



Parent Coaching Workbook

Learn to lead your family with grace



4 ACTIONS, 4 MESSAGES

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Welcome

Welcome to parent coaching at Connected Families! We are so glad you've decided to make this investment of time, resources, and energy. It might be the best investment you make into your family!

Before we begin, here are a few important guidelines:

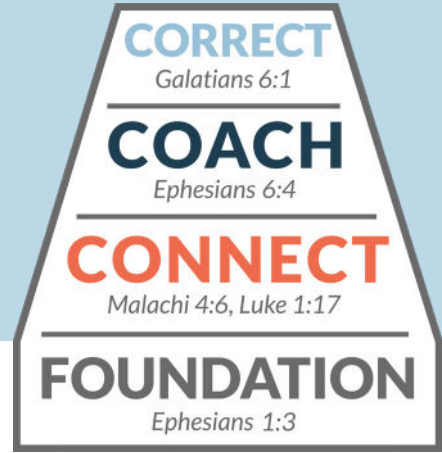
- You will have six months to complete your coaching session(s). Any remaining sessions not completed within six months will be viewed as a donation to Connected Families. A tax-deductible receipt (at the end of the calendar year in which you paid for coaching) is available upon request. Extensions may be granted under extenuating circumstances as long as there is clear communication ahead of time.
- This workbook is designed to be a guide for our sessions. We likely won't discuss everything in it, but it is packed with great information. We will discuss the material in the workbook that corresponds to each session and work together to identify key action steps for the time between sessions.
- Before your Zoom session starts, plan to spend 5-10 minutes reviewing the first page of the session in the workbook that we'll be covering and 5-10 minutes afterward writing down your takeaways. This will maximize the time we spend together and your learning!
- Your reminder emails for subsequent sessions will include a link to fill out the Session Prep form located on your private coaching page. **Please have this form sent to your coach one day prior to your next scheduled coaching session.**
- You will likely get out of coaching whatever you follow through with and put into practice between sessions. Pay attention to the last page of each session and review what was discussed.
- Sessions are self-scheduled through the Calendly link on your private coaching page. You are able to cancel or reschedule your own sessions, but we ask that you do not make changes less than 48 hours before a session unless there are extenuating circumstances.
- Connected Families parent coaches are mandated reporters who are required to notify the appropriate child welfare agency if we suspect a child is being/has been neglected or abused. (For perspective, we have coached hundreds of families since we began in 2009 and haven't yet needed to contact social services as mandated reporters.) If there were a concern, the coach would always talk with the parent(s) before contacting the proper authorities.
- If coaching is a meaningful part of your parenting journey, we would love it if you told your friends. If, on the other hand, it did not meet expectations, we value your specific, honest feedback!



Signature of Parents

Date

Introduction to the Framework



Your Typical Parenting Challenge

GOALS

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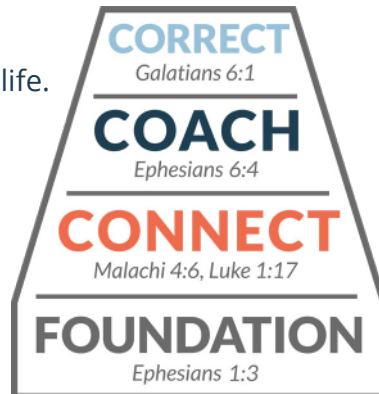
MESSAGES

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Is there a disconnect? Why or Why not?

Discipline That Connects: Four Transformational Messages

- 4 You are **RESPONSIBLE** for your actions and life.
- 3 You are **CALLED** and **CAPABLE**.
- 2 You are **LOVED** no matter what.
- 1 You are **SAFE** with me.



Discuss/role-play “Four Messages” alternative to your initial parenting challenge.

MAKE IT PRACTICAL | What was it like being the child?
Where did you notice the 4 messages?

* The Discipline That Connects book or online course will deepen your learning during coaching.

You are SAFE with me



Key Verses

"The name of the Lord is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe." *Proverbs 18:10*

"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts." *Psalm 139:23*

Key Thought

Kids learn best when they feel safe.



Guiding Question: What's going on in me?



What this session covers

INSIGHTS

- Your beliefs motivate your parenting actions.
- Your kids learn best when they feel safe.
- Your failures are powerful opportunities.

TOOLS

- Replace Toxic Beliefs
- Slow, Low, Listen
- Do-Overs

INVITATION: The first and most important work you do as parents is to receive God's grace and truth. As you lean into God's presence with you, you can gain awareness of what's going on in you, and identify grace-filled truths to replace toxic beliefs. You can learn practical ways to calm yourself and show up to parenting challenges with a peaceful heart. When it all falls apart, you can humbly lead the way in a "do-over". **Kids learn best when they feel safe.** Your work to build your foundation provides powerful "felt safety" where your children truly feel emotionally and physically safe, and that you are for them. This paves the way for them to regulate and learn as you move through the Connected Families Framework.

