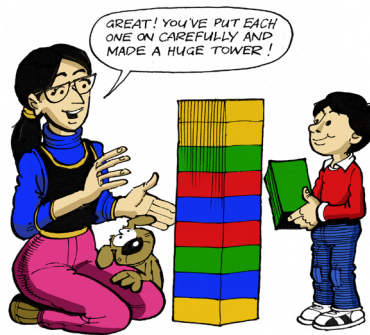


# **Program One: Strengthening Children's Language, School Readiness, Emotion and Social Skills and Positive Relationships**



## **Part 1: Child-Directed Play Promotes Positive Relationships and Children's Confidence**

### **Refrigerator Notes and Handouts**



These handouts are copyright Incredible Years®  
and may not be altered in any way (including translations)  
without express written permission from The Incredible Years®.  
Contact [incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com](mailto:incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com) for more information.

© 2025 The Incredible Years ®

\*\*\* ALL RIGHTS RESERVED \*\*\*

Copyright 1982, Revised 2001, 2008, 2014, 2019, 2025





## Part 1: Child-Directed Play Promotes Positive Relationships & Children's Confidence

### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK



#### To Do:

- **PLAY with your child** being child-directed and an “appreciative audience” for 10 to 15 minutes every day.
- **KEEP TRACK** of these play periods on the Record Sheet: Child-Directed Play Times handout (bring to next session).



#### To Read:

- Handouts and Chapter 1 *Child-directed Play* from **The Incredible Years** book.

#### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY:

- **FILL IN** the two checklists for evaluating play and the temperament questionnaires about your child and yourself, and bring them to the next meeting.



#### Play Time Tips:

- Choose unstructured toys & avoid competitive games with younger children.
- Turn off phones & screens.
- Start with one-on-one play time to enhance relationship skills.

## Part 1: Child-Directed Play Promotes Positive Relationships & Children's Confidence

### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK



#### To Do:

**PLAY** for 10-15 minutes each day with your child doing a child-directed activity such as:

- coloring, painting, or playing with play dough together
- playing with some unstructured toys  
(e.g., Legos, pots and pans, blocks, dress up)
- bathtime or cooking child-directed play time

**KEEP TRACK** of play periods on the “Record Sheet: Child-Directed Play Times” handout. Bring to next session



#### To Read:

Handouts and Chapter 1, *Child-directed Play*, in **The Incredible Years** parent book or audiobook.



# How I am Incredible!

Child's Name and Age: \_\_\_\_\_



**My Child's Strengths:**

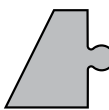
**Adults that Support My Growing and Learning:**

**My Temperament** (e.g., activity level, adaptability, physical sensitivity, intensity, distractibility, persistence, predictability, quiet, anxious, angry):

**My Play and Language Level** (e.g., play alone, anxious or withdrawn, want to initiate play with others but don't know how, initiate but my social interactions are inappropriate, very few words, lots of language, inappropriate language):

**My Favorite Activities** (e.g., reading, soccer, games, music, cooking, building activities, drawing, pretend play):

**Social, Emotional, Persistence, Language and Academic Skills I am Learning** (e.g., helping others, calm down methods, speaking politely, taking turns, listening):



**My Parent's Goals for Me:** (e.g., helping my child follow directions, to better at school, improve their academic success, reduce my own anger and stress):



# *Parents Thinking Like Scientists*



**Child Difficulties**



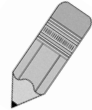
**Goals**

**Child Strengths**



## CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING YOUR CHILD'S PLAY

Completing this self-evaluation may be helpful for you to think about you and your child's play interactions.

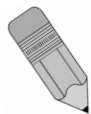


**When you observe your child's play, how often does your child:**

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost Never
1. Solve problems?	_____	_____	_____
2. Show creativity?	_____	_____	_____
3. Cooperate rather than compete?	_____	_____	_____
4. Take risks and try out new ideas?	_____	_____	_____
5. Feel comfortable making mistakes?	_____	_____	_____
6. Show initiative rather than acting passive	_____	_____	_____
7. Display independence rather than dependence?	_____	_____	_____
8. Show self-motivation rather than boredom?	_____	_____	_____
9. Show self-confidence rather than fear	_____	_____	_____

*After you have completed this checklist, think about what you have observed. Most of these behaviors are associated with school success. Complete the next checklist in order to discover what you can do to encourage these behaviors.*





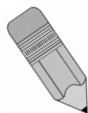
## Checklist For Evaluating Your Parent/Child Play Interactions

**A. When you play with your child, how often do you encourage your child to:**

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost Never
1. Attempt to solve problems?	_____	_____	_____
2. Play independently?	_____	_____	_____
3. Be creative and imaginative?	_____	_____	_____
4. Express feelings and ideas?	_____	_____	_____
5. Engage in pretend or make-believe play?	_____	_____	_____
6. Choose the activity & rules of game?	_____	_____	_____
7. Teach you something?	_____	_____	_____

**B. When you play with your child, how often do you:**

1. Direct or structure the activity?	_____	_____	_____
2. Create the rules of the game?	_____	_____	_____
3. Criticize and correct your child's mistakes?	_____	_____	_____
4. Force your child to finish the project?	_____	_____	_____
5. Allow participation only in gender-appropriate activities	_____	_____	_____
6. Feel uncomfortable with your child's expression of fear or helplessness?	_____	_____	_____
7. Compete with your child	_____	_____	_____
8. Become engrossed with your own play, and ignore your child's play?	_____	_____	_____



## Checklist For Evaluating Your Parent/Child Play Interactions, Page 2

**B. When you play with your child, how often do you:**

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost Never
9. Ask a lot of questions?	_____	_____	_____
10. Impose your own ideas?	_____	_____	_____
11. Give too much help?	_____	_____	_____
12. Prohibit pretend play?	_____	_____	_____
13. Demand perfection?	_____	_____	_____
14. Place emphasis on the ultimate product completion of play rather than effort?	_____	_____	_____

**C. What interferes with your ability to play with your child?**  
**How often do you play with your child alone?**  
**How often do you incorporate cultural traditions into your play?**  
**Do you feel this is valuable?**

Evaluating your responses to the items on this checklist will highlight some of the ways you can improve your play interactions with your child. For example, if you checked “Almost Never” on some of the items in Part A, you can make a deliberate effort to encourage these behaviors in the future. If you checked “Almost Always” or “Sometimes” on some of the items in Part B, you can try to reduce these behaviors. Your responses may indicate that you need to schedule more play time with your child, or that you need to change some of the circumstances or attitudes that are interfering with your ability to participate in play activities.

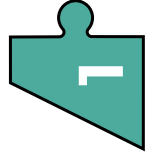


**The Incredible  
Years®**

Home Activities

## RECORD SHEET:

### CHILD-DIRECTED PLAY TIMES



Record times you spent engaged in child-directed play with your child, what you did, and any reaction you noticed in yourself or your child. Return this form to your group leaders at the next group session.

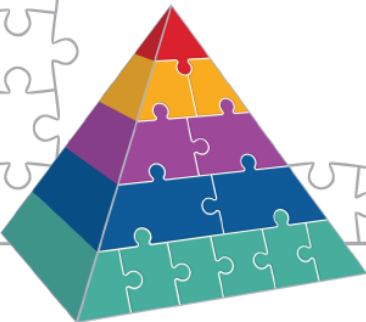
Date	Time Spent	Child-Directed Play Activity	Child's Response	Parent's Reaction



## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### CHILD-DIRECTED PLAY

- Follow your child's lead and interests.
- Be an attentive and appreciative audience.
- Pace at your child's level —give your child time.
- Encourage your child's curiosity and self-discovery: don't criticize.
- Avoid competing with your child.
- Don't focus on the "correct" way or specified rules for a game or an activity
- Model cooperation by doing what your child asks you to do.
- Engage in pretend play with your child (e.g., puppets, playing house, toy telephones, cooking stations).
- Use descriptive comments instead of asking closed-ended questions.
- Curb your desire to give too much help; encourage your child's problem solving.
- Laugh, have fun and share your feelings of joy.
- Remember the "attention principle," and focus on giving your attention to your child's positive rather than disruptive or challenging play behaviors.
- Incorporate family cultural traditions into play.
- Scaffold play when needed to assure your child's safety and success with new learning opportunities.



## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### Unlocking Potential:

#### The Role of Child-Directed Play in Brain Development

Why invest in play with your child? What is its value? Why is play important for children?

- 1. Physical Development:** Play promotes good health and helps develop motor skills as children run, jump, and laugh.
- 2. Learning Opportunity:** Child-directed play helps children discover their abilities, explore the world, and build confidence, competence, and resilience. It allows them to test new ideas and learn from mistakes.
- 3. Emotional Expression:** Play provides an outlet for children to express emotions like anger, fear, and dependency. Fantasy and pretend play reduce negative feelings and foster enjoyment and success.
- 4. Communication:** Through play, children communicate thoughts and emotions. Adults can learn about a child's feelings by observing and engaging during play.
- 5. Empathy Development:** Role-playing, such as pretending to be a parent or teacher, helps children see the world from different perspectives and develop empathy.
- 6. Creativity:** In a supportive environment, children can transform simple objects into imaginative creations, fostering creativity and confidence.
- 7. Social Skills:** Play teaches cooperation, sharing, and empathy, essential skills for social interaction.
- 8. Growth Opportunity:** Play is vital for children's growth. Parents should actively participate in play and create an environment that supports varied play experiences.



## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### The Perfect Playthings: What Makes a Great Toy for Kids

Toys play a key role in fostering good play in children, but it's not necessary to buy expensive or "educational" ones. Children are naturally imaginative and can turn almost anything—a saucepan and spoon or a beach shell—into a fun plaything. Natural materials like water, rocks, shells, sand, pine cones and wood pieces can make great toys.

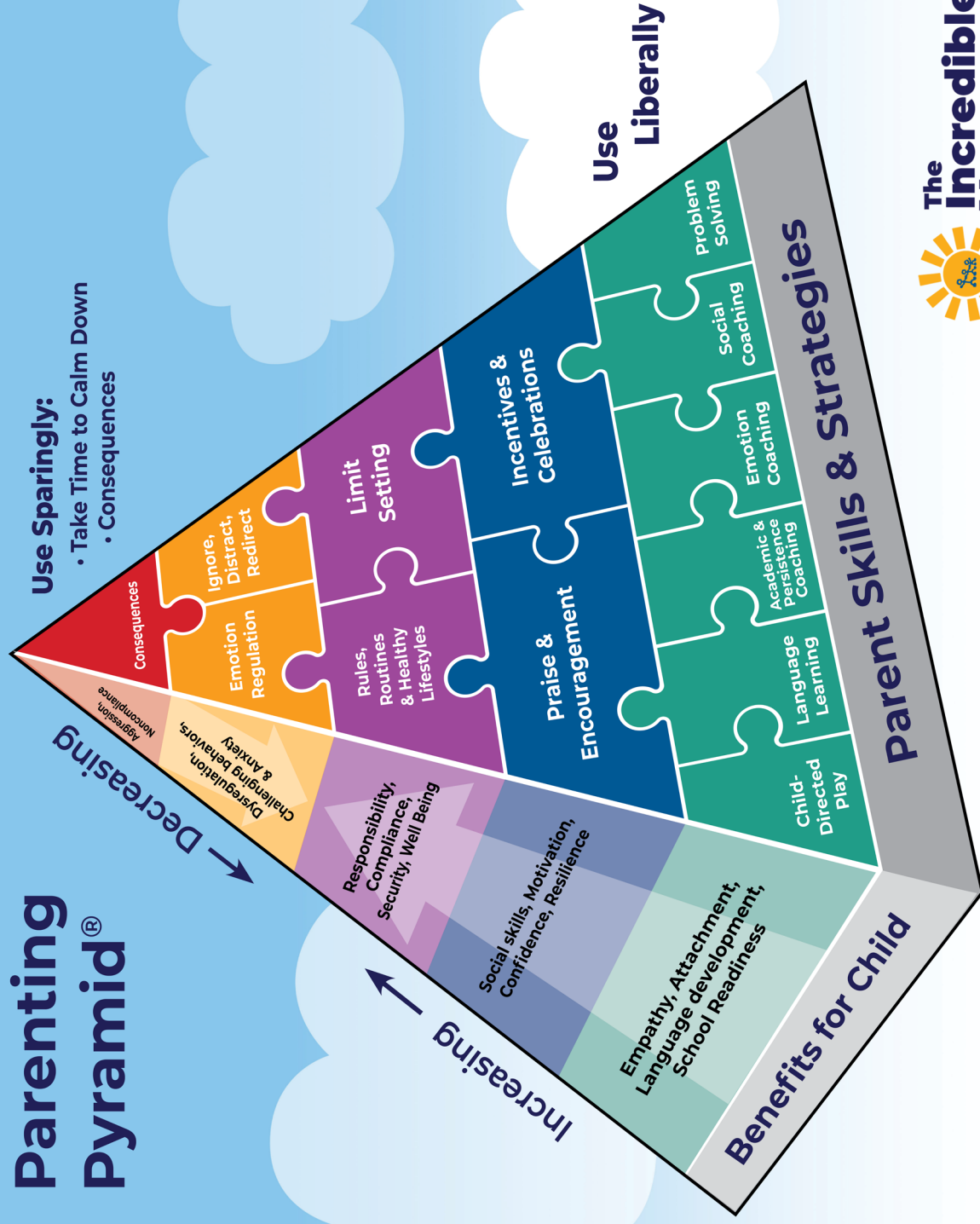
Good play materials should be:

- 1. Safe:** Toys should have no sharp edges or lead-based paint.
- 2. Unstructured:** Simple toys like blocks, playdough, and paints encourage imaginative play.
- 3. Responsive and Versatile:** Toys should inspire children to be active participants. Passive toys, like a mechanical duck that waddles and quacks, entertain briefly but don't encourage true play.
- 4. Large and Easy to Manipulate:** Toys should be the right size for a child's developing coordination. Small toys can be frustrating.
- 5. Pleasant to Touch and Durable:** Materials like maple hardwood are warm, durable, and enjoyable to handle.
- 6. Encourage Cooperative Play:** Toys like pretend kitchens, gardening tools, and housekeeping sets promote sharing, cooperation, and social interaction.
- 7. Age-appropriate and Engaging:** Toys should fit a child's skill level, interests, and personality while also considering the preferences of adults (e.g., a loud toy drum might be fun for kids, but not so much for parents).

By choosing toys with these qualities, children can have more creative and meaningful play experiences.



# Parenting Pyramid®



# Your Child's Temperament



Temperament is a behavioral style that refers to the natural way a person reacts or behaves in response to their environment. In the late 1950s, researchers Thomas, Chess, Birch, Hertzog, and Korn identified nine traits or characteristics that are present at birth and are felt to influence development in important ways throughout life. While environment can modify these physical traits to some extent, the basic traits of a person are felt to be inborn and stable and do not result from the way a child is parented.

Here are nine traits proposed by Thomas *et al.* that describe a baby or child's reactivity to their environment. Think about where your child is on each of these traits. Each trait is a continuum so your child may be very much like one of the traits, but may also be in the middle:

## *My Child's Temperament*

### ***My child's activity level:***

This is the amount your child moves or wiggles or is on the go versus how much your child relaxes or sits still or prefers quiet activities.

Very Active

Quiet and Relaxed

1

2

3

4

5

### ***The regularity of my child's bodily functions:***

This is the predictability of your child's sleep times, appetite, and bowel movements.

Mostly Regular/Predictable

Mostly Irregular/Unpredictable

1

2

3

4

5

### ***My child's adaptability:***

This is how your child adapts to changes in routine, new food, new people, or new places.

Adapts Quickly

Slow to Adapt

1

2

3

4

5

### ***My child's approach:***

This is how eager your child is to try something new versus how fearful or shy your child is when presented with a new situation or person.

Eager Initial Approach

Initial Withdrawal or Reluctance

1

2

3

4

5

### ***My child's physical sensitivity:***

This is how sensitive your child is to noise, tastes, textures, bright lights, touch or temperature.

Not Sensitive

Very sensitive

1

2

3

4

5

### ***My child's intensity:***

This is how intensely your child reacts emotionally to things, even minor events.

High Emotional Intensity

Mild Calm Reaction

1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

### ***My child's distractibility:***

This is the degree to which your child is distracted by sounds, sights, or things in the environment versus how much your child can shut out external stimuli and pay attention.

Very Distractible

Not Distractible

1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

### ***My child's mood:***

This is the degree to which your child is happy or positive versus negative.

Positive Mood

Negative Mood

1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

### ***My child's persistence:***

This is the degree to which your child can persist or sustain their attention versus how easily your child gives up in the face of obstacles.

Long Attention Span

Short Attention Span

1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

## ***Easy and Flexible Temperament Child***

If your child is mostly regular, adaptable, positive, calm and has a moderate activity level you have an easy temperament child; about 40% of children fall into this category.

## ***Slow to Warm Up and Cautious Child***

If your child is slow to adapt, initially withdraws and has moderate activity and intensity, your child will have a slow to warm up temperament; about 15% of children fall into this category.

## ***Challenging Temperament Child***

If your child has a high activity level, is unpredictable, has low adaptability, and is intense and negative you have a more challenging temperament child; about 10% of children fall into this category.

About 35% of children are a combination of these patterns.





# Parenting Approaches:

## A Temperament Focus



Since parents can't change their child's temperamental style, parenting approaches must be accepting and responsive to the unique temperament or cues of each child. It is important for parents to try to get a reasonable "fit" between their child's temperament and their parenting style. This can be done by parents observing and learning about their children's behavioral style and then altering or adapting their parenting expectations, encouragement and discipline to suit their child's unique needs.

Remember, it is important not to label your child as easy, shy or difficult. These labels can damage your child's self-esteem and perhaps set up a self-fulfilling prophecy that prevents your child from expanding their behavioral repertoire. On the other hand, knowing what kind of temperament your child has may make the difference between a happy or a troubled child and between an accepting or a frustrated parent. Understanding your child's temperament can improve your relationship with your child because you will learn how to bring out the best in your child. It is within your power as a parent to help your child cope with their temperament, to build their self-esteem, and eventually come to understand themselves better.

### Easy/Flexible Children

**Traits:** Adaptable, low-intensity, generally positive mood.

#### Parenting Tips:

- Don't overlook them—check in about feelings and thoughts.
- Encourage expression of unique preferences and emotions.
- Ensure they don't feel invisible or overlooked.

### Challenging/Active/Intense Children

**Traits:** High energy, emotional intensity, irregular routines.

#### Parenting Tips:

- Establish predictable routines and transitions.
- Use humor, calming techniques, and soothing activities.
- Keep instructions short and clear, limit distractions.
- Offer frequent praise and support for small accomplishments.
- Stay calm, patient and model appropriate behavior.
- Seek outside support for yourself as a parent when needed.

### Slow-to-Warm/Cautious Children

**Traits:** Shy, hesitant in new situations, low activity level.

#### Parenting Tips:

- Be patient and allow time to adjust to new situations.
- Maintain consistent routines and give advance notice for transitions.
- Encourage gently, without pushing too hard.
- Avoid labeling them as "shy" or "fearful."
- Celebrate small steps of bravery and progress.



# Parent's Temperament Fit with their Child's Temperament



Parents also have their own temperament and need to understand how their own temperament style meshes with their child's temperament. Sometimes parent-child temperaments are very similar; other times they are very different. Both similar and different parent-child temperaments may result in clashes.

Do the questionnaire you did earlier for your child now for yourself. See what you find out about your temperament fit.

## ***My Temperament***

### ***My activity level:***

This is the amount I move versus how much I relax. I am:

Very Active

Quiet and Relaxed

1 2 3 4 5

### ***The regularity of my bodily functions:***

This is the predictability of my sleep times, eating, and bowel movements. I am:

Mostly Regular/Predictable

Mostly Irregular/Unpredictable

1 2 3 4 5

### ***My adaptability:***

This is how I adapt to changes in routine, new food, new people, or new places. I usually:

Adapt Quickly

Slow to Adapt

1 2 3 4 5

### ***My approach:***

This is how eager I am to try something new versus how fearful or shy I am. Usually I am:

Eager Initial Approach

Initial Withdrawal or Reluctance

1 2 3 4 5

### ***My physical sensitivity:***

This is my sensitivity to noise, textures, bright lights, temperature:

Not Sensitive

Very sensitive

1 2 3 4 5

### ***My intensity:***

This is the intensity of my reactions or emotions:

High Emotional Intensity

Mild Calm Reaction

1 2 3 4 5



***My distractibility:***

This is the degree to which I am distracted and notice everything around me versus how much I can shut out external stimuli. Usually I am:

**Very Distractible****Not Distractible**

1

2

3

4

5

***My mood:***

This is the degree to which I am happy or positive versus negative. Usually I have a:

**Positive Mood****Negative Mood**

1

2

3

4

5

***My persistence:***

This is the degree to which I can persist or sustain my attention versus how easily I give up. Usually I have a:

**Long Attention Span****Short Attention Span**

1

2

3

4

5



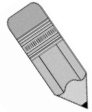
## Brainstorm/Buzz: Benefits of Play with My Child

Before continuing, think about this question:



1. What are the potential benefits for your child when you spend time playing together?

Write down the benefits of playing with your child.



### Benefits of My Playing and Spending Time With My Child



### Goal:

I will commit to playing with my child \_\_\_\_\_ times this week for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes.

## Brainstorm/Buzz: Barriers to Child-directed Play

Before continuing, think about these two questions:

1. What other benefits for your child have you noticed when being child-directed in your play approach?
2. What gets in the way of doing child-directed play or makes it difficult?



Write down the benefits of child-directed play with your child and your difficulties or barriers to doing this. See if you can find any solutions to your barriers to playing in this way.



Benefits of Playing in Child-Directed Ways With My Child	Barriers or Difficulties in Playing With My Child
<p><b>Goal:</b></p> <p>I will commit to playing with my child _____ times this week for _____ minutes.</p>	



# **Program One: Strengthening Children's Language, School Readiness, Emotion and Social Skills and Positive Relationships**



## **Part 2: Promoting Language Learning and Conversations**

### **Refrigerator Notes and Handouts**



These handouts are copyright Incredible Years®  
and may not be altered in any way (including translations)  
without express written permission from The Incredible Years®.  
Contact [incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com](mailto:incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com) for more information.

© 2025 The Incredible Years ®

\*\*\* ALL RIGHTS RESERVED \*\*\*

Copyright 1982, Revised 2001, 2008, 2014, 2019, 2025



### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK (1)



#### To Do:

**PLAY** daily using child-directed play and intentional descriptive commenting. Comment on your child's actions, describe their positions (on, under, in) as well as names of objects your child is playing with. Avoid closed-ended questions.

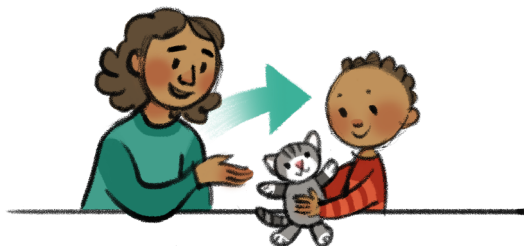
**USE** nonverbal language, visual and "serve and return" methods to expand conversations. Look for opportunities to discuss your child's school experiences, to use bilingual language & share family stories.

**KEEP TRACK** of your language and conversations on your record sheet. Bring to next session.



#### To Read:

Handouts, complete Reading Chapter One and Start Chapter Two, *Academic and Persistence Coaching Promotes Children's School Success*, in **The Incredible Years** parent book or audiobook.



## Part 2: Promoting Language Learning and Conversations

### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK (2)



#### To Do:

**PLAY** daily using child-directed play and intentional descriptive commenting and add a few open-ended questions. Respond to your child's communication with imitation, reflective commenting, enthusiasm and authenticity. Continue to use nonverbal language, visual and "serve and return" language learning methods to expand conversations.

**USE** puppets, games, songs, pretend play, interactive reading and bilingual language to enhance the richness of your child's language learning.

**KEEP TRACK** of your language and conversations on your record sheet.

**CONNECT WITH YOUR BUDDY** from the group to share your conversation experiences with your child.



#### To Read:

Complete Reading Handouts and Chapter One & Two in **The Incredible Years** parent book or audiobook.





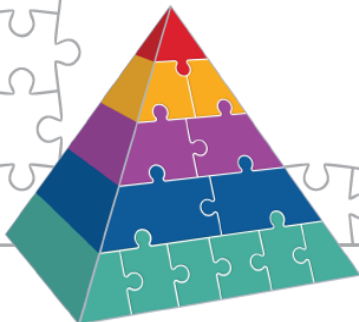
## Connecting with Your Buddy



From now until the final week of the Parenting Course you will be asked to check in via text, email, Zoom or phone with a parent from your group. You will have the same “buddy” for several weeks. The purpose of these checkin calls is to share ideas and “hot tips” about the home activities, such as how one of your play times went, or how you used the coaching approaches, or one of the ideas or principles you learned in the parent group.

These calls or buddy check-ins need last no more than 5 minutes and can be scheduled at your own and your buddy’s convenience.

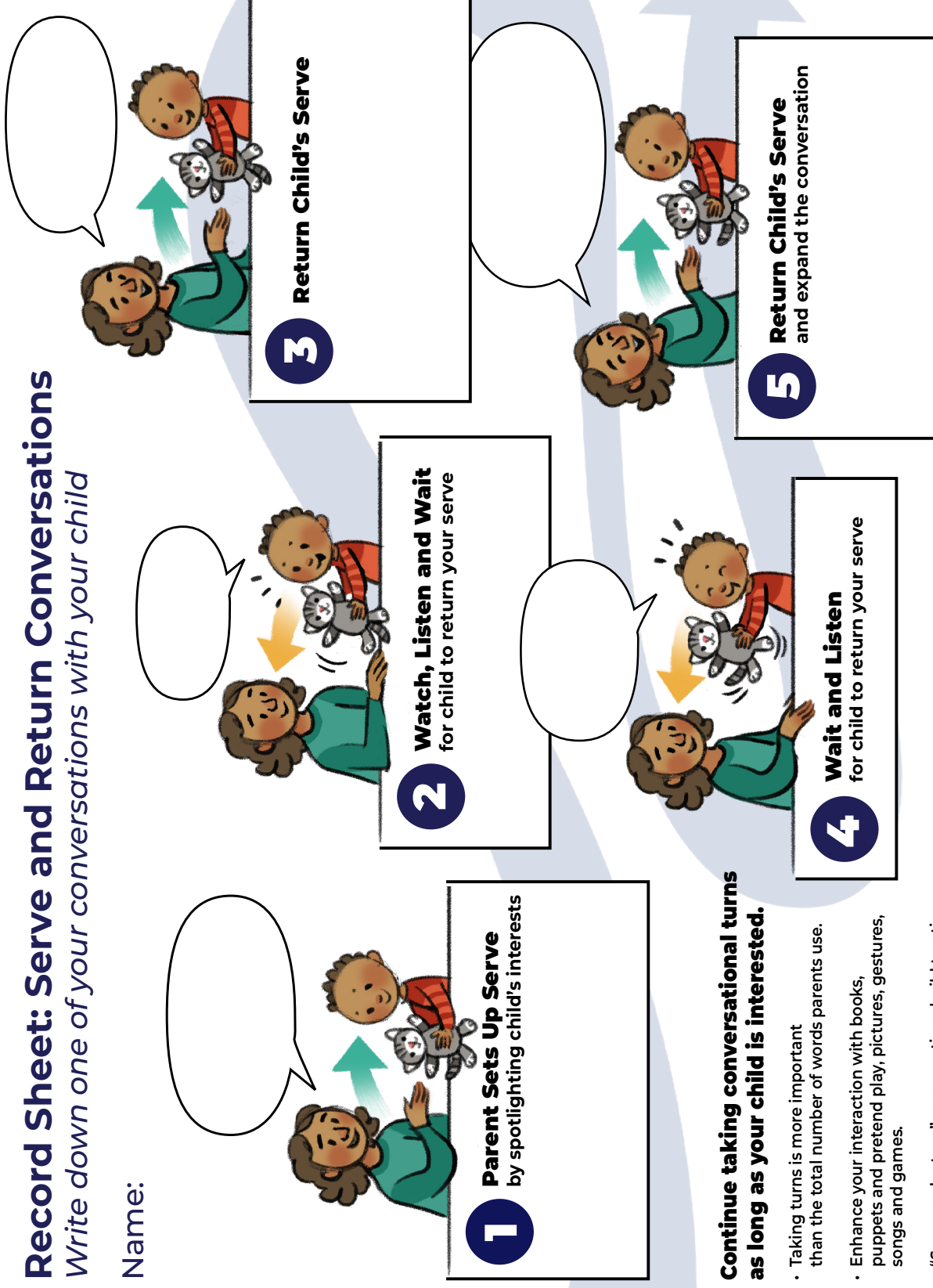
Parents sharing with each other can not only provide a rich bank of creative solutions but also be supportive of one another!



# Record Sheet: Serve and Return Conversations

Write down one of your conversations with your child

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

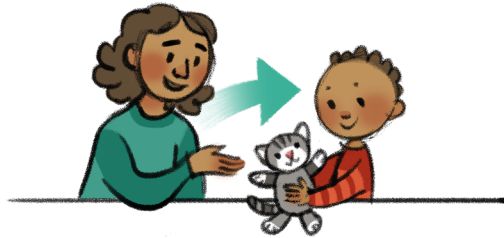


## Continue taking conversational turns as long as your child is interested.

- Taking turns is more important than the total number of words parents use.
- Enhance your interaction with books, puppets and pretend play, pictures, gestures, songs and games.
- "Serve and return" conversations build trusting relationships, and create feelings of safety and joy.

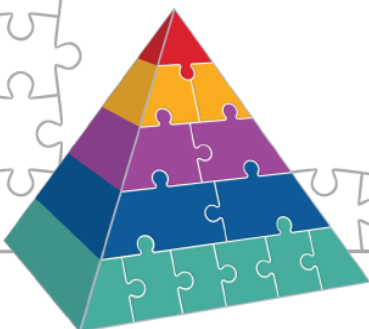
## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### PROMOTING YOUR CHILD'S LANGUAGE LEARNING & CONVERSATIONS



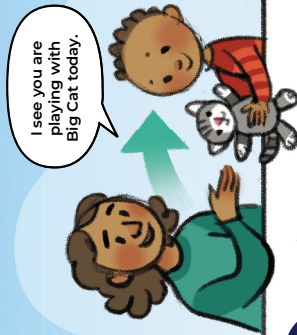
- Continue to be child-directed and follow your child's interests.
- Use intentional descriptive commenting tailored to your child's language level and special interests.
- Try using a few open-ended questions but avoid closed-ended test questions.
- Watch, wait and listen to your child's verbal & nonverbal responses.
- Respond to your child's verbal and nonverbal communication with imitation, reflective commenting, enthusiasm & authenticity.
- Engage in interactive reading approaches.
- Encourage the use of the home culture language and bilingual language learning.
- Share personal stories to enhance your child's language engagement.
- Combine verbal language with pictures, nonverbal gestures, puppets, pretend play, songs and games to enhance the richness of your child's language learning.

**The goal is for all children to become increasingly confident and secure communicators.**



# Serve and Return Conversations

## Building Responsive Language



### 1 Parent Sets Up Serve by spotlighting child's interests

- Get at eye-level and face to face
- Use intentional, descriptive commenting
- Follow your child's lead

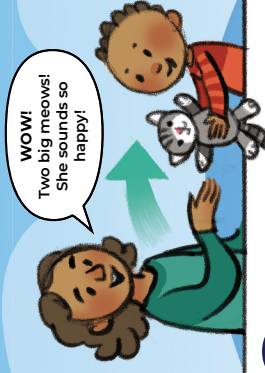


### 2 Watch, Listen and Wait for child to return your serve

- Child points, comments, or shows you something (verbally or nonverbally)

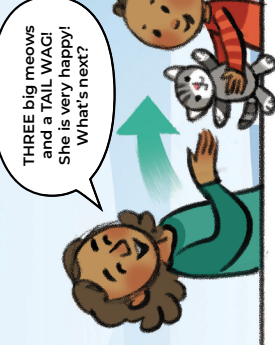


### 4 Wait and Listen for child to return your serve



### 3 Return Child's Serve

- Respond with imitation, reflective commenting, and enthusiastic gestures
- Focus on your child's interests
- Use language most comfortable to you



### 5 Return Child's Serve and expand the conversation

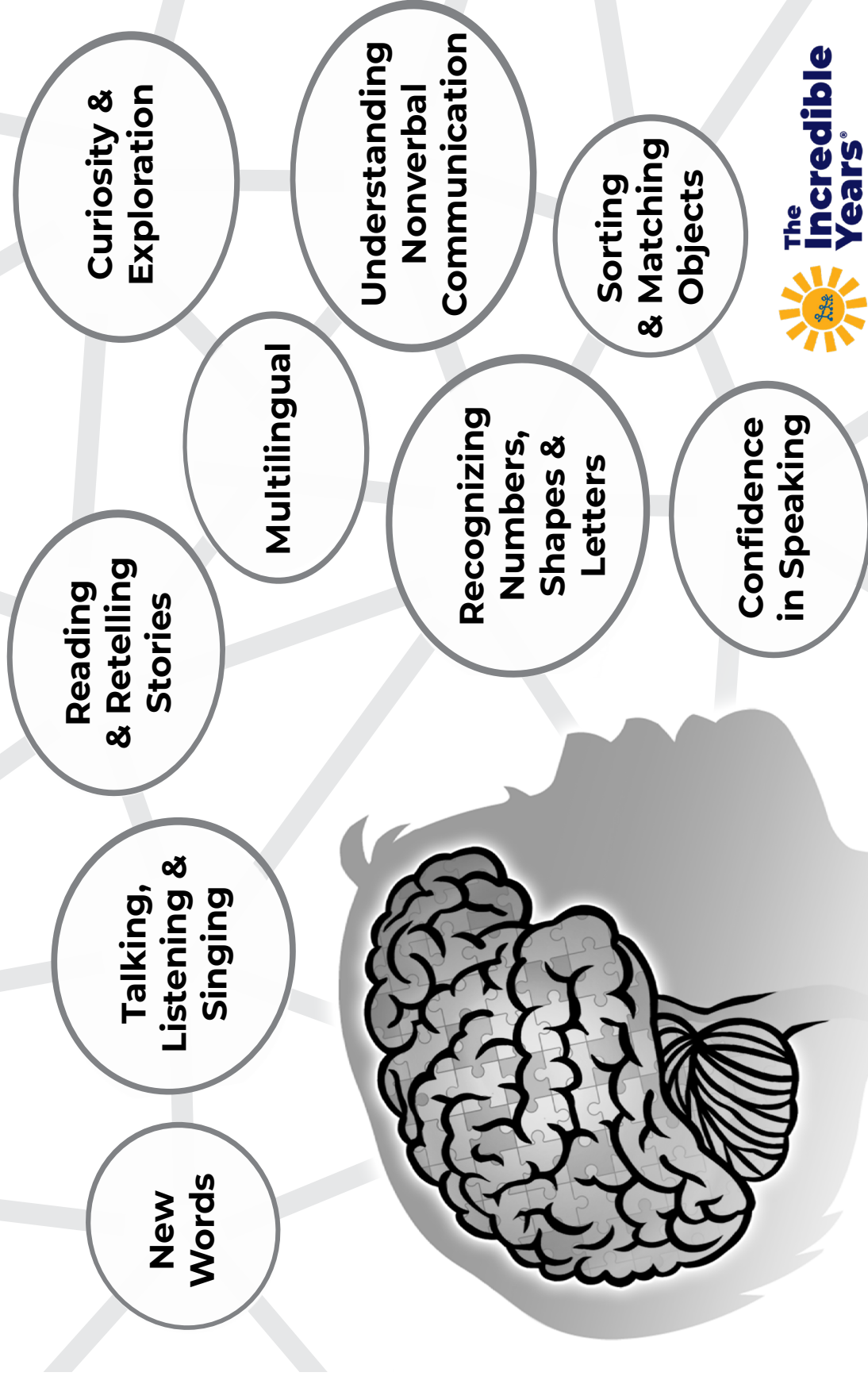
- Add new words intentionally
- Ask a few open-ended questions
- Share personal stories

### Continue taking conversational turns as long as your child is interested.

- Taking turns is more important than the total number of words parents use.
- Enhance your interaction with books, puppets and pretend play, pictures, gestures, songs and games.
- "Serve and return" conversations build trusting relationships, and create feelings of safety and joy.

Serve and Return is a phrase popularized by Harvard Researchers (Center on Developing Child).

# Building Children's Language and Cognitive Brain Connections





## 12 Key Steps to Support Your Child's Learning Through Child-Directed Narrated Play

1. **Follow Your Child's Lead:** Build on their interests and let them take the lead in play activities.
2. **Provide Unstructured Play Time:** Offer toys and materials that foster creativity, such as blocks, play dough, paints, and natural resources.
3. **Use Descriptive Commentary:** Enthusiastically describe what your child is doing in play. Avoid asking too many questions, and encourage their efforts with positive feedback.
4. **Imitate Your Child:** Mimic your child's actions and follow their lead as long as the behavior is appropriate. Let them be in charge of the play.
5. **Promote Conversations with "Serve and Return" Communication:** Engage in back-and-forth exchanges to encourage conversation and strengthen their language skills.
6. **Provide Assistance When Needed:** If your child encounters a problem, offer help after giving them time to try solving it independently. Wait for their confirmation that assistance is welcome.
7. **Impose Limits Gently:** If necessary, set clear and pleasant boundaries (e.g., "You may not color on the table, but here's some paper you can use instead").
8. **Ignore Problem Behaviors:** Avoid reinforcing negative behaviors like whining, crying, or tantrums. Redirect attention to positive actions.
9. **Support Transitions:** Help your child smoothly move from one type of play to another, whether from quiet activities to active ones, or vice versa.
10. **Engage in Pretend Play:** Participate in imaginative, make-believe play with puppets, toys, or role-playing to enhance creativity and empathy.
11. **Praise Efforts and Creativity:** Offer plenty of praise for your child's curiosity, creativity, imagination, and self-discovery during play.
12. **Give a Transition Warning:** Let your child know when playtime will end, and reassure them that you'll engage in it again soon.


Remember, play provides a unique opportunity for children to experiment, learn, and develop in a stress-free, imaginative environment.



## Brainstorm/Buzz: Barriers to Child-directed Play

Write down the benefits of child-directed play using descriptive commenting & “serve and return” conversations with your child. Record any difficulties or barriers you encountered to doing this. See if you can find any solutions to your barriers to communicating in this way.

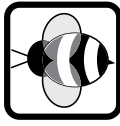


Benefits of Descriptive Commenting & “Serve and Return” Conversations	Barriers or Difficulties with Using Language in this way
	
<p><b>Goal:</b></p> <p>I will commit to playing with my child _____ times this week for _____ minutes.</p>	

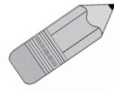
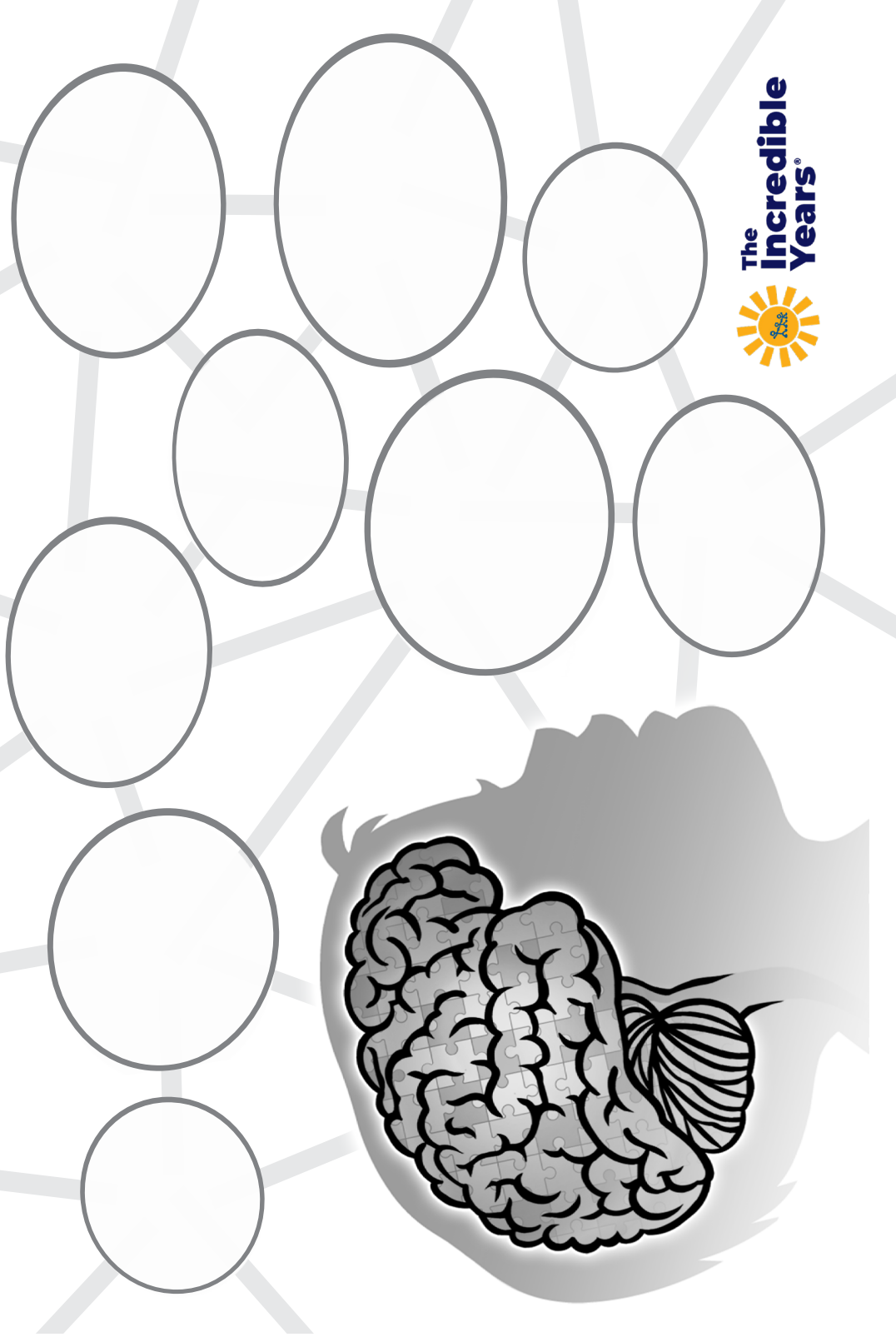


## Brainstorm/Buzz: Building Children's Language and Cognitive Brain Connections

Write in ways you will focus on promoting and strengthening your child's language and conversation skills.



