story or change the ending. The ‘parent’ will help by asking questions to guide the ‘child’ and respond with interest and praise to the child’s ideas.

16. After about 5 minutes of practice, ask for a few parents to share how they did this.

17. Thank the parents for their good ideas. Ask if there are any questions about storytelling with their children.”

! If you have time and you want to practice more, then repeat the role-play and ask the pairs to swap roles.

Activity 3: Narrating activities and summarizing the day

@: adapt the following examples to your context

18. Say

* “Another way **to build children’s vocabulary and verbal skills** as well as their **attention span and memory** is to talk about ‘what you are doing’ and ‘what you have done’. You can do this with everyday activities.
* Narrating and recounting activities is a good habit to get into, whenever your child is with you and you are doing something.
* Let us brainstorm some opporunities to practice ‘what you are doing’ and ‘what you have done’ with your child.

**Example answer:** while going to the market, cooking a meal, washing clothes, doing the housekeeping, working in the garden/the farm, taking care of the animals, going to religious ceremonies, at family celebrations.

* You can also ask the child, and help the child, to summarize the day. In the evening, after dinner, you can ask the child to go through with you what they did all day.”

Activity 4: Role-play for skills practice: Narrating

19. Model a role-play on how parents can use the narrating and summarizing technique with their child.

This is a sample script. Please adapt to your context or create your own. Please change the names to ones that are familiar in your context.

**Child:** First I had breakfast. Then I played with Issa.

**Parent:** What did you play with Issa?

**Child:** We played football.

**Parent:** And then what?

**Child:** I went with you to the field.

**Parent:** Did we go straight to the field?

**Child:** Yes.

**Parent:** I think we stopped to see someone first. Do you remember who that was?

**Child:** Oh yes, we saw Auntie Patricia. She gave me a mango. And then we went to the field.

**Parent:** Yes, that’s right. Well done! You are so smart. I am impressed with your memory and how well you describe things. And what did we do in the field?

20. Say

* “Do not overwhelm the child with questions either. It is also fine for the child to say ‘I do not know’, and for you to help them remember. Show understanding, compassion, tolerance and affection.
* The feedback to the child has to be positive and gentle. The parent should give hints, and not get angry or use harsh words.
* This is a good activity to practice every evening, even with children as young as 3 years old. Whenever you have time in the evening, you can go over the day with your child. Let us practice now, for example, summarizing the day.

Activity 5: Role-play for skills practice: Summarizing

21. Have 2 parents perform a role-play in front of the group, with one playing the ‘child’ and the other the ‘parent’ who asks the child to summarize their day.

22. Give the actors 5 minutes to prepare the script and the role-play, and then have them perform in front of the whole group.

Make sure you listen when they are working to see if the ‘parent’ is giving positive feedback, gentle hints and praise to the ‘child’. If you hear some inappropriate interactions, politely suggest ways to transform the ideas into more positive feedback. Praise parents!

Give parents a 10- or 15-minute break.

### 4. Word games

Time: 30 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Small groups

1. Say

* “This is a fun vocabulary game you can play with your child when you are walking somewhere or when you are waiting somewhere. If the child is getting bored, this game can keep them entertained. You can play this with more than one child.
* One person starts by thinking of an animal and the other players take turns, asking only ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions about it so that they can guess what the animal is.
* We will do a demonstration now.”

2. Say

* “I am thinking of an animal and you are going to ask me questions about it until you can guess what animal I am thinking of.
* I can only answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’.”

! You can think of a goat (do not tell parents the animal you are thinking of). You can give an example question to get started. It could go like this:

Is it bigger than a dog? Yes

Does it have 4 legs? Yes

Does it make a lot of noise? Yes

Is it dangerous? No

Can you eat it? Yes

Is it a cow? No

Does it make milk? Yes

Is it a goat? Yes! Congratulations!

3. After one round of play, have parents list all the words children used in this game, reinforcing how effective this game is for building their language skills. Also highlight that they practice asking and answering questions, another useful skill in learning.

4. Divide parents into groups of 3 and play this game for 5 minutes.

5. Ask

* “How did that go? Was it fun? Could you guess the animals? Did you face any problems?”

6. Lead a short discussion of their experiences. Bring up for discussion any issues you noticed when they were practicing, like using ‘yes/no’ questions, and giving positive feedback.

7. Say

* “Another fun word game is called ‘I spy’. You might remember that we played this game as an energizer in an earlier session.”

8. Have parents play ‘I spy’ in their groups for 5 minutes.

9. Lead a short discussion of their experiences. Bring up for discussion any issues you noticed when they were practicing, like using ‘yes/no’ questions, and giving positive feedback.

### 5. What other ways can parents help children with school?

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Ask

* “What other ways can you think of to help your children learn?”