"For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of."

Matthew 12:34b

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"

Romans 12:2a

Replace Toxic Beliefs

INSIGHT Your beliefs motivate your parenting actions.

- Instead of asking "What should I do?" start asking "What's going on in me and what do I need to receive from the Lord right now?"
- Foundation is about receiving God's grace and truth, not trying harder!

TOOL Replace Toxic Beliefs

BELIEFS ABOUT MYSELF

Toxic Belief

What am I believing right now?

Grace-filled Truth

Lord, what do you say about this?

I'm an angry mom, raising an angry child, and when he gets to be a teenager, it's going to be horrible!



I'm an intense mom, raising an intense child, and we butt heads, but we love each other.

My kids are struggling, and it's my fault.



God can use our struggles for His good purposes. Their choices are theirs, not mine.

I can't do this anymore.



This is hard, but not hopeless. Jesus is enough to get me through.

I feel like a chronic disappointment to God.



God has so much mercy for us in our struggle.

I shouldn't have to deal with this.



This is frustrating, but I know there is an opportunity for my child to learn and grow.

If my child fails this class, I have failed her. I'm a failure.



If my child fails this class, she will have failed a class. That's it. She's still a child of God, as am I.

I'm the parent. I should be in charge and respected.



No person can control another, and true respect is earned. As I lead with grace, I gain both respect and influence.

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

Prayerfully reflect and write down your toxic beliefs about yourself, and corresponding realistic, grace-filled truths.

Replace Toxic Beliefs *(continued)*

BELIEFS ABOUT CHILD

Toxic Belief

What am I believing right now?

Grace-filled Truth

How does God see me and my child?

I need to win these power struggles or she is going to run this house.



She is my teammate to solve this problem.

This kid is a slob. How in the world is he ever going to hold a decent job?



This struggle with neatness does not define him. The messy room is a chance to show unconditional love.

This kid is just a train wreck.



She is a passionate, take-the-world-by-storm miracle of God.

Here we go, another interruption.



She is not a bother or a burden; she's a blessing. Psalm 127:3

She is disobeying me right now, and that's not ok. This needs to stop!



Children naturally want to please their parents. What is getting in the way of my child obeying? How can I help and be her ally?

This kid is so disrespectful! Where does this come from?



If I can love my kids even in the middle of disciplining them, I win their respect. If they get my disdain, they will likely return it over time.

Why is he so difficult all the time?



I can love the "children of my reality."

If my daughter fails this class, she will fail in life.



Success or failure in school will not define my child nor determine her future.

My child's behavior is my report card. (All parents struggle with this to some degree, even though it may sound crazy.)



Jesus is my report card. To the degree that I can be ok when my child is not, I give my child a very freeing gift.

"God grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change; the courage to change the one I can, and the wisdom to know... it's me!"

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

Prayerfully reflect and write down your toxic beliefs about your child, and corresponding realistic, grace-filled truths.



Playful Idea: Ask your child to draw a picture for/with you to illustrate your grace-filled truth. (i.e. "Jesus is my report card.") Or make up a simple tune to remind yourself of a truth: "We are teammates, teammates, to solve our problems! Ohh-ohh!"

“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”

James 1:19, 20

Slow, Low, Listen

INSIGHT Your kids learn best when they feel safe.

- **What calms me down when I’m upset and how can I model that more?**
- When something is *fast, large, and loud*, our brain goes into high energy and threat detection. This triggers the fight/flight system, which is a good, God-designed function to protect us from real danger.
- But if *you* rush in *fast, large, and loud* to control your child’s behavior, it naturally leads to fight/flight/freeze reactions (aggression/defense/shutdown).
- High brain energy/threat detection shuts down (bypasses) your child’s slower, more complex frontal lobe function. This makes it very difficult to access logical problem solving and nearly impossible to learn wisdom or new skills!
- If you want to lead your child toward wise responses, engage them with a safe, loving presence in **the opposite of fast, large, loud: Slow, Low, Listen.**
- Calming yourself and modeling those calming skills for your children helps you bring peace and co-regulation to the struggle. Then, you can teach skills for the next time a challenge arises!
- As this process is repeated with a sense of safety and love, and it gradually builds trust and *self-regulation* skills in your child.
- The bottom line: God is with you in these moments with His mercy and help!

*** Fun Fact:** The high energy of *extreme fun* can also shut down the frontal lobe and bypass its judgment.

TOOL Slow, Low, Listen *(the opposite of fast, large, loud)*

SLOW

How can I slow down and buy some time? (if safety allows)
(opposite of FAST speech or approach)

- “Let’s talk later when we’re calmer.”
- Take a step back.
- Take a bathroom break.
- Approach slowly, talk slowly with pauses.
- Go to a different room for a while.
- Count to 10 – out loud.
- “Hmm. Let me think (or pray) about this.”
- Take a break to get insight from the Discipline That Connects appendix.