### Building Children's Language and Cognitive Brain Connections





# **Program One: Strengthening Children's Language, School Readiness, Emotion and Social Skills and Positive Relationships**



## **Part 3: Persistence and Academic Coaching Promotes School Readiness**

### **Refrigerator Notes and Handouts**



These handouts are copyright Incredible Years®  
and may not be altered in any way (including translations)  
without express written permission from The Incredible Years®.  
Contact [incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com](mailto:incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com) for more information.

© 2025 The Incredible Years ®

\*\*\* ALL RIGHTS RESERVED \*\*\*

Copyright 1982, Revised 2001, 2008, 2014, 2019, 2025





## HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK



### To Do:

- **PLAY** daily being child-directed and use academic coaching. Comment on the colors, shapes, sizes, positions, numbers, letters, and names of the objects your child is playing with. Avoid asking closed-ended questions.
- **READ** using interactive approaches to promote reading readiness and conversations
- **KEEP TRACK** of play periods on the “Record Sheet: Play Times Using Academic Coaching” handout. Bring to next session
- **CONNECT WITH YOUR BUDDY** from the group to share your experiences with academic coaching.



### To Read:

Handouts and Chapter 2, *Academic and Persistence Coaching* in **The Incredible Years** book.



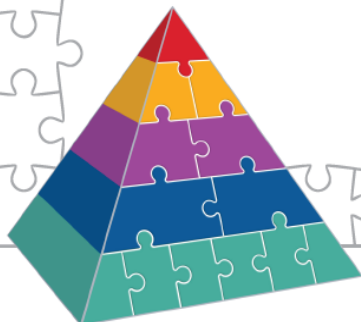
## Connecting with Your Buddy



From now until the final week of the Parenting Course you will be asked to check in via text, email, Zoom or phone with a parent from your group. You will have the same “buddy” for several weeks. The purpose of these checkin calls is to share ideas and “hot tips” about the home activities, such as how one of your play times went, or how you used the coaching approaches, or one of the ideas or principles you learned in the parent group.

These calls or buddy check-ins need last no more than 5 minutes and can be scheduled at your own and your buddy’s convenience.

Parents sharing with each other can not only provide a rich bank of creative solutions but also be supportive of one another!



## FIELD ASSIGNMENT!

A. Sometime in the next three weeks please do at least one of the following activities:

- Go to your local library with your child. Talk to the librarian about books that would be interesting for your child related to your child's interests. Let your child choose several books.

AND/OR

- Talk with your child's teacher or child care provider about how your child is doing. Offer to read or help out in class (or go on a field trip). Familiarize yourself with your child's school curriculum and routine.



B. Write down what you did and how you felt about the experience on the "Field Notes" page.

**FIELD NOTES**

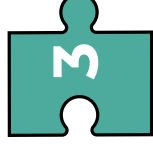




The  
**Incredible  
Years®**

Home Activities

## RECORD SHEET: ACADEMIC COACHING DURING CHILD-DIRECTED PLAY TIMES



Record how you used academic coaching language in your play interactions and any reaction you noticed in your child and yourself.

Date	Time Spent	Activity	Words Used For Academic Coaching	Child's Response & Your Response

## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

## Building Blocks for Reading with CARE



**Comment**, use descriptive commenting to describe pictures. Take turns interacting, and let your child be the storyteller by encouraging him/her to talk about the pictures.



**Ask** a few open-ended questions.

"What do you see on this page?" (observing and reporting)

"I wonder what's happening here?" (storytelling)

"What is your favorite color (or animal) on this page?" (promoting academic skills)

"How is she feeling now?" (exploring feelings)

"What is going to happen next?" (predicting)



**Respond** with verbal and nonverbal encouragement & interest to your child's thinking and responses.

"That's right!"

"You are really thinking about that."

"Wow, you know a lot about that."

"You are really curious."

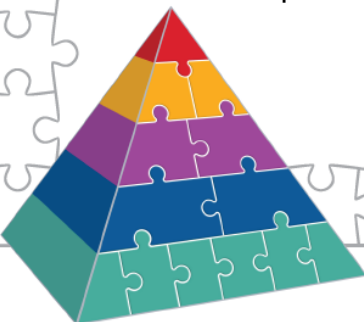


**Expand** on what your child says.

"Yes, I think he's feeling excited, too, and he might be a little scared as well."

"Yes, it is a horse; it's also called a mare."

"Yes, that boy is going to the park. Do you remember going to the park? What do you like best there?"

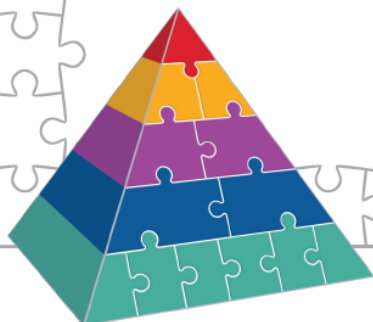
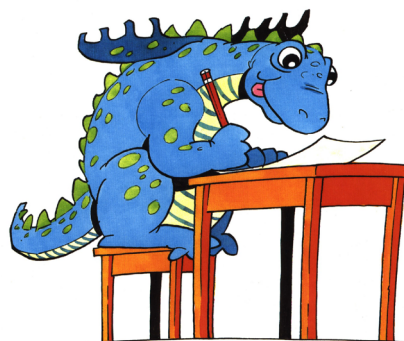




## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### ACADEMIC COACHING TO PROMOTE CHILDREN'S SCHOOL READINESS SKILLS

- Use academic coaching to promote your child's school readiness concepts, tailoring to your child's developmental language level.
- Use many more descriptive comments than questions during play times as well as other times of the day. Avoid closed-ended questions.
- Describe the objects, shapes, numbers, letters, textures, and colors of objects your child is using as well as their actions.
- Listen to your child and imitate, or mirror, your child's words and extend length of sentence by one word.
- Notice what your child is interested in and talk about it.
- Talk about positions of objects (e.g., inside, under, beside, next to).
- Prompt your child to communicate by modeling words for them to copy or by using a hand puppet.
- Praise and give positive feedback to your child for using words (that's right!).
- Use new and more complex words to intentionally expand your child's academic and bilingual vocabulary even if you know your child won't understand the word at first.
- Talk about simple every day stories and events and show interest in what your child is learning at school.
- Read with your child in an interactive way often.

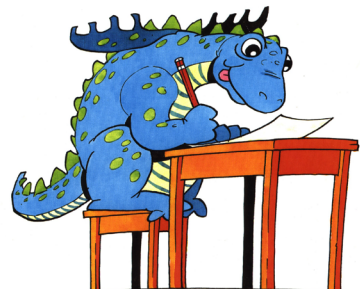
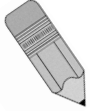




## Brainstorm/Buzz: Goals for Promoting My Child's Academic Success



Think about pre-academic skills and school readiness skills you want to encourage with your child and how you can promote these skills. Write down possible times you could promote these skills and how you will promote these skills with your child.



## Persistence Coaching Promotes School Readiness



### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK



#### To Do:

- **PLAY** daily being child-directed and using academic and persistence coaching.
- **DESCRIBE** when your child is concentrating, focused, working hard, trying again, thinking and being patient and calm while playing, particularly when something is difficult and more complex.
- **TALK** about your child's school experiences and what they are learning. Promote your child's confidence, motivation, curiosity and persistence to read and write. Notice how your child responds to your efforts.
- **KEEP TRACK** of play periods on the "Record Sheet: Persistence Coaching During Play Times" handout.
- **CONNECT WITH YOUR BUDDY** from the group to share your experiences with persistence coaching.



#### To Read:

Part 3, Problem 15: *Reading With Care* and complete Chapter 2 in *The Incredible Years* book.





Home Activities

## RECORD SHEET: PERSISTENCE COACHING DURING CHILD-DIRECTED PLAY TIMES



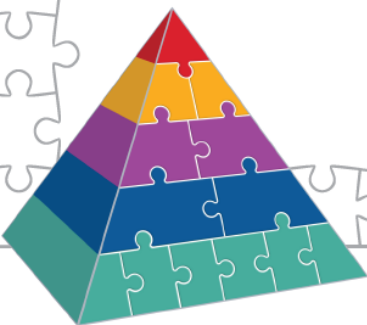
Record times you spent playing with your child, how you used persistence coaching and any reaction you noticed in yourself or your child.

Date	Time Spent	Activity	Parent's Persistence Coaching Words Used	Child's Response & Your Response

## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### PERSISTENCE COACHING TO PROMOTE CHILDREN'S SCHOOL READINESS SKILLS

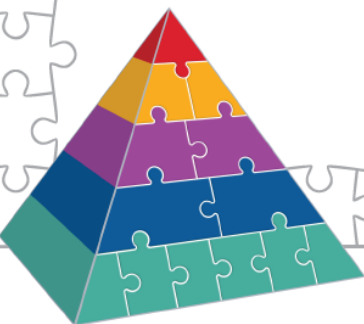
- Coach with persistence narration when you notice your child is working hard, concentrating, being calm, or staying patient when doing an activity.
- Describe your child's persistence when he is trying again, sticking with it, thinking of a new way to do it, staying focused and problem solving.
- Listen carefully ~ watch for times your child is open to talking ~ don't pressure communication when they don't want to talk; try to understand what your child is telling you about their thoughts, ideas, feelings and discoveries without corrections.
- Comment and praise your child for listening to peers or an adult and for their success at sticking with a difficult problem.
- Encourage your child to discover, explore, experiment and provide support when mistakes are made.
- Try not to give too much help; encourage your child's curiosity, independence and problem-solving.



## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### ABOUT BUILDING YOUR CHILD'S SELF-CONFIDENCE

- Value and give your full attention to your children's play activities. (turn off your cell phone)
- Listen to your children — watch for times when your child is open to talking — don't pressure them to talk if they don't want to.
- Reinforce your children's learning efforts by describing what they are doing.
- Praise your children's efforts as well as their successes.
- Follow your child's lead when talking with them or playing.
- Spend regular daily play time with your children.
- When reading:
  - Ask open-ended questions;
  - Avoid commands and corrections;
  - Offer help when they want it.
- Create opportunities for children to retell stories that they have memorized.
- Encourage children to write their own stories, or to dictate them or act them out with you.
- Read to children often and allow them to see you reading.





## Facilitating Children's Language & Pre-School Readiness Skills: Parents as "Academic & Persistence Coaches"

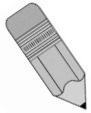
Academic and persistence coaching is a powerful way to strengthen children's school readiness skills. The following is a list of actions, behaviors and objects that can be commented upon when playing with your child. Examples below are for children speaking in sentences. See the next handout to record the coaching language you will use with your child.

Objects, Actions	Examples
<p>_____ colors</p> <p>_____ number counting</p> <p>_____ shapes</p> <p>_____ names of objects</p> <p>_____ sizes (long, short, tall, smaller than, bigger than, etc.)</p> <p>_____ positions (up, down, beside, next to, on top, behind, etc.)</p>	<p>"You have the red car and the yellow truck."</p> <p>"There are one, two, three dinosaurs in a row."</p> <p>"Now the square Lego is stuck to the round Lego."</p> <p>"That train is longer than the track."</p> <p>"You are putting the tiny bolt in the right circle."</p> <p>"The blue block is next to the yellow square, and the purple triangle is on top of the long red rectangle."</p>
Persistence	
<p>_____ working hard</p> <p>_____ concentrating, focusing</p> <p>_____ staying calm, patience</p> <p>_____ trying again</p> <p>_____ problem solving</p> <p>_____ thinking skills</p> <p>_____ reading</p>	<p>"You are working so hard on that puzzle and thinking about where that piece will go."</p> <p>"You are so patient and just keep trying all different ways to make that piece fit together."</p> <p>"You are staying calm and trying again."</p> <p>"You are thinking hard about how to solve the problem and coming up with a great solution to make a ship."</p>
Behaviors	
<p>_____ following parent's directions</p> <p>_____ listening</p> <p>_____ independence</p> <p>_____ exploring</p>	<p>"You followed directions exactly like I asked you. You really listened."</p> <p>"You have figured that out all by yourself."</p> <p>"You are good at trying different ways to solve the problem."</p>

## Brainstorm/Buzz: Academic and Persistence Coaching



The following is a list of academic concepts and persistence coaching behaviors that can be commented upon when playing with your child. Adjust your descriptive commenting & coaching words according to your child's language level. If your child has minimal language, think about nonverbal responses or gestures or visuals you might use. Write below the kind of descriptive commenting and coaching language you will use when interacting with your child.



Academic	Coaching Examples
<input type="checkbox"/> colors <input type="checkbox"/> number counting, letters <input type="checkbox"/> shapes, textures <input type="checkbox"/> names of objects <input type="checkbox"/> sizes (long, short, tall, smaller than, bigger than, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> positions (up, down, beside, next to, on top, in front, behind, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> listening, following directions	
Persistence	
<input type="checkbox"/> working hard <input type="checkbox"/> concentrating, focusing <input type="checkbox"/> staying calm, patience <input type="checkbox"/> trying again <input type="checkbox"/> problem solving <input type="checkbox"/> thinking skills <input type="checkbox"/> reading	





## Brainstorm/Buzz: Encouraging Words to Promote Persistence

Share with your buddy some encouraging words you can use to help your child to keep trying—even though the task is difficult.

e.g., You keep trying...

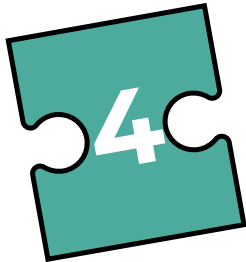


### Goal:

I will commit to using academic and persistence coaching methods when playing with my child \_\_\_\_\_ times this week for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes.

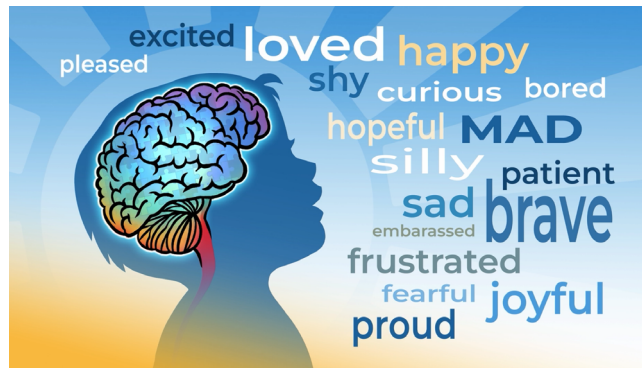


# Program One: Strengthening Children's Language, School Readiness, Emotion and Social Skills and Positive Relationships



## Part 4: Emotion Coaching Strengthens Children's Emotion Literacy & Empathy

### Refrigerator Notes and Handouts



These handouts are copyright Incredible Years®  
and may not be altered in any way (including translations)  
without express written permission from The Incredible Years®.  
Contact [incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com](mailto:incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com) for more information.

© 2025 The Incredible Years ®

\*\*\* ALL RIGHTS RESERVED \*\*\*

Copyright 1982, Revised 2001, 2008, 2014, 2019, 2025



## Part 4: Emotion Coaching Strengthens Children's Emotional Literacy & Empathy

### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK



#### To Do:

- **PLAY** with your child one-on-one labeling your child's emotions when you see them. Label your child's positive feelings more often than their uncomfortable feelings. Suggest a coping strategy when naming your child's uncomfortable feelings.
- **ENGAGE** in some pretend imaginary play with your child. Use puppets or toy characters to model and prompt emotion language and name the feeling when it occurs.
- **USE** books and games to expand emotion language
- **MODEL** your own appropriate expression of feelings about your experiences.
- **CONNECT WITH YOUR BUDDY** to share experiences with emotion coaching during play.



#### To Read:

Handouts and Chapter 4, *Emotion Coaching*, in **The Incredible Years** parent book or audiobook.



**BRAVE**

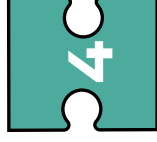


Home Activities

## RECORD SHEET: EMOTION COACHING DURING CHILD-DIRECTED PLAY TIMES



EXCITED



Record times you spent emotion coaching during child-directed play with your child, what emotion words you modeled, prompted or described, and any reaction you noticed in yourself or your child.

Date	Time Spent	Activity	Parent's Emotion Coaching Target Words	Child's Response and Your Response

# Refrigerator Notes

## Facilitating Children's Emotion Learning: Parents as "Emotion Coaches"



Describing children's feelings is a powerful way to strengthen your child's emotional literacy. Once children have emotion language, they will be able to better regulate their own emotions because they can tell you how they feel. The following is a list of emotions that can be commented upon when playing with your child. Adjust your emotion commenting according to your child's literacy level. For example, if your child has 2 emotion words in their vocabulary add a 3rd emotion you would like your child

to be aware of. See the Buzz handout Building Children's Emotional Brain Connections to record the emotion words you will highlight with your child.

Feelings/Emotion Literacy	Examples
<input type="checkbox"/> happy <input type="checkbox"/> frustrated <input type="checkbox"/> calm <input type="checkbox"/> proud <input type="checkbox"/> excited <input type="checkbox"/> pleased <input type="checkbox"/> sad <input type="checkbox"/> helpful <input type="checkbox"/> worried <input type="checkbox"/> confident <input type="checkbox"/> patient <input type="checkbox"/> having fun <input type="checkbox"/> jealous <input type="checkbox"/> forgiving <input type="checkbox"/> caring <input type="checkbox"/> curious <input type="checkbox"/> angry <input type="checkbox"/> mad <input type="checkbox"/> interested <input type="checkbox"/> embarrassed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "That is frustrating, and you are staying calm and trying to do that again."</li> <li>• "You look proud of that drawing."</li> <li>• "You seem confident when reading that story."</li> <li>• "You are so patient. Even though it fell down twice, you just keep trying to see how you can make it taller. You must feel pleased with yourself for being so patient."</li> <li>• "You look like you are having fun playing with your friend, and he looks like he enjoys doing this with you."</li> <li>• "You are so curious. You are trying out every way you think that can go together."</li> <li>• "You are forgiving of your friend because you know it was a mistake."</li> </ul>

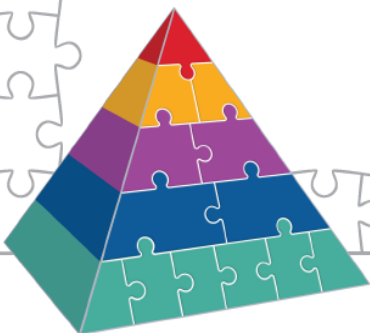
### Modeling Feeling Talk and Sharing Feelings

- "I am proud of you for solving that problem."
- "I am really having fun playing with you."
- "I was nervous it would fall down, but you were careful and patient, and your plan worked."

## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

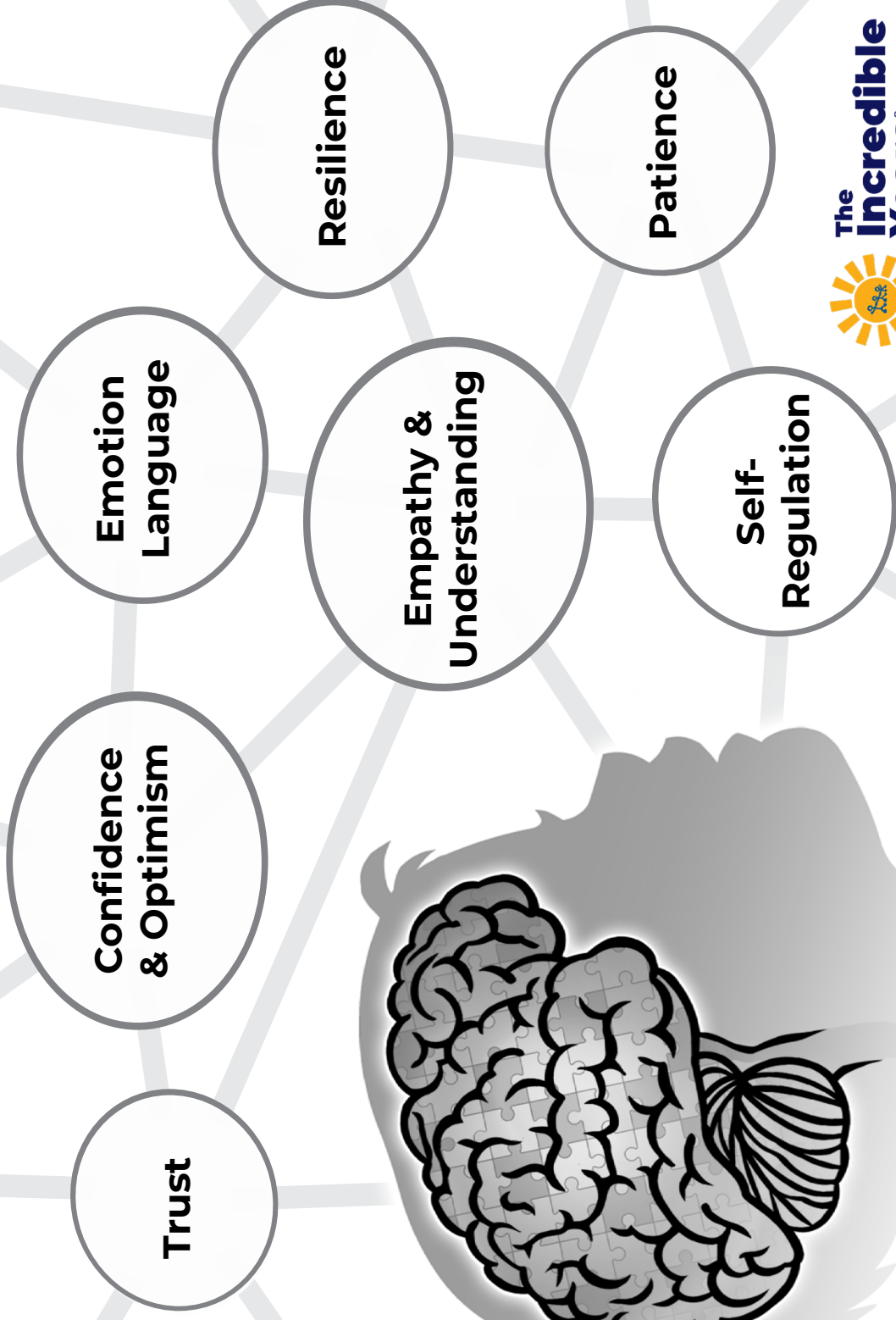
### COACHING YOUR CHILD'S EMOTION LITERACY

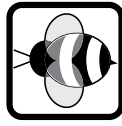
- Listen and try to understand what your child is feeling and wanting.
- Name or label your child's feelings when you see them (*avoid questions about what they are feeling because they are unlikely to have the emotion words to tell you and older children will enjoy the validation that you noticed*).
- Share the message that any feeling is okay, but some responses (like hurting someone) are not.
- Label your child's positive feelings more often than their uncomfortable or unhappy feelings.
- When naming uncomfortable feelings such as frustration, anger, sadness, fear or anxiety, point out or suggest a coping strategy: *"You look frustrated, but you are staying calm and trying again."*
- Comment on times when your child seems self-regulated, times they are staying calm, trying again when frustrated, waiting a turn, and using words to express a feeling
- Support your child when they are unhappy, but recognize when they are too upset to listen and just need time and space to calm down.
- Model and, as needed, give your child the words to use to express their feelings (e.g., *"you can tell her you are unhappy that she broke your tower"*).
- Link positive feelings to appropriate use of social skills.
- Use puppets to model and prompt feeling language.
- Praise and encourage your child when they stay calm in a frustrating situation.
- Cuddle and soothe your child when they are hurt or frightened. Stay calm yourself to provide extra reassurance.
- Model appropriate expression of feeling yourself. For example, *"I am proud of you"* or *"I am having fun playing with you."*





# Building Children's Emotion Brain Connections

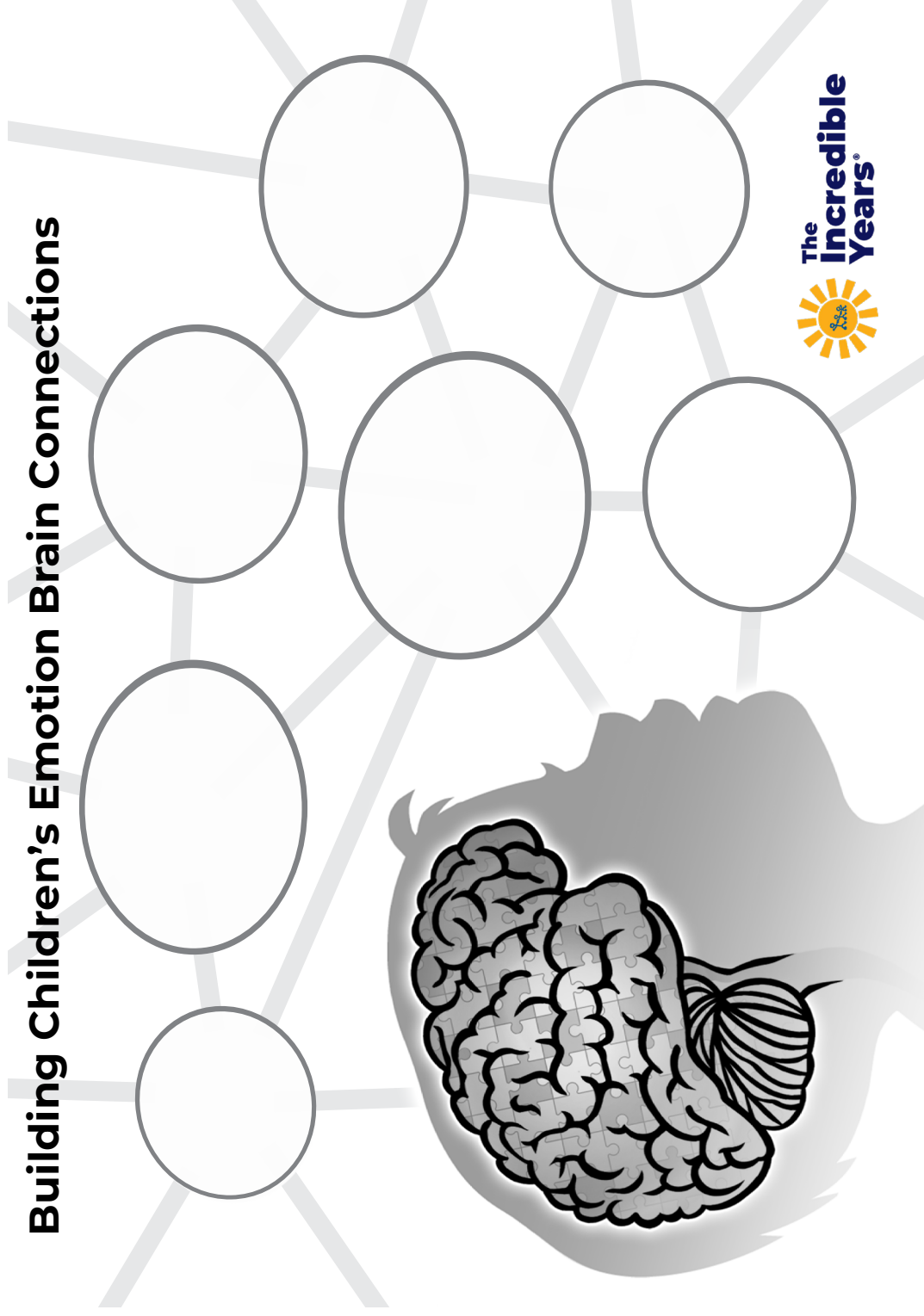




## Brainstorm/Buzz: Targeting Emotion Language to Enhance

Think about what emotion vocabulary your child understands and can speak. Choose a positive feeling and pair with its opposite feeling to teach your child. For example, brave vs scared, angry vs happy, frustrated vs calm, or confident vs nervous. Think about what feeling words you want to strengthen and model in your interactions. Write these in the neuron spaces below.

### Building Children's Emotion Brain Connections



## Brainstorm/Buzz: Emotion Coaching



Describing children's feelings is a powerful way to strengthen your child's emotional literacy. Once children have emotion language, they will be able to better regulate their own emotions because they can tell you how they feel. The following is a list of emotions that can be commented upon when playing with a child. Use this checklist and decide what words you would use with your child depending on your goals for promoting your child's emotional literacy.



Examples of Feeling Words	Target Feeling Coaching Language
<input type="checkbox"/> happy <input type="checkbox"/> frustrated <input type="checkbox"/> calm <input type="checkbox"/> proud <input type="checkbox"/> excited <input type="checkbox"/> pleased <input type="checkbox"/> sad <input type="checkbox"/> helpful <input type="checkbox"/> worried <input type="checkbox"/> confident <input type="checkbox"/> patient <input type="checkbox"/> having fun <input type="checkbox"/> jealous <input type="checkbox"/> forgiving <input type="checkbox"/> caring <input type="checkbox"/> curious <input type="checkbox"/> angry <input type="checkbox"/> mad <input type="checkbox"/> interested <input type="checkbox"/> embarrassed	



# **Program One: Strengthening Children's Language, School Readiness, Emotion and Social Skills and Positive Relationships**



## **Part 5: Social Coaching Promotes Children's Cooperative Friendships**

### **Refrigerator Notes and Handouts**



These handouts are copyright Incredible Years®  
and may not be altered in any way (including translations)  
without express written permission from The Incredible Years®.  
Contact [incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com](mailto:incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com) for more information.

© 2025 The Incredible Years ®

\*\*\* ALL RIGHTS RESERVED \*\*\*

Copyright 1982, Revised 2001, 2008, 2014, 2019, 2025



## Part 5: Social Coaching Promotes Children's Cooperative Friendships

### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK (1)



#### To Do:

- **PLAY ONE-ON-ONE WITH YOUR CHILD** using social coaching approaches; Model and label your own social skills as you use them and prompt your child to ask, share, wait, and take turns with you. Praise your child when they respond to your prompts.
- **USE PUPPETS** to model, prompt and coach your child's targeted social skill.
- **TRY using social coaching** in other settings such as the grocery store or at a playground, or at mealtimes, or bath time.
- **KEEP TRACK** of social coaching the Record Sheet: Social Coaching During Child-Directed Play Times
- **CONNECT WITH YOUR BUDDY** to share experiences with social coaching.



#### To Read:

- Handouts and Chapter Three *Social Coaching* from **The Incredible Years** book.



## Part 5: Social Coaching Promotes Children's Cooperative Friendships

### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK (2)



#### To Do:

- **PLAY WITH SEVERAL CHILDREN** using social coaching approaches; prompt your child to notice what another child is doing or needs help with.
- **HELP YOUR CHILD** see the connection between their social behavior and another's feelings.
- **USE PUPPETS** to model, prompt and coach your child's targeted social skill.
- **KEEP TRACK** of social coaching the Record Sheet: Social Coaching During Child-Directed Play Times
- **CONNECT WITH YOUR BUDDY** to share experiences with social coaching.



#### To Read:

- Chapter Thirteen, *Teaching Children Friendship Skills and Ways to Cope with Peer Problems* from **The Incredible Years** book.







**The  
Incredible  
Years®**

Home Activities

## RECORD SHEET: SOCIAL COACHING DURING CHILD DIRECTED PLAY



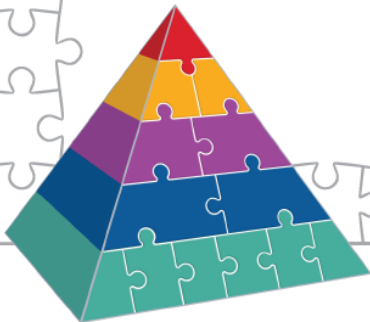
Record times you spend playing with your child using social coaching and any reaction you notice in yourself and/or your child. Remember you can use pretend characters and puppets to model, prompt and practice social skills.

Date	Time Spent	Activity	Parent's Social Coaching	Child's Reaction and Your Response

## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

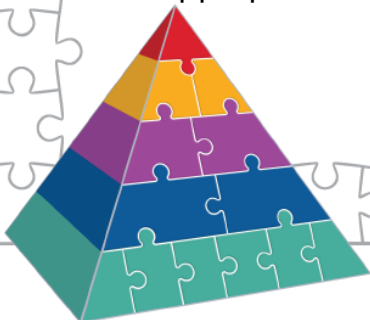
### COACHING YOUR CHILD'S SOCIAL SKILLS ONE-ON-ONE PARENT-CHILD PLAY

- During child-directed play, model and label your own social skills for your child such as offering to share, waiting, giving a compliment, taking turns, asking for help or saying sorry. Label or describe your own social behavior so that your child notices.
- Prompt your child to ask for help, take a turn, share something, notice another's request, or give a compliment and then use labeled praise if your child responds. Let it go if your child does not respond to your prompt.
- Praise your child any time they offer to share with you, help you, take turns, or wait or show empathy.
- Participate in pretend and make-believe play with your child by using a doll, action figure, or puppet to model or prompt social skills such as asking to play, offering to help, taking a turn, giving a compliment, apologizing, calming down with a deep breath, waiting for a turn, or making a polite suggestion or request.
- Model and prompt children with limited language by providing a suggestion of the appropriate social words to use. Keep it simple. Use a visual cue if possible.
- Try to give enough help so children are successful but not so much help that you take over.



**REFRIGERATOR NOTES****COACHING YOUR CHILD'S SOCIAL SKILLS**  
**PEER SOCIAL COACHING**

- Occasionally prompt your child to notice what another child is doing or to help them in some way.
- Help your child understand that when they shared or helped or waited their turn, the other person felt pleased so they can see the connection between their social behavior and another's feelings and how this leads to friendship.
- Encourage play dates with friends. If playing with friends is hard for your child, start with short play times and support their play through coaching.
- Coach, encourage and praise children's friendly social behaviors; avoid criticism.
- Use much more descriptive narration and social coaching than asking questions.
- When coaching siblings, remember to balance the developmental needs of each child.
- Model, prompt, coach, and praise children's friendly behaviors yourself or with the use of puppets when playing with several children (e.g., sharing, helping, taking turns, being polite, waiting, complementing, apologizing).
- If one child is having more social difficulty sharing or taking turns, give your attention to coaching the child who is more cooperative.
- Laugh and have fun.
- Use social coaching at other times, such as mealtimes, cooking together, bath times, grocery store visits, or any family activities that require cooperation. Remember to be realistic about what is developmentally appropriate for your unique child.



## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### COACHING CHILDREN IN COOPERATIVE PLAY WITH PEERS

Join children and their friends when they are playing and “coach” them in good play skills by noticing and commenting on their cooperative efforts.

For example:

**Making Suggestions:** “Wow, that was a helpful suggestion to your friend.”

**Expressing Positive Feelings:** “That’s a friendly way to show how you are feeling.”

**Waiting:** “Super! You waited your turn and let him go first, even when you wanted to be first.”

**Asking Permission:** “That’s very friendly to ask him if he wants to do that first.”

**Complementing:** “What a friendly compliment. I can see she feels good about that.”

**Taking Turns:** “You let her take a turn—how very helpful.”

**Sharing:** “You are both doing it together. I can see you are team players.”

**Agreement:** “You agreed with her suggestion—what a friendly thing to do.”

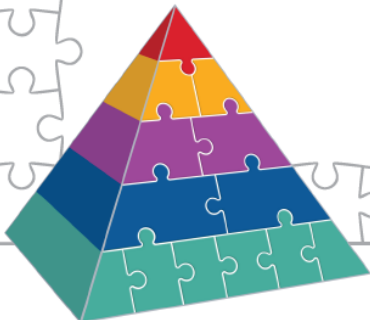
**Using Soft Touch:** “You are using gentle and soft touch with him. That is friendly.”

**Asking for Help:** “Wow! You asked him to help you—that is what good friends do for each other.”

**Caring:** “I can see you really care about her ideas and point of view. You’re a thoughtful person.”

**Problem-Solving:** “You both worked out that problem in a calm way. It looks like it feels good for both of you.”

**Being Polite:** “You were so polite in the way you asked her to wait— that’s very friendly.”





## Facilitating Children's Social Learning Parents as "Social Skills Coaches"

Modeling, prompting and describing children's friendly behaviors is a powerful way to strengthen children's social skills. Social skills are the first steps to making lasting friendships. The following is a list of social skills that you can comment on when playing with your child or when your child is playing with a friend. Adjust your social coaching according to your goals for your child's learning specific social skills. For example, if your child has trouble with turn taking, start with modeling and prompting turn taking before working on sharing behavior. See the **Building Children's Social Brain Connections** handout to record the social skills you will target and encourage with your child.

Target Social Skills	Examples
<input type="checkbox"/> helping <input type="checkbox"/> sharing <input type="checkbox"/> teamwork <input type="checkbox"/> using a friendly voice (quiet, polite)	<p>"That's so friendly. You are sharing your blocks with your friend and waiting your turn."</p> <p>"You are both working together and helping each other like a team."</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> listening to what a friend says <input type="checkbox"/> taking turns <input type="checkbox"/> asking <input type="checkbox"/> trading <input type="checkbox"/> waiting	<p>"You listened to your friend's request and followed his suggestion. That is very friendly."</p> <p>"You waited and asked first if you could use that. Your friend listened to you and shared."</p> <p>"You are taking turns. That's what good friends do for each other."</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> agreeing with a friend's suggestion <input type="checkbox"/> making a suggestion <input type="checkbox"/> giving a compliment <input type="checkbox"/> using soft, gentle touch <input type="checkbox"/> asking permission to use something a friend has <input type="checkbox"/> problem solving <input type="checkbox"/> cooperating <input type="checkbox"/> being generous <input type="checkbox"/> including others <input type="checkbox"/> apologizing	<p>"You made a friendly suggestion and your friend is doing what you suggested. That is so friendly."</p> <p>"You are helping your friend build his tower."</p> <p>"You are being cooperative by sharing."</p> <p>"You both solved the problem of how to put those blocks together. That was a great solution."</p>

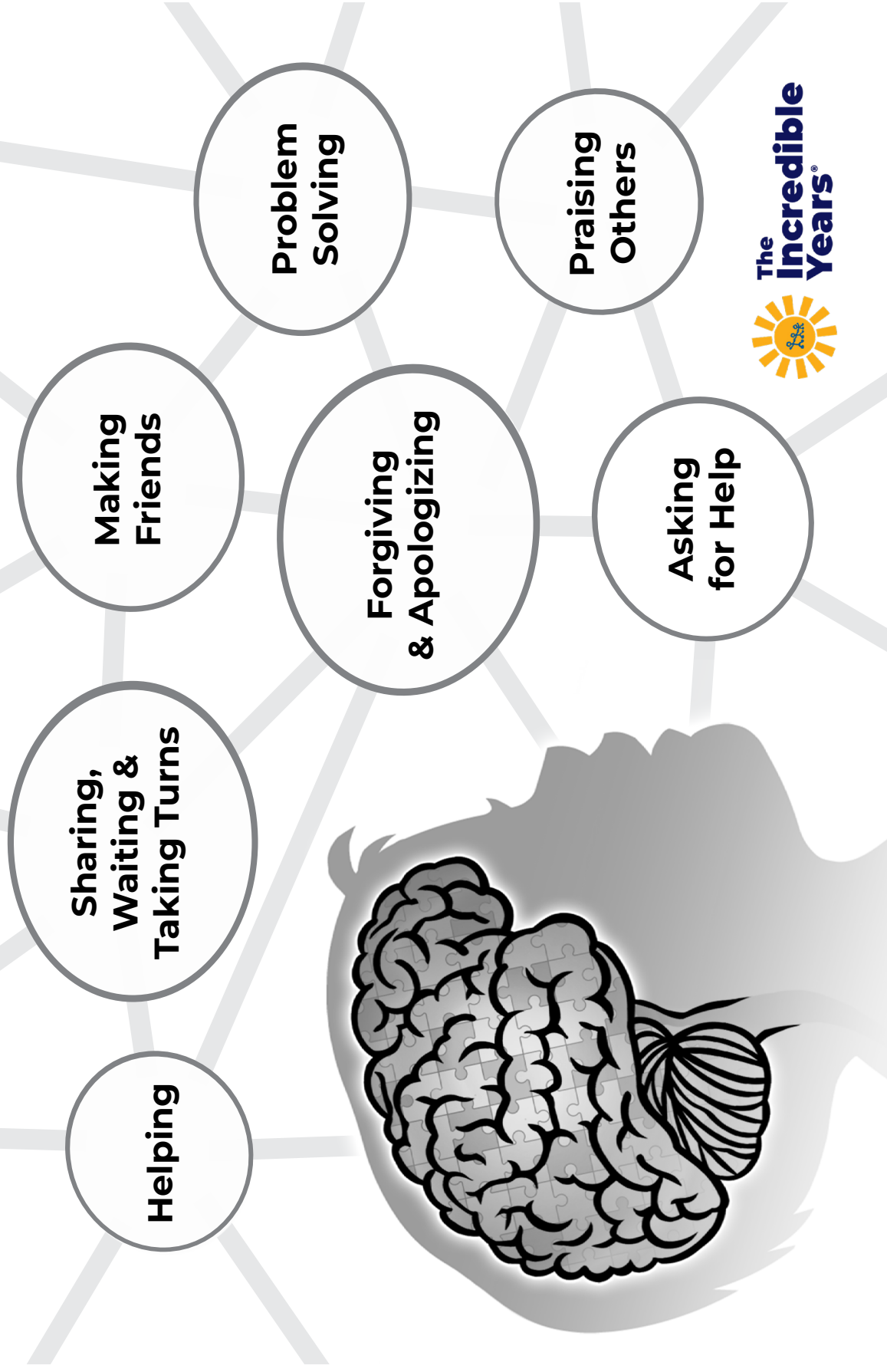
### Prompting

- "Look at what your friend has made. Do you think you can give your friend a compliment?" (praise child if they try to give a compliment)
- "You did that by accident. Do you think you can say you are sorry to your friend?"

### Modeling Friendly Behavior

- Parents can model waiting, taking turns, helping, and complimenting, which also teach children these social skills.

# Building Children's Social Brain Connections





## Parents Promoting Emotional and Social Competence in Young Children



### Parent-Child Social Coaching: Child Developmental Starting Level 1

**Child Solitary Play:** Parents can use social coaching in one-on-one interactions with their children to help them learn social skills and emotional language before they begin to play with peers. A great deal of your child's learning will occur by descriptive commenting, modeling and prompting, which will enhance your child's language skills as well as help them recognize and learn social skills. Here are some examples of scripts you can use to model or prompt.