2. Make a list on the flipchart

Example answers:

* + Talking with teachers
  + Helping with their homework and review
  + Putting school first
  + Participating in the school activities and groups like the Parent and Teacher Association
  + Spending more time playing with and talking to them
  + Encouraging children’s participation in family matters
  + Maintaining a peaceful environment at home, which is conducive to education
  + Encouraging their play, including counting, piling objects, remembering words and letters, drawing and coloring, and so on

3. Praise the parents, thank them for their ideas and encourage them to use all the techniques learned today, with their children.

4. Say

* “We are going to have another session specifically on skills to help you support your children to succeed in school.”

### 6. Home assignment

Time: 5 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Say

* “Use at least one of the 3 techniques learned today, with your children.”

2. Go around the group and have parents tell you which techniques they will use with their children.

! They can select from – storytelling, narrating and summarizing the day, guessing the animal, and ‘I spy’.

### 7. Evaluation

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. The evaluation of this first session should also be simple.   
     
   Ask

* “What did you like best about the session?
* What questions would you have liked to ask but did not have the opportunity to ask?
* How was this session helpful?
* Do you have any other comments or suggestions for improving this session?”

1. Praise all parents and thank them for their participation.
2. Make sure each parent signs the Attendance Form (Resource 3). If there is someone else attending (a mother with a baby on her back, for example), indicate this on the Attendance Form. If someone left or came in during the session, note this as well. If someone misses a session, remind them that they can catch up in the parent support groups or through home visits.

### Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring

After the session, both Parenting Skills Facilitators need to check-off all completed activities in Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report. If there were activities that were not completed, explain why. Facilitators also need to record parent feedback on the Fidelity Forms. This report should be attached to the session attendance record.

# PaSession 10: Understanding Children’s Psychosocial Needs

## **Parenting session summary**

### Objectives

* By the end of this session parents will be able to Articulate the psychosocial impact of a crisis on children.
* List psychological symptoms of children affected by a crisis.

### Duration

2 hours, 10 minutes

### Materials required

* Parenting Skills Curriculum for parents of children (6–11 years)
* Resource 3: Attendance Form
* Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report
* Resource 8: Impact and Symptoms – Answer key
* Handouts:
  + Handout 16: Impact and Symptoms
  + Handout 17: Ignoring Symptoms of Stress: A Vicious Cycle
* Flipcharts and markers/paper and pens
* Tape

### Preparation required

* Read through the materials for this session and make copies of the handouts for each parent. Please make sure to give each parent the handout at the end of the session.
* Arrive for the session 30 minutes before the start time.
* Arrange for a space that is conducive to learning and free of interruptions. For the relaxation exercise, it would be good if there is space for everyone to lie down.
* Sit in a circle to encourage interaction with parents.

### Session overview

Parents learn about the psychosocial impact of crisis and the consequences of ignoring the symptoms of stress. Group activities help parents to talk about how crisis affects children, and how they can support the psychological well-being of their children.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Session activity** | **Time** |
| 1. Welcome and introduction | 20 minutes |
| 2. Understanding the psychosocial impact of a crisis on children | 1 hour, 5 minutes |
| 3. Relaxation exercise | 15 minutes |
| 4. Education and learning to support children’s psychosocial needs | 15 minutes |
| 5. Home assignment | 5 minutes |
| 6. Evaluation | 10 minutes |
| Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring |  |

### Attendance

The **date and place of the session must be written on the Attendance Form.** Each parent **must** sign the Attendance Form (Resource 3) with their name, age and sex. All parents/caregivers are encouraged to attend all 12 sessions together, as parenting is a shared responsibility. Indicate if there is someone else attending with a parent or parents (such as a child or other family member).

## Steps to follow

### 1. Welcome and introduction

Time: 20 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Welcome parents and praise them for attending.

2. Start by asking parents to volunteer to share their experience of the home assignment from the previous session, practicing storytelling and word games with their children.

3. Ask “How did it go? Does anyone want to share any thoughts or reflections?”

### **2**. **Understanding the psychosocial impact of a crisis on children**

Time: 1 hour, 5 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Small groups

1. Explain the impact of crisis on children:

* Crisis affects children in all the same ways as it affects adults, but also in different ways.
* Children are dependent on the care, empathy, and attention of adults who love them. Their attachments are frequently disrupted in times of war, due to the loss of parents, extreme preoccupation of parents in protecting and finding subsistence for the family, and emotional unavailability of depressed or distracted parents.
* Children feel, as we saw in Session 2, what their parents’ feel, including their stress and their emotions.
* Children are often exposed to very traumatic events during war. Loss of loved ones and disruptions in their lives and routine can lead to depression and anxiety for children.
* Research has shown that the earlier we start helping children to cope with the stresses of war, the more likely we are to prevent serious psychosocial problems later in life.[[21]](#footnote-21) Remind the parents of the information in Session 4 on brain development and how toxic stress can affect the brain and neuron connections.

2. Say

* “During this session, we are going to brainstorm about the psychosocial impacts of war on children.”