How can I calm my body? What would be the opposite of intimidating? *(opposite of LARGE, towering, intimidating posture and gestures)*

- Get lower than your child.
- Relax your face, eyebrows up, smile.
- Do push-ups or take a walk.
- Rub hand lotion in before responding.
- Sit down, even put your feet up.
- Five deep "Dragon Breaths."
- Put on music.
- Put hands in pockets or behind back.
- Draw with your child or play catch while discussing the problem together.



How can I receive the insight needed? *(opposite of LOUD commands or overwhelming words)*

- "Lord, what's the opportunity here?"
- "Lord, give me your heart for my child."
- Repeat your prepared "grace-filled truth." (See Replace Toxic Beliefs tool.)
- Pray silently or out loud for wisdom and grace.
- Post a key scripture. Repeat it.
- "What's the need driving this challenge?"
- "What's it like to be my child right now?"
- Instead of blaming, state your emotion, ("I feel angry!") then go calm down.

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

What tends to calm you down or helps you remember God's presence when you're upset?

Highlight the ideas you want to use, or write your own.



Playful Idea: Do a silly practice session with your children where you pretend to be upset and then act out your best "Slow, Low, Listen" ideas! Maybe even ask for their advice.

“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion...”

Philippians 1:6

The Brain Magic of Do-overs

INSIGHT Your failures are powerful opportunities.

- Default responses are well-traveled pathways in the brain. Even though you want to parent in new, grace-filled ways, you will likely find yourself frequently falling into old habits, especially at first!
- Shame and self-criticism don't motivate change (for parents or children). They actually strengthen negative patterns and keep you stuck.
- The Holy Spirit's conviction brings repentance and empowers you to grow!
- Model what it looks like to receive God's grace, ask forgiveness, and try again.
- Grace-filled responses can become the new default over time.

Neuroscience Highlights:

- What you focus on, you get more of: “Focus is Fertilizer”!
 - Actively practicing a different response changes brain pathways (and even brain structure).
 - Celebrating even small successes helps them stick.
-

TOOL Do-Overs

How do I break the pattern of harsh or unhelpful responses?

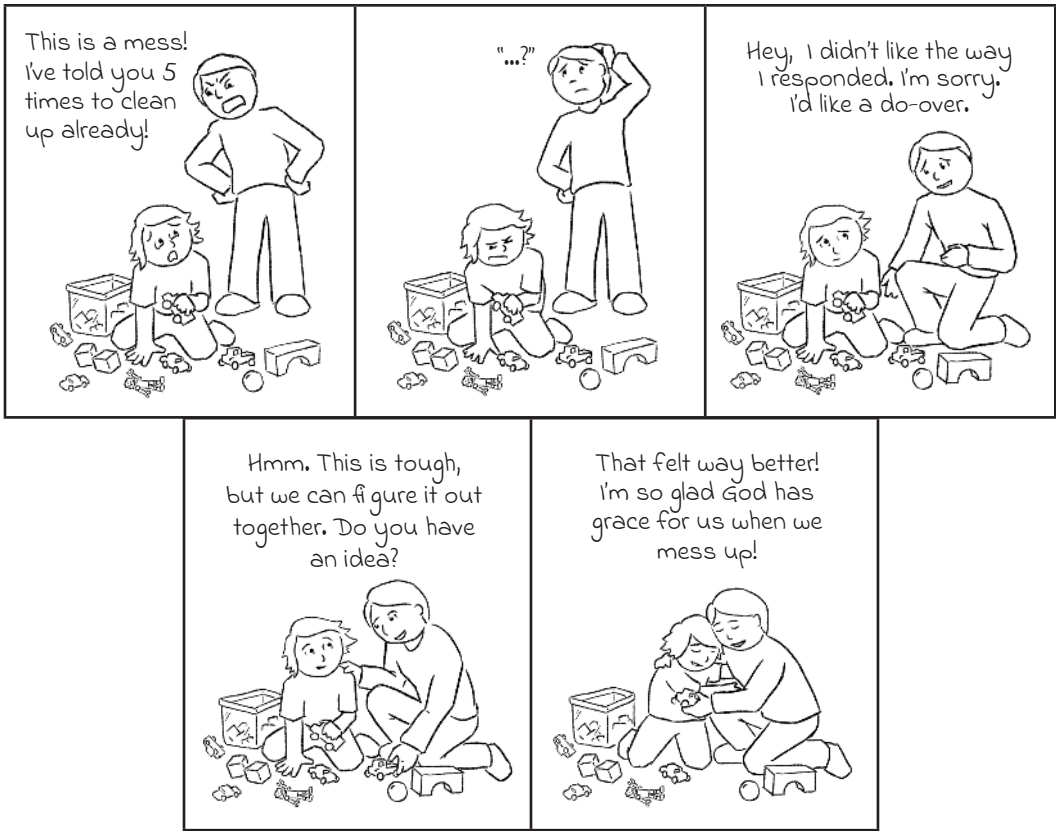
1. Pause and notice the default response.
2. Ask for forgiveness and a do-over.
3. Try again the way you wish you would have done it. (i.e., lighthearted and playful)
4. Celebrate!