Social/Friendship Skills	Examples
<b>Parent Models:</b> Sharing Offering to Help Waiting Suggesting Complementing Behavior-to-Feelings	"I'm going to be your friend and share my car with you." "If you want, I can help you with that by holding the bottom while you put another on top." "I can use my waiting muscles and wait until you're finished using that." "Could we build something together?" "You are so smart in figuring out how to put that together." "You shared with me. That is so friendly and makes me feel happy." "You helped me figure out how to do that. I feel proud that you could show me that."
<b>Parent Prompts:</b> Self-Talk Asking for help <b>Parent Response:</b> Praise child when they share or help you Ignore or model acceptance when child does NOT share or help	"Hmm, I really wish I could find another piece to fit here." "Hmm, I'm not sure I know how to put this together." "Can you help me find another round piece?" "Can you share one of your cars with me?" "That was so helpful and friendly to share with me." Continue to use descriptive commenting. "I can keep trying to find that round piece." (model persistence) "I can wait until you're finished playing with the cars." (model waiting) "I know it is hard to give up that car, so I will wait to have a turn later."
<b>Puppet, Doll or Stuffed Models:</b> Entering Play Being Socially Friendly Ignoring Aggression	"Can I play with you?" "That looks like fun. Can I do that with you?" "I'm being friendly. I'd like to play with you." "I want to play with a friendly person. I think I will find somebody else to play with."

## Parents Promoting Emotional and Social Competence in Young Children



### Parent-Child Social Coaching: Child Developmental Level 2

**Children in Parallel Play:** Young children start out playing with other children by sitting next to them and engaging in parallel play. In the beginning, they do not initiate interactions with other children or seem to notice they are even there. They may not talk to them or offer an idea or interact with them in any way. Parents can help promote peer play by prompting their children to use social skills or to notice their friends' activities or moods. Providing children with the actual words for interactions, or modeling social behaviors will be important since children may not yet have these skills in their repertoire.

Social/Friendship Skills	Examples
<b>Parent Coaches:</b> Asking for What They Want Asking for Help Asking a Friend to Wait	"You can ask your friend for what you want by saying, 'Please can I have the crayon?'" "You can ask your friend for help by saying 'Can you help me?'" "You can tell your friend you are not ready to share yet." If your child responds to your prompt by using his or her words to repeat what you said, praise this polite asking or friendly helping.
<b>Parent Prompting:</b> Noticing Other Child Initiate Interaction With Other Child To Give Child a Compliment  <b>Parent Praising:</b> Behavior-to-Feelings  Playing Together	"Wow, look what a big tower your friend is building." "You are both using green markers." "Your friend is looking for small green pieces. Can you find some for him?" "Your friend has no cars and you have 8 cars. He looks unhappy. Can you share one of your cars with your friend?" "Wow! You can tell your friend his tower is cool." If your child does repeat this, you can praise him or her for a friendly compliment. If your child does not respond, continue descriptive commenting. "You shared with your friend, that is so friendly and makes her feel happy." "You helped your friend figure out how to do that, she looks very pleased with your help." "Your friend is enjoying playing with these Legos with you. You look like you are having fun with your friend. You are both very friendly."
<b>Puppet or Doll Models:</b> Sharing or Helping	"Wow! Do you see the tower that Nancy is building?" "Can either of you help me find a red block to make this truck?" "Could I help you build that house?" "Do you think we could ask Freddy if he'll share his train?"



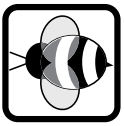
## Parents Promoting Emotional and Social Competence in Young Children



### Child-Peer Social Coaching: Child Developmental Level 3

**Children Who Initiate Play:** Young children move from parallel play to play where they initiate interactions with each other. They are motivated to make friends and interested in other children. Depending on their temperament, impulsivity, attention span and knowledge of social skills their interactions may be cooperative or at times conflictual. Parents can help promote social skills during peer play by prompting and coaching them to use skills or by praising and giving attention to social skills.

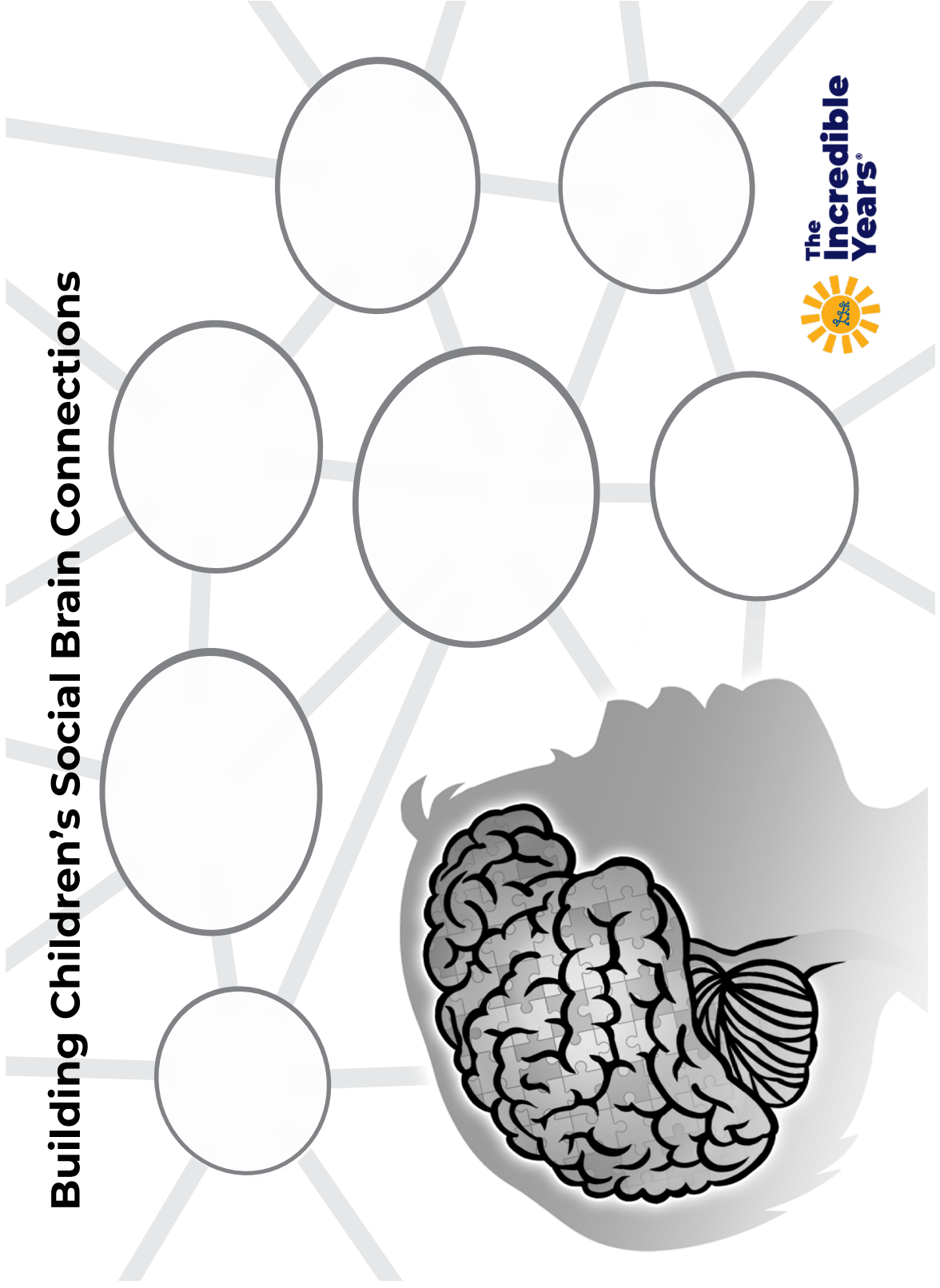
Parent-Coached Skills	Examples
<b>Social/Friendship Skills:</b>  Asking in a Friendly Voice (polite, quiet)  Giving Help to Friend  Sharing or Trading  Asking to Enter Play  Giving a Compliment  Agreeing With or Giving a Suggestion	  "You asked your friend so politely for what you wanted and they gave it to you, you are good friends."  "You helped your friend find what they were looking for. You are both working together and helping each other like a team."  "That's so friendly. You shared your blocks with your friend. Then she traded with you and gave you her car. "  "You asked kindly to play and they seemed happy to have you join in."  "You gave a compliment to her, that is very friendly."  "You accepted your friend's suggestion. That is so cooperative."
<b>Self-Regulatory Skills:</b>  Listening to What a Peer Says  Waiting Patiently  Taking Turns  Staying Calm  Problem Solving	  "Wow you really listened to your friend's request and followed his suggestion. That is really friendly."  "You waited and asked first if you could use that. That shows you have really strong waiting muscles. "  "You are taking turns. That's what good friends do for each other"  "You were disappointed when s/he would let you play with them but you stayed calm and asked someone else to play. That is really brave."  "You both weren't sure how to make that fit together, but you worked together and figured that out. You are both good problem solvers."
<b>Empathy:</b>  Behavior-to-Feelings         Apology/Forgiveness	  "You shared with your friend, that is so friendly and makes her feel happy."  "You saw that she was frustrated and helped her put that together. That is very thoughtful to think of your friend's feelings"  "You were both frustrated with that but you stayed calm and kept trying and finally figured it out. That is real teamwork."  "You were afraid to ask her to play with you, but you were brave and asked her and she seemed really pleased that you did."  "That was an accident. Do you think you can say you're sorry?" Or, "Your friend seems really sorry he did that. Can you forgive him?"



## Brainstorm/Buzz: Target Social Skills

Think about the specific social skills you want to encourage in your child. Write these in the neuron spaces below.

### Building Children's Social Brain Connections



## Brainstorm/Buzz: Target Social Skills to Enhance



Pick the social behaviors you want to target for your modeling, prompting and positive attention and coaching. Write the language you will use to coach these social skills in the examples section.



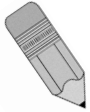
Target Social Skills	Example Coaching Statements
<input type="checkbox"/> helping <input type="checkbox"/> sharing <input type="checkbox"/> teamwork <input type="checkbox"/> using a friendly voice (quiet, polite)	
<input type="checkbox"/> listening to what a friend says <input type="checkbox"/> taking turns <input type="checkbox"/> asking <input type="checkbox"/> trading <input type="checkbox"/> waiting	
<input type="checkbox"/> agreeing with a friend's suggestion <input type="checkbox"/> making a suggestion <input type="checkbox"/> giving a compliment <input type="checkbox"/> using soft, gentle touch <input type="checkbox"/> asking permission to use something a friend has <input type="checkbox"/> problem solving <input type="checkbox"/> cooperating <input type="checkbox"/> being generous <input type="checkbox"/> including others <input type="checkbox"/> apologizing	



## Brainstorm/Buzz: Target Social Coaching: Child Developmental Level 1



**Parent-Child Play:** Write examples of your own social coaching statements below.  
Adjust your language to your child's language level.



Social/Friendship Skills	Your Examples
<b>Parent Models:</b>  Sharing  Offering to Help  Waiting  Suggesting  Complementing  Behavior-to-Feelings	
<b>Parent Prompts:</b>  Self-Talk  Asking for help  <b>Parent Response:</b>  Praise child when they share or help you  Ignore or model acceptance when child does NOT share or help	
<b>Puppet or Doll Models:</b>  Entering Play  Being Socially Friendly  Ignoring Aggression	

## Brainstorm/Buzz: Target Social Coaching: Child Developmental Level 2



**Children in Parallel Play:** Write examples of your own social coaching statements below. Adjust your approach to your child's language and play level.



Social/Friendship Skills	Your Examples
<b>Parent Coaches:</b>  Asking for What They Want  Asking for Help  Asking a Friend to Wait	
<b>Parent Prompting:</b>  Noticing Other Child  Initiate Interaction With Other Child  To Give Child a Compliment  <b>Parent Praising:</b>  Behavior-to-Feelings  Playing Together	
<b>Puppet or Doll Models:</b>  Sharing or Helping	

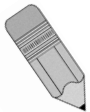




## Brainstorm/Buzz: Target Social Coaching: Child Developmental Level 3

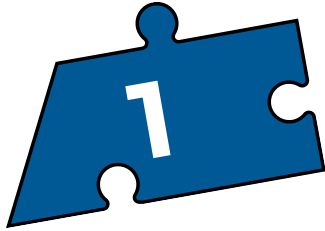


**Children Who Initiate Play:** Write examples of your own social coaching statements below. Adjust your approach to your child's language and play level.



Parent-Coached Skills	Your Examples
<b>Social/Friendship Skills:</b>  Asking in a Friendly Voice (polite, quiet) Giving Help to Friend Sharing or Trading Asking to Enter Play Giving a Compliment Agreeing With or Giving a Suggestion	
<b>Self-Regulatory Skills:</b>  Listening to What a Peer Says Waiting Patiently Taking Turns Staying Calm Problem Solving	
<b>Empathy:</b>  Behavior-to-Feelings Apology/Forgiveness	

# **Program Two: Using Praise and Incentives to Encourage Cooperative Behavior**



## **Part 1: The Art of Effective Praise and Encouragement**

### **Refrigerator Notes and Handouts**



Praising

These handouts are copyright Incredible Years® and may not be altered in any way (including translations) without express written permission from The Incredible Years®. Contact [incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com](mailto:incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com) for more information.

© 2025 The Incredible Years ®

\*\*\* ALL RIGHTS RESERVED \*\*\*

Copyright 1982, Revised 2001, 2008, 2014, 2019, 2025





## Part 1: The Art of Effective Praise and Encouragement

### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK



#### To Do:

**CONTINUE CHILD-DIRECTED PLAY** every day for at least 10 minutes.

**PRACTICE** increasing your labeled praise during these play times.

**CHOOSE ONE BEHAVIOR** you would like to see your child engage in more frequently, and systematically encourage and PRAISE it every time it occurs during the following week; for example: playing quietly, following your directions, picking up toys, and sharing with others.

**DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF PRAISES** you give and observe what effect this has on your child.

**KEEP TRACK** of the results on the “Praise” Record Sheet. Bring to next season.

**LIST** the behaviors you want to see more of on the Behavior Record handout.

**CONNECT WITH YOUR BUDDY** from the group to share your praise approach.

**REMEMBER** to praise someone who is important to you!



#### To Read:

Handouts and Chapter Five, *Positive Attention, Encouragement and Praise*, in **The Incredible Years** parent book or audiobook.



Praising



**The Incredible  
Years®**

Home Activities



## RECORD SHEET: PRAISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Record times and ways you praised your child and your child's response. Remember your toy character or puppet can also model praise and prompt your child's social behaviors.

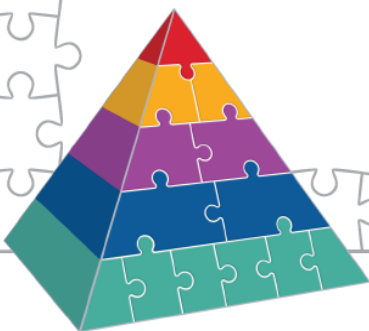
Date	Time	Number of Praises and Examples of Praise Statements	Types of Child Behaviors Praised	Child's Response & Your Feelings



## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### EFFECTIVE PRAISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

- Set goals for positive behaviors you want to prompt and encourage.
- Catch your child doing something positive!
- Praise small steps: don't save praise for perfect behavior.
- Don't worry about spoiling your children with praise.
- Increase praise for children with more challenging behaviors.
- Model self-praise.
- Give labeled, specific & genuine praise that describes what you like.
- Make praise contingent on positive behavior.
- Praise with smiles, eye contact, and enthusiasm.
- Praise immediately.
- Express your own positive feelings about what your child did.
- Give pats and hugs and kisses along with praise.
- Use praise consistently.
- Praise in front of other people.
- Prompt your child to praise others.
- Express your belief in your children.



## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### EXAMPLES OF WAYS TO GIVE PRAISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

"You do a good job of . . ."

"You have improved in . . ."

"I like it when you . . ."

"Good for you for . . ."

"Great idea for . . ."

"You've done a fantastic job of . . ."

"See how \_\_\_\_\_ has improved in . . ."

"You're doing very well."

"Look how well they did . . ."

"That's a perfect way of . . ."

"Wow, what a wonderful job you've done of . . ."

"That's correct, that's the perfect way to . . ."

"I'm so happy you . . ."

"It really pleases me when you . . ."

"You're such a big girl for . . ."

"Good boy for . . ."

"Thank you for . . ."

"What a nice job of . . ."

"Hey, you are really sharp; you . . ."

"That's great, it really looks like . . ."

"You're doing just what Mommy asked you to do."

"That was so helpful."

"My, you are minding Daddy so well."

"That's very kind of you for . . ."

"Beautiful! Great! Brilliant! Awesome! Tremendous!"

"Mommy's very proud of you for . . ."

"How thoughtful of you to . . ."

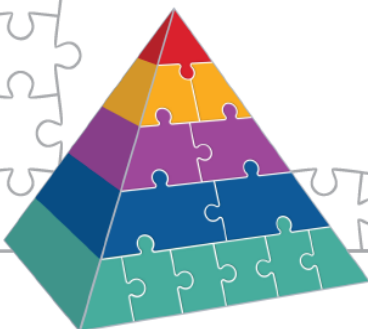
### Some Physical Rewards

A pat on the arm or shoulder

A hug

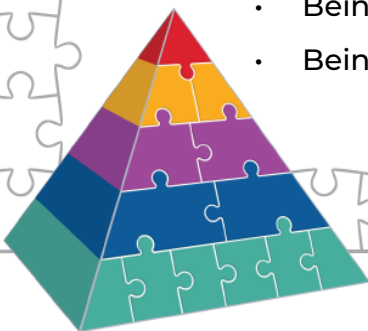
Head rubbing

Giving a kiss



**REFRIGERATOR NOTES**  
**EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIORS TO PRAISE  
AND ENCOURAGE**

- Sharing
- Taking turns
- Waiting
- Talking with friendly voice
- Listening and complying with parent requests
- Eating using utensils or using napkin
- Going to bed after the first parent request
- Playing quietly
- Solving a problem
- Turning down the television
- Doing chores
- Coming home from school on time
- Getting backpack ready for school in the morning
- Making it through the night without wetting the bed
- Making the bed
- Picking up clothes
- Putting toys away
- Walking slowly
- Doing homework
- Getting dressed
- Being thoughtful or helpful
- Being patient
- Being kind to another child or adult





## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE COMMENTS FOR TEACHERS

Expressing gratitude for your teacher's efforts can significantly enhance your child's success. Below are some ways you can compliment or thank your teacher for:

- **Patience and understanding** in managing your child's unique needs.
- **Adaptability and flexibility** in tailoring teaching methods to suit individual learning styles.
- **Enthusiasm and passion** for the subjects being taught.
- The **time and effort** spent on preparing classroom activities.
- **Persistence and positivity** in handling challenging behaviors.
- Helping your child transition **calmly into or out of the classroom**, especially when you're running late.
- Sending notes home that highlight **what your child accomplished** each day.
- **Inspiring curiosity** and a love for learning in your child.
- **Facilitating friendships** and helping your child connect with peers.
- Offering helpful **suggestions** for supporting your child's learning at home.
- Creating a **friendly, warm, and supportive** learning environment.
- Proudly displaying your child's **artwork or achievements** on the classroom wall.
- **Boosting your child's self-esteem** and helping them feel good about themselves.
- Teaching your child important **social skills**.
- **Coordinating an incentive program** that supports both home and school behaviors.
- Calling to share updates about your child's **progress**.
- Inviting you to participate in **class activities** or field trips.
- Keeping you well-informed about the **curriculum** and learning goals.

Example teacher compliments:

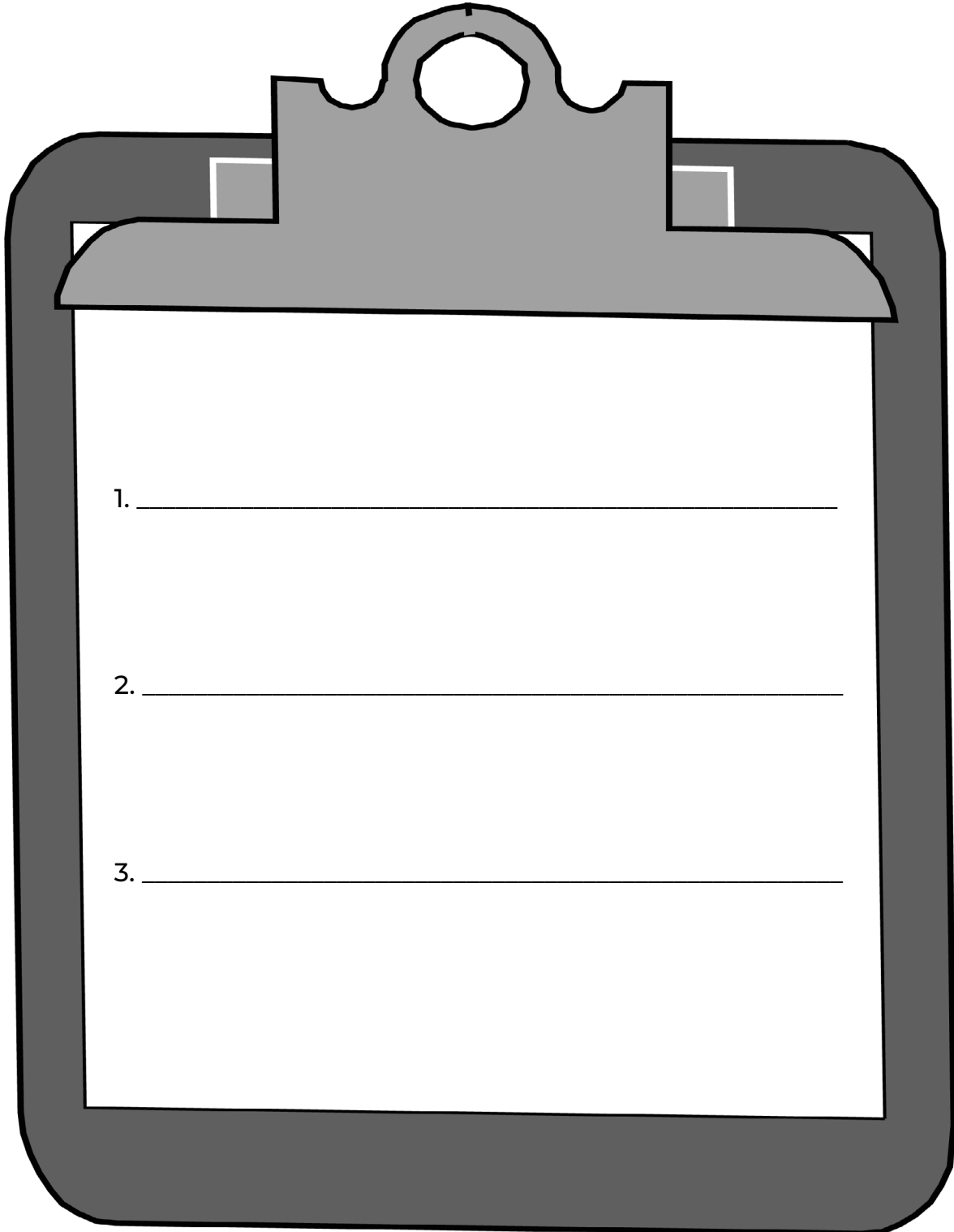
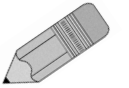
*"Your commitment to the children's learning is incredible."*

*"Your creativity truly inspires my child."*



## Brainstorm/Buzz: Behaviors I Want to See More Of

Brainstorm 2-3 behaviors you want to see more of. Write them below and time of day you will be looking for them to occur.



1. \_\_\_\_\_

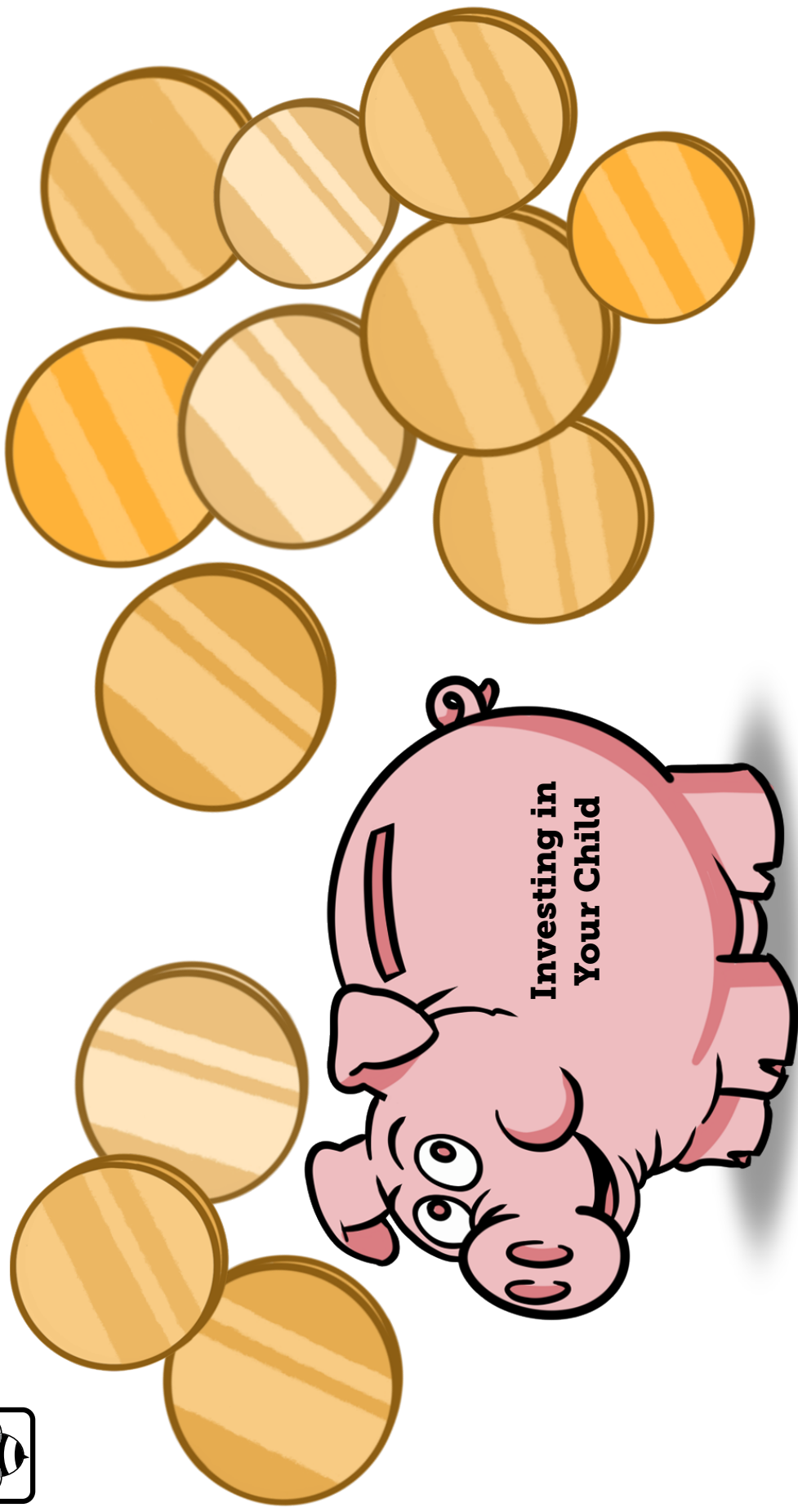
2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_





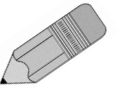
**Brainstorm/Buzz: Write Your Own Personal Praise Statements for Your Child onto Coins**





## Brainstorm/Buzz: Positive Self Praise

Brainstorm possible self-praise you can use to encourage yourself as a parent.  
Write these statements below.



### ***Positive Self-Praise***

I can stay calm...my child is just testing

I am working hard as a parent...



### ***Goal:***

I will commit to stopping my self-criticism and looking at something I did well each day as a parent.



## Brainstorm/Buzz: Labeled Praise



Brainstorm words you use to praise your child to increase behavior you want to see more of. Write them below.

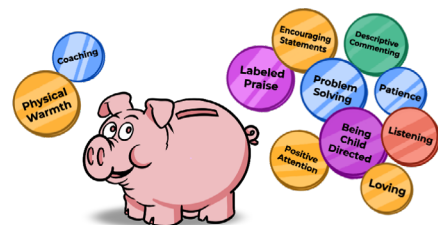
Behaviors I want to see more of

Labeled Praise Statements

I like it when you...

Good for you! for...

Wow! What a wonderful job you've done setting the table!



Remember to Build Up  
Your Child's Bank Account

### Goal:

I will commit to increasing the number of praises I give my child to \_\_\_\_\_  
per hour. The behaviors I will praise include: (e.g., sharing) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Brainstorm/Buzz: Praise Positive Opposite Behaviors



Behaviors I want to see less of:  
(e.g., yelling)

Positive opposite behavior  
I want to see more of:  
(e.g., polite voice)

1.

1.

2.

2.

3.

3.

4.

4.

5.

5.

6.

6.

7.

7.

8.

8.

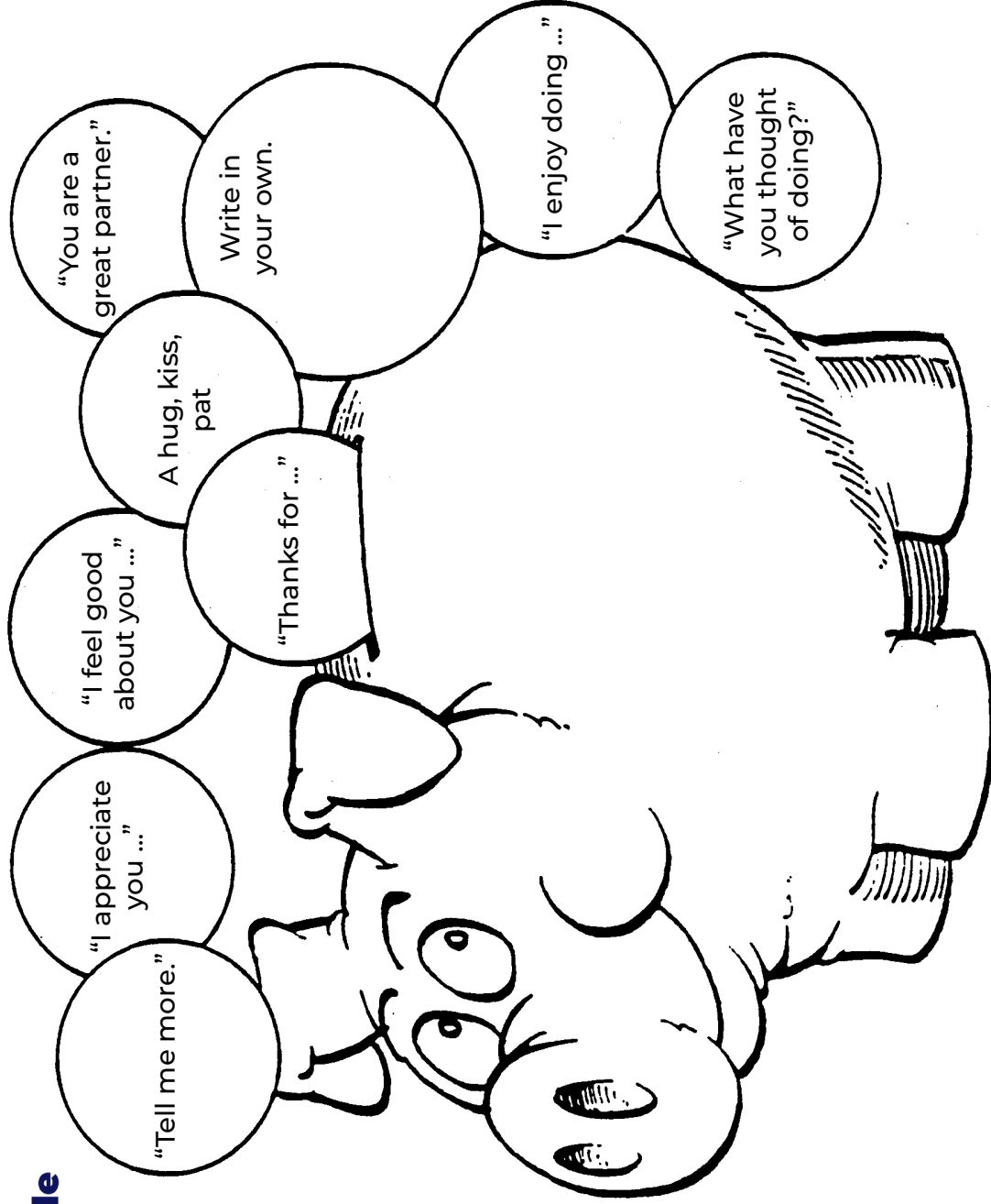
9.

9.

10.

10.





***Remember to Build Up Your Bank Account  
With Other Family Members***

# **Program Two: Using Praise and Incentives to Encourage Cooperative Behavior**



## **Part 2: Motivating Children Through Incentives**

### **Refrigerator Notes and Handouts**



**These handouts are copyright Incredible Years®  
and may not be altered in any way (including translations)  
without express written permission from The Incredible Years®.  
Contact [incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com](mailto:incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com) for more information.**

© 2025 The Incredible Years ®

\*\*\* ALL RIGHTS RESERVED \*\*\*

Copyright 1982, Revised 2001, 2008, 2014, 2019, 2025



## Part 2: Motivating Children Through Incentives



### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK



#### To Do:

**CONTINUE Coaching and Child-Directed play** with your child every day for at least 10 minutes , and **INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PRAISES** given to your child.

**TRY** giving a spontaneous sticker or special treat for a social behavior you want to encourage.

**CHOOSE ONE BEHAVIOR TO WORK ON WITH A STICKER CHART OR REWARD SYSTEM** from your list of behaviors you want to see more of (Record on the Behavior Record handout).

**EXPLAIN** the sticker system to your child for the behavior you want to encourage; **MAKE** the chart together and **BRING** the chart to the next meeting.

**CONNECT WITH YOUR BUDDY** from the group and share your ideas about incentives.



#### To Read:

Handouts and Chapter Six, *Incentives and Celebrations*, in **The Incredible Years** parent book or audiobook.



## Part 2: Motivating Children Through Incentives

### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK

(use this handout if you are doing a 2nd session on this topic)



#### To Do:

**CONTINUE CHILD-DIRECTED PLAY** with your child every day for at least 10 minutes, and **INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PRAISES** given to your child.

**KEEP WORKING** on your chart or sticker program.

If your child is having problems at school, set up a program that includes tangible rewards for “good-behavior” notes from teachers. (Talk to your child’s teachers about sending these home.)

**SHARE** with teachers what activities motivate your child. (And praise their efforts to work with your child.)



#### To Read:

Handouts and Part 3, Problems 3 & 10, *Dawdling and Mealtime Problems*, in **The Incredible Years** parent book or audiobook.







**The Incredible  
Years®**

Home Activities

## RECORD SHEET: PRAISE, ENCOURAGEMENT & REWARDS

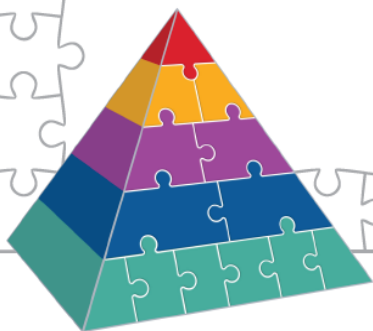


Record times you praised and/or rewarded your child and your child's response. Remember other family members and friends can also encourage your child. Let them know what child behaviors you are working on for positive attention and a reward.

Date	Time	Examples of Praise Statements & Selected Rewards	Types of Child Behaviors Praised and Rewarded	Child's Response

## REFRIGERATOR NOTES ABOUT TANGIBLE REWARDS

- Target 1-2 positive child behaviors to strengthen.
- Make the behavior steps small.
- Gradually increase the challenge.
- Don't make programs too complex—choose one or two behaviors to start.
- Choose inexpensive rewards.
- Have daily rewards.
- Involve your child in choosing rewards.
- Get the positive behavior first, then reward.
- Reward everyday achievements.
- Gradually replace rewards with social approval.
- Be clear and specific about rewards.
- Have a varied reward menu.
- Show your child you expect success.
- Don't mix rewards with punishment.
- Consistently monitor the reward program.
- Co-ordinate your program with your child's teacher.



## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

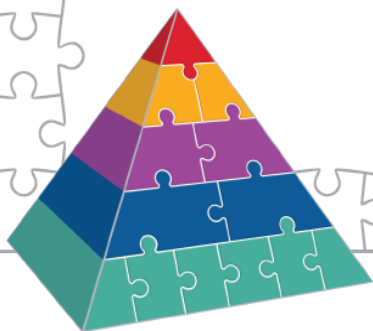
### ASSESSING YOUR CHILD'S POTTY TRAINING READINESS

Some children are trained by three years old but don't worry if your 3-year-old isn't trained; many children aren't ready until they are four years old. If your child shows signs of readiness you can begin toilet training at about 2½ years old. Avoid rushing or getting into power struggles over this. Do this training when you have the time and patience and don't have too many other family pressures.

Encourage your children's beginning toilet training steps by giving fun stickers, hugs and encouragement for taking down their pants on their own, sitting on the seat, and washing hands, regardless of whether they go in the toilet.

#### Signs of Readiness

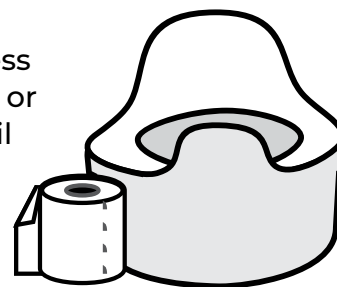
- your child can stay dry for 3 hours or more
- your child recognizes the signs that they have to go
- your child can pull down their pants down and up by themselves
- your child seems interested or motivated to become potty trained
- your child is imitating others going to the bathroom
- your child can follow simple instructions



## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

## THE POTTY PLAN: TURNING TINKLES INTO TRIUMPHS

- **Dress for Success:** Select clothes that are easy to take off such as elastic-waisted pants.
- **Use the Right Tools:** Use a child-sized potty chair or toilet seat adaptor seat with a foot stool.
- **Let Them Watch and Learn:** Allow your child to watch you or an older sibling use the toilet. Model by showing how to wipe, flush, and wash hands.
- **Start with a Routine:** Begin by seating your child on potty fully clothed once a day. Respond with proud smiles and praise their success undressing and sitting.
- **Go Bare When Ready:** Progress to having them sit on the potty bare-bottomed, whenever they are most likely to have a bowel movement. Let it be natural - never force or restrain them. Flush with giggles.
- **Celebrate Small Successes:** Praise your child and give a fun sticker when they use the potty seat, tinkle, poop or stay dry.
- **Encourage Independence:** Remind your child they can always ask for help if they need to go.
- **Teach Clean-Up Skills:** Show your child how to wipe properly and wash their hands every time.
- **Stay Calm Through Setbacks:** Accidents are normal. Reassure your child with a calm, positive attitude. *"That's okay, next time you will get to the potty in time!"*
- **Try Training Pants:** Once your child is making progress, introduce training pants for short periods to help them learn to undress themselves.
- **Diapers at Night Are Okay:** Nighttime dryness may take much longer to develop - months or even years. Keep using diapers at night until your child consistently wakes up dry.



2



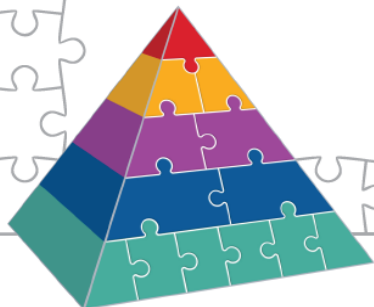
## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### Practice Praising Yourself and Others!

- Send a note to your child's teacher telling what you like about your child's classroom and learning experiences.

### AND/OR

- Praise another parent or family member.
- Give yourself a compliment.





## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### CARING DAYS

#### ***Strengthening Support Between Partners***

Marital/partner discord can make it very difficult for parents to be effective in managing their children's behavior. The following exercise is designed to strengthen your relationship.

Identify 10 to 20 caring behaviors that your spouse or partner could do that you would enjoy. Ask your spouse/partner to do this also. List these behaviors on a piece of paper and post them. Each day you and your spouse/partner should try to select one or two items from the list and do them for one another. These caring behaviors should be (a) positive, (b) specific, (c) small, and (d) something that is not the subject of a recent conflict.



**Examples:**

- Ask how I spent the day and listen.
- Offer to get the cream or sugar for me.
- Listen to "mood music" when we go to sleep.
- Hold my hand when we go for walks.
- Massage my back.
- Arrange for a babysitter and go out.
- Let me work late one night without a hassle.
- Have a quiet dinner without the children.
- Empty the dishwasher or do the laundry
- Offer to watch the children while I make dinner, read, etc.
- Allow me to sleep in one morning on the weekend.



By doing this exercise, you will obtain a record of each other's efforts and become more observant of how the other person tries to please. We have noticed that parents are often quite willing to please their partner if they understand precisely what their partner wants and know that their efforts will be recognized.

#### ***Support for Single Parents***

If you do not have a partner, it is important to arrange some "caring days" for yourself. You could do this by developing a list of pleasurable things you would like to do for yourself or with a friend. Each week pick some of the items from your list to give yourself.



**Examples:**

- Have dinner or coffee with a friend.
- Go to a movie.
- Arrange for a back rub.
- Take a piano lesson.
- Walk to the park. Have a bubble bath.
- Buy and read a fun magazine.

It is also important for single parents to set up a support system. This might be done by meeting regularly with other parents, close friends, or family members. Organizations such as Parents Without Partners, church groups, and recreational groups can be sources of support and stimulation.



# I can do it!



Target behavior:

Target behavior:

**Sunday**

**Monday**

**Tuesday**

**Wednesday**

**Thursday**

**Friday**

**Saturday**

Reward:











**The  
Incredible  
Years®**



**Parent Self-Reflection Inventory**  
 Parents learn extensively from self-reflection regarding their parenting interactions with their children. Some of the skills learned in the Incredible Years Program will be easy and others may be more difficult. From your reflections you can determine your goals for what you want to do more of. Fill this out each day and reflect on what you do often and what you might want to do more of to enhance your child's social, emotional, cognitive and academic development.