3. Distribute the Handout 16: Impacts and Symptoms to all the parents.

4. Divide the parents into 4 groups.

5. Ask them to brainstorm for 15 minutes to answer the following questions for the 6- to 11-year-old age-group:

* What is the impact of war on children?
* What are the psychological symptoms that can be observed?

6. Have each group present key discussion points to the rest of the team.

Refer to Resource 8: Impacts and Symptoms – Answer key for example answers.

8.. Ask “ How have your children been affected by this crisis?”

#### Note for Facilitator: Parents will hear that they are not the only parents whose children have been affected. They will understand their children’s reactions and begin to make the links between how adults’ and children’s reactions are connected, and they can start internalizing the different ways they can help their children.

8. Say

* “**These are common reactions.** They are normal in the sense that most children will experience some of them at some point, although most children will recover. Every child responds differently, according to their age, gender, background or temperament, and there are **no right or wrong reactions.** It can sometimes be helpful for you to discuss positive changes in your children’s behaviour, as well.
* **These are understandable reactions.** Adults are very good at noticing changes in behaviour, but it is much harder for them to know about children’s internal distress. In this case, it is helpful for you to make the links between adults’ and children’s distress.”

9. Ask

* “Do you have distressing memories yourselves, and do you think your children have some has well?
* Did your children tell you about distressing memories?
* Did you notice any behaviour that would suggest that they have distressing memories?”

10. Say

* “Children commonly have distressing and intrusive memories after exposure to war-time stress.
* These may be in the form of nightmares, intrusive pictures or thoughts during waking hours. “

! Use case examples of your own, or ask for examples from the group.

* “As with adults, the natural reaction of children is to try to push these thoughts away, or to avoid reminders of the event that can trigger them.”

11. Ask

* “Can you give me examples of ways you or your children push away or avoid difficult memories?
* Do you have ways to avoid repetitive thoughts about a specific event?”

1. Distribute Handout 17 Ignoring Symptoms of Stress - a Viscious Cycle
2. Say

* “Look at the ‘vicious cycle’ diagram and explain how pushing away or avoiding difficult memories may provide temporary relief, but in the long term, it prevents recovery.”
* The parts of the diagram are explained below:
  + **Difficult memories/nightmares** – Some thoughts, difficult memories and nightmares of traumatic events that keep coming into your mind.
  + **Ignoring and pushing away** – The immediate reaction is to push away or ignore these difficult memories.
  + **Relief in the short term** – Feeling better for a short period of time.
  + **Difficult memories/nightmares come back stronger and more often** – Bad memories coming back more frequently and with a greater intensity, thus continuing the vicious cycle.

Ignoring symptoms of stress: A vicious cycle

14. Say

* “Look at the image in this handout. Can you see the effect of ignoring the symptoms of stress?
* To break the cycle, talking about a traumatic event and finding comfort is the key!
* We will discuss in detail in the next session, ways to address symptoms of stress for children.”

1. Explain the second image in the handout:

The first picture in the second image shows that you should not let your children watch violent images of the conflict on TV or listen to adult discussions about the conflict.

The second picture in the second image shows that you should answer children’s questions about the current situation using appropriate and reassuring language.

Give parents a 10- or 15-minute break.

### 3. Relaxation exercise

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Say

* “We are now going to do a relaxation exercise.
* Remove your shoes, loosen your clothing and find a comfortable position.

@ Adapt this to what would be appropriate for your context and space.