Doing and celebrating “do-overs” can be a powerful tool for helping both parents and children get unstuck from hurtful behavior. Do-overs strengthen alternative, more helpful pathways and bring the power of God's grace into messy conflict.

Note: *Do-overs aren't only for negative interactions. You could also do a do-over when you realize you missed an opportunity to connect or be proactive!*

The Brain Magic of Do-overs (continued)

TOOL Do-Overs



MAKE IT PRACTICAL

What is a response you struggle with, for which you want to develop a new brain pathway?

The grace-filled response I want to practice:

Simple ways to celebrate after do-overs:



Playful Idea: Back up out of the room as you start your do-over, maybe even with "reversing the tape" sound effects and movements.

Maximize Your Growth: Application

TAKEAWAY: What is a FOUNDATION insight you want to remember?

Revisit the “Make it practical” questions throughout this session.

- Replace Toxic Beliefs** with grace-filled truths
- Slow, Low, Listen** to co-regulate, connect and build wisdom
- Do-overs** to strengthen new habits

APPLICATION: What is a Just Right Challenge?

Rather than aiming for a complete overhaul and falling short, identify a “Just Right Challenge” - something that stretches you, but is still within reach. (You’ll know when you’ve identified one by your sense of eagerness, not overwhelm.) Then celebrate and build on your growth! This approach helps you to be most effective at reaching your goals.

GOAL #1 Write out your specific goal:

When _____

...I want to _____.

What visual cues or reminders will help you remember the changes you’d like to make?

How might you build in encouragement/celebration, or maybe accountability with another person?


GOAL #2 Write out your specific goal:

When _____

...I want to _____.

What visual cues or reminders will help you remember the changes you’d like to make?

How might you build in encouragement/celebration, or maybe accountability with another person?

 **Reminder:** Please send a session prep form (linked in your reminder email) one day before your next session.

Extra Resources



Scan this QR code to find free extra resources on the Framework as well as common challenges by topic. The **FOUNDATION** heading contains podcasts and articles to give you further encouragement and ideas around what you've learned in this session.

community.connectedfamilies.org/coaching-resources/

You'll find:

- Encouragement specifically to dads and specifically to moms
- Help for parents who don't feel like they are on the same page
- More practical tips for calming yourself and utilizing do-overs
- Most importantly, a big dose of God's grace for YOU as you grow your connected family!

You are LOVED no matter what

CONNECT

Key Verse

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
Romans 5:8

Key Thought

Misbehavior is the golden opportunity for true unconditional love.



Guiding Question

What's it like to be my child right now?



What this session covers

INSIGHTS

- Jesus is our example: Jesus understands us, and because of this, He can help us. Understanding the factors contributing to misbehaviour equips you to effectively help your child.
- When you prioritize empathy and love first, it paves the way for healing and growth.
- Strong connection helps your child and family to thrive.

TOOLS

- Consider underlying factors
- Love in misbehavior
- Proactive connection and playfulness

INVITATION: Your Foundation in God's grace and truth anchors you in the daily ups and downs of parenting. Freed from toxic beliefs, you can see your family the way Christ does... with genuine empathy, love-no-matter-what, and even delight! Instead of just getting through parenting challenges, you recognize that **misbehavior is the golden opportunity for true unconditional love**. There is no more important time for kids to know they are loved than when they misbehave. And there is nothing more important as a parent than receiving and passing on the transforming love of Jesus to your children. Enjoying your kids and connecting with their hearts prepares them for your guidance and coaching (session 3).

Consider Underlying Factors

INSIGHT Jesus is our example

What about sin? We can't lose sight of the baggage of sin that remains a struggle for all of us - parents and children. This is a complex issue, but in the same way God's image in us never leaves us when we misbehave, our vulnerability to sin is also an ever-present undercurrent of misbehavior.

1 John 1:8

Addressing misbehavior requires discernment as you assess and address "What's it like to be my child?" For more discussion on sin and misbehavior, see this session's resource page.

Jesus understands us, and because of this, He can help us. Understanding the factors contributing to misbehavior equips you to effectively help your child. This tool helps answer the important question, "What's it like to be my child?"

- For parents and kids, our "misbehavior" is not entirely free from sin and selfishness...
- *But* it is almost always linked to other factors or stressors.
- 3 common contributors: **physical factors**, **payoffs**, and **discouragement/negative identity**

TOOL Consider underlying factors

PHYSICAL FACTORS: Body Brain Function

You might notice a strong pattern in your child's behavior struggles. When physical factors are contributing, your support can prevent and reduce some of those struggles.