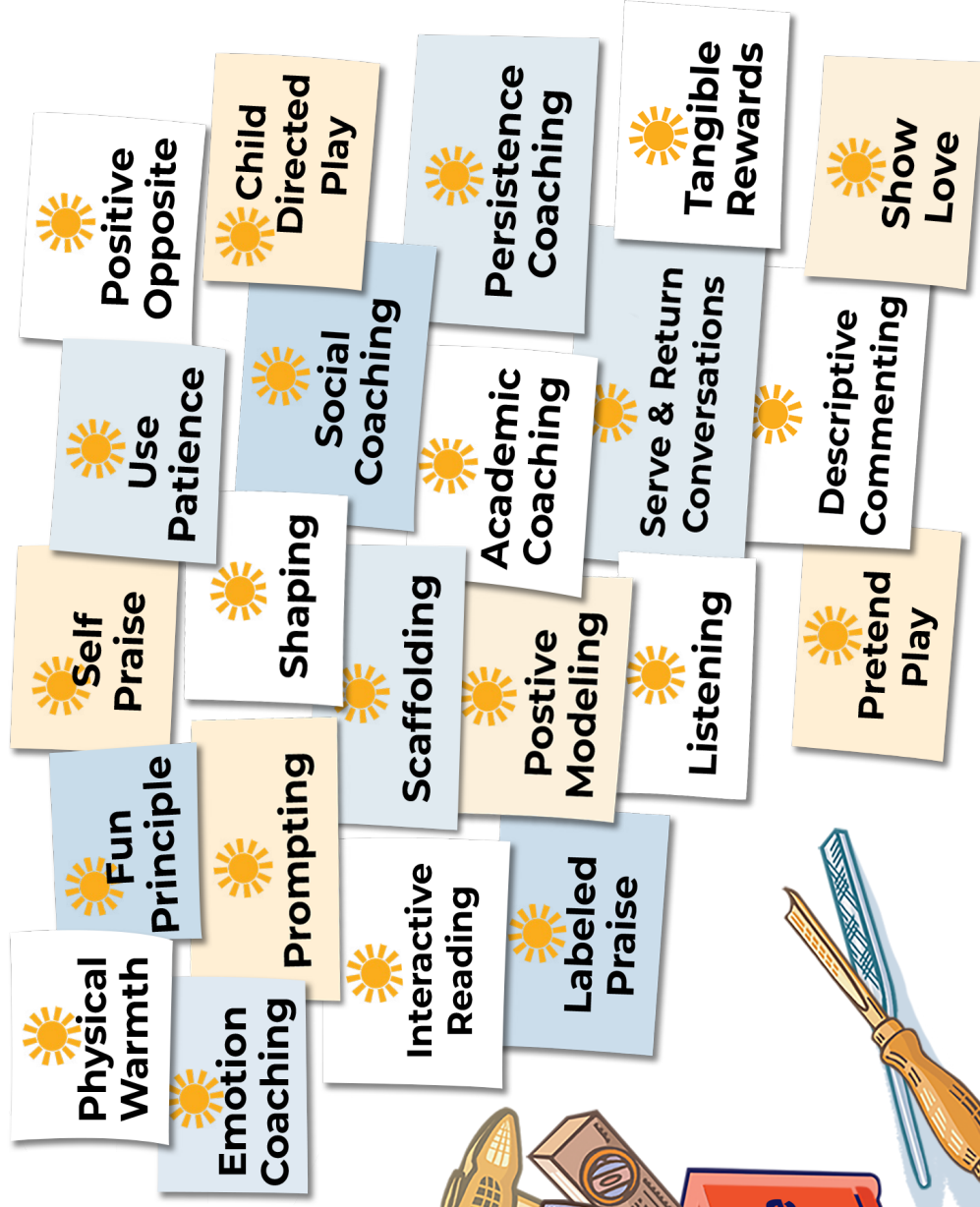
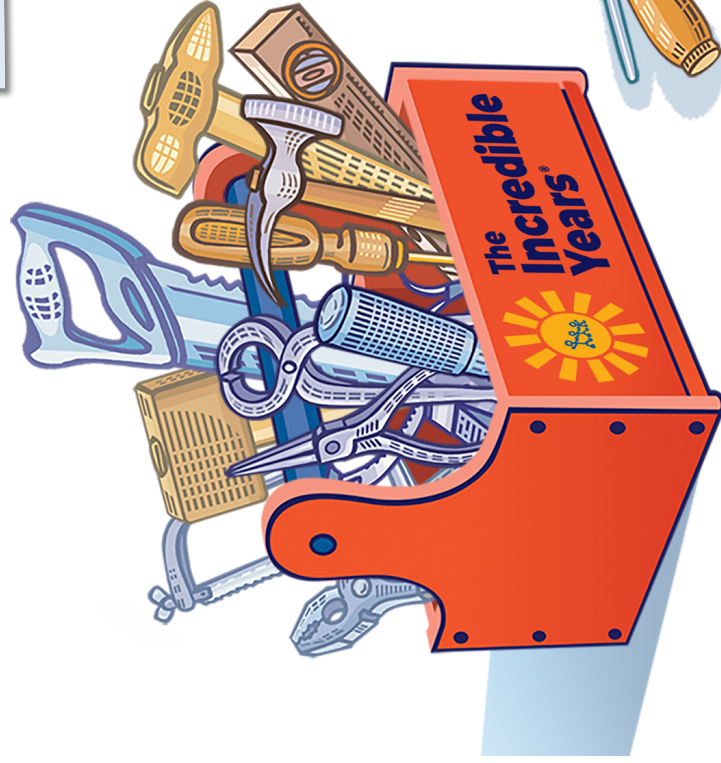
## This week I used these IY Parenting Tools to build my child's positive behaviors!

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
 Fun Principle	I used the fun principle and was silly in my play times						
 Child Directed Play	I worked on describing my child's play like a sports narrator						
 Positive Modeling	I modeled being a friendly play mate by sharing and taking turns with my child						
 Social Coaching	I played with my child using social coaching						
 Persistence Coaching	I used persistence coaching to help my child stay calm and cope with his frustration						
 Listening	I validated my child's frustrated, angry or anxious feelings and then I used persistence coaching to help my child know how s/he could cope with these uncomfortable feelings						
 Emotion Coaching	I used a puppet during our play times to model emotion words						
 Ignore	I withdrew my attention, ignored the misbehavior and gave my child an opportunity to calm down when my child was too dysregulated to be open to discussion or problem solving						
	My personal goal for this week is to earn _____ stickers						

**Goal:** This week I will use \_\_\_\_\_ different IY Parenting Tools to build positive behaviors!



# Building Positive Behaviors





## Brainstorm/Buzz: No-Cost or Spontaneous Tangible Rewards to Use With My Child



Write down in the space below some no-cost or surprise rewards to use with your child.



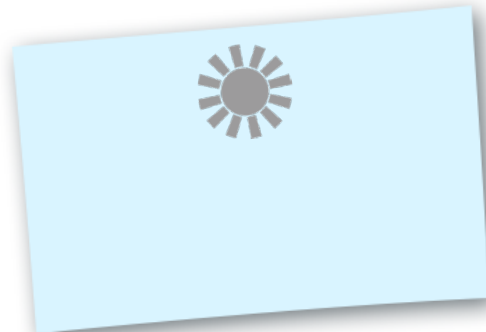
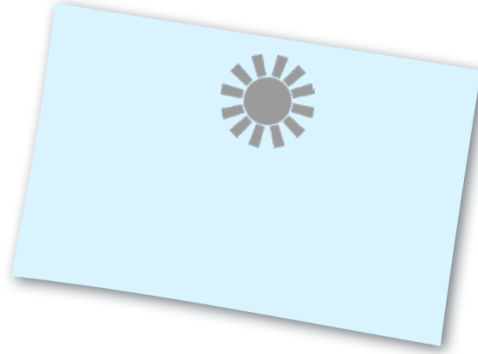
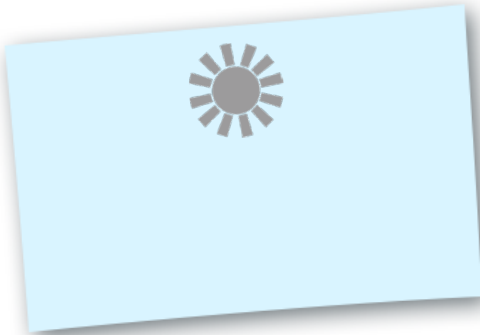
*Playing soccer with my child*

*Child has a friend over to play*

*Child decides what to have for dessert*

*Parent has extra reading time with child*

*Child has extra half hour of TV time*



### Goal:

I will commit to giving a surprise reward for \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

behavior.

## Brainstorm/Buzz: Reward Yourself!

Think about rewarding yourself. Have you ever used an incentive system to reward yourself for accomplishing difficult tasks or goals, like completing a difficult project, or working hard as a parent? Think about ways you could reward yourself for your hard work as a parent.



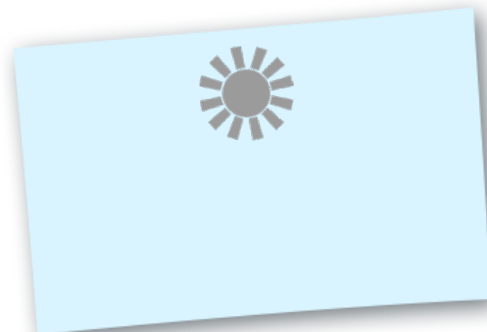
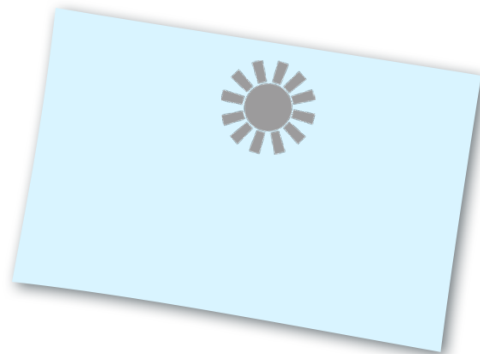
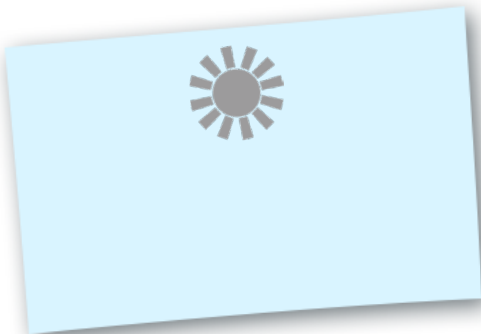
### Good Incentives for Me

*A walk in the park*

*Tea/coffee with a friend*

*Warm bubble bath*

*Buy myself a good book*



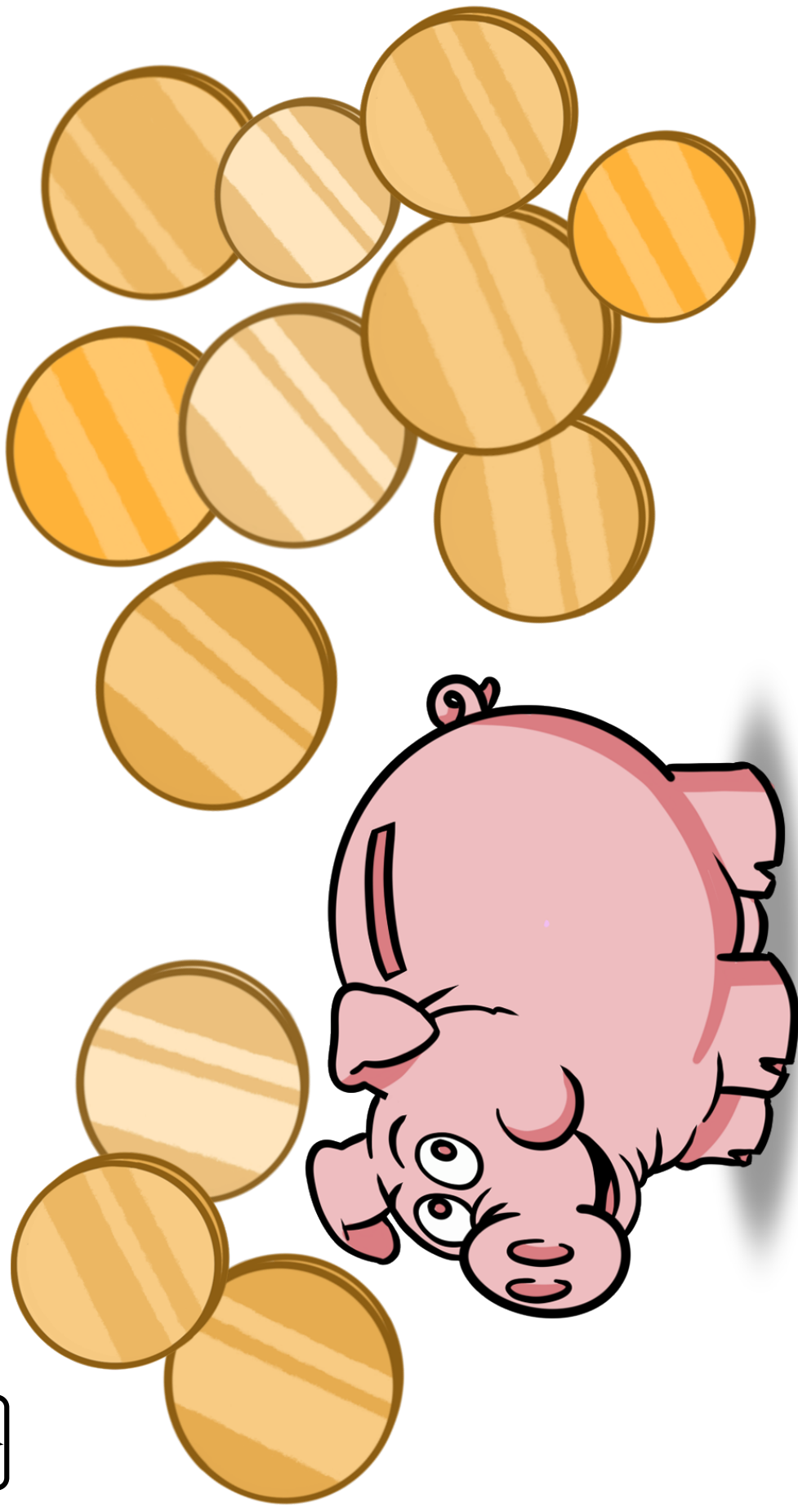
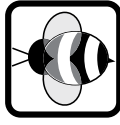
### Goal:

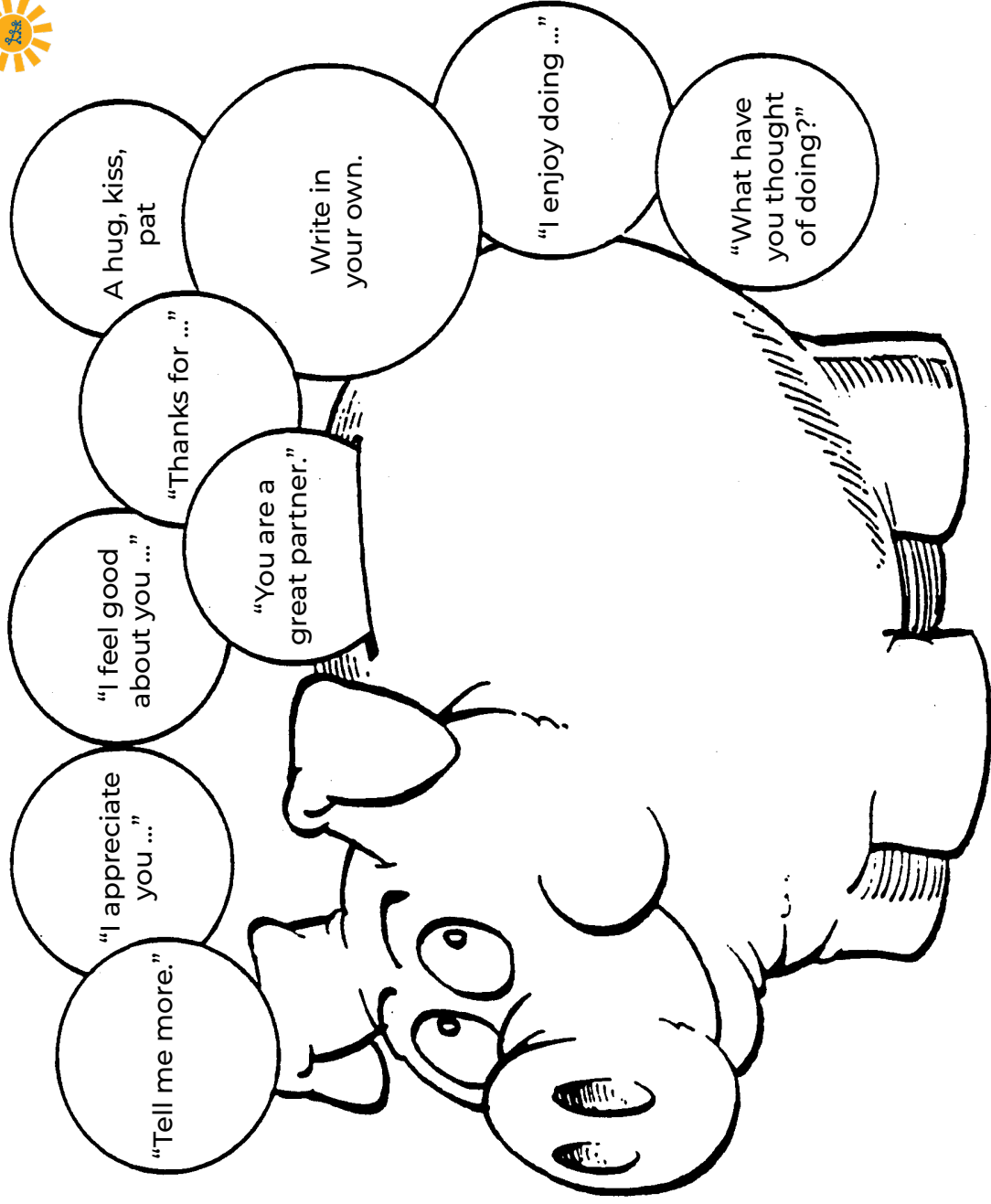
I will commit to doing something positive for myself this week. This will include: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ .



**Brainstorm/Buzz: Write in your favorite no cost / low cost incentives**

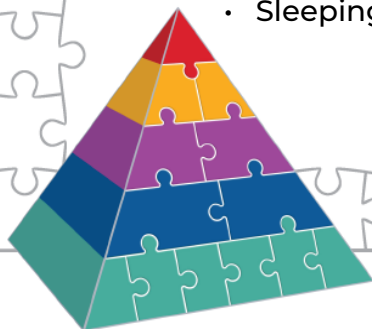




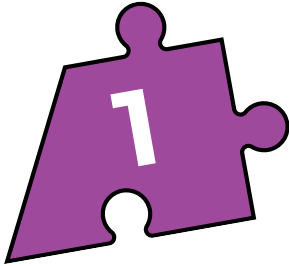
***Remember to Build Up Your Bank Account  
With Support and Encouragement***

## EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIORS TO REWARD WITH STARS AND STICKERS

- Getting dressed by themselves before the timer goes off
- Eating politely with spoon
- Making it through the night without wetting the bed
- Making the bed in the morning
- Not teasing siblings for 30 minutes
- Going to bed when asked
- Complying with a parent's request
- Sharing with sibling
- Doing homework
- Reading a book quietly
- Turning off the TV
- Watching only 1 hour of TV
- Helping set the table
- Staying calm when frustrated
- Putting dirty clothes in hamper
- Use friendly words
- Using toilet
- Washing hands before dinner
- Brushing teeth
- Staying by side of grocery cart
- Using words to state needs
- Sleeping in own bed all night



# Program Three: Proactive Discipline



## Part 1: Establishing Household Rules, Routines and Healthy Lifestyles

### Refrigerator Notes and Handouts



These handouts are copyright Incredible Years® and may not be altered in any way (including translations) without express written permission from The Incredible Years®. Contact [incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com](mailto:incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com) for more information.

© 2025 The Incredible Years ®

\*\*\* ALL RIGHTS RESERVED \*\*\*

Copyright 1982, Revised 2001, 2008, 2014, 2019, 2025





## Part 1: Establishing Household Rules, Routines & Healthy Lifestyles

### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK



#### To Do:

**SET UP A REGULAR ROUTINE.** Using one of the Buzz sheets for afterschool, morning or bedtime to determine your specific morning or evening or after school routine. (Bring plan to next session.)

**COMPLETE** the household rules handouts to establish some of the important rules in your household. Explain these to your children and post.

**ESTABLISH** a household chore for your child. (see Household Chores handout)

**CONNECT WITH YOUR BUDDY** to talk about your bedtime or morning or after school routine.



#### To Read:

Refrigerator Notes and review Chapter 7, *Limit Setting*, and Part 3: Problem 1 Screen Time in **The Incredible Years** parent book or audiobook.



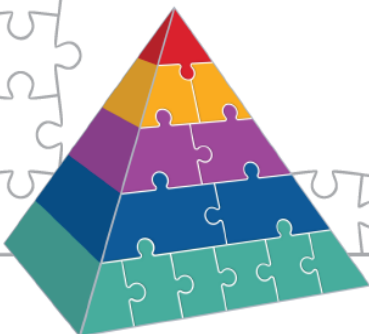
**REMEMBER TO CONTINUE PLAYING!**



## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### MAKING MEALTIMES ENJOYABLE

- Involve your child in food shopping, meal planning, preparation, & cooking.
- Set up a predictable routine for mealtimes at a scheduled time each day.
- Offer a transition time before dinner that includes washing hands or setting the table.
- Try to make mealtimes a relaxed and fun time for your child.
- Eliminate distractions during mealtimes such as TV, video games or phone use during meals.
- Provide your child with a choice of healthy foods to allow for independent decision making.
- Introduce one new food at a time in a small amount; for example, offer the new food along with your child's favorites.
- Try to offer a meal with at least one food choice you know your child likes.
- Offer child-size portions—which is much smaller than adult portions.
- Don't expect your child to like a whole lot of foods—let your child make their own decisions on the food they choose to eat. Forcing your child to eat will only make your child more stubborn and less open to new foods in the future.
- Ignore complaints about food and refusals to eat and praise what your child does eat.
- Compliment others at the table who are eating and using polite manners.
- Be a role model by eating healthy food yourself and talk about what you are eating – its texture, color, shape, size & benefits.
- Talk about food and family traditions and use mealtime as a chance to have conversations.
- Don't expect your child to sit for a long time at the table.
- Once your meal time has ended, avoid giving your child unhealthy snacks between meals.
- Use books and pretend cooking play to encourage discussions about healthy eating and mealtime rules & routines.



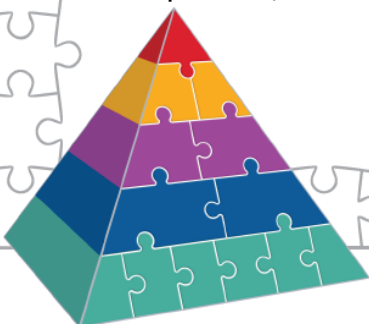


## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### ROUTINES FOR HANDLING SEPARATIONS

Most children will have mastered separation anxiety by three years; but temporary episodes of separation anxiety are normal. Children vacillate between wanting to be independent and needing the security of a parent. Especially if your preschooler is shy or timid, you will find that helping your child cope with separations will result in a more secure and confident preschooler. But don't worry, there are still many years left before independence is fully achieved.

- Let your child know you are leaving in a predictable, routine way—don't sneak away to avoid a tantrum or lie about where you are going, as this will only increase your child's insecurity.
- Say good-bye briefly with a hug and say something positive about your expectations for your child's time away from you. Reassure them in a positive way that they will have a good time while you are gone and that they are safe.
- Encourage your child's growing independence.
- If you are leaving your child at preschool, let them know when you will see them again, when they will be picked up and by whom.
- If you are leaving them at home, let them know who will be taking care of them and when you will be back. For example, *"Grandma is coming to play with you tonight while I go out for dinner. I'll be home after you are in bed, but I'll come in and kiss you good night."*
- When you leave, avoid giving too much attention to the child's normal protests.
- When you return, greet your child with love and joy – let them know you are happy to see them.
- Give your child some transition time to move from their current play experience to leaving with you.
- Some children enjoy having a transitional object that reminds them of their parents. This might be a special piece of jewelry or a trinket that belongs to mom or dad, a picture, or some other object that has special associations.





**The  
Incredible  
Years®**

## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### ***Promoting Your Child's Healthy Media Diet (2 to 6 years)***

Excessive screen time can affect a child's development, impacting friendships, physical fitness, sleep, and even their interest in reading and school success, and can increase children's aggressive behavior. Here are some tips to help your child develop healthy screen time habits, while minimizing negative effects.

#### **1. Set Screen Time Limits**

- **Under 2 years:** Discourage screen time.
- **Ages 2-5 years:** limit to one hour/day of high quality programming
- **Ages 6-12:** limit to 90 minutes/day

#### **2. Monitor Content**

- Use Websites such as Common Sense Media <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/> to choose age-appropriate content.
- Take an active role in your children's media education by watching TV programs with them and participating in their computer games to discuss characters, behaviors, and the messages portrayed, especially during commercials.

#### **3. Keep all screens in Common Areas**

- Put devices in shared spaces so that it is easy to monitor or track your child's screen time use.
- Set and enforce daily screen time limits and reward your child for healthy viewing habits and following the screen time rules.

#### **4. Create a Screen-Free Bedtime Routine**

- Avoid screen time 1 hour prior to bedtime.
- Keep computers, smartphones or TVs out of your child's bedroom to promote better sleep.

#### **5. Balance Screen Time with Other Activities**

- Encourage physical activity, reading or some other social play time.
- Designate family "screen free" times or days to foster meaningful connections.

#### **6. Model Healthy Habits**

- Set a positive example by modeling healthy screen time habits



See <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/fmp/Pages/MediaPlan.aspx> for a tool developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics to create your own family media plan.



**The  
Incredible  
Years®**

## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### *Promoting Children's Healthy Lifestyle and Well-Being*

- **Promote Daily Physical Activity:** Encourage your children to be active every day by offering a variety of fun options during child-directed play. Activities like tag, Frisbee, jumping rope, swimming, dancing, soccer, or even walking to the park can help them enjoy movement. Participate with them to make it more fun, and emphasize how these activities keep our bodies strong and capable.
- **Focus on Healthy Choices, Not Weight:** Avoid making comments about weight - whether yours or your child's. Instead, focus on healthy choices that support strong bodies and an active lifestyle. For example, you can say, *"These exercises help keep us strong so we can play, climb, dance, and have fun!"* This helps children develop a positive relationship with their bodies.
- **Limit Screen Time:** Set a limit of no more than 1 hour of screen time for children over 2 years of age.
- **Offer Healthy Snacks:** Provide nutritious snacks such as fruits, vegetables with yogurt or hummus, or whole-grain crackers. Limit snacks that are high in fat, sugar, or salt. Encourage your child to enjoy meals and snacks at regular times instead of constant grazing, which helps them develop better eating habits.
- **Moderation with Treats:** Offer "treat" foods in moderation. Instead of banning sweets completely, help children learn how to enjoy them in reasonable amounts. For example, say, "It's okay to have a small treat today, but tomorrow we'll focus on healthy foods again." This teaches them balance.
- **Serve a Variety of Healthy Foods:** At mealtimes provide a variety of nutritious foods including fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats. This exposes children to different tastes and textures, helping them develop a preference for a wide range of healthy foods. Avoid foods high in trans fats and saturated fats.
- **Encourage Self-Serving:** Allow your child to serve themselves at mealtimes. Don't force them to clean their plate, but do encourage them to have more of healthy foods they enjoy. This helps children learn to listen to their hunger signals and eat according to their needs.







**The  
Incredible  
Years®**

## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### ***Promoting Children's Healthy Lifestyle and Well-Being (continued)***







- **Avoid Restrictive Diets:** Do not put your child on a weight-reduction diet unless supervised by a physician. For most young children, the focus should be on maintaining their current weight while continuing to grow taller and stronger.
- **Encourage Healthy Beverages:** Offer water or low/non-fat milk as primary beverage options. Limit sugary drinks like soda and juice, which provide little nutritional value. This helps children develop healthy hydration habits.
- **Make Family Meals Special:** Establish predictable family meals where everyone can talk and enjoy food together. Make mealtime a “no-screen” time, so everyone can engage in conversation and bond over the meal. This fosters healthy relationships with food and family.
- **Involve Children in Meal Planning:** Let your children participate in food planning, shopping, and meal preparation. This involvement gives them a sense of ownership and encourages them to try new foods. It also helps them understand where food comes from and the importance of balanced eating.
- **Communicate with Caregivers:** If your child is in childcare, make sure caregivers are promoting healthy eating habits and limiting junk food. Regular communication ensures that everyone is on the same page when it comes to supporting your child's health.
- **Be a Positive Role Model:** One of the most powerful ways children learn healthy habits is by observing you. Model healthy behaviors by staying physically active, eating nutritious foods, enjoying family meals, and talking positively about your own healthy body. Your actions will inspire them to do the same.

## Brainstorm/Buzz: Benefits and Barriers to Setting Up Predictable Routines

1. What are the benefits for your child to setting up predictable routines?
2. What gets in the way of setting up predictable routines or makes it difficult?

Write down the benefits of predictable routines for your child and your difficulties in doing it. See if you can find any solutions to your barriers to setting up predictable routines.



Benefits of Setting Up Predictable Routines for My Child	Difficulties in Doing This
<p><b><i>Morning Routine</i></b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Put on clothes. </p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Make the bed. </p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Eat breakfast. </p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Brush teeth. </p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Wash face and hands. </p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Get school bag and lunch. </p> <p><b>Routine Chart</b></p>	
<p><b>Goal:</b></p> <p>I will commit to:</p>	




## Brainstorm/Buzz: Benefits and Barriers to Promoting Healthy Eating Habits



1. What are the benefits for your child for promoting healthy eating habits?
2. What gets in the way of promoting healthy eating habits or makes it difficult?



Write down the benefits of promoting healthy eating habits for your child and your difficulties in doing it. See if you can find any solutions to your barriers to promoting healthy eating habits.

Benefits of Promoting Healthy Eating Habits for My Child	Difficulties in Doing This
	
<p><b>Goal:</b> I will commit to:</p>	




## Brainstorm/Buzz: Benefits and Barriers to Children Having Chores

1. What are the benefits for your child for having chores?
2. What gets in the way of promoting children having chores or makes it difficult?

Write down the benefits of promoting your child having chores and your difficulties in doing it. See if you can find any solutions to your barriers to promoting children having chores.



Benefits of Promoting Chores for My Child	Difficulties in Doing This
	
<p><b>Goal:</b></p> <p>I will commit to:</p>	



## Brainstorm/Buzz: Establishing Household Rules

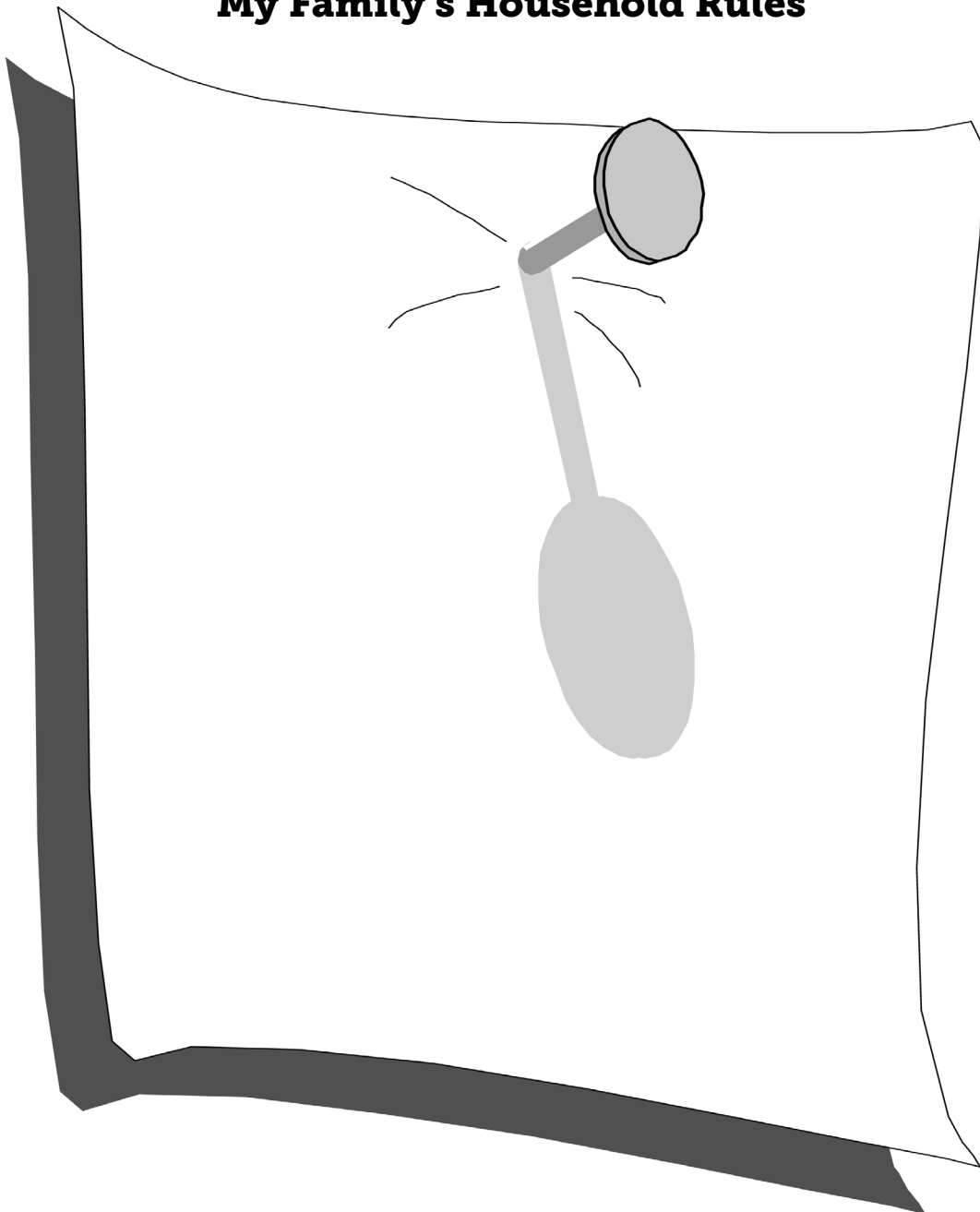
Every home needs a limited number of “house rules.” Make a list of 5-6 non-negotiable rules. If the list gets too long, no one will remember the rules.

Some examples:

1. Bedtime is at 8:00 p.m.
2. No hitting allowed.
3. A seat belt must always be worn in the car.
4. Bicycle helmet must be worn when riding bike.
5. One hour of TV or computer per day.



### My Family's Household Rules



# Brainstorm/Buzz: Our Family Routines

## Morning / Drop-Off at School or Daycare

Write out your morning routine, or your routine for leaving your child at daycare.



### Our Morning Routine

#### *Morning Routine*

- ☐ Put on clothes. 
- ☐ Make the bed. 
- ☐ Eat breakfast. 
- ☐ Brush teeth. 
- ☐ Wash face and hands. 
- ☐ Get school bag and lunch. 

Routine Chart



## Brainstorm/Buzz: Our Family Routines

### After School or Bedtime Routine






Write out your bedtime or after-school routine.

#### Our After School or Bedtime Routine



**Bedtime Routine**

- ☒ Put toys away. 
- ☒ Put PJ's on. 
- ☒ Snack. 
- ☒ Brush teeth. 
- ☒ Wash hands and face. 
- ☒ Story!!! 
- ☒ Staying in bed. 
- ☒ Bedtime is at \_\_\_\_ p.m.

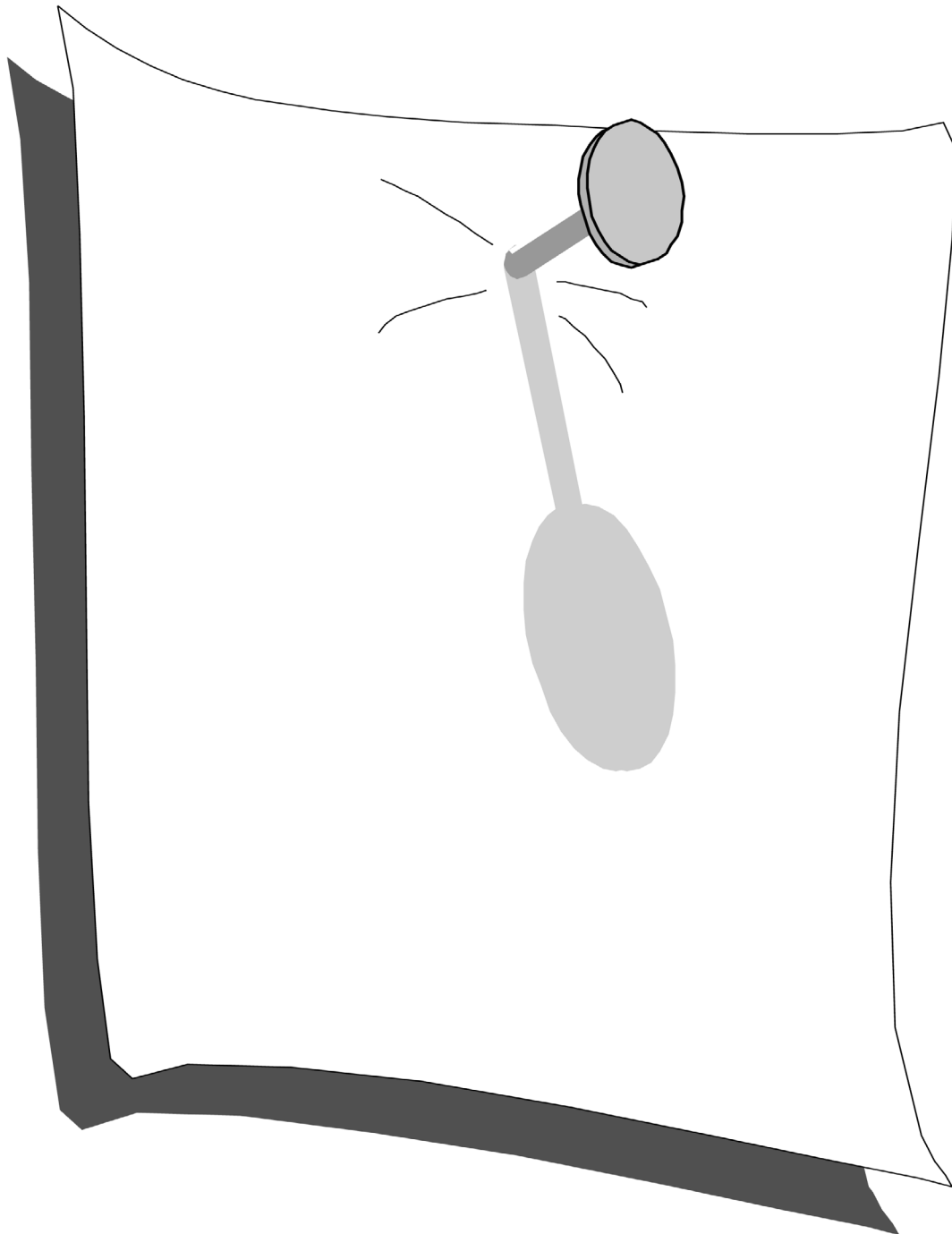
## Brainstorm/Buzz: Household Chores for \_\_\_\_\_

Some examples:

1. Feed dog
2. Set table
3. Empty dishwasher



### My List of Household Chores



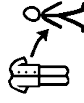
## Example After School Routine

☐

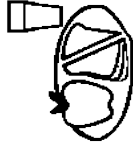
Hang up coat.

☐

Change into home clothes.

☐

Snack!!!

☐

Check book bag

☐

Do homework

☐

Routine Chart



The Incredible Years®

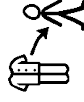
## Example After School Routine

☐

Hang up coat.

☐

Change into home clothes.

☐

Snack!!!

☐

Check book bag

☐

Do homework

☐

Routine Chart



The Incredible Years®

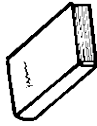
## Cleaning My Room

☐

Put dirty clothes in the laundry basket.

☐

Put books on the shelf.

☐

Put games in the cupboard.

☐

Make the bed.

☐

\_\_\_\_\_

☐

\_\_\_\_\_

☐

Routine Chart



The Incredible Years®

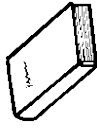
## Cleaning My Room

☐

Put dirty clothes in the laundry basket.

☐

Put books on the shelf.

☐

Put games in the cupboard.

☐

Make the bed.

☐

\_\_\_\_\_

☐

\_\_\_\_\_

☐

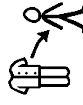
Routine Chart



The Incredible Years®

## Morning Routine

☐ Put on clothes.



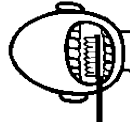
☐ Make the bed.



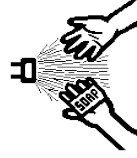
☐ Eat breakfast.



☐ Brush teeth.



☐ Wash face and hands.



☐ Get school bag and lunch.

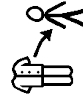


The Incredible Years®

Routine Chart

## Morning Routine

☐ Put on clothes.



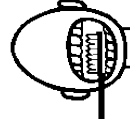
☐ Make the bed.



☐ Eat breakfast.



☐ Brush teeth.



☐ Wash face and hands.



☐ Get school bag and lunch.



The Incredible Years®

Routine Chart



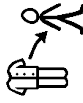
## Bedtime Routine

☐

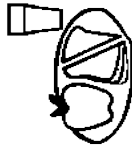
Put toys away.

☐

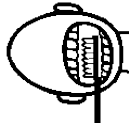
Put PJ's on.

☐

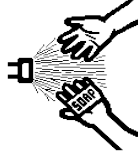
Snack.

☐

Brush teeth.

☐

Wash hands and face.

☐

Story!!!

☐

Staying in bed.

☐

Bedtime is at \_\_\_\_ p.m.

Routine Chart



## Bedtime Routine

☐

Put toys away.

☐

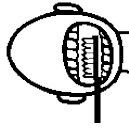
Put PJ's on.

☐

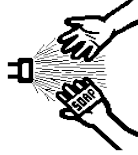
Snack.

☐

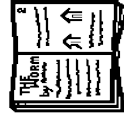
Brush teeth.

☐

Wash hands and face.

☐

Story!!!

☐

Staying in bed.

☐


Bedtime is at \_\_\_\_ p.m.

Routine Chart




<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

**Routine Chart**

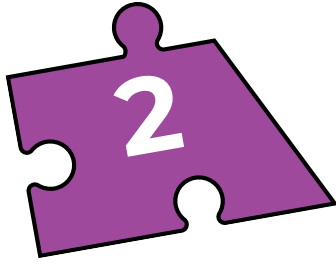
 **The Incredible Years®**

<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

**Routine Chart**

 **The Incredible Years®**

# **Program Three: Proactive Discipline**



## **Part 2: Effective Limit Setting**

### **Refrigerator Notes and Handouts**



These handouts are copyright Incredible Years®  
and may not be altered in any way (including translations)  
without express written permission from The Incredible Years®.  
Contact [incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com](mailto:incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com) for more information.

© 2025 The Incredible Years ®

\*\*\* ALL RIGHTS RESERVED \*\*\*

Copyright 1982, Revised 2001, 2008, 2014, 2019, 2025



## Part 2: Effective Limit Setting

### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK



#### To Do:

**DECREASE** the number of commands/limits you give to those that are most important.

When necessary, **GIVE POSITIVE AND SPECIFIC COMMANDS/REQUESTS/LIMITS**. Avoid using question commands, “let’s” commands, negative commands, vague commands, and chain commands. Give choices and transition warnings when possible.