* Take a few minutes to relax, breathing in and out in slow, deep breaths.
* When you are relaxed and ready to start, shift your attention to your right foot. Take a moment to focus on the way it feels.
* Slowly tense the muscles in your right foot, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10.
* Relax your right foot. Focus on the tension flowing away and the way your foot feels as it becomes limp and loose.
* Stay in this relaxed state for a moment, breathing deeply and slowly.
* When you are ready, shift your attention to your left foot. Take a moment to focus on the way it feels.
* Slowly tense the muscles in your left foot, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10.
* Relax your left foot. Focus on the tension flowing away and the way your foot feels as it becomes limp and loose.
* Stay in this relaxed state for a moment, breathing deeply and slowly.
* When you are ready, shift your attention to your right leg. Take a moment to focus on the way it feels.
* Slowly tense the muscles in your right leg, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10.
* Relax your right leg. Focus on the tension flowing away and the way your foot feels as it becomes limp and loose.
* Stay in this relaxed state for a moment, breathing deeply and slowly.
* When you are ready, shift your attention to your left leg. Take a moment to focus on the way it feels.
* Slowly tense the muscles in your left leg, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10.
* Relax your left leg. Focus on the tension flowing away and the way your foot feels as it becomes limp and loose.
* Stay in this relaxed state for a moment, breathing deeply and slowly.
* When you are ready, shift your attention to your stomach. Take a moment to focus on the way it feels.
* Slowly tense the muscles in your stomach, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10.
* Relax your stomach. Focus on the tension flowing away and the way your stomach feels as it becomes limp and loose.
* Stay in this relaxed state for a moment, breathing deeply and slowly.
* When you are ready, shift your attention to your chest. Take a moment to focus on the way it feels.
* Slowly tense the muscles in your chest, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10.
* Relax your chest. Focus on the tension flowing away and the way your chest feels as it becomes limp and loose.
* Stay in this relaxed state for a moment, breathing deeply and slowly.
* When you are ready, shift your attention to your right shoulder Take a moment to focus on the way it feels.
* Slowly tense the muscles in your right shoulder, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10.
* Relax your right shoulder. Focus on the tension flowing away and the way your right shoulder feels as it becomes limp and loose.
* Stay in this relaxed state for a moment, breathing deeply and slowly.
* When you are ready, shift your attention to your left shoulder Take a moment to focus on the way it feels.
* Slowly tense the muscles in your left shoulder, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10.
* Relax your left shoulder. Focus on the tension flowing away and the way your shoulder feels as it becomes limp and loose.
* Stay in this relaxed state for a moment, breathing deeply and slowly.
* When you are ready, shift your attention to your back. Take a moment to focus on the way it feels.
* Slowly tense the muscles in your back, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10.
* Relax your back. Focus on the tension flowing away and the way your back feels as it becomes limp and loose.
* Stay in this relaxed state for a moment, breathing deeply and slowly.
* When you are ready, shift your attention to your neck. Take a moment to focus on the way it feels.
* Slowly tense the muscles in your neck, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of 10.
* Relax your neck. Focus on the tension flowing away and the way your neck feels as it becomes limp and loose.
* Stay in this relaxed state for a moment, breathing deeply and slowly.
* When you are ready, you can sit up.”

### 4. Education and learning to support children’s psychosocial needs

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Small groups

1. Ask

* “Do you remember when we talked about education and brain development in Session 4?
* Do you remember what we talked about?”

After parents have responded, share the following answers, if needed:

* It is important that children continue to have opportunities for learning in order to help their brains develop in a healthy way, in order to make good decisions, take appropriate risks and plan for their future.
* Children need an education to have opportunities for higher learning and employment in the future.
* We also played the ‘Concentration game.’

2. Ask

* “Are your children attending school?
* Are both your boys and girls attending school?
* Why is it important for both boys and girls to have education opportunities?
* Are you supporting your children’s learning at home with games and relaxation activities?”

3. Praise parents for helping their children prepare for a successful life.

4. Explain the following principles of how children learn:

* There are 5 principles parents can follow to keep their children’s brains developing in healthy ways in order for them to succeed in school and life.

1. Make time to talk about school and learning.

For example, say, ‘David, tell me about what you learned in school today!’; ‘David, we are going to the market. Can you keep track of how much all of our items cost today?’

1. Make time to talk about children’s goals and dreams.

For example, say, ‘Fatima, how are your studies going? Are you still thinking about being a teacher?’

1. Take school attendance seriously. **Children need to attend school in order to learn and have future opportunities.**
2. Get involved. Visit your child’s school, ask them about what they are learning, talk to their teacher, and so on.
3. Offer to help children with studying and playing learning games.

Vocabulary game: ‘A to Z race’

@ If some caregivers cannot read and write, use the alternative game: ‘Our cat’

1. Divide everyone into 2 teams. Give each team a paper and pen.
2. Choose a topic like food and drink, sports, countries, and so on. They must be very broad categories.
3. Give parents instructions for the **‘A to Z race’ activity:**[[22]](#footnote-22)

* “Each team will start with one person who will write a word with the letter ‘A’, related to the category. For example, if the category is ‘food’ they could write ‘apple’.
* The paper and pen will then be passed on to a second person, who will write a word with the letter ‘B’, related to the category, and so on.
* The first team to reach ‘Z’ will win.
* If you cannot think of a word beginning with a particular letter, you can leave a space, but the team with the most words at the end is the winner.”

1. Have the parents play this game and tell them to play it at home with their familes.

Alternative game: ‘Our cat’

1. Have parents sit in a large semi-circle.
2. Draw a simple picture of a cat on the flipchart and tell the parents/caregivers that this is our cat. Tell them that we will find words to describe the cat.
3. Give the group instructions for the **‘Our cat’ activity**:

* Each parent has to think of a word to describe the cat and the word must begin with the first letter of the parent’s name.
* Pick a parent to start the game. He or she will say “Our cat is…” and complete the sentence with a word to describe the cat.

For example, if a parent’s name is Nina, she will say “Our cat is … neat!”

* The parent to the right will add a word describing the cat, by saying “Our cat is…neat and [word to describe cat].”

For example, Ali will say “Our cat is neat and angry!”