- blood sugar (i.e., getting irritable before a meal)
- fatigue/sleep issues
- lack of exercise, too sedentary or restless
- boredom/understimulated
- overwhelmed/overstimulated
- difficulty regulating energy level (intense/rapid shifts in emotions/energy)
- lack of skills (a.k.a. brain pathways) necessary to respond wisely
- learning differences (gifted/learning challenges)
- sensory processing challenges
- brain changes from trauma/adoption
- overactive "threat detector"

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

Next to the challenges that apply, write ideas for how you might support your children in these areas. Note: as children mature, your role shifts to supporting their own care for themselves.

PAYOFFS: Inadvertent rewards for misbehavior

- God built into children an innate, relationship-building desire for intense connection with their parents.
- Misbehavior can lead to:
 - **Tangible pay-offs:** something a child is demanding
 - **Relational payoffs:**
 - Intense attention (if you are feeling annoyed → children are likely looking for connection)
 - Power or control (if you are feeling angered → children are likely looking for power)

Consider this analogy from the child's perspective:

"Even though I want positive connection, I might try and get nothing. I know I can get a lot of negative attention (which is still a form of connection) if I dawdle, sass Mom or Dad, or poke my sibling..."

Therefore, intense, angry attention from Mom or Dad is an important reward (and fertilizer) for misbehavior. It can also make kids feel very powerful because they inherently know they are controlling their parents' emotions.

- Reframing "attention seeking" as "connection seeking" can help you engage with wisdom and empathy. Instead of thinking, "Oh, he's just looking for attention," consider asking yourself: "**Is my child attempting to connect with me?**" Then, invite your child into positive connection!

Compare the amount and intensity of the energy your child gets from you when doing a typical misbehavior – or when doing the opposite, appropriate behavior:

(1 = none, 10 = intense focused energy and attention)

Misbehavior: _____ out of 10

Appropriate behavior: _____ out of 10.



MAKE IT PRACTICAL

What tangible and/or relational rewards might "fertilize" your child's misbehavior?

How could you respond differently next time you feel annoyed or angry about your child's behavior?

DISCOURAGEMENT/NEGATIVE IDENTITY

- Children who struggle with misbehavior are usually discouraged.
- Our judgments can send messages like *"You are a problem,"* causing hurt feelings and the conclusion that we are *against* them, not for them.
- A struggling child may have developed a negative identity as a troublemaker, whiner, angry kid, etc, with an internal template that keeps them stuck. They may believe, *"This is the kind of kid I am, and this is what I do."*
- Children can get strong negative identity messages from siblings, peers, or teachers, as well as their own perceptions of their struggles, school/athletic performance, and how they compare with others.

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

What might your child be believing about themselves?
"My child would describe their role in the family as"

Are there sources of negative identity messages your child is getting outside the home?

What truths do you want your child to know and believe about themselves?

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.”

Hebrews 4:15

“[Nothing] ... in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8:39

TOOL Love in Misbehavior

The Power of Empathy

When you take time to try to understand your child and express empathy, it helps you react calmly. Empathy demonstrates unconditional love and builds self-awareness and emotional maturity in your children by giving them language to understand themselves. Over time, they will learn to apply that knowledge to understanding and expressing empathy for others!

- How could I express empathy with sincerity?
- What affectionate response might best communicate unconditional love?

WORDS

- Simply say, *“I love you.”*
- Remind a child of a past success.
- Work to truly understand and clearly articulate your child’s point of view.
“This is hard to talk about, isn’t it?”
- Validate your child’s feelings (this does not imply approval of your child’s behavior.)
- Tell your child about a time when you felt the same way.
“I remember struggling with these problems at school, too.”
- Identify what is important to your child when she is struggling.
“You care a lot about things being fair.”
- Continue to make validation/empathy statements until you can see your child feels understood.
- Reassure your child.
“We are having a hard time, but we’ll get through this.”
- Poke fun at yourself or the challenging situation, but not at your child.

FOCUSED ATTENTION / FACIAL EXPRESSION

- Listen without judgment.
- Put your attention on whatever small (or significant) thing is good in the interaction.
- Smile.
- "Gentle eyes".
- Make the majority of your eye contact with your child affectionate and inviting.

PHYSICAL AFFECTION

- Offer a hug whenever your child is ready.
- Give a high five for any insight your child has.
- If your child is comfortable with it, rub a shoulder.
- Sit next to your child or, if a small child, let your child sit on your lap.

Love in Misbehavior Communicates:

*"You are loved and understood,
even when you're struggling."*

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

Which of these ideas would you like to try?

Write a few empathy statements you could use in challenging moments.



Playful Idea: Coach kids to know how to answer the question, "What does Jesus do when we mess up?" (He loves us!) Pretend you are hard of hearing and need them to repeat it.