**MONITOR** and record the frequency and type of commands or limits you give at home for a 30-minute period on the “Record Sheet: Commands/Limits” handout, and record your child’s response to these commands/limits.

**PRAISE** your child every time they comply with a command or limit you set.

**CONNECT WITH YOUR BUDDY** from the group and talk about how you limit screen time watching.



#### To Read:

Handouts and review Chapter 7, *Limit Setting*, & Part 3: Problem 6 *Resistance to Going to Bed* in **The Incredible Years** parent book or audiobook.



**REMEMBER TO CONTINUE CHILD-DIRECTED PLAY!**



Home Activities

## RECORD SHEET: COMMANDS/REQUESTS/LIMITS



Record a time you gave a respectful commend or made a request to your child. Note what you said, how your child responded and what you said next. Bring record sheet to next session for discussion.


Date	Time	Command/Request Given	Child's Response	Parent's Response
Example	5-5:30 p.m.	"Please, Put the toys away now."	Child puts toys away	"Thank you for putting the toys away. Great listening and helping."
1st Day				
2nd Day				
		Example of When/Then Command		

Notice what attention and encouragement you give to your child for following household rules and doing what you ask them to do. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Behavior Record: Praise “Positive Opposites”

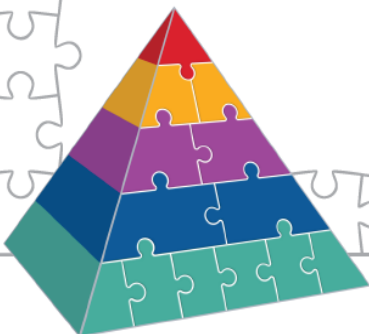
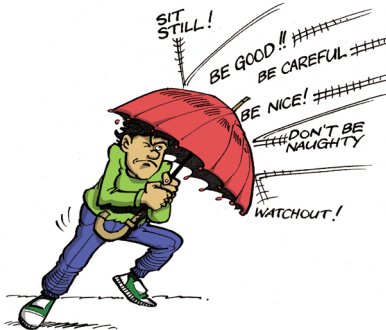


Behaviors I want to see less of: (e.g., yelling)	Positive opposite behavior I want to see more of: (e.g., polite voice)
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### EFFECTIVE LIMIT SETTING

- Make commands/requests positive, polite, clear and respectful. Use the word “please.”
- Avoid giving unnecessary, vague, negative or question commands or threats.
- Get physically close with eye contact, get your child’s attention, and give one respectful command/request at a time.
- Be realistic in your expectations and use age-appropriate commands/limits.
- Use “do” commands/requests, rather than what not to do commands.
- Use your child’s name.
- Avoid use of “stop” commands when possible.
- Don’t ask your child for permission for the limit you are setting.
- Give children ample opportunity to comply (ten seconds).
- Give transition warnings and helpful reminders.
- Use “when-then” commands/requests.
- Give children options or choices whenever possible.
- Make commands/requests short and to the point.
- Support your partner’s commands/limits.
- Praise your child’s compliance to limits.
- Strike a balance between parent and child control.
- Follow through with your commands or your children will learn to ignore you.

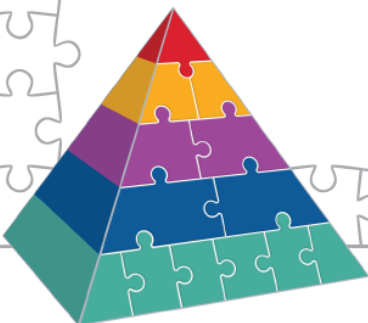




## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### WHEN YOU HAVE TO TELL YOUR CHILD “NO”

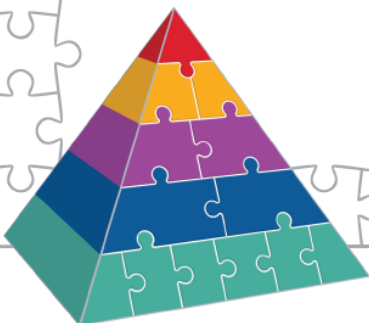
- Clearly set the limit calmly and briefly.
- Ignore protests or tantrums which result because of the limit set.
- When your child is calm again, redirect or distract with something else interesting.
- Remove the object (e.g., food item or toy) that is not allowed so it is not tempting (disconnect computer).
- Tell your child yes when you can.
- Give a direction that tells your child what they CAN do as an alternative to what they can't do.
- Offer limited choices when possible.
- Respond with humor or a song.
- Turn tasks into games, for example, “fly” to the bathroom, or make a “train” to the bedroom.
- Don't give a lot of attention to your child's protests or “no” – ignore, redirect, or change the subject so it is not reinforced with attention.
- Monitor how many “nos” you give and see if they are necessary.



## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### PROACTIVE DISCIPLINE HELPS MY CHILD FEEL LOVED AND SECURE

- Engage in child-directed play frequently and provide social, persistence and emotional coaching.
- Label and reflect your child's feelings – even negative or uncomfortable feelings.
- Structure your child's day with a predictable routine for mornings, naps, meals and bedtime.
- Set clear limits when needed to keep your child safe.
- Help your child prepare for transitions or changes in routine.
- Have a predictable routine for leaving your child and reuniting.
- Give your child choices when possible.
- Share your love and praise and tell your child how special they are.
- Give your child attention and praise for positive behavior.
- Redirect your child's negative behavior.
- Allow your child independence when possible.
- Help your child explore while giving appropriate support.
- Ignore tantrums and give back attention as soon as tantrum stops.
- Take care of yourself by getting support from others and doing things for yourself.



## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### USING RESPECTFUL COMMANDS

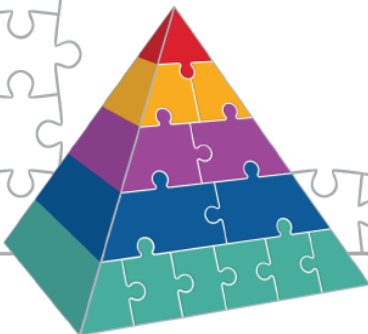
#### *Examples of Clear Commands/Requests – Start With Please...*

"Walk slowly."	"Please go to bed."
"Keep your hands to yourself."	"Keep your hands to your own body."
"Talk softly."	"Keep the paint on the paper."
"Play quietly."	"Wash your hands."
"Come home."	"Set the table."
"Use your fork."	"Make your bed."
"Use your friendly voice."	"Sit here please."
"Take turns."	"Please help your friend."
"Please put the clothes away."	"Pass the dessert."

*Notice the action verb comes first.*

#### *Unclear, Vague, or Negative Commands/Requests*

"Let's put away the toys."	"Wouldn't it be nice to go to bed now?"
"Why don't we go to bed now?"	"Hand me the bread, will you?"
"Don't yell."	"Be nice, be good, be careful!"
"Shut up."	"Watch it."
"Stop running."	"Let's don't do that anymore."






## Brainstorm/Buzz: Benefits and Barriers to Setting Limits



1. What are the possible benefits for your children having clear limits or rules in your home?
2. What gets in the way of setting limits & following through with them?

Write down the benefits of having clear limits and your difficulties in doing it. See if you can find any solutions to your barriers to setting clear limits.



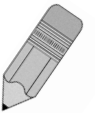
Benefits of Setting Limits	Barriers to Setting Limits
	

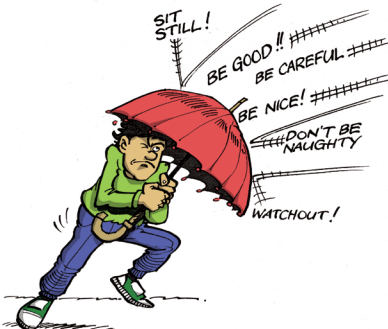
### Goal:

I will commit to reducing the number of commands or requests to those that are most important. Instead, I will focus on giving transition warnings, offering choices when possible, using distractions and when-then commands and making positive requests.

## Brainstorm/Buzz: Goals for Discipline

Think about what you want to accomplish with your discipline and what you want to avoid.



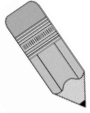
What you want to accomplish	What you want to avoid
	



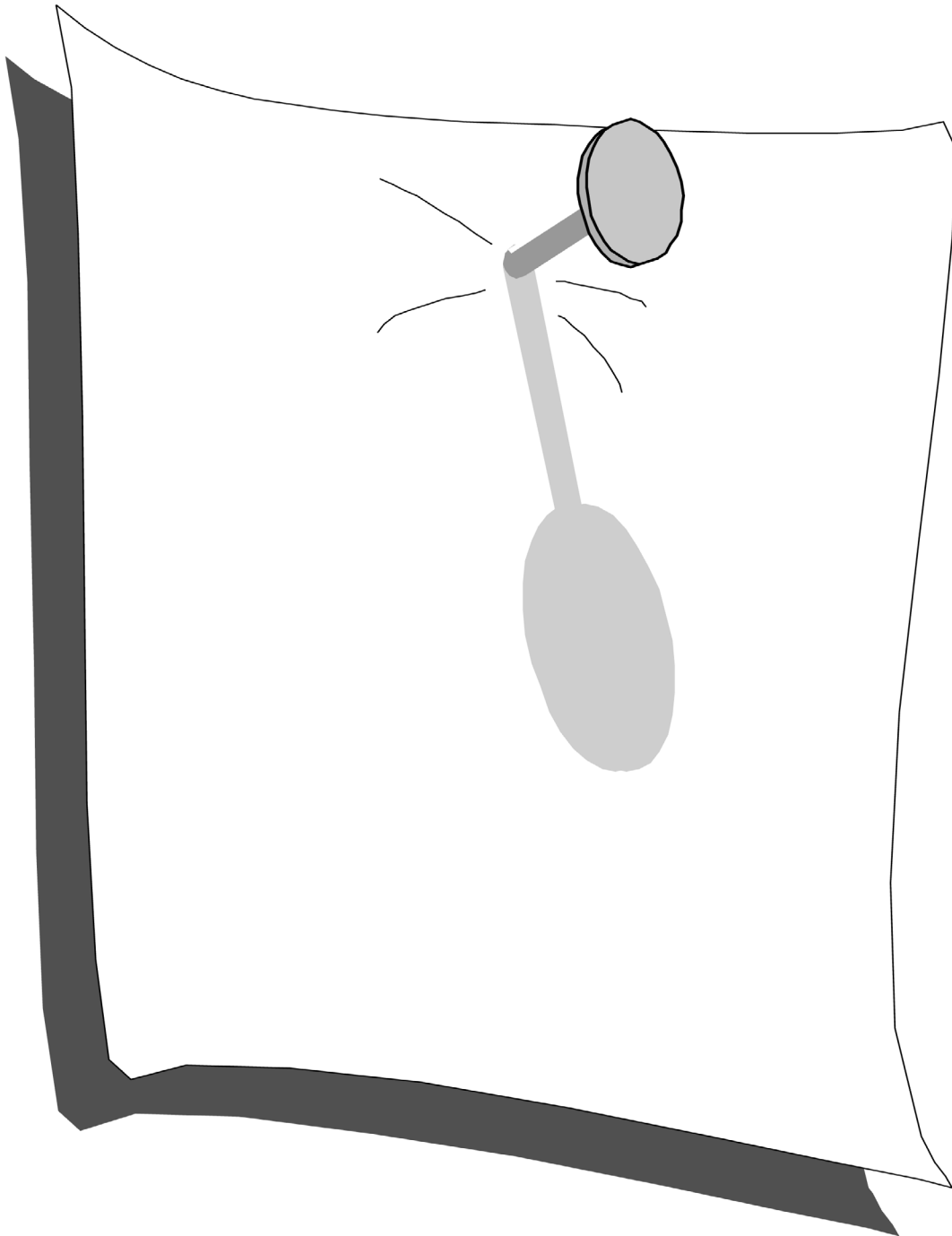
## Brainstorm/Buzz: My Family Rules for Screen Time



Think about your rules for screen time - amount of time per day and type of screen time allowed or not allowed.



### My Family Rules for Screen Time

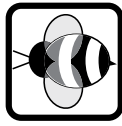


## Brainstorm/Buzz: Rewriting Commands/Requests

Rewrite the following ineffective commands into positive, clear, respectful commands.



Ineffective Commands	Rewrite
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shut up</li> <li>• Quit shouting</li> <li>• Stop running</li> <li>• Watch it</li> <li>• Why don't we go to bed?</li> <li>• Let's clean up the living room</li> <li>• Cut it out</li> <li>• What is your coat doing there?</li> <li>• Why are your shoes in the living room?</li> <li>• Don't shove salad in your mouth like a pig</li> <li>• Why is your bike still in the driveway?</li> <li>• You look like a mess</li> <li>• Stop bugging your sister</li> <li>• You are never ready</li> <li>• Your clothes are filthy</li> <li>• This room is a mess</li> <li>• Don't whine</li> <li>• You are impossible</li> <li>• Stop dawdling</li> <li>• Hurry up</li> <li>• Be quiet</li> <li>• Why are you riding on the road when you've been told not to?</li> </ul>	

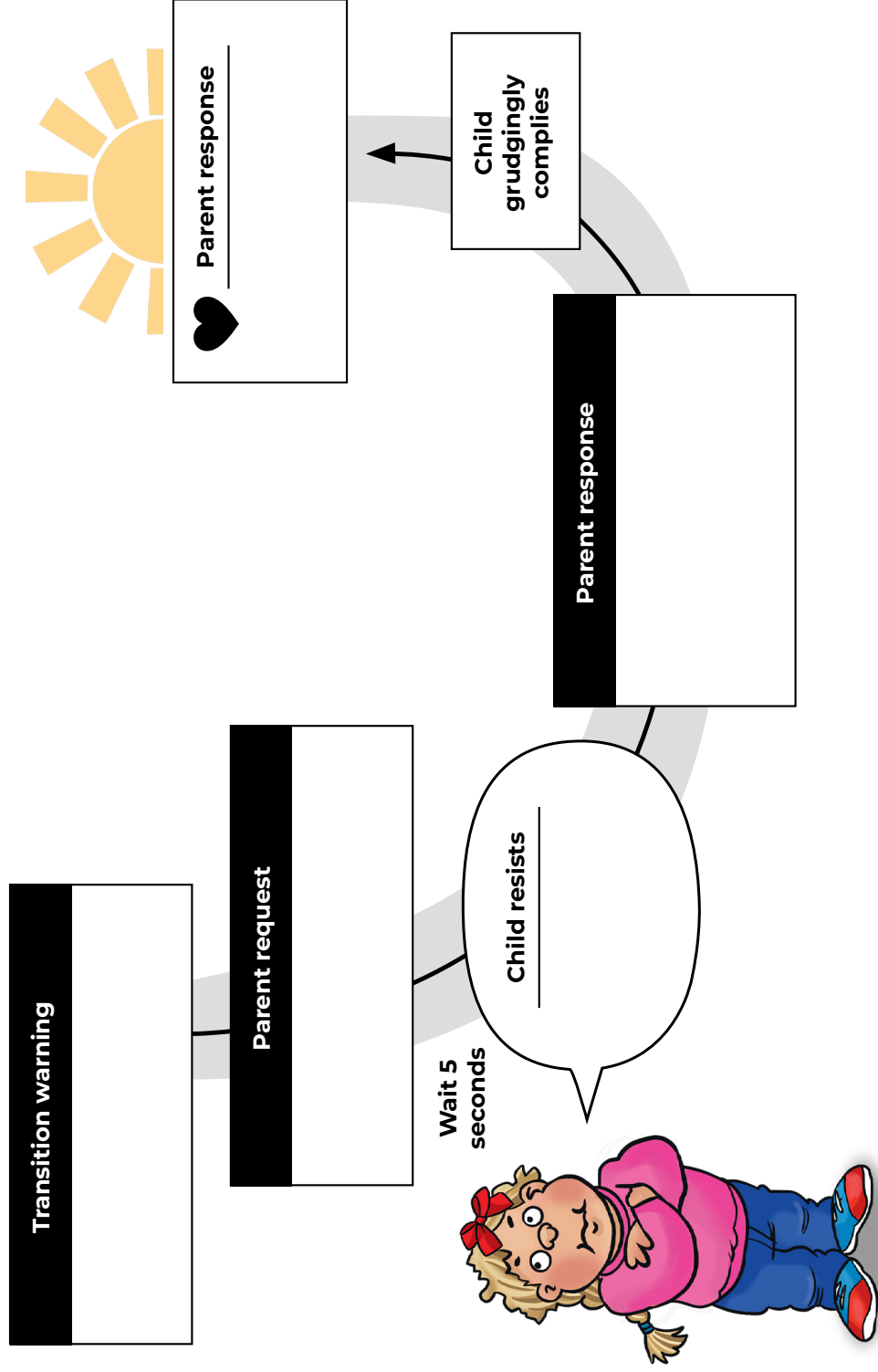


## Brainstorm/Buzz: Effective Limit Setting - How Would You Respond?

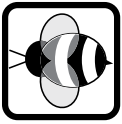
What could you say to your child for transition warning? How could you respond to the child's refusal and disrespectful attitude?



### Practice - Effective Limit Setting





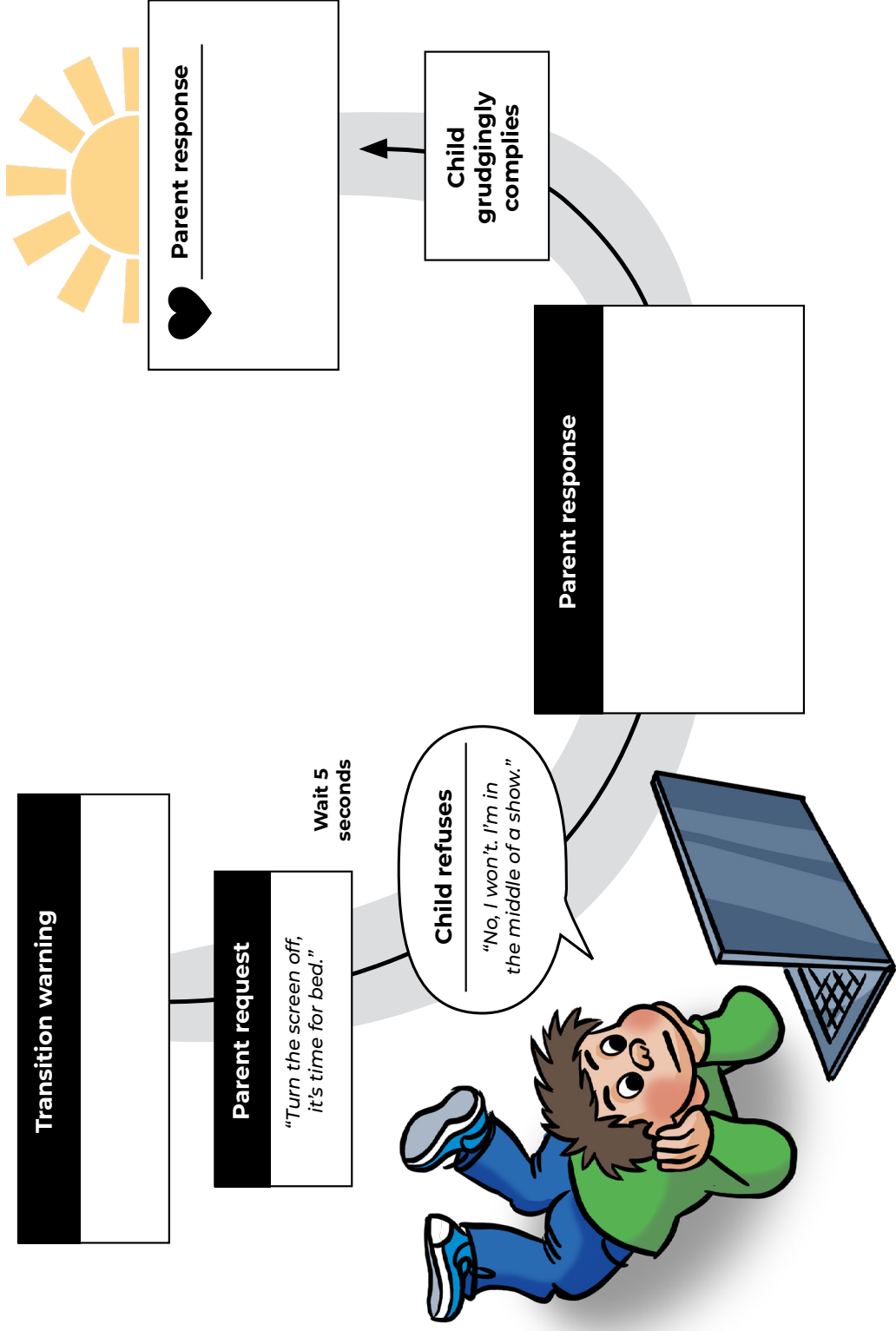


## Brainstorm/Buzz: How Could You Respond?

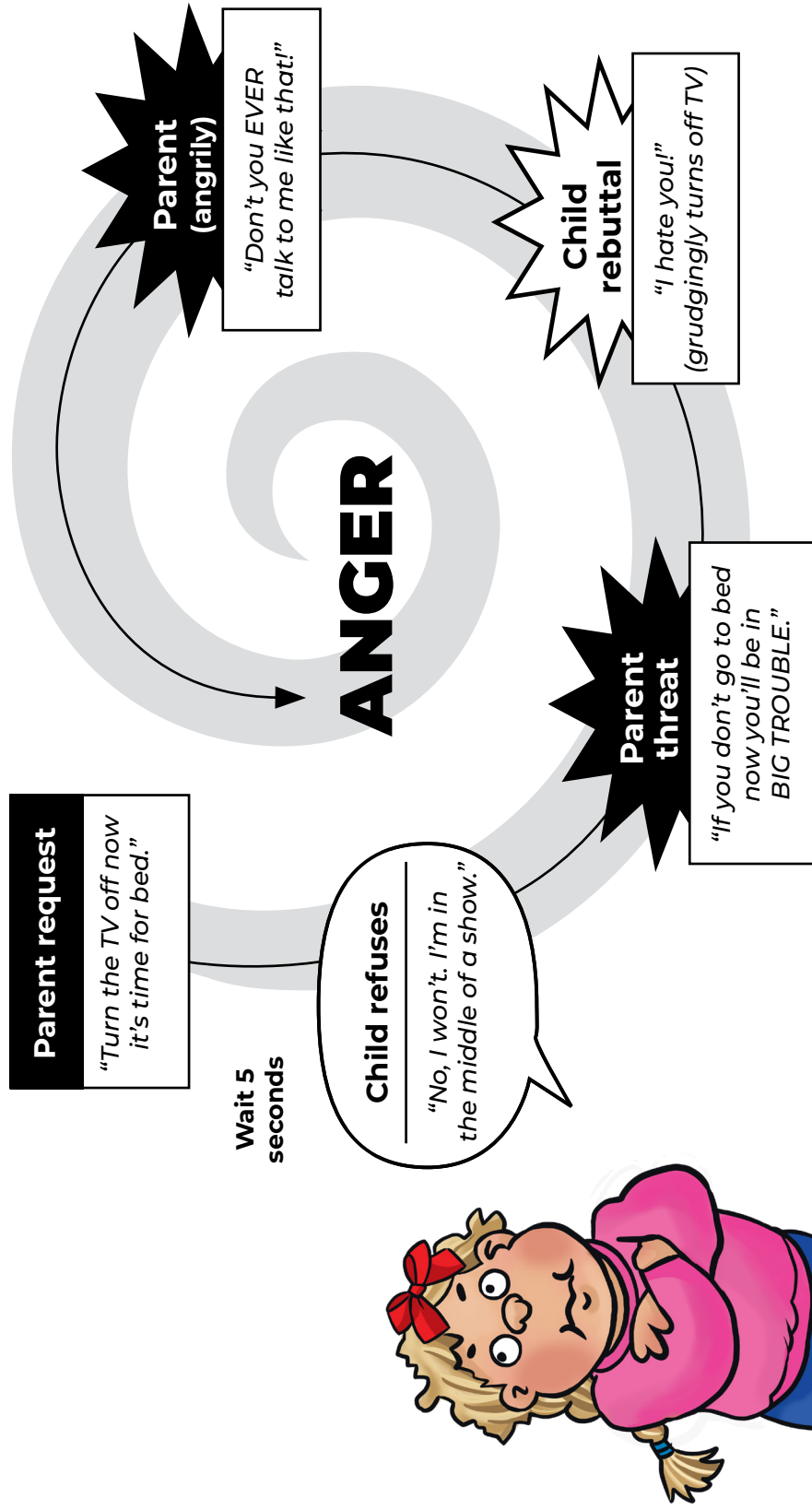
How could you respond to your child's resistance or challenging response to a limit you set?



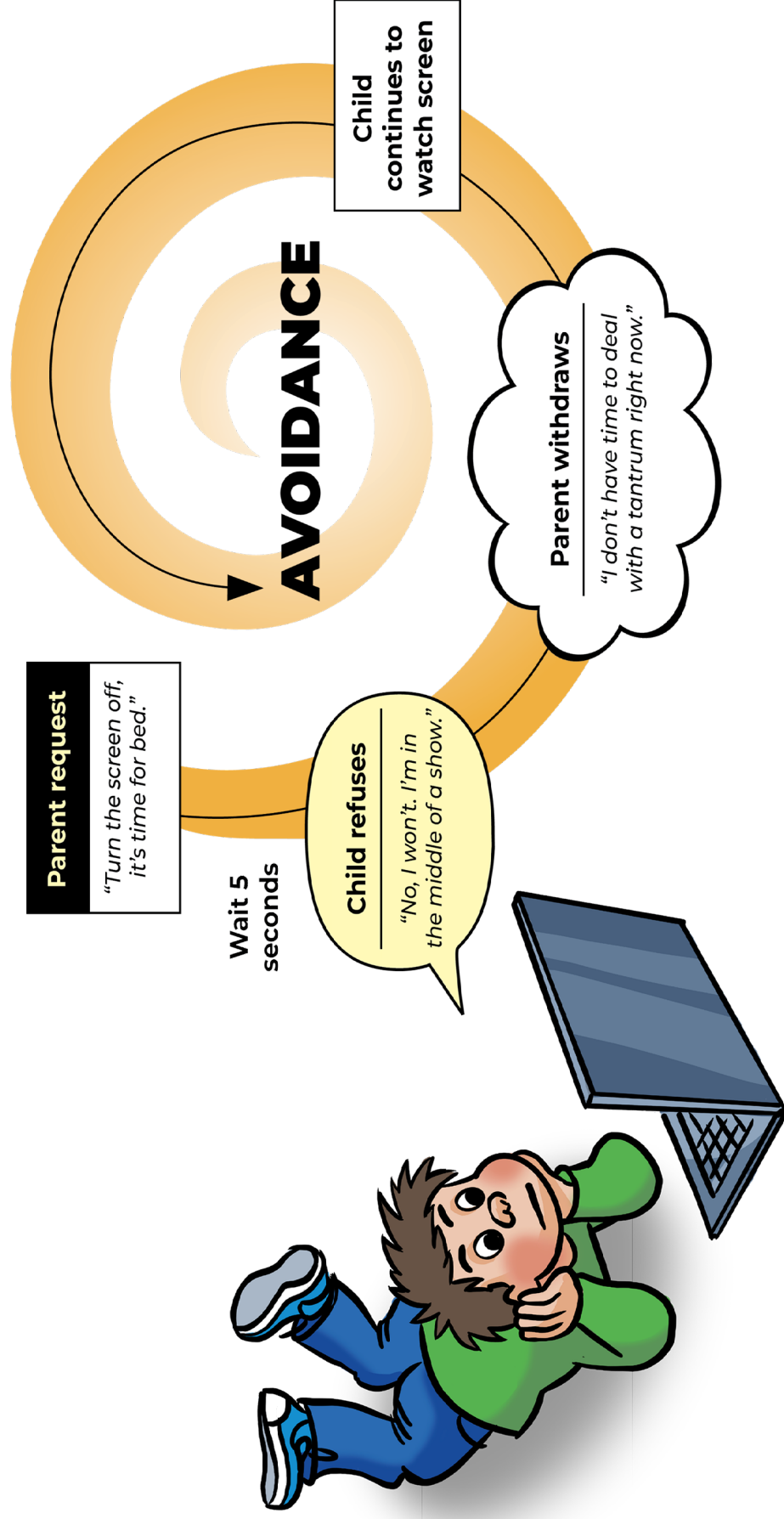
### Practice - How could you respond?



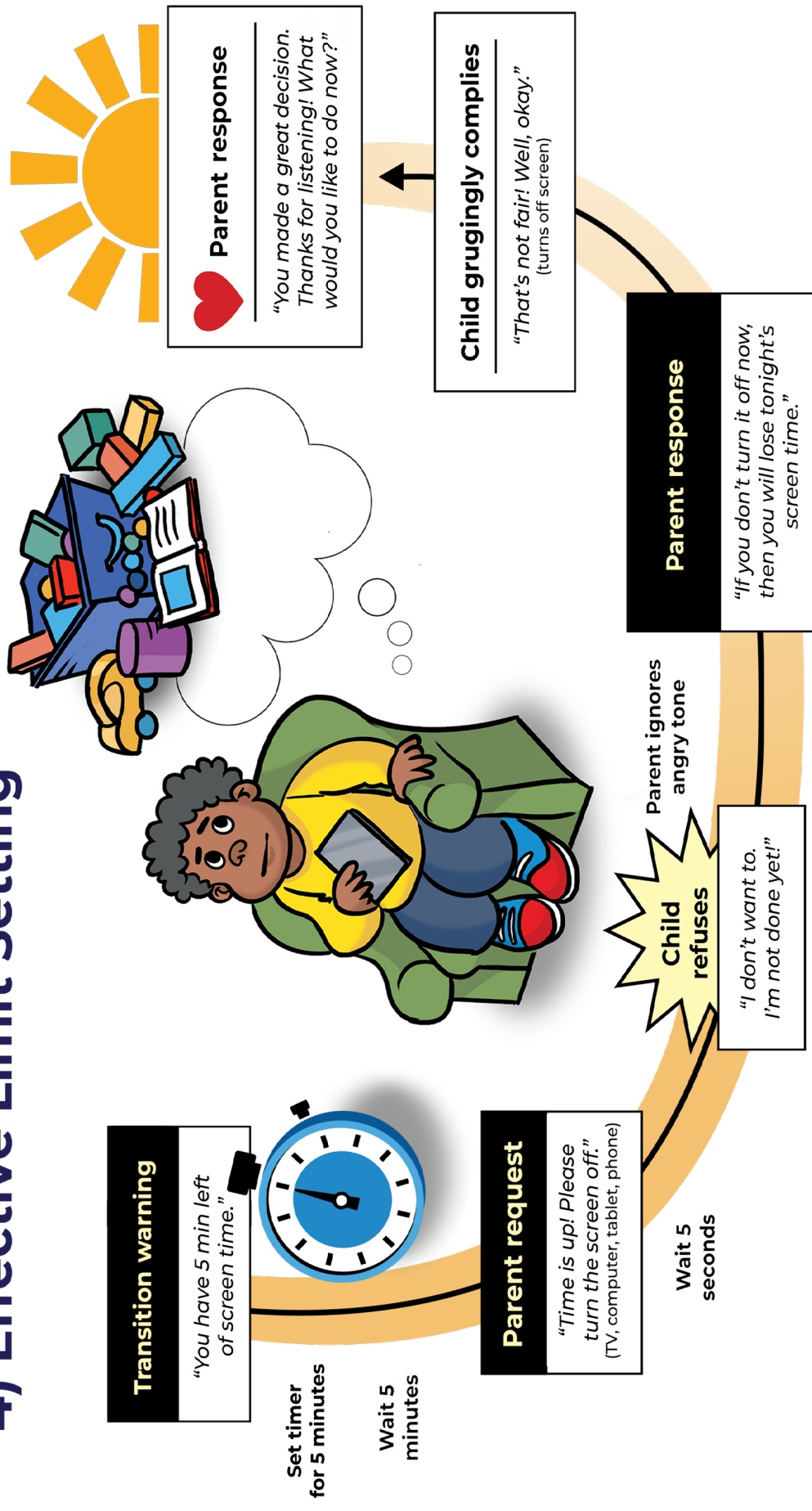
## 1) Ineffective Limit Setting: Anger Trap



## 2) Ineffective Limit Setting: Avoidance Trap



## 4) Effective Limit Setting

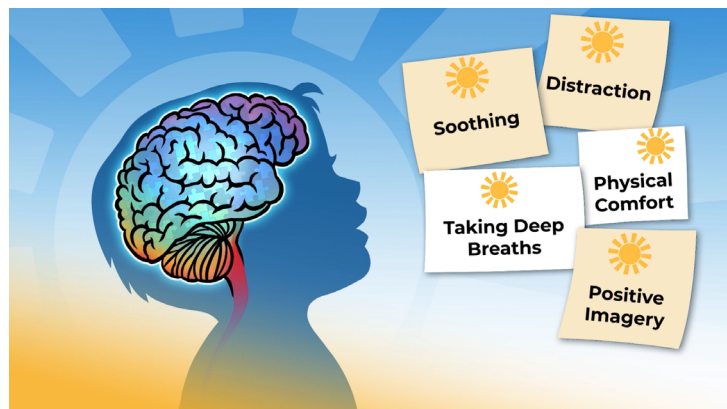


# Program Four: Preventing and Managing Misbehavior



## Part 1: Teaching Children Emotion Regulation Skills

### Refrigerator Notes and Handouts



These handouts are copyright Incredible Years® and may not be altered in any way (including translations) without express written permission from The Incredible Years®. Contact [incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com](mailto:incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com) for more information.

© 2025 The Incredible Years ®

\*\*\* ALL RIGHTS RESERVED \*\*\*

Copyright 1982, Revised 2001, 2008, 2014, 2019, 2025



## Part 1: Teaching Children Emotion Regulation Skills

### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK



#### To Do:

**SET UP A CALM DOWN PRACTICE.** Using a puppet, or Calm Down thermometer, or book, teach your child how to calm down with deep breathing, or positive self-talk, or positive imagery. (Record your approach on your record sheet & bring to next session.)

**MODEL A CALM DOWN METHOD.** Demonstrate calming down yourself in a frustrating situation with one the methods you have taught your child.

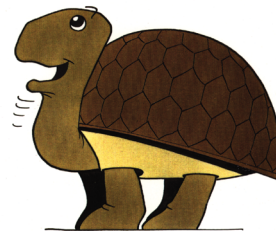
**PROMOTE EXERCISE.** Integrate exercise as a method to help your child calm down.

**CONNECT WITH** a group member to talk about your calm down approaches for yourself or your child.



#### To Read:

Handouts and review Chapter 12, *Helping Children Learn to Regulate their Emotions*, in **The Incredible Years** parent book or audiobook.





Home Activities



## RECORD SHEET:

### TEACHING EMOTION REGULATION WHEN CHILD IS CALM

Record times you taught your child a calm down skill when they are regulated. Write down any reaction you noticed in yourself or your child.

	Identify "Trigger" that Prompts Your Child's Dysregulation	Parent Approach	Child's Response	Parent Response
Example when child is calm	Use puppet or read story	Explore with child how puppet or child in story can calm down. Prompt & model deep breathing practice.	Coach and praise any effort child makes to show you a self-regulation strategy.	
Beginning Teaching				
Ongoing approach				

1. What have you noticed triggers your child's dysregulation? (e.g., being tired, not eating, not getting what they want, turning off the computer etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

2. What positive opposite behaviors are you working on giving positive attention to? (e.g., coaching times child is calm or able to wait, or persisting with something difficult and staying patient) \_\_\_\_\_







Home Activities



## RECORD SHEET:

### PROMPTING SELF-REGULATION WHEN CHILD IS DYSREGULATED

Record times you taught your child a calm down skill when they are dysregulating. Write down any reaction you noticed in yourself or your child.

	Identify "Trigger" that Prompts Your Child's Dysregulation	Parent Approach	Child's Response	Parent Response
Example when child is dysregulated	Child begins to scream when screen time ends.	Identifies child's feelings and prompts breathing or uses a puppet or distraction method.	Child calms down and parent praises effort to stay calm.	If child escalates dysregulation - ignore and give child time to calm down
Beginning Teaching				
Ongoing approach				

1. What have you noticed triggers your child's dysregulation? (e.g., being tired, not eating, not getting what they want, turning off the computer etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

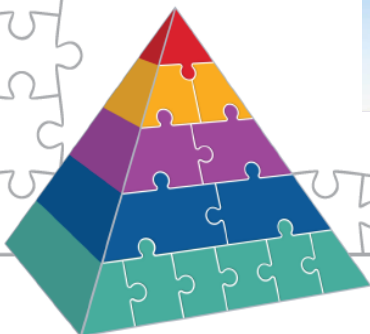
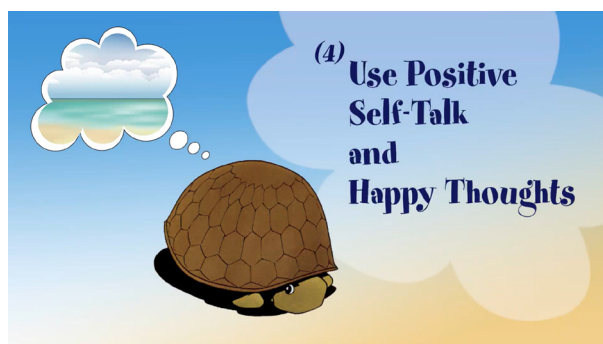
2. What positive opposite behaviors are you working on giving positive attention to? (e.g., coaching times child is calm or able to wait, or persisting with something difficult and staying patient) \_\_\_\_\_



## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### TEACHING CHILDREN SELF-REGULATION SKILLS

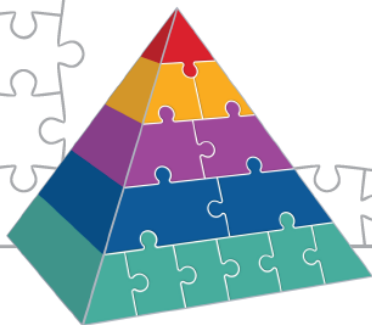
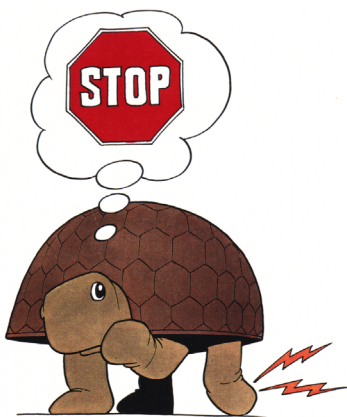
- Use emotion coaching to strengthen your child's emotion language.
- Use puppets, books and visuals to enhance your child's self-regulation learning and practice calm down breathing methods.
- Encourage your child to build memories of happy times and places through art, writing, and stories told.
- Teach your child how to use the Calm Down Thermometer and/or "turtle technique" for managing stress and anger as a way to self-regulate.
- Prompt your child when anxious, fearful or angry to use some positive coping self-talk such as, "I can do it", "I can calm down", Or, "I can wait and be patient."
- Encourage counting to 10, dancing, singing, taking a bath, giving and getting hugs or using favorite stuffie, rocking back and forth and some form of regular exercise as self-regulation activities.
- Model calm down strategies as an adult, such as taking deep breaths, or using the calm down thermometer, or taking a brief break or time away to exercise yourself.
- Promote child cuddles with stuffed animals.
- Give your child time and space to calm down. Save your coaching for times when your child is in a coachable window.
- Keep a balanced diet and regular mealtime, bedtime and exercise routines so your children are well nourished and not sleep deprived.



## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### MANAGING YOUR CHILDREN'S DYSREGULATION

- Stay patient, supportive and model calmness when your child is dysregulated. Remember calm voices lead to calmer children.
- Have realistic expectations remembering young children have less developed brains and are less able to regulate themselves; Don't punish dysregulated and disruptive behavior.
- Cue your child by saying, "Tell yourself to STOP, calm down, and take three big breaths."
- Encourage your child to use positive self-talk by saying, "Tell yourself, 'I can calm down; I can handle this,'" or "Everyone makes mistakes; with practice I can do it."
- Praise your child's self-control and appropriate expression of feelings whenever you notice it.
- Give your child time and space to calm down while staying nearby so your child is safe.
- Once your child is calm, reconnect with new learning, distractions and problem solving.

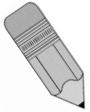





## Brainstorm/Buzz: Benefits and Barriers to Teaching Children Emotion Regulation



1. What are the possible benefits for teaching your child emotion regulation skills?
2. What are the barriers to helping your child learn emotion regulation skills?



Think about possible solutions to your barriers to teaching emotion regulation skills.

Benefits of Teaching Children Emotion Regulation Methods	Barriers or Difficulties in doing this
	
<p><b>Goal:</b></p> <p>I will commit to using books or puppets or breathing practices to teach my child how to calm down. I will have predictable bedtimes, meal times and exercise routines. I will work on using calm down methods for myself.</p>	

## Brainstorm/Buzz: Strategies for Staying Calm

Using the “Staying Calm” toolkit poster, pick some of the strategies and think about how you could use self-reward or praise, or forgiveness, or humor or challenge negative thoughts.

Write down the strategies you will try.



### Strategies for Staying Calm



### Goal:


I will commit to taking time to reduce my stress and staying calm through meditation, exercise, using positive self-talk, deep breathing, talking to a friend or doing something for myself.



## Brainstorm/Buzz: Strategies for Reducing Stress

Think of a strategy you can use to reduce your stress.



