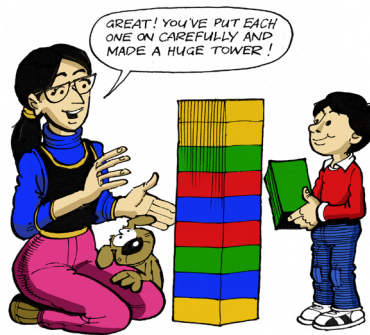


# **Program One: Strengthening Children's Language, School Readiness, Emotion and Social Skills and Positive Relationships**



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

### **Refrigerator Notes and Handouts**



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**My Play and Language Level** (e.g., play alone, anxious or withdrawn, want to initiate play with others but don't know how, initiate but my social interactions are inappropriate, very few words, lots of language, inappropriate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



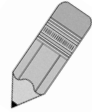
**Goals**

**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.

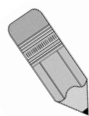


**When you observe your child's play, how often does your child:**

	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

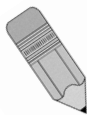
**A. When you play with your child, how often do you encourage your child to:**

	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.

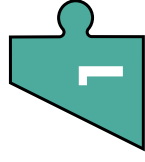


**The Incredible  
Years®**

Home Activities

## RECORD SHEET:

### CHILD-DIRECTED PLAY TIMES



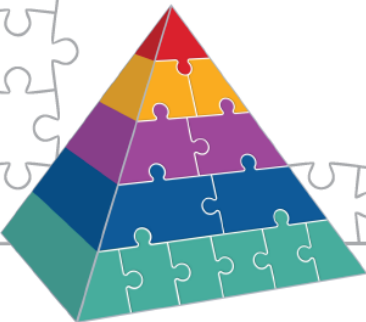
Record times you spent engaged in child-directed play with your child, what you did, and any reaction you noticed in yourself or your child. Return this form to your group leaders at the next group session.

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.

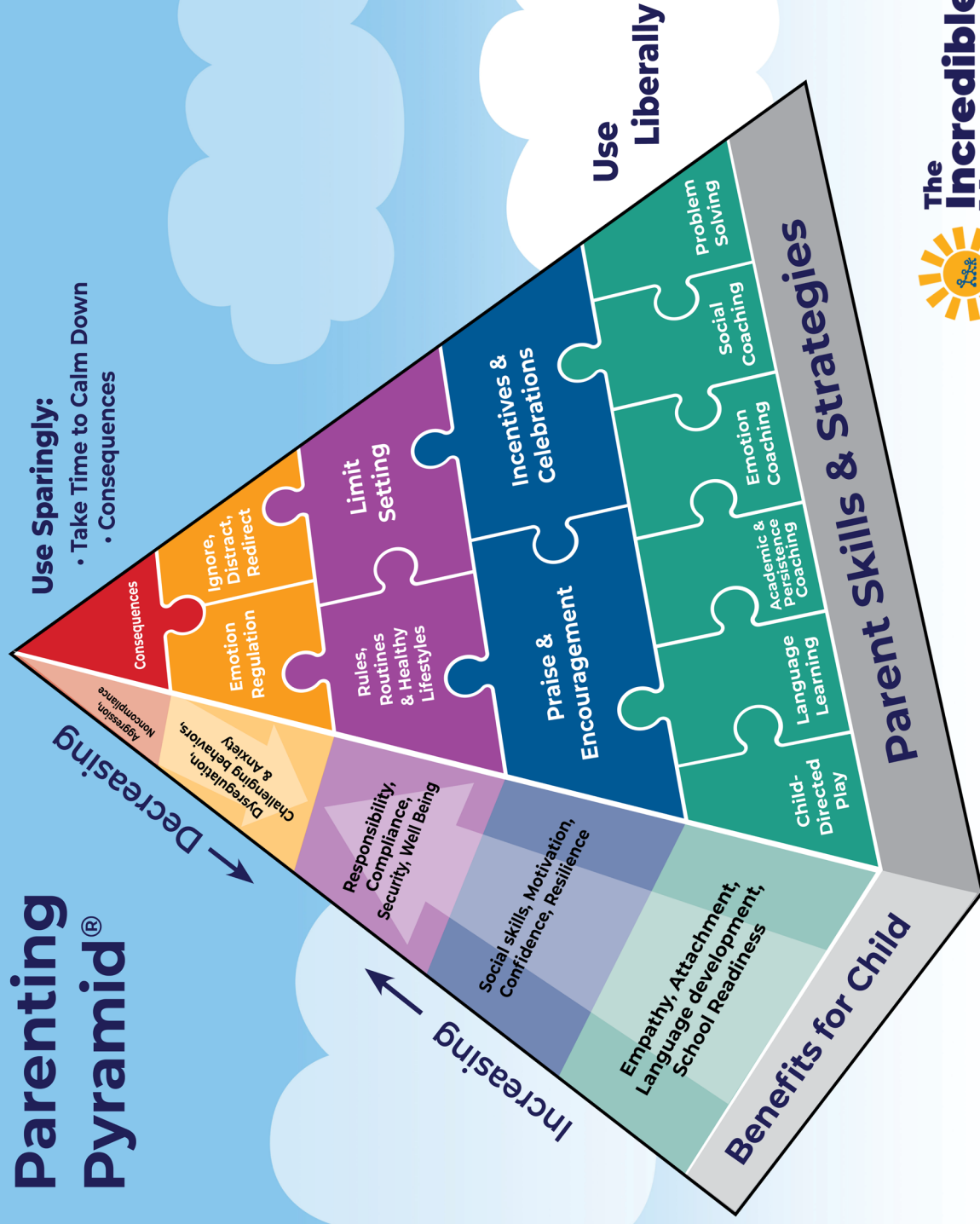
Good play materials should be:

- 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

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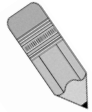
## Brainstorm/Buzz: Benefits of Play with My Child

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>	