Proactive Connection and Play

INSIGHT Children and families thrive when connection is strong.

"You are my beloved son,
with whom I am well
pleased."

Matthew 3:17

"See how great a love the
Father has lavished on us,
that we should be
called children of God."

1 John 3:1

- Research shows that connection is the best predictor of a positive future and the biggest antidote to many of life's challenges.
- You can create strong connection even amid the busyness of life with simple, quick, but power-packed proactive connection and play.
- Increasing connection before or during a time that tends to be challenging (like bedtime or chores) can make an especially big difference.

TOOL Proactive Connection

WORDS

Communicates - "You are valuable just because you are created and loved by God."

- Pray a strong blessing over your child (biblically very significant).
 - "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace."
Numbers 6:24-26
 - Pray any encouraging scripture at bedtime, such as the verses in the margin.
 - Personalize a blessing: "Lord, I bless Amanda in your name. I am so grateful for your deep love for her. Thank you for the privilege of being her dad. Continue to grow her in your wonderful purposes for her life."
 - If your child is uncomfortable receiving a blessing, you can ask permission to pray a blessing after they are asleep.
- Express gratitude for specific characteristics God created in your child, such as intensity, creativity, sparkly blue eyes, fiery red hair, and an off-the-wall sense of humor.
- Use nicknames that are affirming and call out a strength you see in your child.
 - Examples: Laser-like Laura for a child who can focus on video games; Bulldog for a very determined son, etc. The child *must* feel good about the nickname. Jesus gave His intense disciples James and John the nickname Sons of Thunder and determined Simon should become Peter (the Rock). These names expressed joy-filled affection and strongly called out the disciples' capabilities.
- Project a positive future, even in failure.
 - For example, "It didn't work out for you this time, but you will keep working hard. You will get it." or "This was a tough one, wasn't it? I believe things will be different next time around."
- Write short notes for kids to find in their lunches at school, under their pillows, etc. Exchanging journal entries can pave the way for greater comfort with face-to-face verbal affection.
- Text affectionate greetings if your kids use technology.

FOCUSED ATTENTION/FACIAL EXPRESSION

Communicates - *"You are noticed and important."*

- Warm greetings and a grin at transitions such as waking, returning from school, etc. Fully acknowledge your child's presence when they walk into the house and give them your attention.
- Consciously set aside your cell phone or computer, look in your child's eyes, and acknowledge, *"You are way more important than this device."*
- Ask *curious* questions about your child's interests and determine how you can explore them together. Note: The older the child, the more suspicious they may be that there is a hidden agenda.
- Take some time to breathe and simply watch your child. Wink or smile at her. *Affectionate, delighted eye contact is essential to bonding with your child!*
- Notice and verbalize ways you've seen your child grow recently. (This communicates both "You are loved." and "You are capable.")
- "Video moments": Find your child and simply narrate what you see him doing. This communicates, *"You are noticed. You matter. What's important to you is important because you are important."*
 - *"Wow, look at that _____ you're making. I can see _____ (add details)."*
 - Ask questions about whatever you notice.
 - *"Hey, that looks like an interesting show. Tell me about it at dinner."*
- Give kids a specific time to ask any question they want (i.e., bedtime?).
- Reflect on favorite memories together.
- If your child doesn't want to talk, just sit next to them while they focus on a favorite activity. (This can feel very affectionate but comfortable for a withdrawn child.)
- Sit silently with your child in the same room with no agenda, or take a leisurely walk. Calm and relaxed.
- Turn off your music when driving so you are available to talk if your child wants to.
- Spend 10 minutes every day (or half hour a week) doing exactly what your child would like to do.
- Look through old photos or videos where fond memories can be shared.

PHYSICAL AFFECTION

Communicates - *"I feel close to you."*

- Place your hand on your child while praying for them. This is an integral part of scriptural blessings that passes faith between generations.
- Back/shoulder or foot rub, touch on the shoulder, hugs.
- Brush hair or paint nails, or whatever your child says she enjoys.
- Give a high five, fist bump, a fun "secret" handshake with a "secret" meaning.
- Hug sandwich with another parent or sibling; family huddle hugs
- Play wrestle, give piggyback rides, bike/walk/hike/run/exercise together

When you are playful with your kids, it engages their hearts and brains in a remarkable way. Play can take many forms and is powerful for connecting and reducing stress (for kids AND parents!).