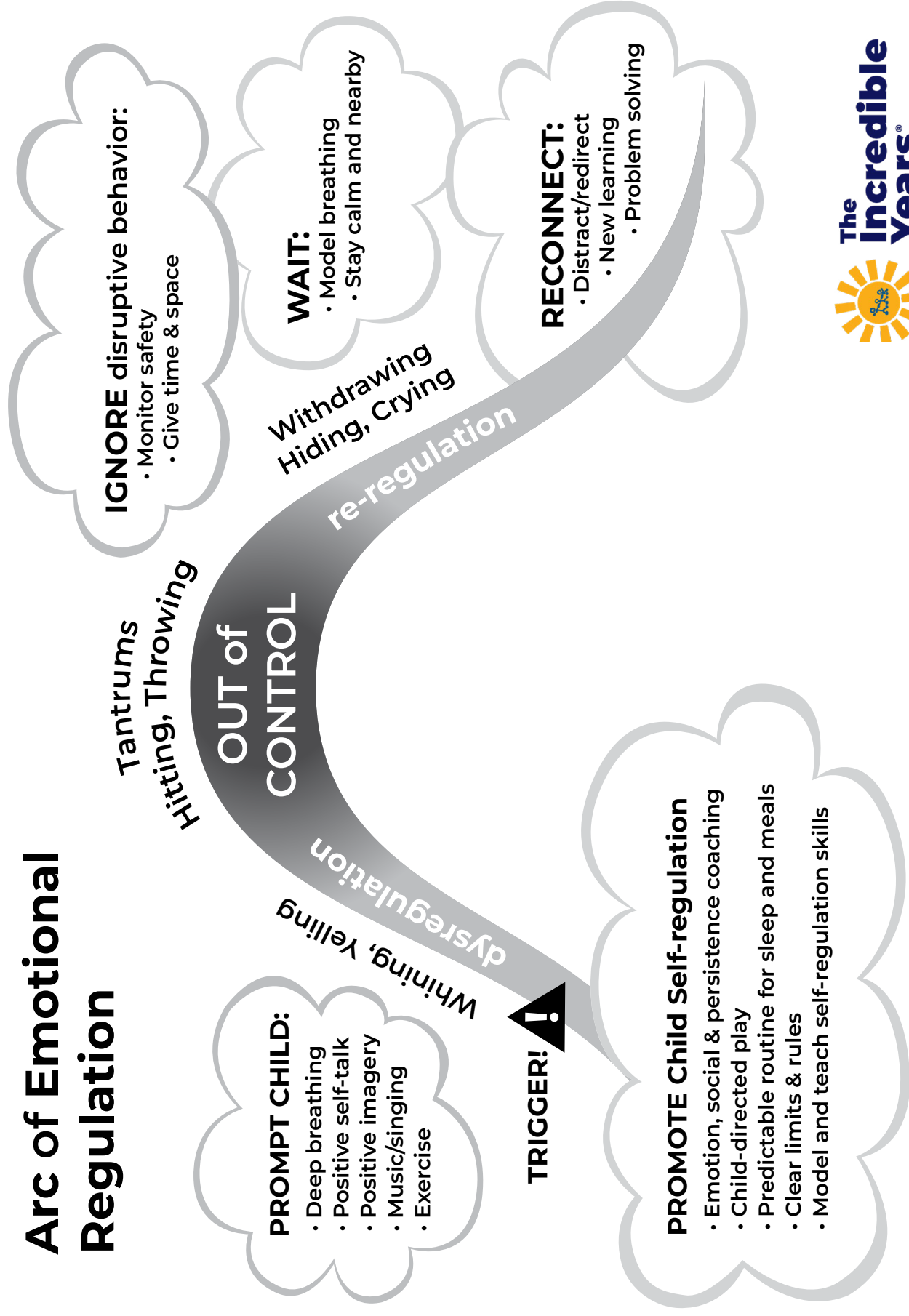
Examples	Your Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go for a walk</li> <li>• Listen to calming music</li> <li>• Take slow deep breaths</li> <li>• Positive self-talk</li> <li>• Visualize peaceful place or situation</li> <li>• Exercise workout</li> <li>• Tense and relax your muscles</li> <li>• Engage in Mindfulness</li> <li>• Get enough sleep</li> <li>• Eat healthy</li> <li>• Journal your thoughts</li> <li>• Drink water</li> <li>• Watch a funny video</li> <li>• Do a puzzle</li> <li>• Sing</li> <li>• Seek support</li> <li>• Do something fun for yourself</li> <li>• Read</li> <li>• Think of what you are grateful for</li> </ul>	

**Practice:**

**Connect Positive Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviors**

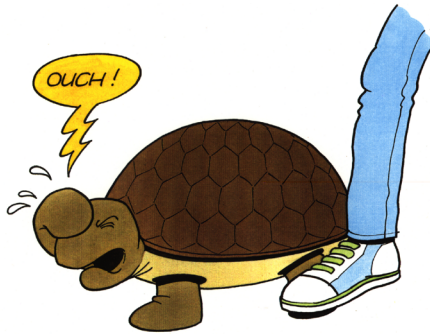


# Arc of Emotional Regulation

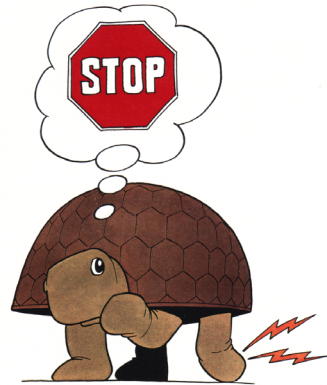




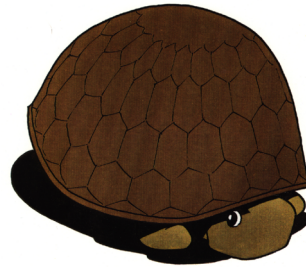
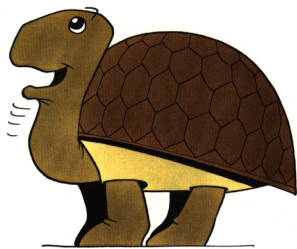
# Tiny Turtle's Anger Management Steps



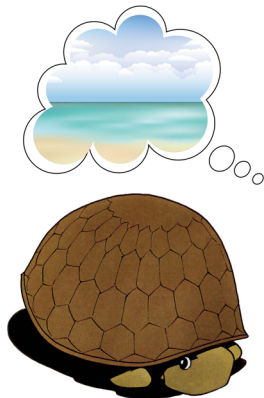
**Step 1:** Recognize the uncomfortable feeling.



**Step 2:** Think, "Stop."



**Step 3:** Take slow deep breaths and withdraw into an imaginary shell.



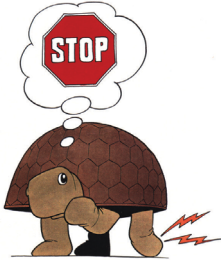
**Step 4:** Use positive self-talk and happy thoughts.



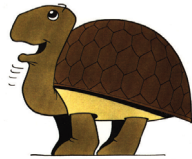
**Step 5:** When calm, come out and try again to solve the problem

# Calm Down Thermometer

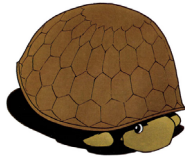
I can do it. I can calm down.



Think "Stop"



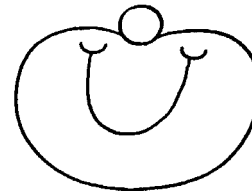
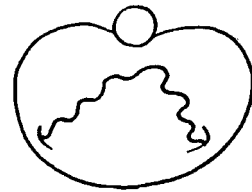
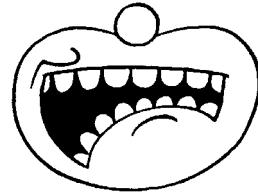
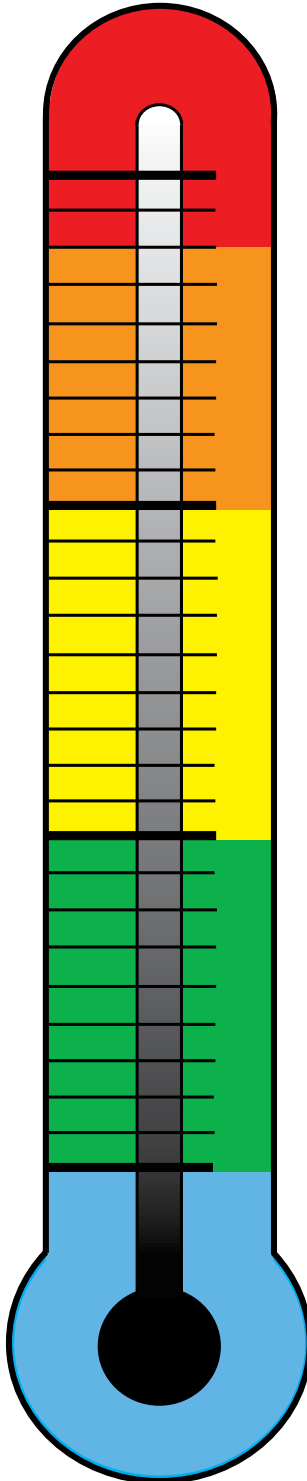
Take 3 deep  
breaths

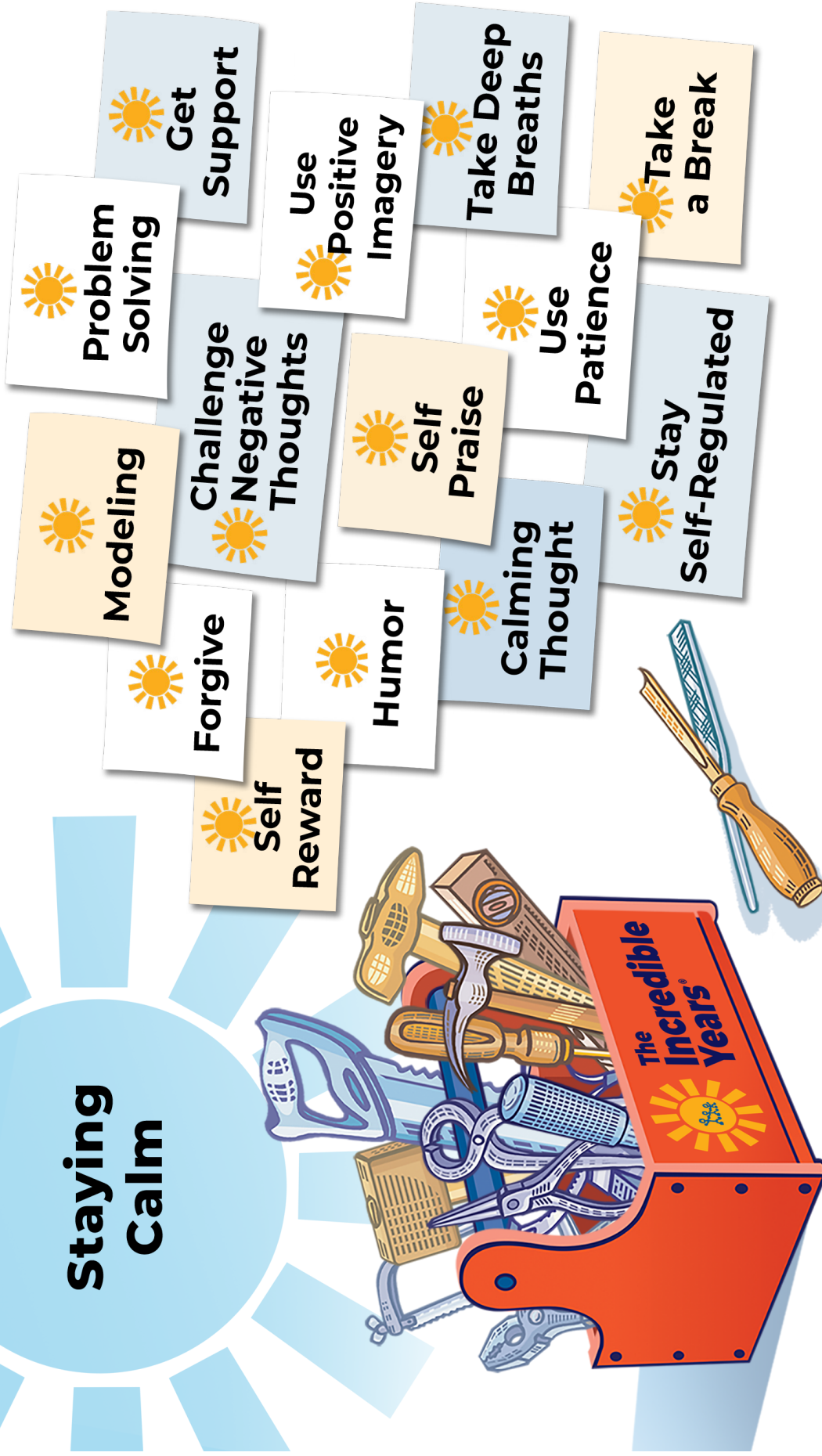


Think happy  
thoughts



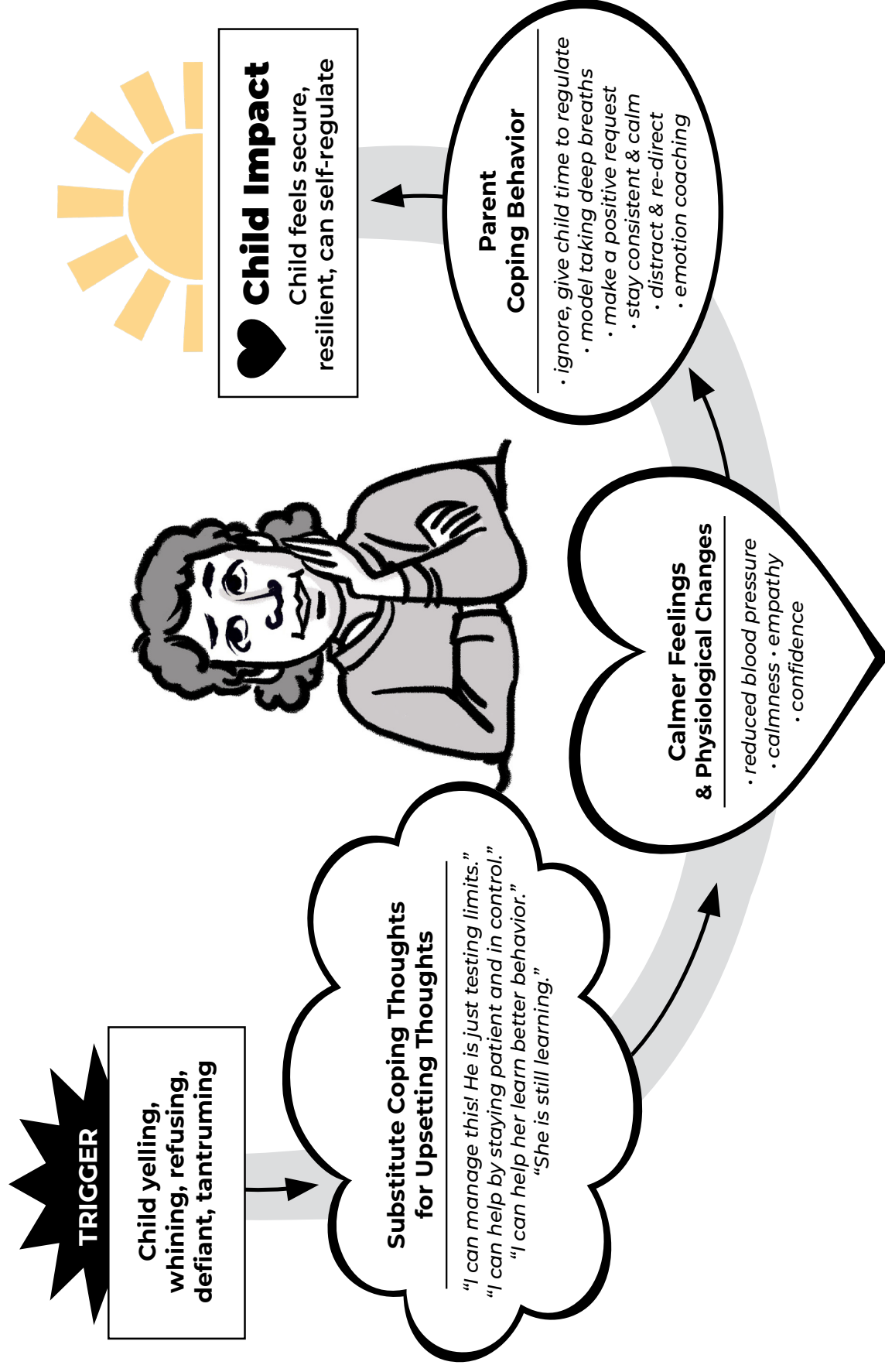
Stay cool





# Coping Cycle:

## Connect Positive Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviors



# Self-Talk Thermometer



## Thoughts

I'm so mad I could hurt...  
S/he deserves to be...  
S/he is no good/rotten.  
What did I do to deserve...  
It's not my fault; it's his/hers.  
S/he's just like...  
I was never like this.  
I think s/he'll end up in jail.  
I don't have time to deal with this.  
I'm a bad parent (partner). I'm hopeless  
Why me? This is too stressful.

It's not working to stay calm.  
It's useless...  
There's no point in doing anything for  
them. It never helps.  
No matter what I do, nothing changes.  
S/he just throws it back at me.  
I deserve this for what I did when...

My parents told me I was...(a criticism)  
What's going to happen when s/he's a  
teenager?  
I'm getting stressed; I need to take a personal  
Time Out.  
Maybe this is too much for me to handle.  
Maybe I'm not a good parent/spouse.  
I'm not sure I can do this.

When change occurs, it's supposed to get  
worse before it gets better.  
I can make a difference to our future.  
Stress is a normal part of any relationship.  
This stage won't last forever. Things will get  
better.  
I can handle this; I can control my anger.  
I can teach him to...  
Problems occur so we can all learn to manage  
conflict.  
I can talk to him about...and come up with  
some solutions.  
We'll manage; we all need learning trials.  
Everyone makes mistakes.  
I can help by...  
His/her positive qualities are...  
I'm a caring parent/partner, and I'm trying by...  
I stay calm most of the time.  
I enjoy being with them, especially when we...  
I love (appreciate)...

## Feelings

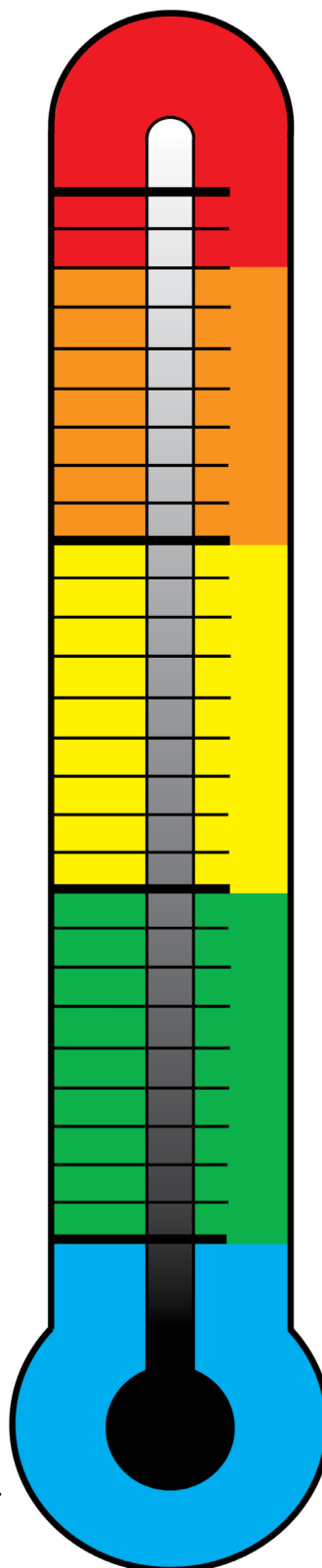
Furious  
Contemptuous  
Angry

Defensive  
Guilt  
Withdrawn  
Frustrated  
Depression

Irritated  
Anxious  
Worried

Alert/Interested  
Receptive/Open to  
influence/Flexible  
Calm

Happy  
Confident  
Content  
Loving/  
Affectionate



# Physiological Signs Thermometer

## Feelings

Furious  
Contemptuous  
Angry

Defensive  
Guilt  
Withdrawn  
Frustrated  
Depression

Irritated  
Anxious  
Worried

Alert/Interested  
Receptive/Open to  
influence/Flexible  
Calm  
Happy  
Confident  
Content  
Loving/  
Affectionate

## Physiological Signs

Heart racing  
Neck muscles tight  
Chest Tight  
Clenched fists  
Teeth clenched  
Headache

Shallow rapid breathing  
Increased perspiration  
Muscles tense

Pacing  
Headache developing

## Behaviors

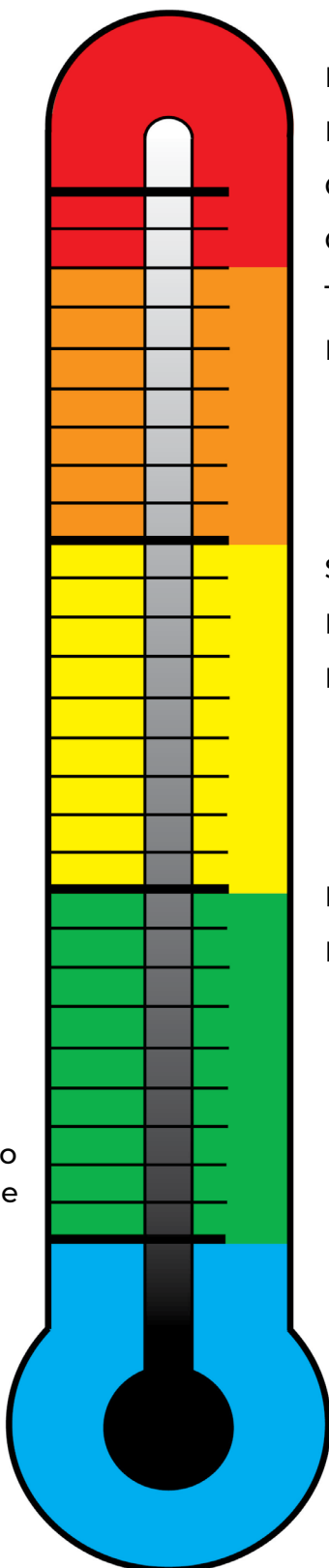
Yelling  
Hitting

Threatening  
Withdrawing  
Stonewalling

Criticizing

Difficulty listening  
Thinking narrow  
Less open to new  
ideas

Calm  
Pleasant  
Able to problem-solve  
Able to listen



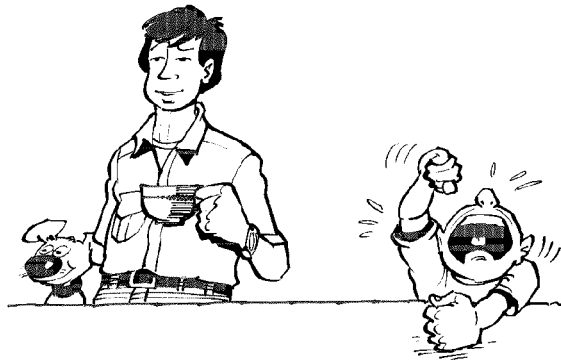


# **Program Four: Preventing and Managing Misbehavior**



## **Part 2: Ignore, Distract and Redirect**

### **Refrigerator Notes and Handouts**



These handouts are copyright Incredible Years® and may not be altered in any way (including translations) without express written permission from The Incredible Years®. Contact [incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com](mailto:incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com) for more information.

© 2025 The Incredible Years ®

\*\*\* ALL RIGHTS RESERVED \*\*\*

Copyright 1982, Revised 2001, 2008, 2014, 2019, 2025





## Part 2: Ignore, Distract and Redirect

### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK



#### To Do:

**ON THE BEHAVIOR RECORD HANDOUT**, review the list of the behaviors you want to see more of and less of.

**SELECT** one challenging behavior you plan to ignore while giving attention and praise to its positive opposite behavior. Share with other adults in the family.

**PRACTICE USING COPING THOUGHTS WHEN IGNORING.**

**WAIT FOR YOUR CHILD TO CALM DOWN & THEN USE A DISTRACTION OR REDIRECTION.**

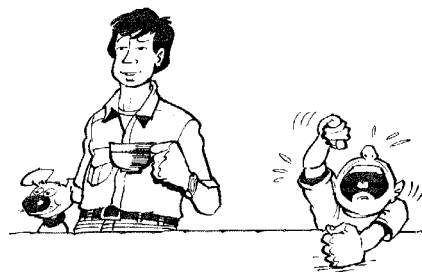
**PRAISE** your child for complying with commands /requests or instructions.

**CONNECT WITH YOUR BUDDY** from the group and share ideas about using Ignore, distractions and redirections.



#### To Read:

Handouts and Chapter 8, *Ignore*, & Chapter 14, *Controlling Upsetting Thoughts* in **The Incredible Years** parent book or audiobook.



***Remember to continue playing and giving positive attention to “positive opposite” behaviors!***



**The Incredible Years**

Home Activities

## RECORD SHEET: IGNORE, DISTRACT, REDIRECT AND PRAISE



2

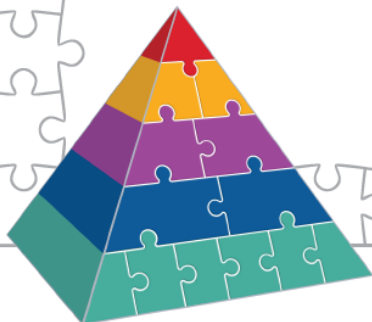
Record the negative or challenging behavior you will ignore this week and the positive opposite behavior you will praise instead, and your child's response.

Date	Behavior Ignored e.g. Yelling	Positive Opposite Behavior Praised e.g. Asking for what they want with friendly voice	Child's Response
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### ABOUT IGNORING, DISTRACTING AND REDIRECTING

- Avoid eye contact and discussion while ignoring.
- Physically move away from your child but stay in the room so child is safe & you can return your positive attention.
- Be subtle in the way you ignore.
- Be prepared for your child's testing when first starting to ignore target behavior.
- Be consistent and patient.
- Return your attention as soon as child is re-regulated and focus on child's positive opposite behavior with your positive attention.
- Use distractions and redirections when child is more regulated.
- Choose only 1-2 specific child misbehaviors to ignore at first and make sure they are ones you can ignore.
- Try to regulate your own mood and stay calm and patient when ignoring.





## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### PARENTS LEARNING COGNITIVE SELF-CONTROL

Many family members find that in stressful situations they cannot maintain their self-control. Others report they suffer from chronic anger, anxiety or depression, and they are easily set off by the slightest event. However, when parents allow themselves to become so overwhelmed that they overreact, the consequences can be unfortunate. Parents may say or do something they will regret. After they calm down, they may feel guilty and avoid dealing with the child for fear of repeating the episode. It is frightening and anxiety-provoking for a child to see a parent lose control. Also, the child learns to imitate these aggressive behaviors in other situations. These cycles of parental overreaction and avoidance make it difficult to deal with the child in a consistent manner. The best approach is to achieve a middle ground—not be so overwhelmed that you can't respond or so upset that you overreact.

#### Upsetting & Negative Thoughts

"My child is impossible. This is getting worse. He'll never change."

"Nothing I am doing is working."

"He's just like...."

"I can't handle it when...."

"My child never listens."

"I don't think I can do this."

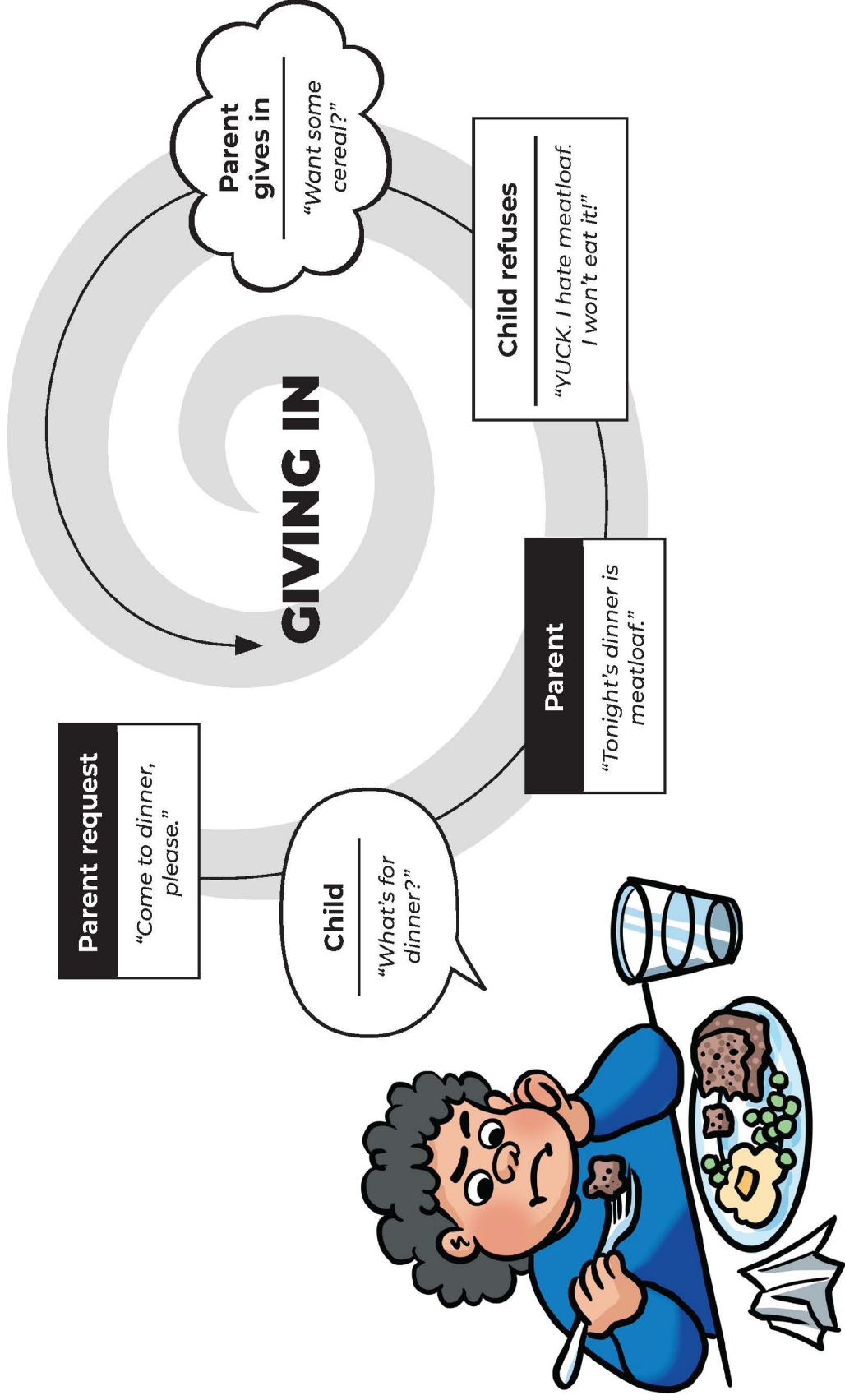
"My child hates me and likes to see me upset."

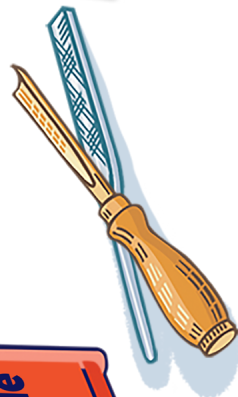
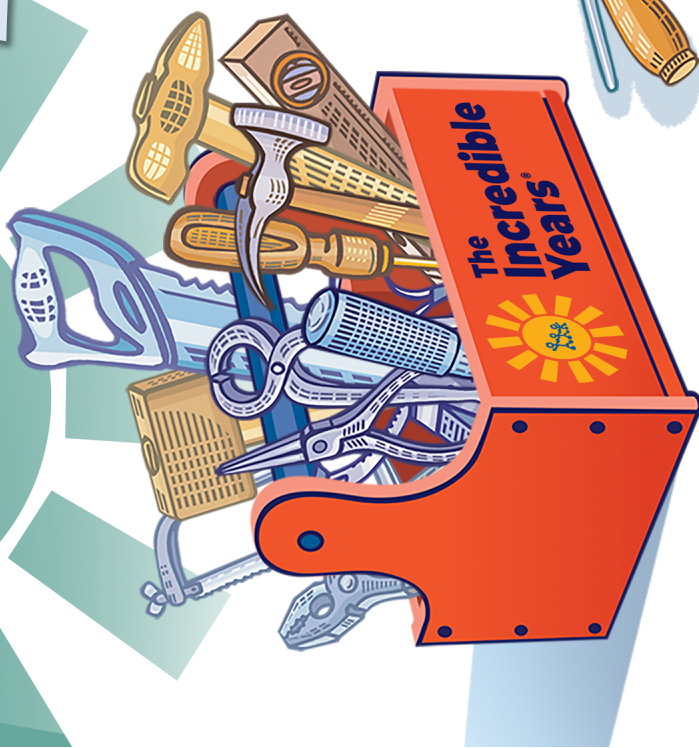
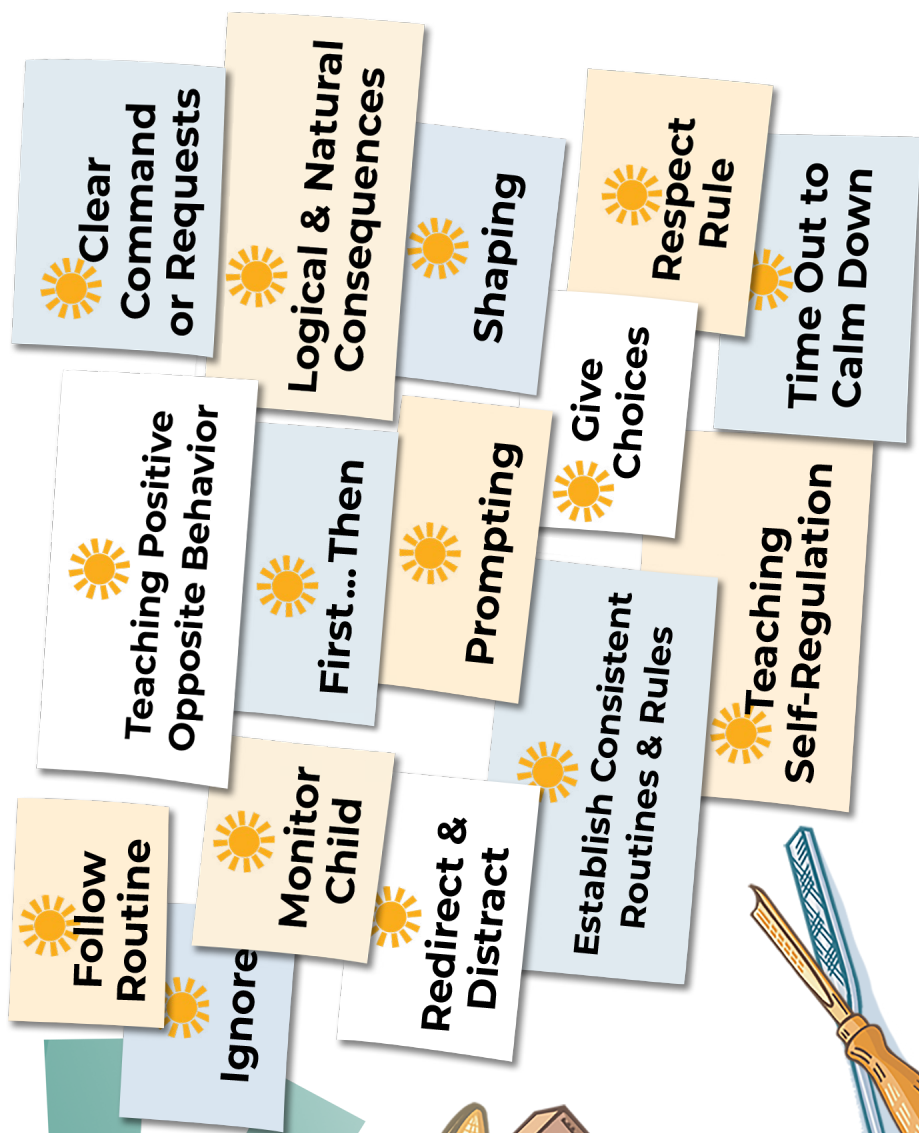
#### Calming Thoughts

"My child is testing to see if he can have his own way. My job is to stay calm and help him learn better ways to behave."

"I can handle this. I am in control. He has just learned some powerful ways to get control. I will teach him more appropriate ways to behave."

## Ineffective Limit Setting: Giving In Trap








## Brainstorm/Buzz: Target Behaviors

*Praise “Positive Opposites”*

Behaviors I want to see less of: (e.g., yelling)	Positive opposite behavior I want to see more of: (e.g., polite voice)
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
	



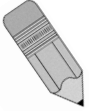




## Brainstorm/Buzz: Ways for Parents to Stay Calm



When you first start ignoring misbehavior, the behavior will get worse before it gets better. It is important to be prepared to wait out this challenging period. If you give into the oppositional and challenging behavior, this behavior will be reinforced and your child will learn that by protesting loudly, they can get their own way.



It is important to stay calm while ignoring. Try to think ahead and brainstorm ways to remain calm when ignoring misbehavior. Write your ideas below.

*relaxation techniques*  
*deep breaths*  
*positive thoughts*  
*turn on some music*



*Remember, all young children argue and protest to get what they want. This is not personal, but a reflection of their strive to be independent and to test the rules.*

**Goal:** I will commit to tell myself the following \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

when my child protests.



## Brainstorm/Buzz: Behaviors to Ignore

Behaviors such as pouting, sulking, screaming, swearing, tantruming and arguing are good candidates for ignoring. These behaviors are annoying, but they never really seem to hurt anyone, and the behaviors will disappear if they are systematically ignored. The ignoring technique should not be used, however, with behaviors that could lead to physical injury, property damage, or intolerable disruption of an ongoing activity.

Ignoring is one of the most effective strategies you can use to reduce children's challenging behaviors.



### ***Child Behaviors I Will Ignore***

*e.g., whining*

*tantrums*



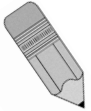
**Goal:** I will commit to ignoring \_\_\_\_\_

behavior whenever it occurs. I will praise \_\_\_\_\_

behavior, the positive opposite of the challenging behavior I am ignoring.



## Brainstorm/Buzz: Using Selective Ignoring



Sometimes, children will show positive and negative behaviors during the same activity. For example, a child might follow directions (positive behavior) while whining or rolling their eyes (negative attitude). Selective ignoring is a technique where a parent praises or rewards the part of the behavior that is positive while ignoring the negative behavior. For example, a parent might praise the child for following directions, and pay no attention to the whining or negative attitude. This way, children learn that they will receive positive attention for some behaviors, but will not receive attention for other behavior (e.g., arguing).

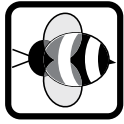
Think about some situations where this kind of selective ignoring could be effective.

### ***When Would Selective Ignoring be Effective?***

*e.g., when my child is following directions but giving me "attitude" at the same time, I will praise their compliance and ignore their attitude.*



**Goal:** I will commit to praising \_\_\_\_\_  
behavior while ignoring \_\_\_\_\_  
behavior.

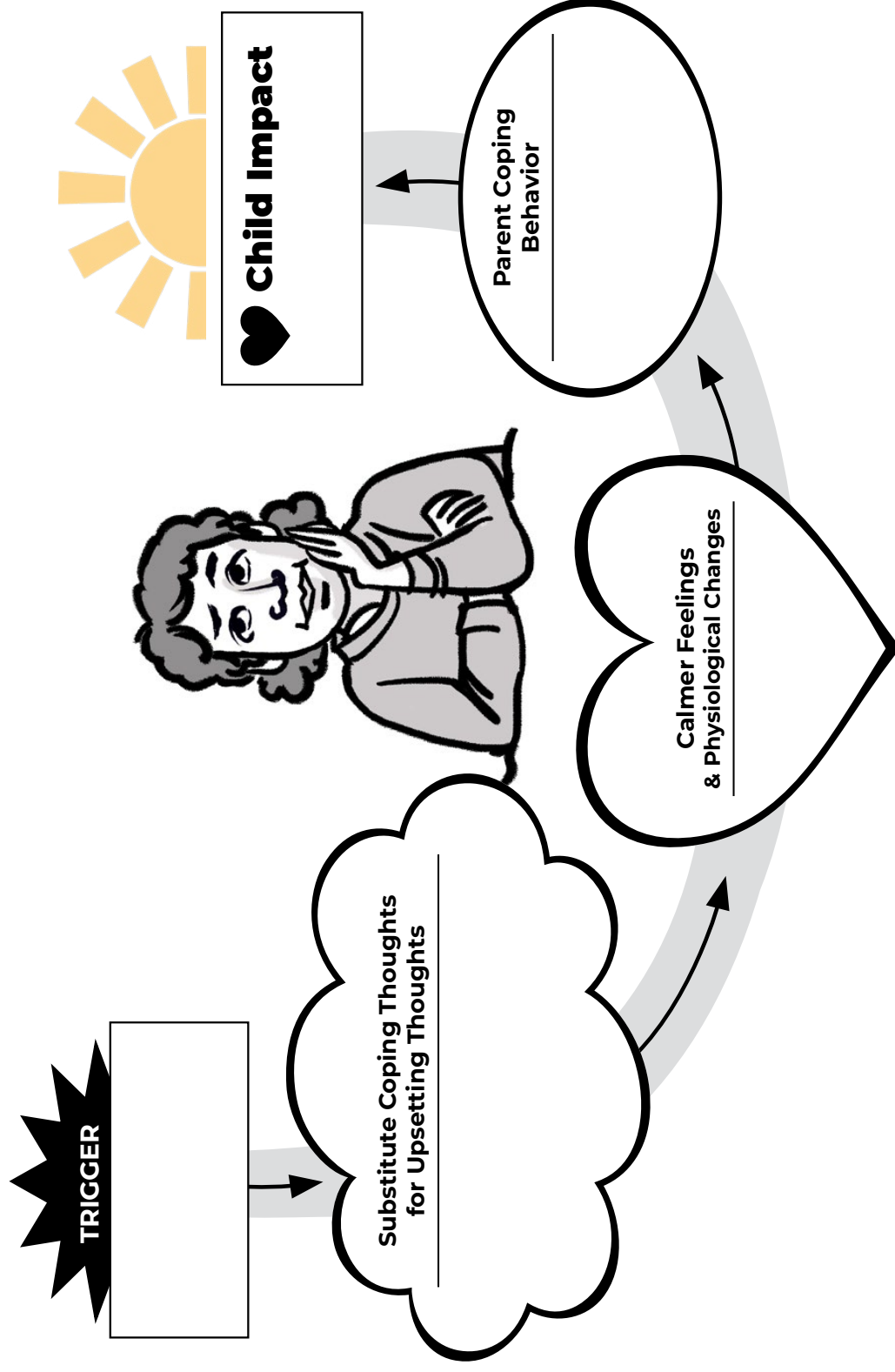


## Brainstorm/Buzz: Connect Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviors

How could you replace negative thoughts with positive coping thoughts in order to stay calm, patient and positive in your parenting approach?