* This will continue with each parent remembering and repeating all the words used to describe the cat and adding their own word at the end.
* The parent who started has to end the game by remembering all the words.
* At the end, ask a few others in the group if they can also remember all the words.

@: If cats are not relevant in your context or are seen as negative animals in your community, change the animal.

### 5. Home assignment

Time: 5 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Give parents the following tasks for homework:

* Observe your children and identify signs of stress
* Show them that you love them
* Practice relaxation exercises

### 6. Evaluation

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Ask the follow questions:

* “What did you like best about the session?
* What questions would you have liked to ask but did not have the opportunity to ask?
* How was this session helpful?
* Have you any other comments or suggestions to improve the session?”

1. Praise all parents and thank them for their participation.
2. Make sure each parent signs the Attendance Form (Resource 3). If there is someone else attending (a mother with a baby on her back, for example), indicate this on the Attendance Form. If someone left or came in during the session, note this as well. If someone misses a session, remind them that they can catch up in the parent support groups or through home visits.

### Post session report: Fidelity monitoring

After the session, both Parenting Skills Facilitators need to check-off all completed activities in Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report. If there were activities that were not completed, explain why. Facilitators also need to record parent feedback on the Fidelity Forms. This report should be attached to the session attendance record.

# Parenting Skills Session 11: Providing Psychosocial Support to Children

## **Parenting session summary**

### Objectives

* By the end of this session parents will be able to List and use techniques to provide support to their children affected by a crisis, such as talking, listening and engaging them in activities.
* Identify severe psychosocial needs, and make appropriate referrals if necessary.

### Duration

2 hours, 10 minutes

### Materials required

* Parenting Skills Curriculum for parents of children (6–11 years)
* Resource 3: Attendance Form
* Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report
* Handouts:
  + Handout 18: Parent Tips for Helping Children After Disasters
  + Handout 19: Mandala
  + Handout 20: Referral Pathway (@ adaptation required)
* Flipcharts and markers/ paper and pen

### Preparation required

* Gather necessary information about the referral pathway of the SHLS program and adapt this session’s Activity 5: Referral accordingly.
* Prepare a song, story or a group pledge to share with the caregivers for the final session.
* Read through the materials for this session and make copies of the handouts for each parent. Please make sure to give each parent the handout at the end of the session.
* Arrive for the session 30 minutes before the start time.
* Arrange for a space that is conducive to learning and free of interruptions.
* Sit in a circle to encourage interaction with parents.

**Session overview:**

Parents learn about using talking and listening to help their children manage stress. Parents also practice a mindfulness exercise they can use themselves and with their children. Parents learn about using the SHLS referral mechanism to refer children demonstrating severe signs of stress, to appropriate professionals.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Session activity** | **Time** |
| 1. Welcome and introduction | 20 minutes |
| 2. Talking and listening | 45 minutes |
| 3. Children’s activities | 15 minutes |
| 4. Relaxation and mindfulness exercises | 10 minutes |
| 5. Referral | 20 minutes |
| 6. Home assignment | 10 minutes |
| 7. Evaluation | 10 minutes |
| Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring |  |

### Attendance

The **date and place of the session must be written on the Attendance Form.** Each parent **must** sign the Attendance Form (Resource 3) with their name, age and sex. All parents/caregivers are encouraged to attend all 12 sessions together, as parenting is a shared responsibility. Indicate if there is someone else attending with a parent or parents (such as a child or other family member).

## Steps to follow

### 1. Welcome and introduction

Time: 20 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Welcome parents and praise them for attending.

2. Start by asking parents to volunteer to share their experience of the home assignment from the previous session.

3. Ask

* “Did you do the assignment?
* Did you identify any new symptoms of stress?
* Did you practice any relaxation techniques? How did it feel?
* Does anyone have any thoughts or reflections they can share?”

4. Remind parents that talking about post-traumatic stress does not mean they are sick, mad or crazy!

5. Say

* “In this session, we will learn, as parents and caregivers, how to address the psychosocial needs of our children.
* As we saw during the last session, children can overcome the negative effects of stress with the help of relaxation strategies. They do not necessarily need to be referred to a psychologist.
* As parents, there is a lot you can do!”

6. Have one parent summarize the last session and give examples of symptoms of psychosocial distress.

7. Ask

* “Since the last session, did you notice changes in your children’s behavior or symptoms of psychosocial distress that you haven’t noticed before?
* How did you help your children with their difficulties?
* Which one worked?
* What are the most difficult problems to deal with?
* What are the obstacles to helping children?

! Write the responses to these questions on the flipchart.

### **2. Talking and listening** [[23]](#footnote-23)

Time: 45 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Small groups

1. Explain

* “During and after war, children can feel vulnerable, frightened and insecure. Families are commonly split up and normal daily life seems impossible.
* Children can become confused as well as scared at what is happening around them. They often become afraid of their own reactions, fearing that they are going crazy or losing control. They may worry about the future and about their own safety as well as the safety of those closest to them.
* Although children, like adults, need to have time to switch off from thinking about war, they will not be able to forget what has happened to them.
* Talking about what has happened in the past, and about their worries for the future with someone they trust, will help children to make sense of what is happening around them and their memories will become less distressing.”