"The joy of the Lord is your strength"
Nehemiah 8:10b

TOOL Playfulness

Communicates - *"I'm having fun loving you. It's easy."*

- Find ways to laugh at yourself when you are with your child. For younger kids, you can even intentionally make silly mistakes, which can help reduce perfectionistic anxiety.
- Put aside your agenda, get on the floor, and play; find something fun to do together. Build a fort and camp out in it. Play with Legos or dolls. Draw next to your child. Play catch.
- Use goofy nicknames with no meaning at all that your child thinks are silly.
- Silly repeated phrases - i.e., "You're my girly girl girl whom I lovey love love."
- Give your child a hefty dose of playful power by playing the bumbling adult who chases but can't quite catch them, who forgets how to get ready for bed, or who needs their advice on a very silly problem.
- Create a hilarious alter-ego, such as Robot Dad or Mrs. McGillicuddy, the eccentric homework assistant. Play the part whenever a giggle is needed!
- Make up a song and repeat it often. These only need to be affectionate, not creative or well-sung. For example, put the following words to a tune and sing it, especially at difficult times: *"I love you when you're happy or when you're feeling sad. I love you when you're crabby and when you're really mad. I love you, love you, love you!"*
- Make inside jokes with your child. (This communicates, "You and I have a special connection.")
- Share a funny experience you had that day.
- Invite kids into your play and creative pursuits - baking, art, music, etc.
- A non-threatening idea for any aged child: watch funny YouTube videos or movies with memorable lines you can repeat and enjoy.

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

Check the connection and playfulness ideas that are natural strengths for you, and underline a few new ideas you'd like to try.

You are Loved No Matter What!

For I am convinced that
neither arguing nor defiance,
neither sibling conflict nor disrespect,
neither bad grades nor failure,
neither whining nor lying,
neither forgetfulness nor messes,
nor any other misbehavior
will be able to separate you from my love
or God's amazing love.

Adapted From Romans 8:38, 39

Maximize Your Growth: Application

TAKEAWAY: What is a CONNECT insight you want to remember?

Revisit the “Make it practical” questions throughout this session.

- Consider Underlying Factors** to understand your child and respond with wisdom.
- Love in Misbehavior** to effectively communicate unconditional love and empathy.
- Proactive Connection and Playfulness** to grow deeper connection and joy.

IDENTIFY YOUR JUST RIGHT CHALLENGES

GOAL #1 Write out your specific goal:

When _____

...I want to _____.

What visual cues or reminders will help you remember the changes you'd like to make?

How might you build in encouragement/celebration, or maybe accountability with another person?


GOAL #2 Write out your specific goal:

When _____

...I want to _____.

What visual cues or reminders will help you remember the changes you'd like to make?

How might you build in encouragement/celebration, or maybe accountability with another person?

 **Reminder:** Please send a session prep form (linked in your reminder email) one day before your next session.

Extra Resources



Scan this QR code to find free extra resources on the Framework, as well as common challenges by topic. The **CONNECT** heading contains podcasts and articles to give you further encouragement and ideas around what you've learned in this session.

community.connectedfamilies.org/coaching-resources/

You'll find:

- Encouragement specifically to dads and specifically to moms
- Help for parents who don't feel like they are on the same page
- More practical tips for calming yourself and utilizing do-overs
- Most importantly, a big dose of God's grace for YOU as you grow your connected family!



Scan this QR code to download the **Romans 8:38,39 printable**. We hope this adaptation of Romans 8: 38-39 will serve as a way to strengthen connection with your child as you discuss the conflict in your relationship and move toward reconciliation.

community.connectedfamilies.org/romans-8-download/

Extra Resources

PURPOSEFUL PLAY

Child Leads

Set a timer for a designated time period where your child leads the play while you watch, narrate and communicate delight! You can start with half an hour a week or 10-15 minutes a day. You can include motor toys like nerf toys, balls, blocks, obstacle course items, or imagination toys (see symbolic play). This strengthens a child's trust and safety and can increase their ability to play alone because they practice providing the creativity. It improves cooperation as kids feel seen and valued.

Symbolic Play

Use props, blocks, stuffed animals, puppets, dolls, small figures, Legos, doctor kit, vehicles, art supplies, Play-Doh, or dress-up clothes to engage your child around experiences that might be difficult to have a conversation about, i.e., feelings about a new sibling, struggles at school, fear of the dentist, etc. You can use toys to act out a scenario similar to the challenging experience and let your child take over the storyline, or you can pretend to be a character in the scenario. This is especially good for helping children heal from trauma or learn wise choice-making in various situations.

Nonsense Play

Make silly mistakes (put a sock on your child's ear, draw someone with three arms), or have exaggerated, big emotions or pretend conflicts. Make up a silly song that expresses a child's frustration with something. Objects talk, and even fingers can have conversations with the child. Great for reducing perfectionism in kids, as mistakes prompt laughter. Decreases stress and increases cooperation.

Pursuit Play

Separate and pursue your child in various ways - peekaboo, chase, tag, hide and seek, look for a child as you pretend you can't see them. Wildly celebrate finding or catching your child. Two people each tug on the arm and argue over who gets to be with the child. Good for attachment, connection, and helping separation anxiety or trauma. It communicates, "I want you! You are delighted in!"

