

Striving to Thrive in 2020: Parent Handout

Find the Middle Ground: We can do hard things!

- If we set our expectations too low, we risk fragilizing our children by assuming they can't do things.
- But if our expectations are too strict (expecting kids to do everything all at once the way they did before the pandemic), this may feel invalidating and set them up for failure.
- The goal is to find the middle ground where we can validate their experiences and emotions while fostering a sense of resilience. We can do hard things!

Step 1: Check in with your child:

Acknowledge

- This is a tough time
- School might feel really different right now.
- That there is so much uncertainty.

Normalize

- It's okay to have different reactions, emotions and stress along the way.

Instill hope

- We are in this together!
- We can support each other.

Praise

- Thanks for letting me know how you are feeling.
- Thanks for sharing your concerns about school/home/ friends.

Step 2: Make your home a charging environment: Child-Directed Play

Overview of Child in Child-Directed Play

- Child directed play is 5-15 minutes of one-on-one time between the child and caregiver
- More frequent is better! Ideally, the child receives this period of child-directed play as many days of the week as possible.

- The play time is not earned through “good” behavior and, conversely, cannot be lost for “bad” behavior. In fact, on challenging days, the child may need this time with you even more.
- The child chooses the activity to play, within reason. You can also provide several available options and allow the child to pick.
- The activity should allow you to observe and describe the child’s play. Less interactive activities, such as watching videos or reading, should be avoided. Try to avoid offering games or activities that foster aggression (e.g., playing with superheroes), as this may result in having to end the play for the day.
- Show genuine interest and enthusiasm as you play along with the child according to their rules.

What to DO during child-directed play:

The behaviors below show you are paying attention and are interested in what the child is doing:

1. Describe what the child is doing (narrate like a sportscaster).
2. Reflect back what the child says.
3. Imitate the child.
4. Provide labeled praise.

What to AVOID during child-directed play:

1. Instructions- since they require the child to pay attention to you.
2. Questions- since they require that the child respond. It is appropriate to use questions sparingly with older children.
3. Criticisms

Step 3: Help your child hit the reset button:

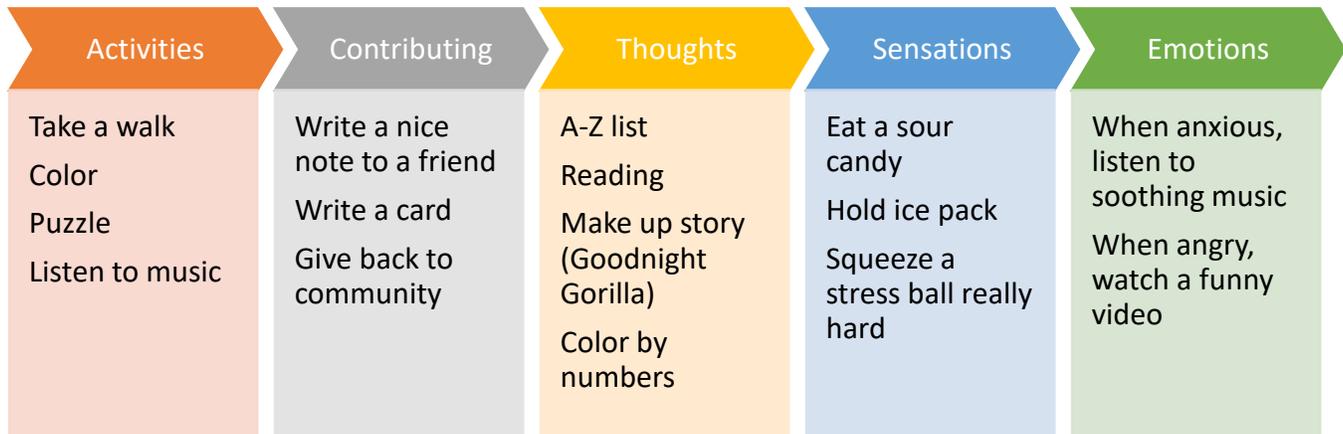
1. Notice that your child needs help regulating their emotions
2. Provide Validation:
 - Make eye contact
 - Reflect back what your child is saying without judgment and without making interpretations
3. Ask “How can I help?”
 - You can offer a few options:
 - “I can listen and validate your feelings.”
 - “I can help you problem solve.”
 - “I can go away and let you handle it.”

4. Prompt your child to use a coping skill:

- ACCEPTS
- Grounding

5. Praise

ACCEPTS examples:



Grounding Examples: These skills involve deliberately turning attention away from the distressing situation or related negative thoughts and instead noticing the present moment.

Skill	Instruction
54321 Senses	Identify five things you see in the room, four things you hear, three things you touch, two things you smell, one thing you taste.
54321 Colors	Identify five red objects in the room, four blue objects, three yellow objects, etc. Pick any set of five colors that works for you.

Examples:

1. My child doesn't want to engage in virtual learning: in the moment coaching
 - (Be kind to yourself – we are all doing our best)
 - Check-in: what's making it hard?
 - Validate
 - Ask how you can help
 - Prompt coping skill use (ACCEPTS, Grounding) in moment of distress
 - Praise
 - Return to expectation
2. My child doesn't want to engage in virtual learning: positive reinforcement:

- Identify 1-3 target behaviors (e.g., keeping screen on, contributing, initiating work, etc)
- Set up reward system
 - i. If, then: If you stay on the whole zoom call, you then can play outside for an extra 15 minutes
 - ii. Sticker chart: 1 sticker for each target behavior, 5 stickers is reward
- Use labeled praise along with rewards to lock in the habit