**!** It is important to remind parents that they should not encourage violence or revenge towards ‘the enemy’. Maintaining a culture of revenge prevents recovery and strengthens stress.

* “Children need to **make sense** of what is happening around them, at a level appropriate to their development and age, if they are to feel safe and secure.
* They need time to talk about what has happened to them, and to **express their feelings** associated with bad memories. This requires you to be ready to listen to your children.
* **Sensitive listening** means finding the right time to talk, and leaving enough time for children to talk and fully express difficult things.
* It means showing that you are attending to what the child is saying, and that you are interested, by making encouraging comments and questions, and showing interest through your body language and tone of voice.
* It means **accepting all of the child’s feelings** as natural and normal in this crisis situation, even if these are difficult for you to hear.
* Sometimes parents are not ready to hear their children and may say, ‘Do not cry now’ or ‘We do not need to talk about that.’
* If the children are willing to talk, it’s important to give them the opportunity to do so. If you are busy at that particular moment, fix a time when you will be available to listen and answer questions.”

2. Ask

* “Have you already tried to talk to your children about the war and what is happening?
* What was the children’s reaction?
* Did some of you experience the opposite, where the child refused to talk?”

3. Say

* “Sometimes children are unable to or refuse to talk. **They cannot be forced to talk!** But you can show them and tell them that you are ready to listen and help whenever they want to talk.
* Children may respond to physical comfort or hugs. Writing in a diary can also help them express their feelings.”

4. Brainstorm with the group on the following questions. Write their answers on the flipchart and include the example answers.

* Why is it important to talk with children?

Example answers:

* Gets things out in the open
* Parents understand their children better
* Relieves tension between parents and children
* Makes the child feel better
* Talking makes it easier to forget
* Children can start to distance themselves from painful memories
* Puts their fear in perspective
* Means they do not bottle everything up
* We can help children if we listen to their problems
* The child can get a different perspective on things
* They can hear that their feelings are normal and confirm that they are not going crazy
* Why is it hard to talk with children?

Example answers:

* It is too painful
* Children do not have the words
* They feel guilt and confusion
* They are afraid of not being heard
* They are afraid of losing control
* They do not feel the need to talk
* They talk to others, like their friends
* Why parents sometimes do not want to listen*?*

Example answers:

* It is too painful to hear their child’s distress
* They fear the child will get more upset
* They fear they will get upset themselves
* They do not know what to say to the child
* It reminds them of their own traumatic experiences
* It is too exhausting
* They do not have the time
* They believe it can be harmful for them to talk in that way
* When the child is silent, what should we do*?*

Example answers:

* Respect their silence
* Be patient, and look for appropriate occasions
* Set aside a special time each day to talk and the child will use it when they are ready
* Do not push for more than they want to tell
* Find ways other than talking to communicate, such as writing and doing things together

5. Divide parents into 3 groups.

6. Have each group prepare a role-play about talking to their child about a difficult experience. Two parents in the group should play the ‘parent’ and ‘child’ respectively, and the third person should observe and note what fostered better communication between the 2, and what hindered it. Remind parents about the 4 steps of empathy from Session 6.

This is a sample script. Please adapt to your context or create your own. Please change the names to ones that are familiar in your context.

**Parent:** I notice recently that you were getting upset very easily and that you are fighting a lot with your brother. Is there something that bothers you that you would like to talk to me about?

**Child:** [Silent for a few moments and then cries]

**Parent:** [Gives the child a hug] You can always talk to me, today or whenever you want.

**Child:** I am fed up of this situation, I do not like it here! I want to go back to my previous life.

**Parent:** I understand your frustration. I am frustrated too. But we are here because it is safer. We have to make the most of it while we are here. You can always talk to me when you feel sad.

8. Distribute Handout 18: Parent Tips for Helping Children After Disasters, and discuss it together.

! Give parents a 10- or 25-minute break.

### 3. Children’s activities[[24]](#footnote-24)

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Explain

* After and during very stressful crisis events, normal life can seem chaotic. To develop children’s sense of security, safety and stability, it is important to re-establish, as much as possible, a normal daily routine. This includes allowing children to attend clubs or SHLS activities, and ensuring that they get enough sleep. At home, it might mean regular family meal times and bedtime.
* Children also need time to meet friends and to do enjoyable activities, even in times of war. This is part of normal development. At times of war, it can also help to distract and relax them. Keeping them inside the tents/house will not solve the problems. They will become frustrated and will lack respect for their parents.
* Parents can inform their children of the risks and ways to protect themselves and trust them to make the right choices.