### Practice:

### Connect Positive Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviors





## **Brainstorm/Buzz: Self-Talk and Positive Thoughts to Use in Problem Situations**

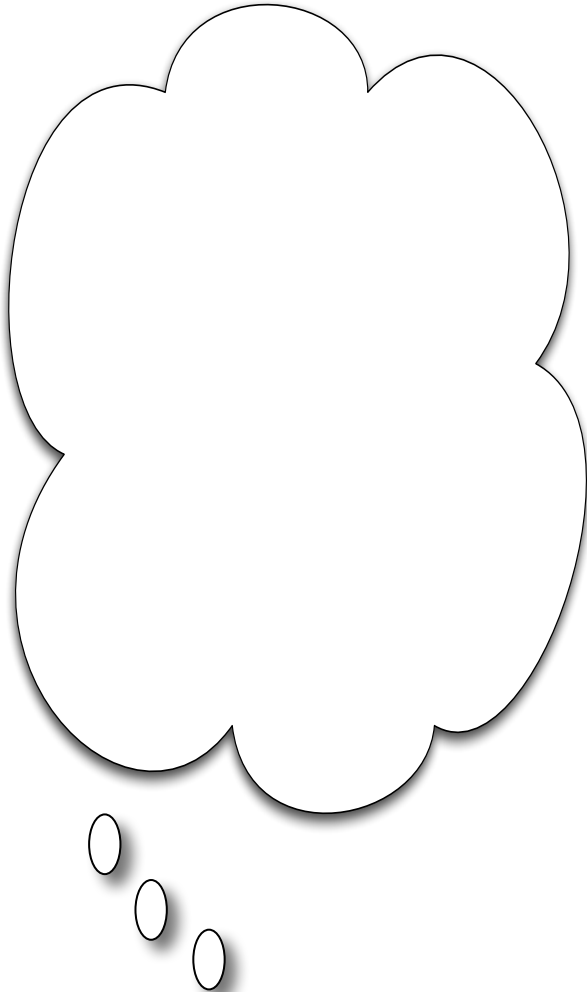


Identify a problem situation and the upsetting or negative thoughts you have at the time. Write down some alternative calming or coping thoughts that you might use to redefine the situation. Next time you find yourself using negative self-talk, give yourself some time to think positively, to feel calmer and consider the alternative parenting tools available to you for dealing with the situation.

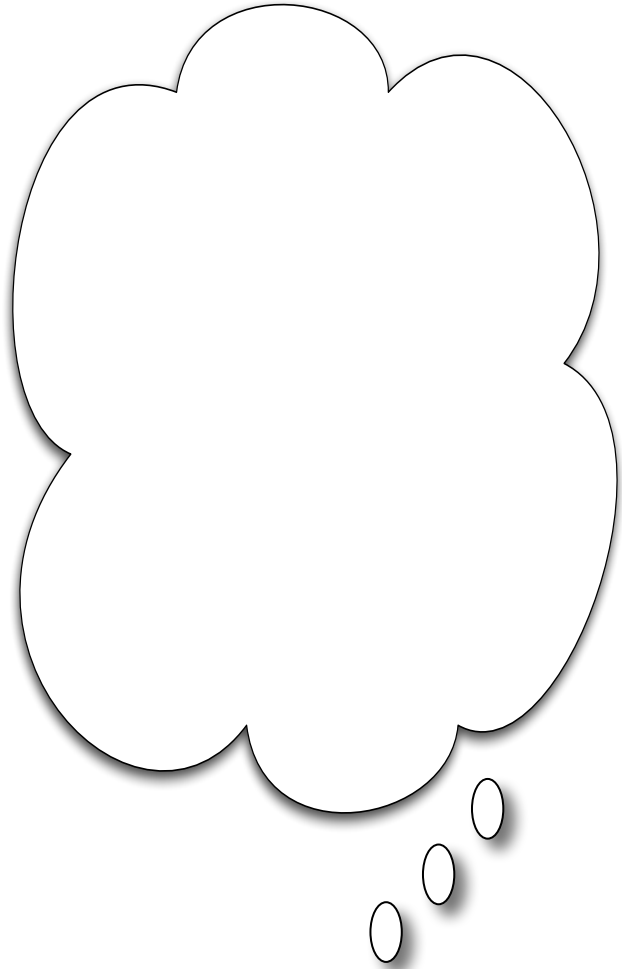


Problem Situation: \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Upsetting Thoughts***



### ***Calming Thoughts***



## Brainstorm/Buzz: Coping Statements

*Write your own positive coping statements  
and practice them during the week.*



*"I can stay calm."*



## Brainstorm/Buzz: Staying Calm & Managing Anger with Positive Thoughts



Rewrite the following negative self-talk with positive coping thoughts.




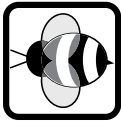
Negative Self-Talk	Positive Coping Thoughts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can't stand this—it's too hard!</li> <li>• I don't know what to do.</li> <li>• Ignoring will never work.</li> <li>• I am losing control and will explode soon.</li> <li>• I am going to hit her just like my mom did to me.</li> <li>• It's awful to let him disrespect me. It's not good to look weak in front of my child.</li> <li>• I hate being disrespected.</li> <li>• She will never change.</li> <li>• I can't let him challenge my authority.</li> <li>• He hurt me so I should hurt him.</li> <li>• I don't like him when he's like this.</li> </ul>	

## Brainstorm/Buzz: Staying Calm & Managing Anger

*Continued from previous page*



Negative Self-Talk	Positive Coping Thoughts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The neighbors will complain if I don't get this stopped.</li> <li>• She will never stop whining.</li> <li>• A little more force on my part will stop her.</li> <li>• That brat knows how much this bugs me—he's doing it on purpose.</li> <li>• I'm an inept parent—should never have had children.</li> <li>• I can't let her get away with that.</li> <li>• It's all his dad's (or mom's) fault.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Goal:</b> I will commit to stopping and challenging my negative self-talk and working on practicing using coping and positive self-talk as well as giving myself time to calm down.</p>	

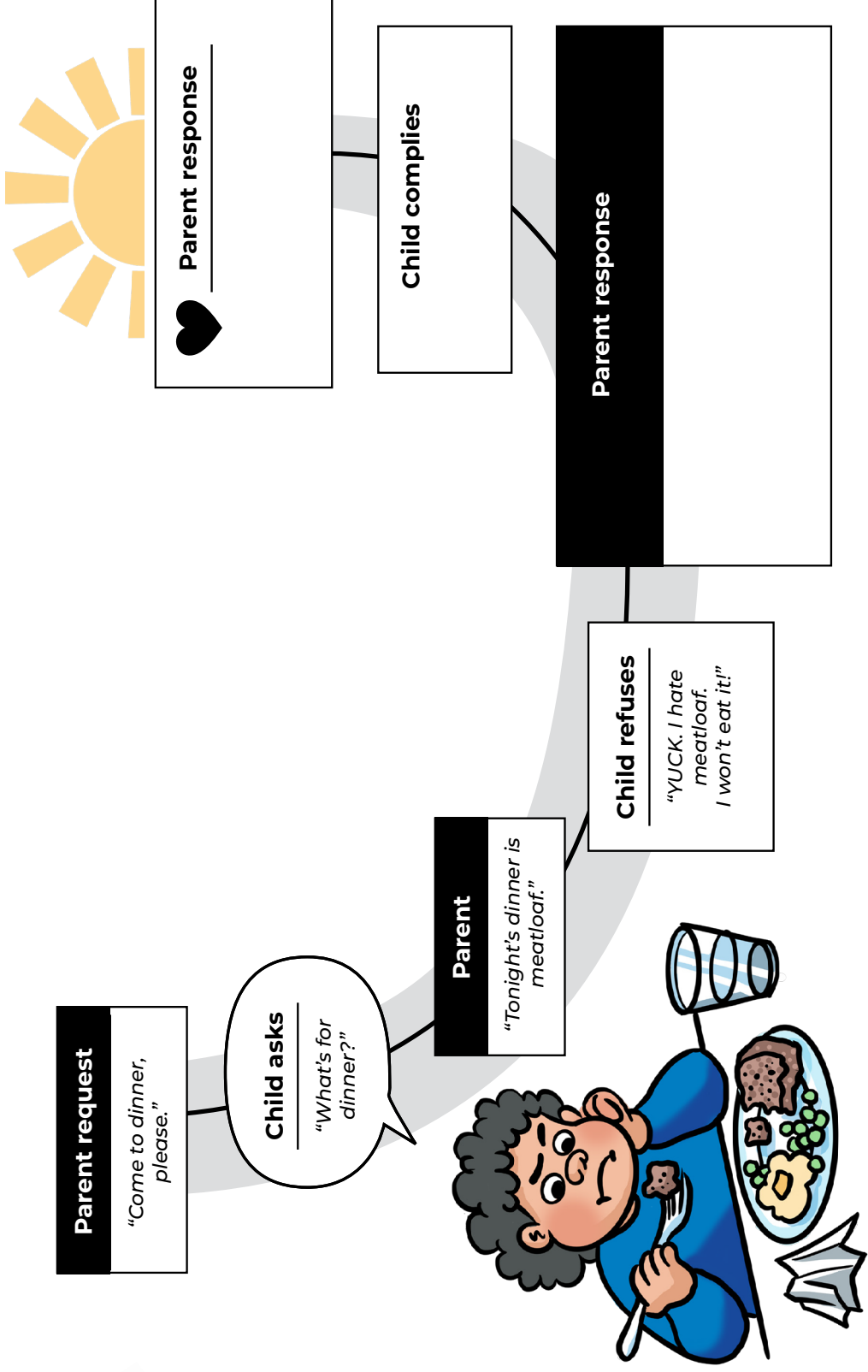


## Brainstorm/Buzz: How Could You Respond?

How could you respond to your child's rejection or refusal of food at mealtime?

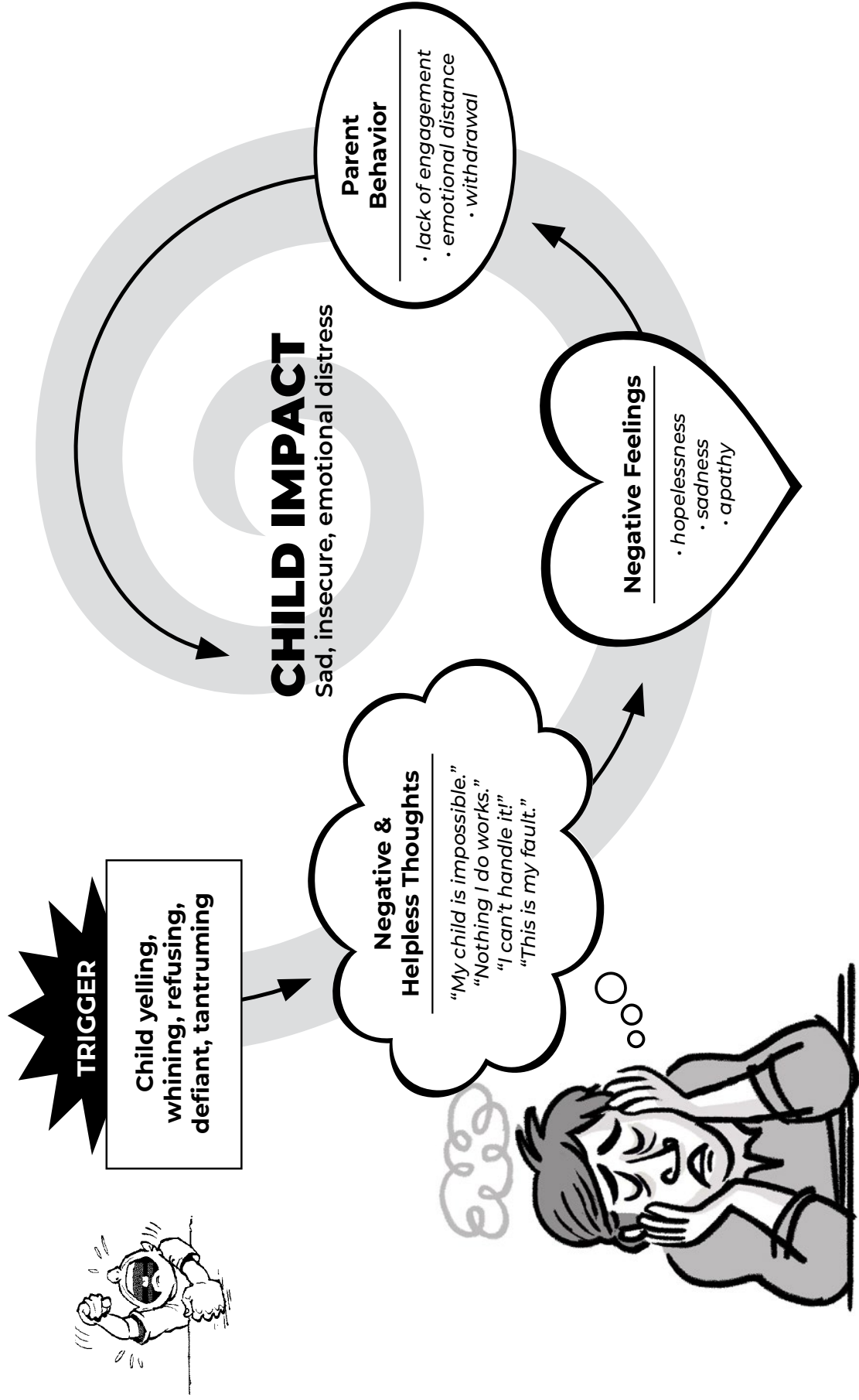


## Practice - How could you respond?

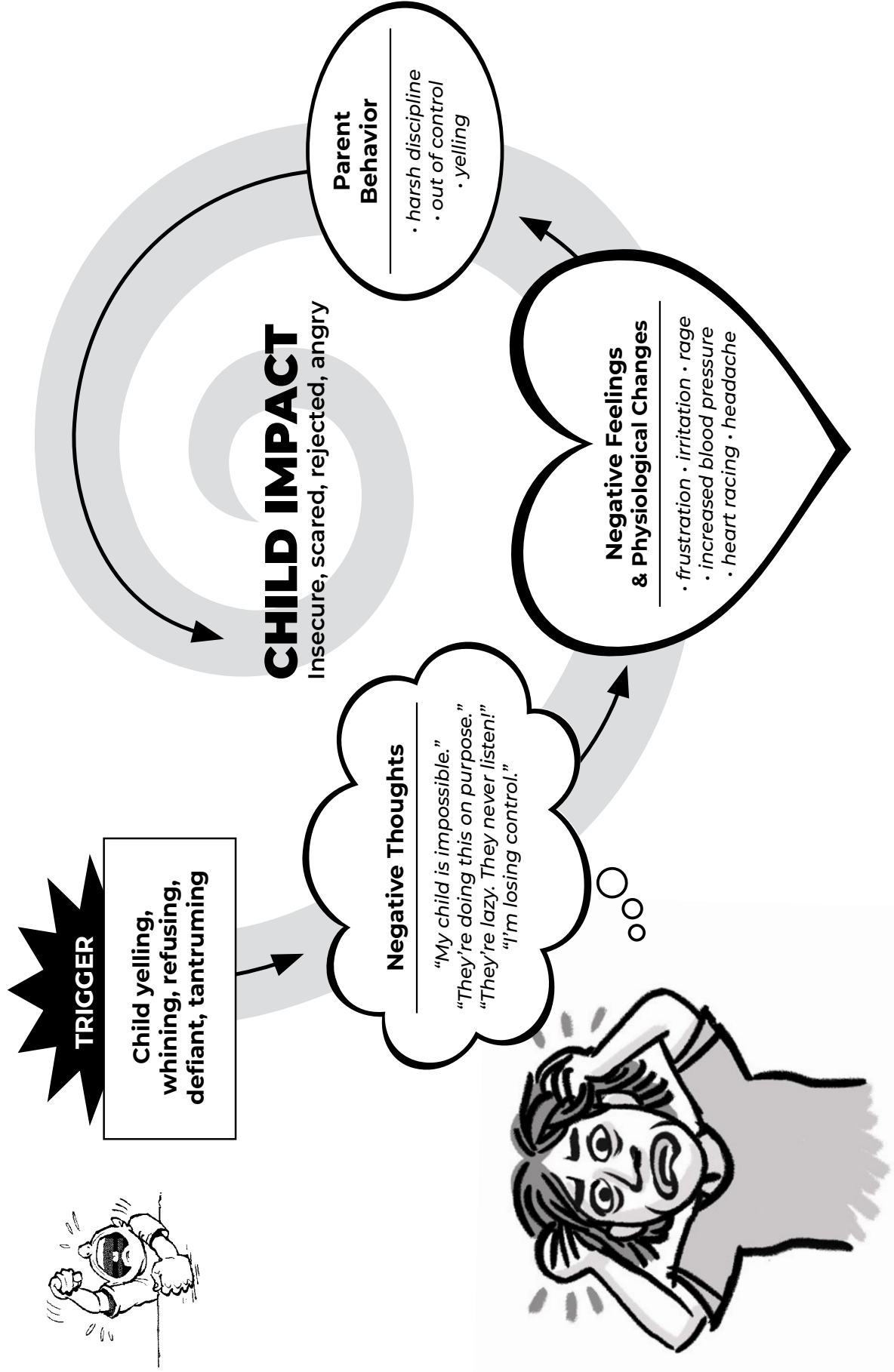




# Parent Depression Cycle

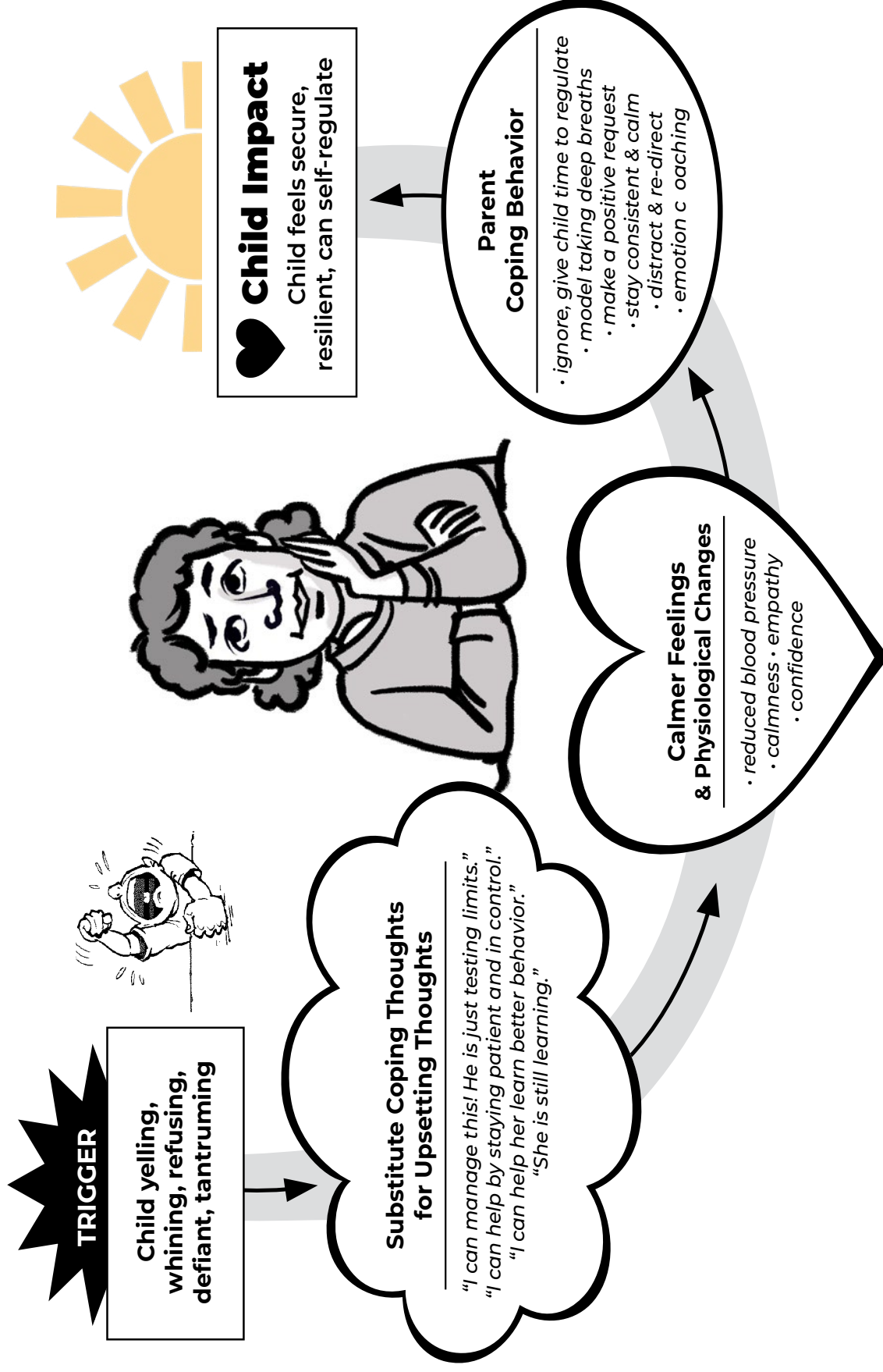


# Parent Anger Cycle



# Coping Cycle:

## Connect Positive Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviors



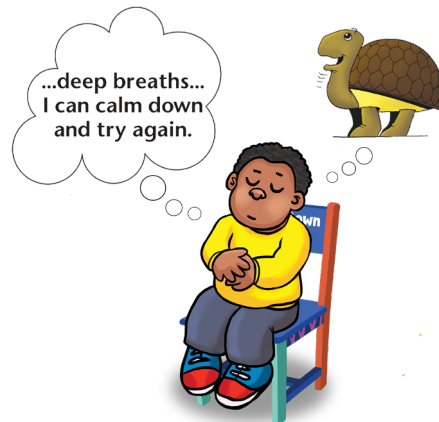


# Program Four: Preventing and Managing Misbehavior



## Part 3: Consequences for Destructive or Aggressive Behaviors

### Refrigerator Notes and Handouts



These handouts are copyright Incredible Years® and may not be altered in any way (including translations) without express written permission from The Incredible Years®. Contact [incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com](mailto:incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com) for more information.

© 2025 The Incredible Years ®

\*\*\* ALL RIGHTS RESERVED \*\*\*

Copyright 1982, Revised 2001, 2008, 2014, 2019, 2025



## Part 3: Consequences for Destructive or Aggressive Behaviors

### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK

#### Positive Time Out to Calm Down



#### To Do:

**PRACTICE** with your child how to take a Time Out to Calm Down at a time when your child is calm, and try using puppets.

**IF YOUR CHILD IS AGGRESSIVE** use Positive Time Out to Calm Down; for example, fighting or hitting or extreme oppositional or destructive behavior. Write the results on the “Record Sheet: Time Out to Calm Down for Aggression” handout. Bring record sheet to next session.

**CHOOSE A POSITIVE BEHAVIOR** (the opposite of the behavior which results in Time Out to Calm Down) to systematically give attention to through the use of praise, reinforcement and positive attention (e.g., staying calm, verbally expressing feelings, keeping hands to self, complying to parent requests).

**REVIEW** the handouts on coping and calming self talk, and strategies for reducing stress.

**PRACTICE** using positive self-talk and coping thoughts.

**CONNECT WITH YOUR BUDDY** from the group and share your calm down strategies.



#### To Read:

Handouts and Chapter 9, *Time Out to Calm Down*, Chapter 10 *Natural and Logical Consequences*, and Chapter 15, *Time Out from Stress and Anger* in **The Incredible Years** parent book or audiobook.



***Remember to continue playing!***



**The Incredible Years®**

Home Activities

## RECORD SHEET: POSITIVE TIME OUT TO CALM DOWN FOR AGGRESSION & DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIORS



TO Command in Response to Child Hitting	
Child's Response	
Calm Down Area (Duration)	
Warning Given if Child Does Not Go or Stay in Calm Down Area	
Use of Backup Room (Duration) or Loss of Privilege or time added	





**The Incredible Years®**

Home Activities

## RECORD SHEET: CALM DOWN PROCEDURE FOR COMPLIANCE TRAINING

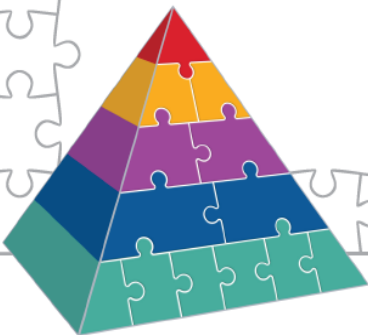


Command Given (Warning if Noncompliant)	
Child's Response	
Reward/Attend for Compliance	
Calm Down Area for Noncompliance (Duration)	
If Child Does Not Go To Calm Down Area, Use of Backup Room (Duration), Or, Loss of Privilege	
Repeat Original Command	

## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### EVIDENCE-BASED TIME OUT TO CALM DOWN FOR AGGRESSIVE AND HIGHLY OPPOSITIONAL BEHAVIOR

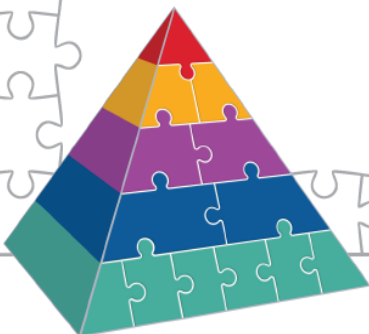
- Teach children how to go to Time Out to Calm Down and practice this when children are not misbehaving. Use puppets for this practice.
- Be prepared for testing when first used.
- Monitor and control personal anger and stay respectful.
- Give 3-5-minute Time to Calm & wait for 2-minute calm at the end.
- Carefully select the type of behaviors for which Time to Calm strategy will be used consistently and sparingly.
- Don't threaten Time Out to Calm Down unless you're prepared to follow through.
- Ignore child's protests but monitor their safety while taking Time to Calm.
- Use Time to a Calm Down space for aggressive behavior regardless of setting.
- Support a partner's use of Time to Calm approach.
- Don't rely exclusively on Time Out to Calm Down—combine with other discipline techniques, such as ignoring, distracting and redirection, logical consequences and problem solving.
- Expect repeated learning trials.
- Plan added time up to 10 min or backup loss of privileges for older children who refuse to go to Time Out to Calm Down space.
- Build up your child's bank account with Time In, such as child-directed play, social, emotion and persistence coaching, praise, love and support for positive opposite behaviors.
- Model using personal Time Out to relax, calm down and refuel energy.



## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### ABOUT PARENT STRESS AND ANGER

- Scan your body for tension, and breathe and relax or do meditation exercises.
- Notice any negative self-statements and replace them with coping thoughts, self-encouragement & positive forecasting.
- Ask yourself if what is making you feel tense is really that important? Will it make a difference a week from now? A year? When you are 70?
- Visualize some marvelous past event or think of a positive event in the near future.
- In the middle of conflict, breathe, cool off, get playful, use humor, or get away for a few minutes.
- Take a break (go for a walk, take a bath, read a magazine, call a friend).
- Review your Staying Calm Incredible Years Parenting Tool Kit.



## REFRIGERATOR NOTE

### HANDLING TANTRUM STORMS

Daily tantrums are a normal part of childhood. They occur because developmentally children lack the verbal skills to communicate their feelings or wants, and have an immature emotional self-regulation system. This coupled with a strong drive to be independent is a recipe for frustration for your child.

- Stay calm in the face of your child's storm—including kicking, screaming, throwing things or hitting.
- Don't try to reason or use a distraction with your child in the middle of a storm - the more you reason or yell, the worse the storm will rage.
- Stay in the room with your child while the storm occurs, but ignore the tantrum; do something else.
- Wait for the storm to subside and then return your attention immediately; praise your child's calm behavior and distract them to some other activity.
- No matter how long the storm lasts, don't give in or negotiate – even when you are in public. This short-term solution will lead to longer-term consequences of escalating tantrums and using these to get what they want.
- Stay calm and in control – a tantruming child is feeling out of control and needs to feel that their parent is in control.
- If your child's tantrum escalates to hitting people or pets, or breaking objects, take them to a safe place. Then stay with them but ignore the tantrum.

#### **Think about why your child might be tantruming.**

- Try to preempt storms when possible.

Think about why and when your child's tantrums occur – is it when your child is hungry? Or, tired? Or, involved in a transition to some other activity? Or, can't have something they want?

This might mean keeping snacks on hand, or, setting an earlier nap time, or preparing your child for a transition in advance which will give them a chance to adjust. If your child is grappling with control or independence issues, try offering choices when possible.

Monitor how often you are saying “no” – are your limits necessary? Keep your battles for the important issues.

***Remember – even with all your prevention strategies – children will still tantrum and need your help and support to develop the self-regulation skills to calm down.***





# Responding to Child Dysregulation and Teaching Self-Regulation

Carolyn Webster-Stratton, Ph.D.

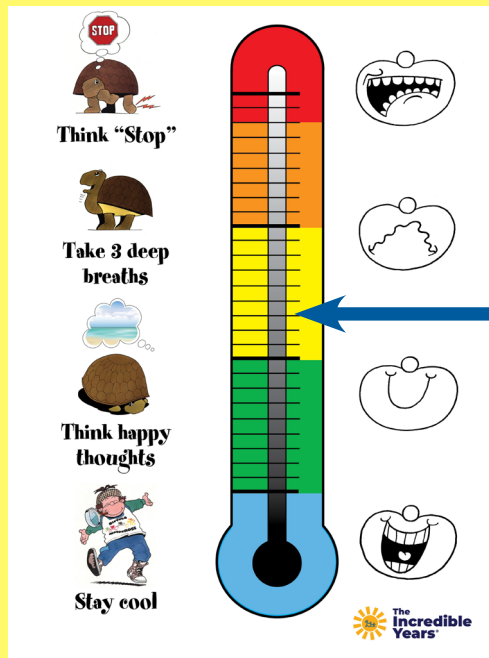
## My child is upset, angry, defiant & beginning to dysregulate

### Parent Self-Talk

- “My child is upset because... and needs help to self-regulate and problem solve.”
- “I can stay calm. This will help my child to stay calm.”
- “I can ignore this behavior as long as he is not hurting someone or breaking something.”
- “I can be supportive without giving too much attention to disruptive behavior.”
- “If my child is responsive and cooperative to my coaching, then it’s a good time to coach. If my coaching makes her angrier, then she needs space and privacy to calm down.”

### Parent Response

- Model deep breathing, patience and being sympathetic to child.
- Help child use Calm Down Thermometer and take deep breaths.
- Redirect child to another activity.
- Ignore child’s dysregulated behavior as long as behavior is not unsafe.
- Label child’s emotion and coping strategy: “You look angry, but you are trying hard to stay calm with breathing and remembering your happy place.”
- Stay nearby and be supportive.
- Give attention and coaching to behaviors that encourage your child’s coping and emotion regulation.



## Parent Self-Regulation

When children are angry and dysregulated, parents may also feel angry and out-of-control and may respond by yelling, criticizing, or spanking. At these times, Time Out can provide time and space for the parent, as well as the child, to self-regulate. Here are some tips for parent self-regulation:

- STOP and challenge negative thoughts and use positive self-talk such as: *"All children misbehave at times. My child is testing the limits of his independence to learn that our household rules are predictable and safe. This is normal for children this age and not the end of the world."*
- Do some deep breathing and repeat a calming word: "relax," "be patient," "take it easy."
- Think of relaxing imagery or of fun times you have had with your child.
- Take a brief break by washing your face, having a cup of tea, putting on some music, or patting the dog. Make sure your child is safe and monitored.
- Focus on coping thoughts such as: *"I can help my child best by staying in control."*
- Forgive yourself and be sure you are building in some "personal time" for relaxation.
- Ask for support from someone else.
- Reconnect with your child as soon as you are both calm.

**Like your child, you can get yourself into a "green" calm state and try again.**



## My child continues to dysregulate and becomes aggressive

### Parent Self-Talk

"My child is out of control and too dysregulated to benefit from prompts to calm down or to discuss solutions to problems."

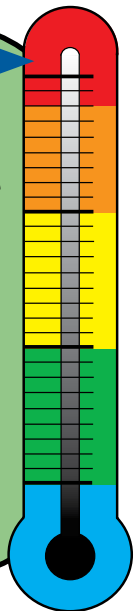
"I need to give my child time away from attention and a safe space to calm down so he doesn't hurt someone."

"I have taught my child how to use the Time Out or Tiny Turtle breathing methods to calm down so I can do that now."

"Time Out is a safe and respectful way for my child to learn to reflect and self-regulate."

### Parent Response

- I say, "Hitting is not allowed, you need to go to Time Out to Calm Down." (This place has a Calm Down Thermometer to remind my child of what to do in Time Out to Calm Down.)
- I wait patiently nearby to let him re-regulate and make sure others don't give this disruptive behavior attention.
- I give him privacy and don't talk to him during this calm down time.
- When he is calm (3-5 minutes), I praise him for calming down.
- I support my child to re-enter an activity or routine.





## My Child Is Calm Now

### Parent Self-Talk

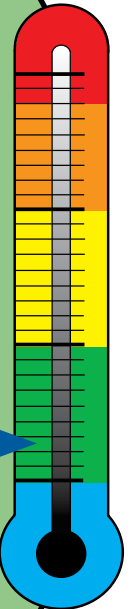
"Now I can reconnect with my child and help her learn an alternative way to solve her problem."

"She is learning she gets more attention for positive behavior than inappropriate behavior."

"I can help her learn to express her frustration and anger in more appropriate ways."

### Parent Positive Response

- I praise my child for calming down.
- I distract my child to a new learning opportunity.
- I do not force my child to apologize because insincere apologies do not teach empathy.
- I engage her in something else so that we have positive Time In together and she feels loved.
- I start using social coaching as my child plays.
- I also look for times when she is calm, patient, happy, or friendly.
- I use emotion coaching to help her understand these self-regulated feelings get my attention.
- If she starts to dysregulate again, I name her uncomfortable feelings, help her express these verbally, and prompt her to remember her coping strategies.
- During times when my child is calm, I use puppets, games, and stories to help her learn alternative solutions to common childhood problem situations.



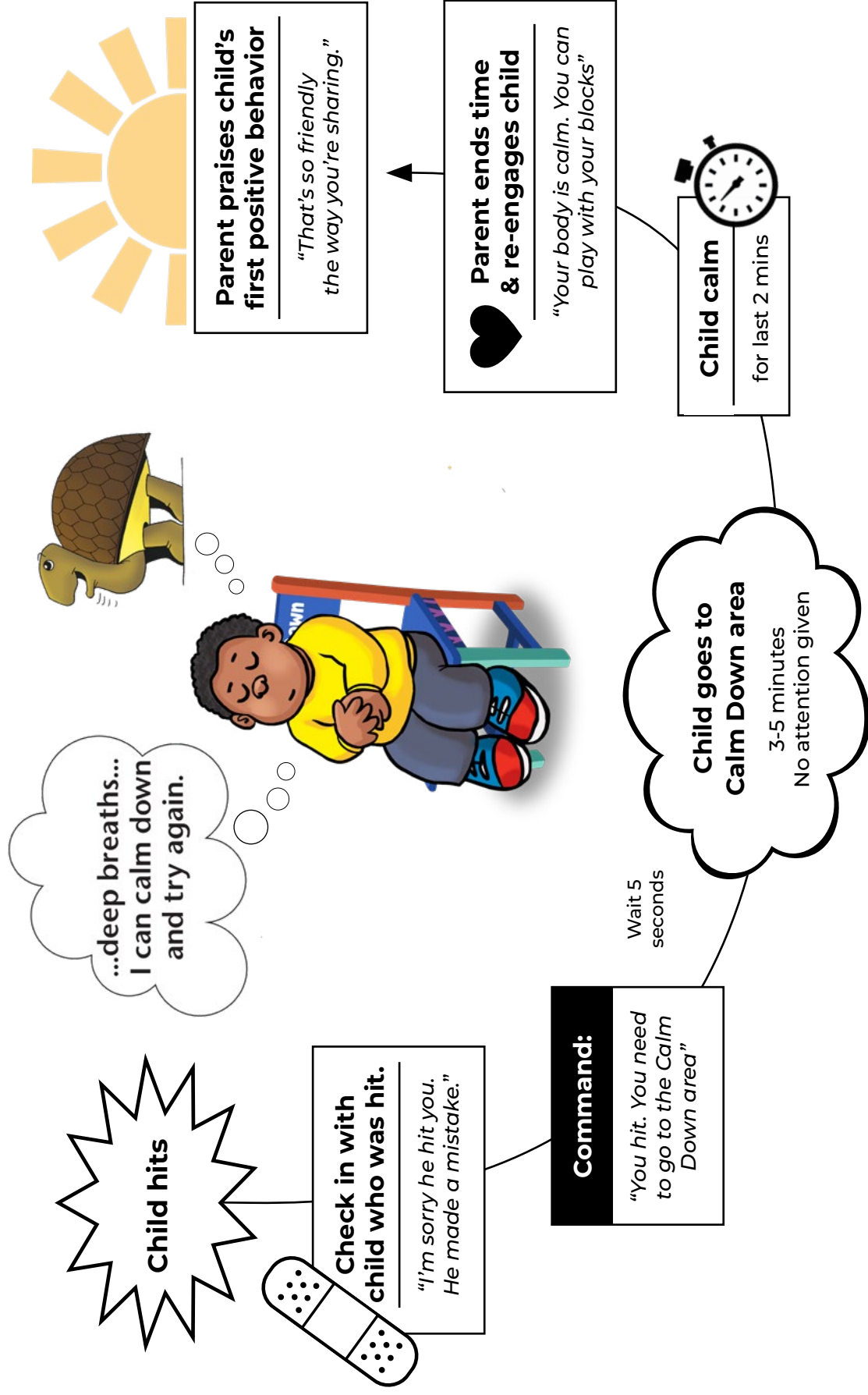
### Bottom Line

My child learns that taking a Time Out to Calm Down feels like a safe and secure place to calm down; it is not punitive or harsh and isolating; my child understands that when he has calmed down, he can join in family or peer activities without blame and has a new opportunity to try again with another solution to his problem. He feels loved when this strategy has been used and has sometimes seen his parents or teachers use this same strategy when they are angry. My child **gets far more Time In attention** from me for positive behaviors than negative behaviors. He feels loved and secure when using Time Out to Calm Down because it gives him time to re-regulate and try again in a loving environment. Time Out to Calm Down provides me with a chance to take a deep breath and calm down so I can respond to my child in a calm, firm, consistent, nurturing or caring manner.