2. Say

* “Sometimes parents think that they are protecting their children by keeping them inside the tent. But children need to interact with other young people of the same age.
* Allowing your children to attend organized and structured activities will help them recover.
* You can ask me for more information about SHLS activities after this session if you want.
* If children are afraid to go outside, they can take the first step by accompanying you when you go to town or to the market.”

3. Brainstorm with the group on the following questions. Write their answers on the flipchart.

* What sorts of things would you like to see your children doing?

Example answers:

* Reading
* Drawing
* Listening to music
* Playing sports
* Getting involved in clubs
* How can parents encourage this?
* Can parents get together to set up activity groups for children or to explore safe, available opportunities?

4. Suggest the following additional activities:

* + **Writing in a diary**, including all their negative and positive thoughts.
  + **Art therapy**, such as coloring mandalas to help children focus their attention. See samples of mandalas (Handout 19: Mandala)

### Relaxation and mindfulness exercises[[25]](#footnote-25)

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Individuals

1. Say

* “Encourage your children to practice the relaxation techniques that you have been taught during this training. This will help them to manage their emotions and feelings. Can you name those techniques?”

Example answers:

* + Deep breathing
  + Counting backwards from 20 to zero
  + Center yourself
  + Muscle relaxation (read the text for your family)
  + Coping and Healing Toolkit (create a toolkit with your children)
  + Safe space

Exercise: A minute of mindfulness

2. Say

* “This is an easy mindfulness exercise, and one that you can do anytime throughout the day. Take a moment right now to try this. Check your watch and note the time. For the next 60 seconds your task is to focus all your attention on your breathing. It’s just for one minute, but it can seem like an eternity. Leave your eyes open and breathe normally. Be ready to catch your mind from wandering off – because it will – and return your attention to your breath whenever it does so.
* Keep in mind that this mindfulness exercise is not a contest or a personal challenge. You can’t fail at this exercise; you can only experience it.

3. After 60 seconds, bring everyone back to the whole group and ask them how it felt. Tell them to use this exercise many times throughout the day to restore their minds to the present moment and to restore it to clarity and peace.

### Referral

@ Adapt this section for the referral system in your context.

Time: 20 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Explain

* When parents feel that, despite all their efforts, their children are still showing signs of psychosocial distress, they should contact the SHLS focal point for psychosocial cases.
* If children are showing any of the following signs, parents should refer the case immediately to the appropriate services:
* Violence towards others
* Loss of speech
* Fainting
* Nightmares interfering with their sleep

2. Draw the referral pathway for the SHLS on the flipchart and explain it to the parents.

3. Distribute Handout 20: Referral Pathway (adapted).

### 6. Home assignment

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Small groups

1. Say

* “This next week, try to implement some of the techniques taught during this session, such as talking to your children and identifying relevant activities.
* You can also try to implement some of the tips from the handout.
* Find some time to talk to your child.
* Prepare a 5-minute presentation on one of the Parenting Skills sessions.
* We will divide into groups and I will assign each group one Parenting Skills session to do a presentation on during the next session.”

2. Share the song, story or a group pledge with everyone and ask them to practice it for the final session.

3. Divide the parents into 8 groups and assign one session to each group, from Sessions 2 to 11. Distribute one piece of flipchart paper and some markers to each group to use for the presentation at the next meeting.

**List of Parenting Skills sessions:**

* **Session 2:** Understanding parent stress
* **Session 3:** Coping and healing strategies
* **Session 4:** Understanding brain development – children need love to be healthy
* **Session 5:** Positive parental time for healthy growth and development
* **Session 6:** Empathy – respecting your child’s opinions and thoughts
* **Session 7:** Encouraging responsibility – family rules and routines
* **Session 8:** Discipline with dignity
* **Session 9:** Talking, storytelling and playing games
* **Session 10:** Understanding children’s psychosocial needs
* **Session 11:** Providing psychosocial support to children

### 7. Evaluation

Time: 10 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Ask the follow questions:

* “What did you like best about the session?
* What questions would you have liked to ask but did not have the opportunity to ask?
* How was this session helpful?
* Have you any other comments or suggestions to improve the session?”

1. Praise all parents and thank them for their participation.
2. Tell parents for the next session (which is the last session) they can invite their family and other community members.
3. Make sure each parent signs the Attendance Form (Resource 3). If there is someone else attending (a mother with a baby on her back, for example), indicate this on the Attendance Form. If someone left or came in during the session, note this as well. If someone misses a session, remind them that they can catch up in the parent support groups or through home visits.

### Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring

After the session, both Parenting Skills Facilitators need to check-off all completed activities in Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report. If there were activities that were not completed, explain why. Facilitators also need to record parent feedback on the Fidelity Forms. This report should be attached to the session attendance record.

# Parenting Skills Session 12: Review and Celebration – Commitment to Positive Parenting

## **Parenting session summary**

### Objectives

* By the end of this session parents will be able to Articulate key ideas and demonstrate their understanding of the assigned Parenting Skills session.

### Duration

1 hour, 50 minutes

### Materials required

* Parenting Skills Curriculum for parents of children (6–11 years)
* Resource 3: Attendance Form
* Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report
* Resource 9: SHLS Parenting Skills Certificate Template
* Flipcharts and markers/Paper and pens

### Preparation required

* Prepare and print Parenting Skills certificates for distribution.
* Help parents set up their presentations and inform them that they will be called on in the session to speak about their favourite parenting skills strategy from the program.
* Arrive for the session 30 minutes before the start time.
* Arrange for a space that is conducive to learning and free of interruptions. Please make sure the space is large enough to fit extra people, as family and community members will be invited to attend.
* Sit in a circle to encourage interaction with parents.

### Session overview

Parents will celebrate their completion of the program with friends, family and other community members.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Session activity** | **Time** |
| 1. Welcome and introduction | 15 minutes |
| 2. Energizer, game, song or relaxation exercise | 5 minutes |
| 3. Presentation of curriculum | 30 minutes |
| 4. Sharing time | 20 minutes |
| 5. Praise for parents and feedback from guests | 20 minutes |
| 6. Presentation of certificates and public commitment to positive parenting | 20 minutes |
| Post-session report: fidelity monitoring |  |

### Attendance

The **date and place of the session must be written on the Attendance Form.** Each parent **must** sign the Attendance Form (Resource 3) with their name, age and sex. All parents/caregivers are encouraged to attend all 12 sessions together, as parenting is a shared responsibility. Indicate if there is someone else attending with a parent or parents (such as a child or other family member).

## Steps to follow

### 1. Welcome and introduction

Time: 15 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Welcome everyone and praise them for attending this celebration. Smile and be positive! Parents have completed the Parenting Skills Curriculum!

2. Both facilitators should introduce themselves as there will be a few new people attending this session.

3. Ask the parents to introduce themselves and their children. Then ask for guests to introduce themselves.

### 2. Energizer, game, song or relaxation exercise

Time: 5 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Let the parents choose an energizer from the sessions and facilitate the activity.

### 3. Presentation of curriculum

Time: 30 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Read the title and description of each session and then have parents explain some of the skills and information they learned. Have one parent speak **briefly** on every session. This will not only be a presentation to community and family members, but a good review for parents in the program.

2. Say

* “The SHLS Parenting Skills Curriculum was developed for families with children between 6 and 11 years of age. The evidence-based program intends to increase parents’ knowledge about child development, give them some techniques they can use to communicate with children, help them manage their own and their children’s stress, and support their child’s well-being.
* The SHLS Parenting Skills Curriculum is based on the International Rescue Committee’s parenting programs in Liberia, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania and Thailand. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) responds to the world’s worst humanitarian crises in over 40 countries and helps people to survive and rebuild their lives. The program’s curriculum consists of 12 group sessions for caregivers of children between 6 and 11 years of age. Each session lasts approximately 2 hours. As part of the program, parents create support groups to encourage each other and help each other practice new parenting skills.

3. Introduce each of the sessions and invite the parents to explain what was discussed and learned during those sessions.

**List of Parenting Skills sessions:**

* **Session 2:** Understanding parent stress
* **Session 3:** Coping and healing strategies
* **Session 4:** Understanding brain development – children need love to be healthy
* **Session 5:** Positive parental time for healthy growth and development
* **Session 6:** Empathy – respecting your child’s opinions and thoughts
* **Session 7:** Encouraging responsibility – family rules and routines
* **Session 8:** Discipline with dignity
* **Session 9:** Talking, storytelling and playing games
* **Session 10:** Understanding children’s psychosocial needs
* **Session 11:** Providing psychosocial support to children

### 4. Sharing time

Time: 20 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group; Individuals

1. Ask each parent to share their favorite relaxation, communication or other positive parenting strategy as part of their prepared 5-minute presentations.

### 5. Praise for parents and feedback from guests

Time: 20 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

* Thank guests for attending the final session. Ask them to share words of encouragement and support. Ask if they have noticed some of the positive changes parents have made. You can also ask guests to talk about how they will continue to support nurturing parents.
* Emphasize to parents and guests that parents must support each other in their positive parenting efforts to raising happy, healthy children.
* Urge parents to continue to gather in their parent support groups to help and encourage each other.

### 6. Presentation of certificates and public commitment to positive parenting

Time: 20 minutes

Arrangement: Whole group

1. Invite parents to present their commitments to positive parenting in front of the guests. They will have chosen a song, story or a group pledge.

### Post-session report: Fidelity monitoring

After the session, both Parenting Skills Facilitators need to check-off all completed activities in Resource 4: Parenting Session Feedback and Fidelity Report. If there were activities that were not completed, explain why. Facilitators also need to record parent feedback on the Fidelity Forms. This report should be attached to the session attendance record.

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