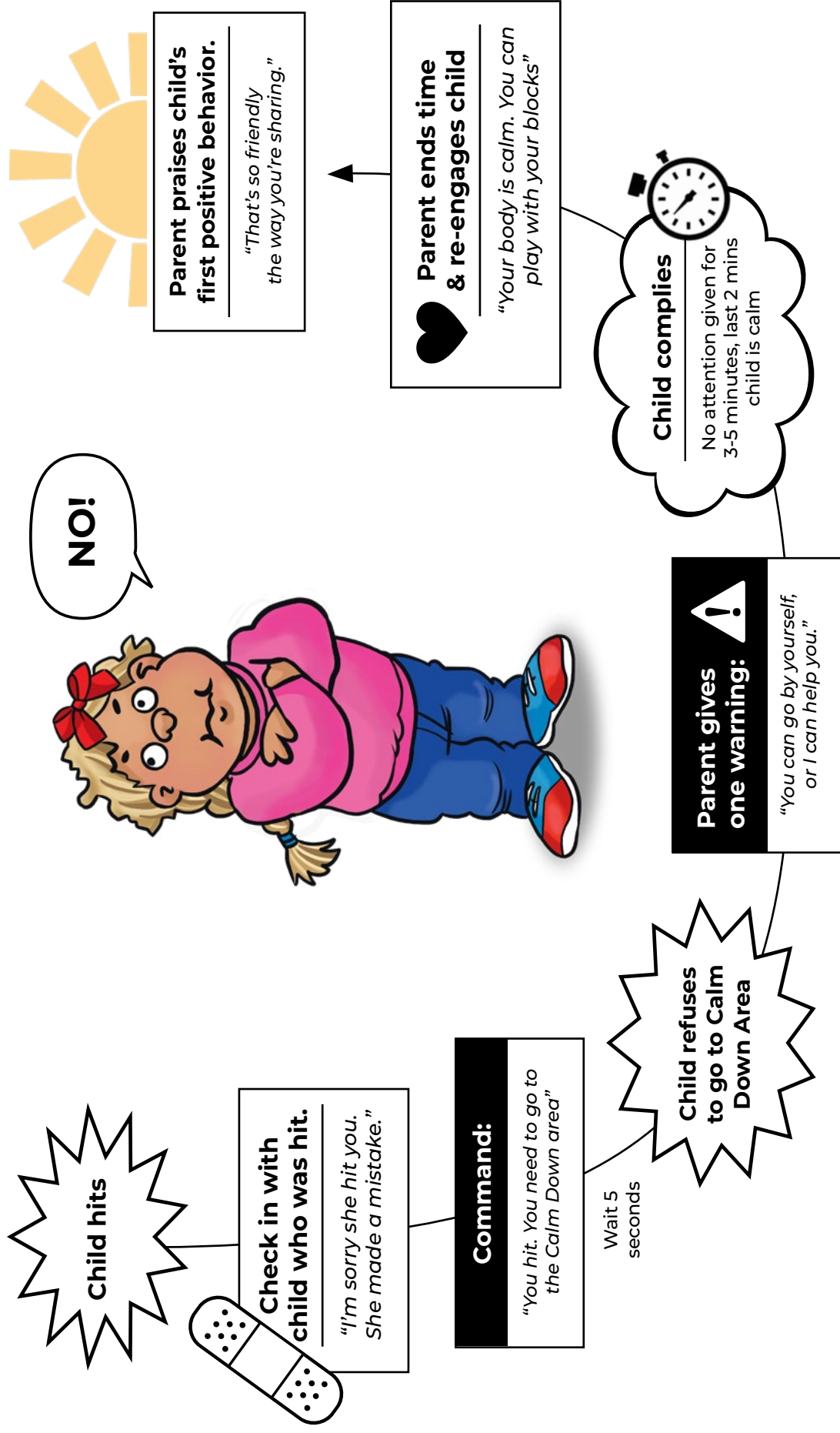


# 1) Calm Down Procedure for Aggression

(Ages 3-6 Years)

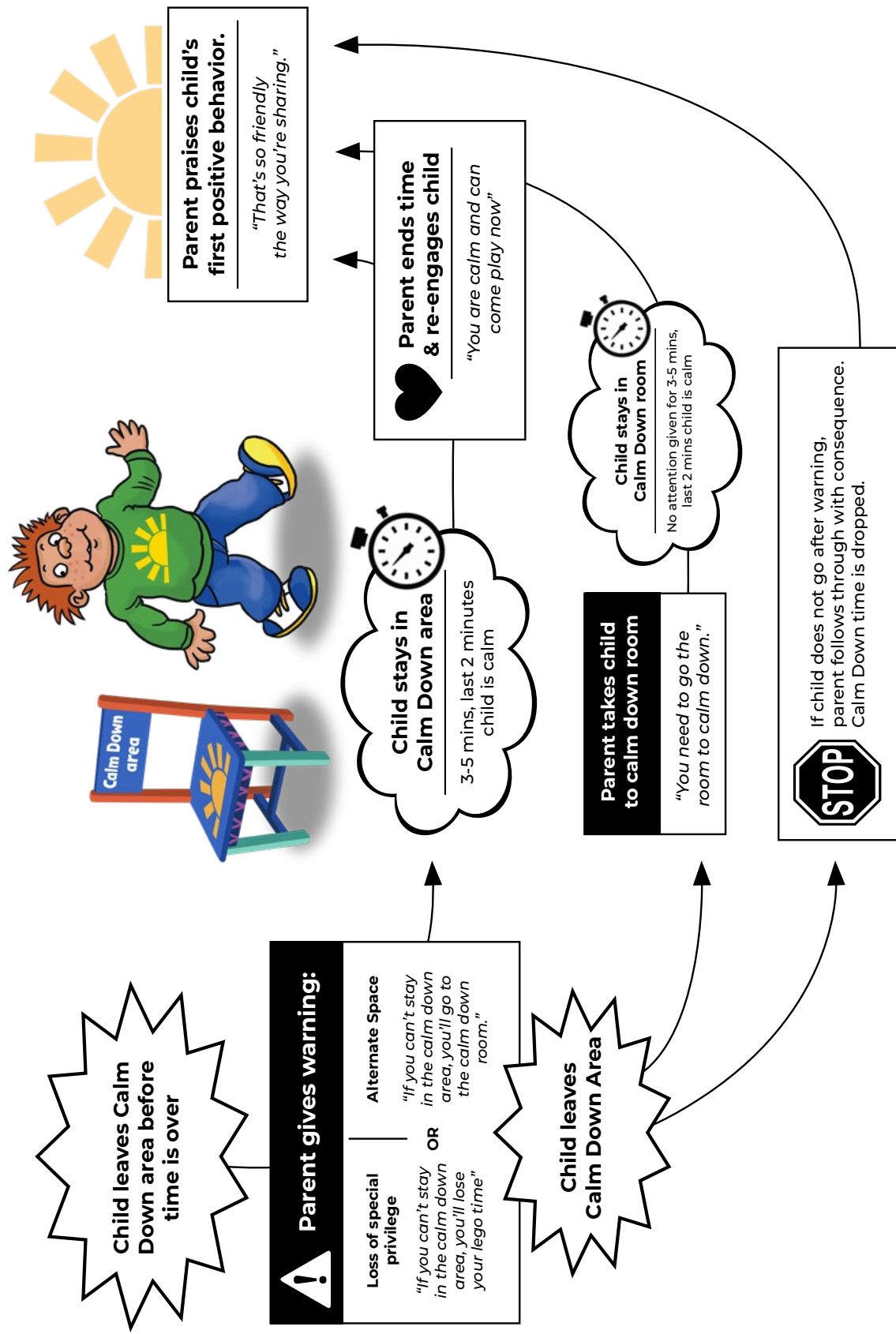


## 2) Child Resists Going to Calm Down Area (Ages 3–6 Years)

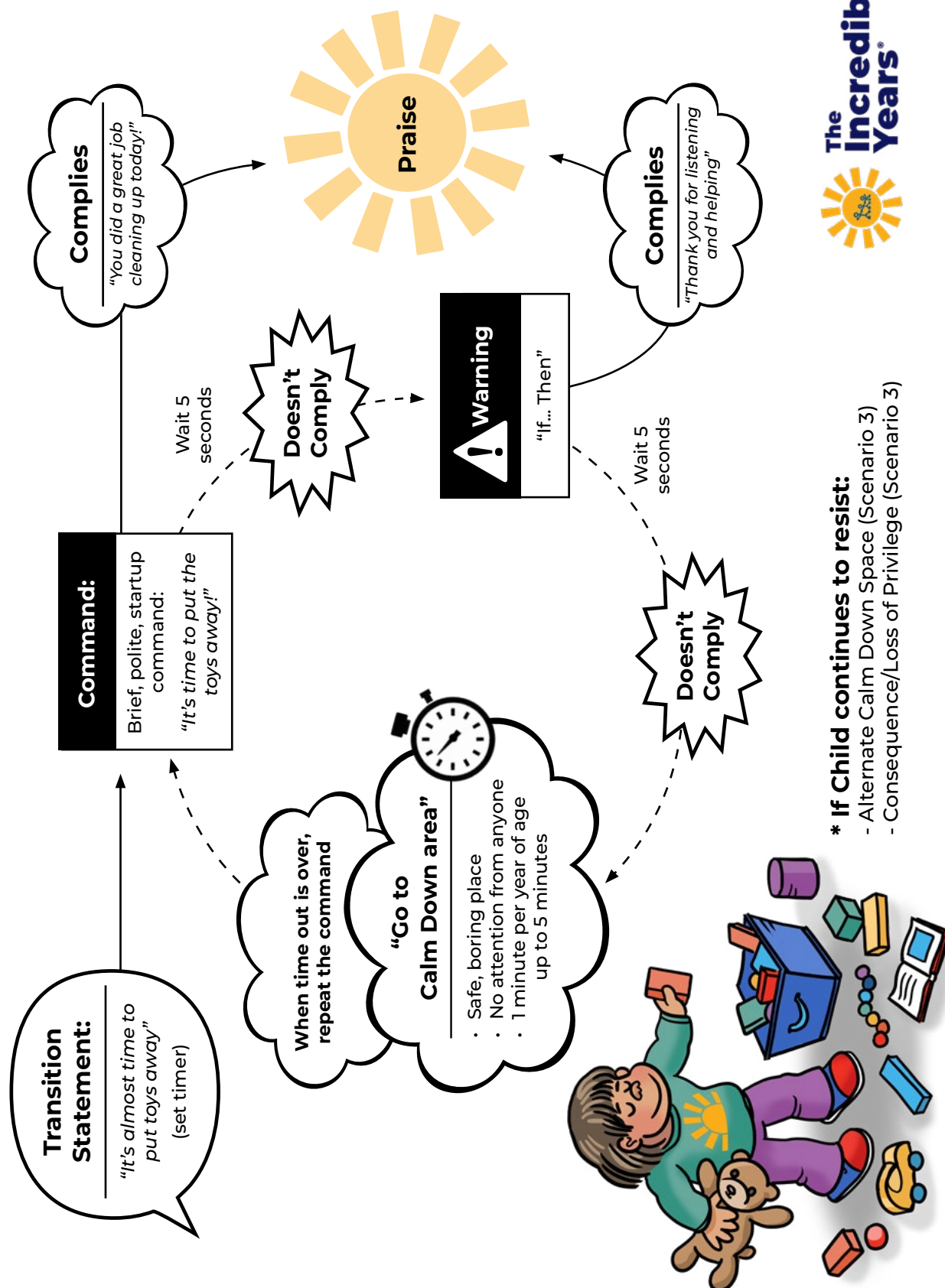


# 3) Child Refuses to Stay in Calm Down Area

(Ages 3–6 Years)



## 4) Calm Down Procedure for Compliance Training



## Brainstorm/Buzz: Behaviors Appropriate for Time Out to Calm Down



It is important to think about what child behaviors will result in the Time to Calm Down procedure ahead of time. That way, when the behavior occurs, you are prepared to follow through with the Time Out to Calm Down. It is also important for children to know which behaviors will result in going to the Calm Down area. Try brainstorming some of these:



### ***Behaviors Appropriate for Time to Calm Down Procedure***

*e.g., hitting others*



Be sure to define what you mean by hitting. For mild jostling and poking redirection and distractions usually work to separate children and get them focused on something else. However, violent and hurtful hitting should have immediate removal of child to a Time Out area where they cannot hurt another child.

Remember to practice in advance with your child how to calm down in Time Out by taking deep breaths and telling yourself, "I can do it, I can calm down." and thinking of their happy place.



## Brainstorm: Benefits and Barriers of Time Away to Calm Down

Think about the advantages or benefits to using the Time to Calm Down procedure and write them down. List the disadvantages or barriers to doing this.



### Time Away to Calm Down

#### Benefits of Time Out to Calm Down

#### Barriers or Obstacles to Doing This



### Considerations

#### *Thinking About Taking Time Away to Calm Down Benefits and Barriers*

Look at the lists and notice who the benefits are to and who experiences the disadvantages (child or parent). Also look at whether the barriers are short term or long term for you or your child.

## Brainstorm/Buzz: Parent Coping and Calming Self-Talk

Think about ways to stay calm, assertive and patient.

Practice challenging negative self-talk and substituting positive self-talk and coping statements. On your notepad, write down some self-talk that you can use when you feel anger mounting.



### Positive Self-Talk

*I can handle this...*

*I can control my anger...*

*I will take a brief Time Out myself...*





## Brainstorm/Buzz: Staying Calm



What emotional responses do you experience when using the Time to Calm Down procedure? Parents often have trouble controlling their anger when dealing with a child's aggression or oppositional behavior, and find it hard not to criticize the child. This emotional involvement can make it difficult to ignore your child's arguments or to praise compliance when it finally does occur. What strategies could you use to stay calm? Write down your ideas.



My emotional responses when using the Time to Calm Down Procedure	Strategies to stay calm
	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• challenge negative self-talk</li> <li>• replace negative thought with a positive one</li> <li>• visualize a happy time or peaceful place</li> <li>• take slow, deep breaths</li> <li>• sing</li> <li>• put music on</li> <li>• count to 10</li> <li>• tense and relax muscles</li> <li>• positive self-talk</li> </ul> <p>Other ideas:</p>





## Supplemental Handout

### WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE LOSING CONTROL

1. Step back from the situation for a moment and ask yourself:

- What is my goal?
- What am I doing now?
- Is what I am doing helping me to reach my goal?
- What do I need to do differently?

2. Practice the relaxation technique:

- Slow down your breathing.
- Count from one to ten as far as you are able to in a single breath.
- Repeat deep, slow inhaling and exhaling while counting until you feel relaxed.



3. Recognize your upsetting thoughts. Rephrase these thoughts into alternative, calming thoughts. For example:

#### Upsetting Thoughts

"That child is a monster.  
That is ridiculous. He'll never  
change."

"I'm sick of being this mad.  
Things are going to change  
around here, or else."

#### Calming Thoughts

"This is a child who is testing  
to see if he can get his own  
way. My job is to stay calm and  
help him learn better ways  
to behave."

"I need to talk to Michael  
about leaving his clothes  
lying around. If we discuss  
this constructively and calmly  
we should be able to reach a  
good solution."

## Supplemental Handout

### RELAXATION PROCEDURES

Many people must learn to relax before they can control their self-statements. The following is a relaxation procedure that can be learned without extensive training.

1. Get comfortable in your chair. Close your eyes.
2. Become aware of your breathing.
3. As you breathe in and out, slow your breathing down.
4. As you slow down your breathing, with your next deep breath slowly count from 1 to 10 as far as you are able to in that single breath.
5. Now exhale slowly, and count from 1 to 10 again until you are out of breath.
6. Visualize yourself calm and in control.
7. Tell yourself that you are doing a good job and making progress.
8. Repeat this deep, slow inhaling and exhaling while counting, until you feel relaxed.

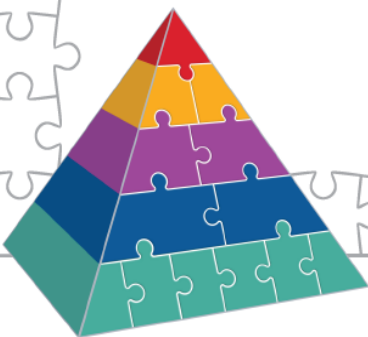
Remember, there will be times when it is difficult to use these self-control techniques. Relapses are to be expected. With practice, however, you will find it much easier to relax.



### Supplemental Handout

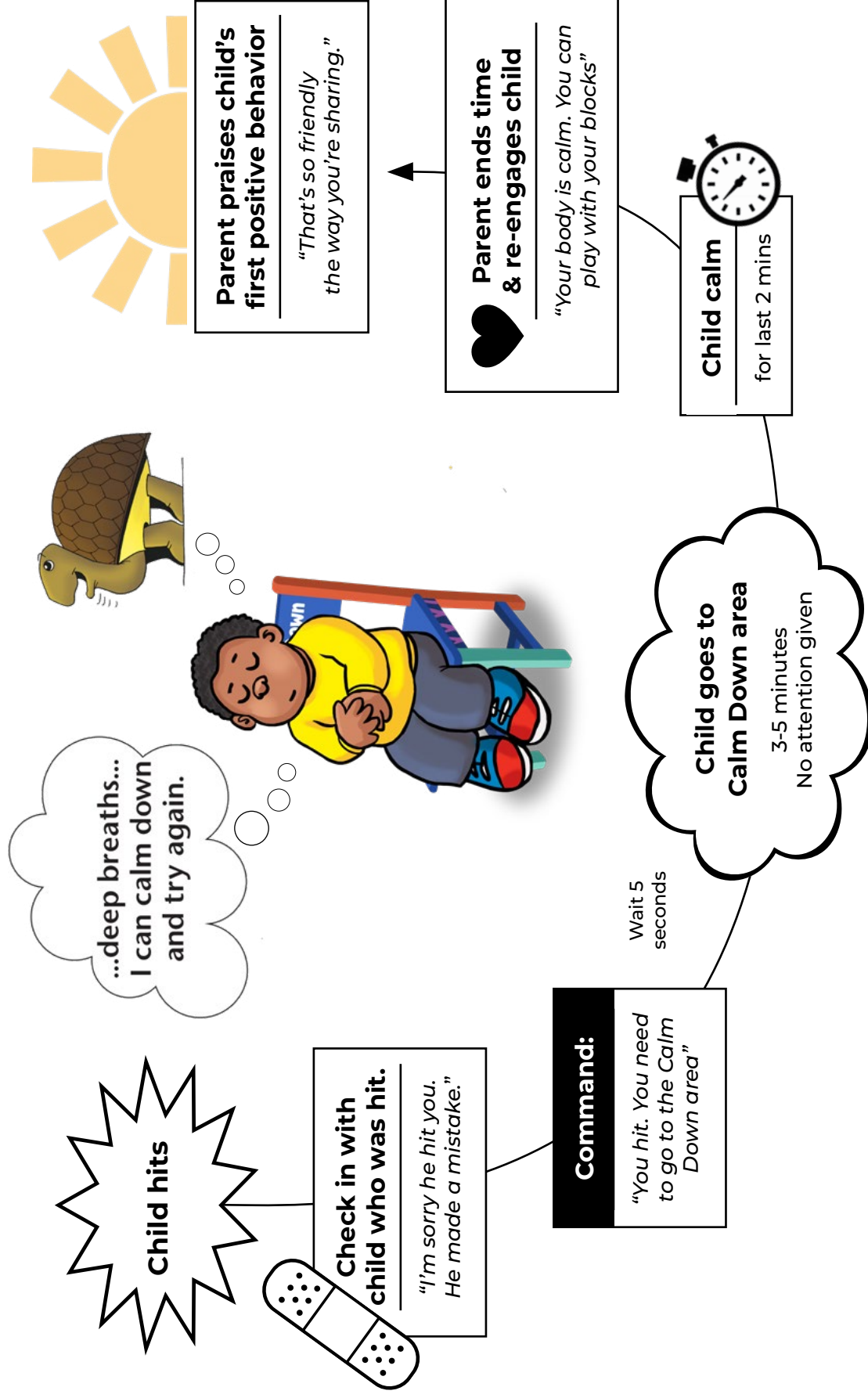
## Teach Your Child Calm Down Strategies

- When your child is calm, practice taking deep breaths and praise your child by telling them they are very strong at calming down. Teach them Tiny turtle's calm down steps.
- Notice times when your child stays calm in a frustrating situation and praise their patience and calmness.
- Use emotion coaching and comment on times your child is happy, excited, curious, calm, angry or frustrated. Try to comment on more happy feelings than angry or sad ones.
- Model staying calm yourself in frustrating situations – take a deep breath – say, “I can calm down” in front of your child.

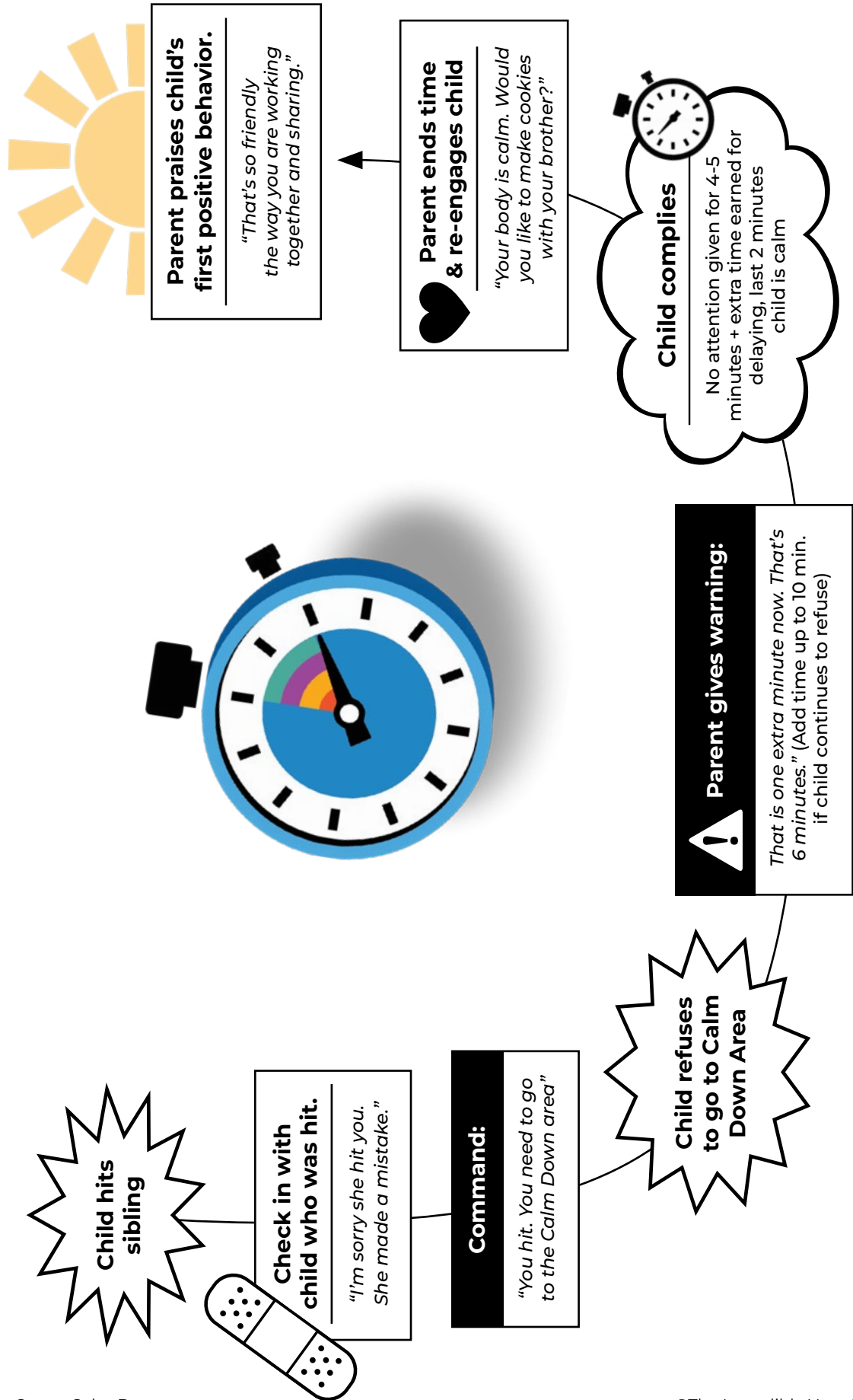


# 1) Calm Down Procedure for Aggression

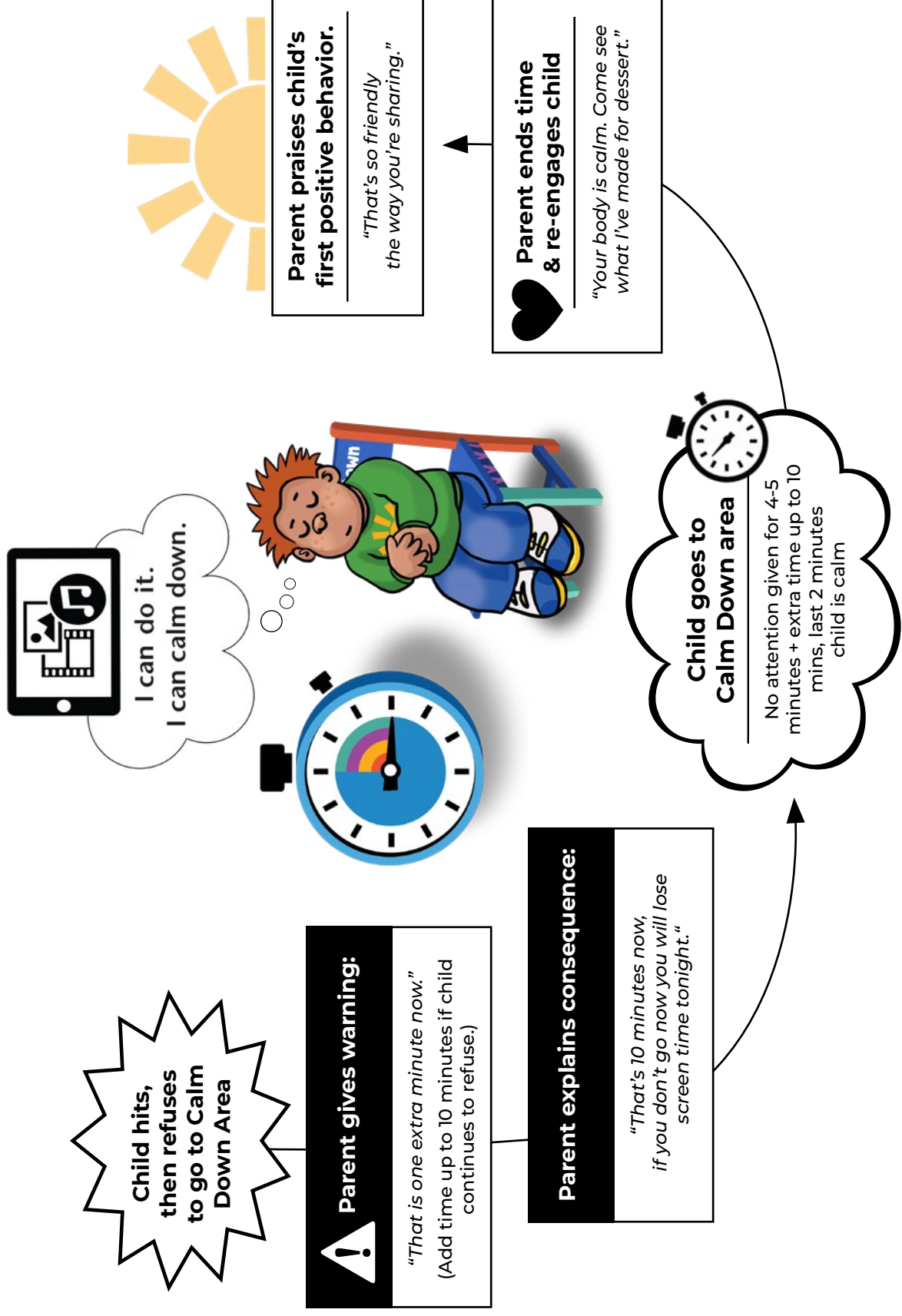
(Ages 6-8 Years)



## 2) Adding Time for Child who Resists Going to Calm Down Area (Ages 6-10)



### 3) Adding Another Consequence for Child who Continues to Refuse Calm Down Area (Ages 6-10)





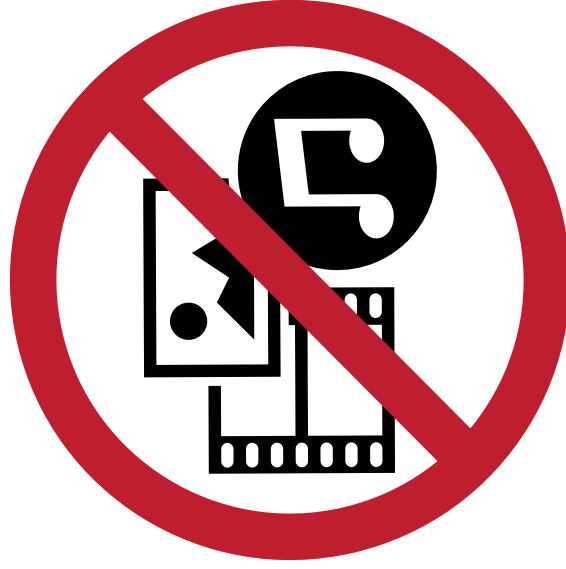
## 4) Following through with Consequence for Child Who still Refuses to go to Calm Down Area (Ages 6-10)



**Parent gives warning:**  
  
"That is one extra minute now."  
(Add time up to 10 minutes if child continues to refuse.)

**Parent explains consequence:**

"That's 10 minutes now, if you don't go now you will lose screen time tonight."



**Parent ends power struggle**

A black octagonal sign with the word 'STOP' in white capital letters.  
"You've lost your screen time." (Going to Calm Down Area is dropped.)

**Parent follows through with consequence & ignores protests**

Consequence should be carried out same day.



### CONSEQUENCE

A stylized yellow sun with rays.

**Parent praises child's first positive behavior.**  
  
"That's so friendly the way you're sharing."



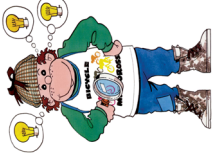
The  
Incredible  
Years®

Home Activities

## RECORD SHEET:

### LOGICAL & NATURAL CONSEQUENCES

List here your experience using "if - then" logical consequences.



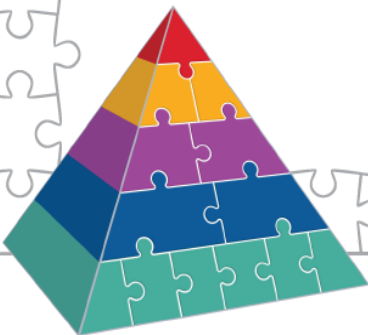
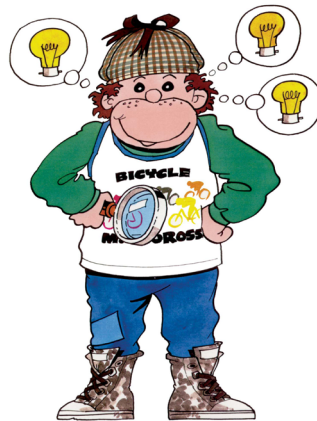
Date	Time	Command Given	Child's Response	"If - then" Logical Consequence (eg. loss of TV or computer privilege for evening, favorite toy removed for a short time)	Child's Response



## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### ABOUT NATURAL AND LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

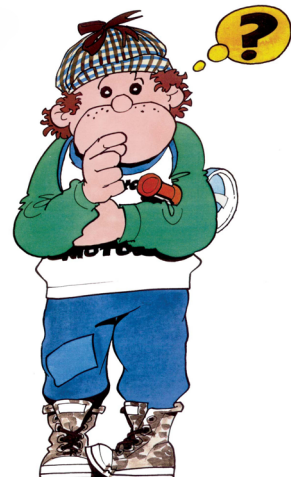
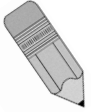
- Make consequences developmentally appropriate.
- Be sure you can live with the consequences you set up.
- Make consequences immediate.
- Clearly state consequences ahead of time.
- Make consequences natural and non-punitive.
- Involve the child whenever possible.
- When possible, give a warning before giving consequence; “if... then”.
- Be friendly and positive.
- Use consequences that are immediate, short, and to the point.
- Use Time to Calm Down consequence for aggressive behaviors
- Establish a list of possible loss of privileges and disciplinary chores.
- Once a consequence is completed, quickly offer the child a new learning opportunity to be successful.





## Brainstorm/Buzz: Logical and Natural Consequences

Please list below some possible natural or logical consequences you can use with your child. (E.g., removal of toy)

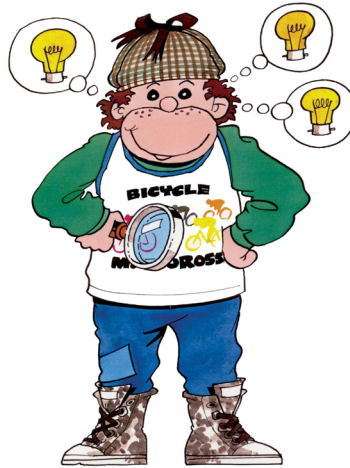


# Program Four: Preventing and Managing Misbehavior



## Part 4: Teaching Children to Problem Solve

### Refrigerator Notes and Handouts



These handouts are copyright Incredible Years®  
and may not be altered in any way (including translations)  
without express written permission from The Incredible Years®.

Contact [incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com](mailto:incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com) for more information.

© 2025 The Incredible Years ®

\*\*\* ALL RIGHTS RESERVED \*\*\*

Copyright 1982, Revised 2001, 2008, 2014, 2019, 2025



## Part 4: Teaching Children to Problem Solve

### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK



#### To Do:

**USING PUPPETS** or a book such as *Wally's Problem Solving Book*, practice reading and “acting out” solutions to common problems. (record on Record Sheet)

**MODEL** problem solving yourself when faced with a problem (e.g., what TV program to watch, difficulty finding parking, what dessert to choose, etc.).



#### To Read:

Handouts and Chapter 11, *Teaching Children to Problem Solve*, in **The Incredible Years** parent book or audiobook.

#### Remember

It will take hundreds of learning trials and much patience to teach your children to problem solve. There may even be times when the child is so upset or angry that they first need to go to the Calm Down space. Problem solving discussions may need to be postponed to a time when the child is calm.



1 What is my problem ?

***Remember to continue playing!***

## Part 4: Teaching Children to Problem Solve

### HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK



#### To Do:

**CHOOSE** a problem situation where your child seems distressed about something and try to use the problem-solving strategies discussed in this program. For example, use a puppet to mirror the child's issue and ask your child for solutions, which the child then teaches to the puppet. Keep track of your results on the Parent Record Sheet.



#### To Read:

Handouts and Chapter 11, *Teaching Children to Problem Solve*, in **The Incredible Years** parent book or audiobook. Also read Chapters 16, 17 and 18 to work on your own problem solving.

**Remember** the first step is to get your children to generate solutions.



2 What is a solution ?

***Remember to continue playing!***



Home Activities



## RECORD SHEET:

### PROBLEM SOLVING PRACTICE WITH YOUR CHILD



Describe a hypothetical problem you tried to problem solve with your child using a book or puppets or play interaction. Describe the problem scenario and what solutions were proposed and practiced. Remember to do this practice when your child is calm and interested.

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Problem Situation

e.g. Two children fighting over a bike.

#### What is the problem?

*"I'm angry because Jessie won't share the bike."*

#### Discuss some solutions & act them out using toys

Ask to ride the bike.

Offer to take turns.

Wait until Jessie is finished.

#### Discuss the best choice

Is it safe?

Is it fair?

Does it lead to good feelings?

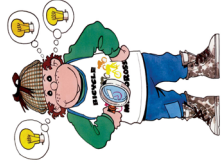
#### Child's Response



Home Activities

## RECORD SHEET:

### PROBLEM SOLVING IN REAL CONFLICT SITUATION



Write down a time your child was upset about a situation where you attempted to promote problem solving. (e.g., another child wouldn't share) Try to reconstruct the discussion: what was said and how you and your child felt. Remember to do this problem solving when you and your child are reasonably calm. Try not to do this problem solving when either you or your child are too emotionally dysregulated.



Step 1: Identify the problem through child's feelings (sad, angry, frustrated, disappointed, worried, fearful).

Step 2: Help child define the problem.

Step 3: Discuss the goals.

Step 4: Brainstorm with child some possible solutions. Evaluate Solutions (safe, fair, good feelings) and make a good choice.

Step 5: Try out the solution.

Step 6: Evaluate the Success of the solution.



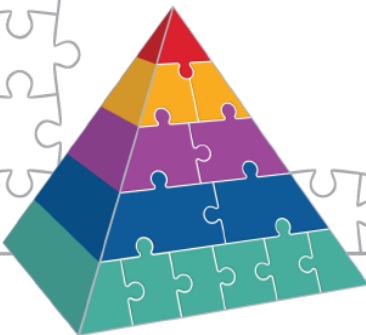
## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### TEACHING CHILDREN TO PROBLEM SOLVE



What is the best solution?

- Use games, books and puppets to present hypothetical problem situations for children to practice the problem solving steps.
- Help children clearly define the problem and to recognize the feelings involved.
- For preschool children, focus on generating several solutions.
- For primary age children, add steps to help them think through to the various consequences of different solutions and make the best choice (based on fairness, safety and good feelings).
- Be positive, creative and humorous.
- Model effective problem solving yourself.
- Help children anticipate what to do next when a solution doesn't work.
- Remember it is the process of learning how to think about conflict that is critical, rather than getting correct answers.
- Avoid problem-solving if your child is highly dysregulated.

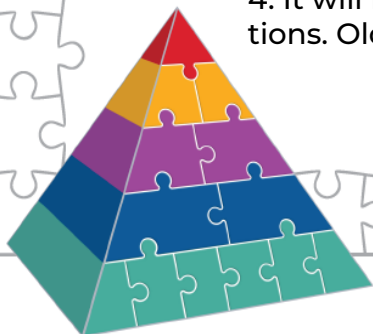


## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### PARENT'S PROBLEM SOLVING CHECKLIST

	Yes	No
Step 1: Help your child identify the problem through their feelings	—	—
Step 2: Help your child state the problem	—	—
Step 3: Identify the goals with your child	—	—
Step 4: Brainstorm with your child possible solutions	—	—
1. Remain open, noncritical	—	—
2. Use a fun, playful approach	—	—
3. Increase number of solutions	—	—
4. Postpone details	—	—
Step 5: Evaluate with child possible solutions and make a good choice	—	—
1. Evaluate each solution	—	—
2. Choose best solution	—	—
3. Practice the solution	—	—
Step 6: Evaluate the Success of the Solution	—	—
1. Reinforce progress	—	—
2. Refine problem solving plan	—	—

Preschoolers will be at the stage of Steps 1, 2, 3 and 4. It will be more difficult for them to evaluate solutions. Older children will be able to work on Step 5.



## REFRIGERATOR NOTES

### POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS FOR CHILDREN TO PRACTICE & USE

Yell at him.\*

Wait a while.

Laugh at him.

Look sad or cry.

Ignore him;  
walk away

Play somewhere  
else

Take it.\*

Hit him.\*

Tell her not to be  
mad.

Ask him.

Say please.

Do something fun.

Trade something.

Apologize.

Get help from your  
parent or teacher.

Talk about your feel-  
ings

Beg him.

Offer to share.

Get another one.

Take turns.

Flip a coin.

Admit a mistake.

Calm down first.

Tell the truth.

Give a compliment.

Be a good sport.

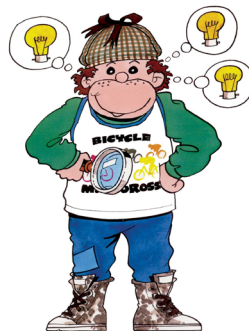
Say "no."

Stop your anger.

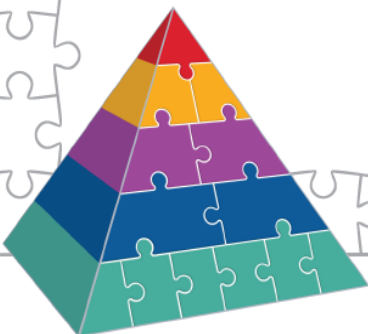
Be brave.

Forgive.

\*These are inappropriate solutions. Encourage children to think of consequences and to make another choice with a better consequence.



3 What are some other solutions?



## WHAT TO DO WHEN NEW PROBLEMS ARISE?

“Relapses” of misbehaviors are *normal*, so be prepared for them! Often a relapse is triggered by some type of crisis or change in family life (illness, death, vacation, new job, financial stress). This generally results in an increase in children’s challenging behaviors. The following are some ways to reinstate the program and get yourself on track again.

1. Set up a time when you are not upset to talk about the problem with your partner, a friend, or to think quietly on your own.
2. Clarify what child behaviors you want and don’t want.
3. List the problems from most to least important. Concentrate on dealing with only the most pressing problem to start with.
4. Brainstorm as many solutions as possible (review handouts):

### Reinforcements

(praise, tangible rewards, play sessions, coaching methods & teaching self-regulation)

### Discipline

(ignore, distract and redirect, Time Out to calm down, loss of privileges, work chores, logical consequences, problem solving)

### Techniques that help parents maintain self-control

(self-talk, relaxation, support from others, self care)

5. Monitor weekly progress, and revise the program when necessary.
6. Reinforce your efforts.

**Remember:** There is a tendency for parents to use strategies with short-term benefits (for example, obtaining immediate compliance by yelling) that have long-term negative outcomes for the child (for example, the child learns to yell). Parents need to use skills such as child directed play, coaching methods, praising and ignoring literally hundreds of times in order to change children’s behavior, and this takes a lot of work. Over the long run, however, this approach teaches children how to behave appropriately, builds essential skills for getting along with others, and fosters children’s positive self-image. This is a little like flossing your teeth—you need to keep doing it to realize the long-term benefits!



1 What is my problem ?

## Brainstorm/Buzz: Problems Parents Want to Work on with Problem Solving

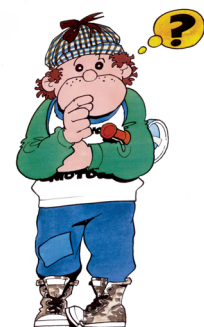
Think about possible problem scenarios related to your child's life that you could make up to problem solve and act out possible solutions. Write down problem situations you can use to promote discussions about problem solving, using solutions you want your child to learn. e.g:

- staying calm or brave
- asking for help
- sharing
- helping
- responding to making a mistake



### **Problems to work on with Problem Solving**

e.g. Two children fighting over whose turn it is to use computer;  
Being afraid to ask to play with another child;  
Another child not wanting to play with child;  
Death of a pet



1 What is my problem ?

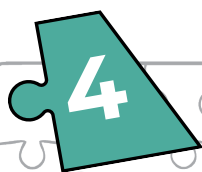


## Parents Working Like Detectives: See What You've Learned!

Make a list of what strategies/parenting tools you would use for the following misbehaviors. Add other challenging behaviors you are wanting to manage. Think about how you are attending to the positive opposite of these behaviors.



Challenging Behavior	Parenting Response/Tool
1. Hitting and shoving peers	_____
2. Refusal to do what parent asks	_____
3. Whining	_____
4. Tantrums	_____
5. Dawdling while dressing	_____
6. Not eating certain foods at meals	_____
7. Smart talk/arguing with parent	_____
8. Difficulty sitting at dinner table	_____
9. Stomach aches and headaches	_____
10. Inattentiveness and impulsivity	_____
11. Leaving family room in a mess	_____
12. Criticizing / fighting with a sibling	_____
13. Hitting or hurting pets	_____
14. Not sharing toys with friends	_____



## Parents Working Like Detectives: See What You've Learned!

Make a list of what strategies/parenting tools you would use for the following misbehaviors. Add other challenging behaviors you are wanting to manage. Think about how you are attending to the positive opposite of these behaviors.



Challenging Behavior	Parenting Response/Tool
15. Leaving bike, toys, etc. outside	_____
16. Exploding in anger / screaming	_____
17. Too much screen time	_____
18. Hiding notes from the teacher	_____
19. Difficulty taking turns with siblings or peers	_____
20. Refusing to go to bed at bedtime	_____
21. Bossy with peers	_____
22. Bad language	_____
23. Refusing to use car seat	_____
24. Getting in parents bed at night	_____
25. Being afraid (of going to school or a play date)	_____
26. Being sad and withdrawing due to family stress or transition (e.g., moving)	_____
25. Other	_____





## Problem Solving Worksheet For Managing Preschoolers' Challenging Behaviors



### Problem Definition:

1. My child's challenging behavior: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What are the triggers/precipitants of my child's misbehavior? (developmental problem, not enough sleep, not getting what he wants, a family transition or stress, low frustration tolerance, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How do I usually respond to this misbehavior? (Do I give it attention? Do I get angry or act stressed or withdraw?) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Goals:

4. What is my goal? What positive opposite behavior do I want to see in my child instead? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Solutions:

5. What parenting tools or strategies can I use from the bottom of the Incredible Years Pyramid to support my child's positive behavior?

**Play/Coaching/Special Time:** What kind of play or special time might best help my child here? (Remember, it is best if it is child-led.) (persistence, academic, social, or emotion coaching) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Praise:** What behaviors can I praise and how? (Remember they should be the "positive opposites" of the behaviors you want to decrease.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Stickers and Rewards:** How can I reward this prosocial behavior? What incentives will motivate my child? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Choose from the list below those responses from the top of the pyramid that can be used to reduce this misbehavior.

**Routines:** Do I have a predictable routine for this problem? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Distraction/Redirection:** How can I distract or redirect my child before misbehavior escalates? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





**Ignore:** What part of this behavior could I ignore? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What will I say to myself while I ignore it? How can I stay calm? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Consequence:** What natural or logical consequence can I use to teach my child to change this behavior? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Calm Down Strategies:** What calm down strategies can I teach my child? (use of turtle shell, deep breathing, positive self-talk "I can do it, I can calm down," use of the Calm Down Thermometer, exercise, think of happy place) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Problem Solving Teaching:**

7. Is this a problem I can use to promote my child's practice of using the problem solving steps? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Carrying Out my Plan:**

8. To whom should I communicate this plan? (teachers, grandparents, partners, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Who can I call for support and to check in? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. How will I take care of myself while this is going on? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Evaluating the Success of Solutions**

11. How will I know I am making progress? What will be different? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

12. How will I celebrate my child's success? As well as my own? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

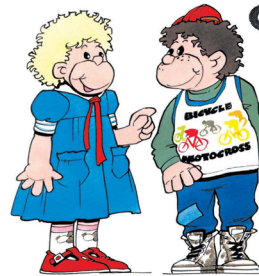
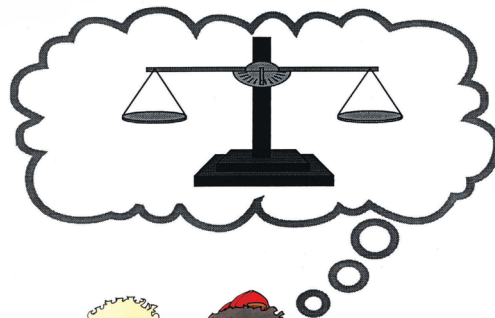
**Congratulations! You have a plan to change your child's behavior!**

**Remember, it can take three weeks or more to see changes, so don't give up!**

## SUPPLEMENTAL HANDOUT EVALUATING SOLUTIONS



Is my solution safe?



Is my solution fair?



Does my solution lead to  
good feelings?