PURPOSEFUL PLAY *(continued)*

Power Reversal Play

Play the silly, clumsy, confused, or frightened adult. Fall down when you chase kids or let them knock you down with a pillow, be terrified when they are a fierce animal or pretend you need them to protect or guide you. Imitate whatever your child does (be careful to be light-hearted, not mocking); or follow their commands, i.e., let kids lead Simon Says, pretend to be a robot they command, roleplay a silly situation, and ask their advice. Create scenarios where your child is the hero or saves the day in the face of some threat as you follow their orders. Great for building confidence and security in anxious or timid kids, it decreases power struggles with strong-willed kids because they enjoy fun “delegated power” without defiance.

Regression Play

This can restore connection from a missed opportunity for early bonding. Feed, rock, sing lullabies, or do baby talk with your child as your child acts like a baby (or just younger than they are.) Because kids are given permission to act younger and are loved when they do it, it decreases jealousy and aggression toward a younger sibling and reduces manipulative helplessness or baby talk.

Physical Connection

Give zooming fly-by kisses, snuggle, play wrestle, hand-clapping (“patty-cake”) games, fist bumps, piggyback rides which child directs, “dancing on Dad,” play Sardines, squish child between two parents. “Accidentally” fall on top of your child, fall “asleep,” and they work to get out from under you. Communicates safety and “I like to be close to you.”

Teamwork

Play as a team, take turns building something, make an obstacle course, be an assembly line to empty the dishwasher, or alternate words or lines when telling a story. Kids gang up against parent(s) in a Nerf gun or newspaper ball fight. Serve others together. Teamwork builds unity between siblings and cooperation in general.

Listening and Self-Control

Practice these skills in games like Simon Says, Red Light - Green Light, Statues, “Captain May I?”, Freeze, Slow-motion - Fast-motion. Notice and affirm any success.

Primary resources: [Attachment Play](#), [Playful Parenting](#), [Self-control Games](#)

You are CALLED and CAPABLE



Key Verses

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." *Ephesians 2:10*

"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." *Psalms 139:14*

Key Thought

I can find and build strengths in my child, even in misbehavior.



Guiding Questions

What can I affirm in my child?

What skill is needed for my child to grow?



What this session covers

INSIGHTS

- Your children have God-given gifts and an identity to call out and affirm.
- Even from a young age, you can help your child discover God's purposes for them.
- Your strongest influence is through your proactive effort.

TOOLS

- ABC Affirmations
- Gifts Gone Awry
- Motivate, Model, Practice, Praise
- Questions
- Team Problem Solving
- Family Meetings

INVITATION: As you deepen your Foundation and Connection as a parent, your God-given influence in your family grows. You can step into the role of Coach, recognizing and affirming the identity, gifts, and calling that God has already placed in your children. You can have the confidence to **find and build strengths, even in misbehavior**. You'll develop your child's capability when you solve problems as a team and find Just Right Challenges that will maximize their learning and growth. You can learn to ask thoughtful questions as you build values and skills and celebrate God's work in all of you while you grow in the purposes He has for each of you.

ABC Affirmations

INSIGHT

Your children have God-given gifts and an identity to call out and affirm.

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

Philippians 4:8

- Managing misbehavior can be exhausting for parents and children. Getting below the surface allows you to mentor your child’s identity and beliefs, which often produces a harvest of positive change over time.
- Focus is Fertilizer: what you focus on, you’ll get more of.
- Effective affirmation builds skills, wisdom, and positive identity (without feeding people-pleasing from unhelpful forms of praise.)

“...even when kids understand why something is wrong, they still aren’t more likely to do what’s right the next time.” What changes behavior is “creating opportunities to practice good behavior and following up with praise...”

- Dr. Alan Kazdin, Director of the Yale Parenting Center and Child Conduct Clinic
<http://alankazdin.com/discipline-for-softies-by-nancy-rones-parents-com/>

TOOL

ABC Affirmations

A Action

What positive actions did you observe?

Use good detail to objectively describe what you observed.



Example:

“Wow, you cleared the table before I even asked you to!”



This builds **SKILLS** because children know exactly what they can do again next time.

B Benefit

What were the natural benefits of the action to everyone involved, including the child?

You can also ask your child questions to help them discover this.



Example:

“That made it easy to finish the dinnertime chores quickly, and we all had more time to play games together.”



This builds **WISDOM** about how life works and motivation to make wise choices.

C Character

What did it take to do that? What character did it require?

Make a statement about maturity and/or a specific character quality that was required.



Example:

“It takes responsibility and self-control to take care of your chore before getting busy with something else.”



This builds a **POSITIVE IDENTITY** around what they’ve done, which increases their desire to repeat the wise choice the next time.

ABC Affirmations

MAKE IT PRACTICAL | Write an ABC affirmation you can use to encourage one of your children.

- **Action:**
- **Benefit:**
- **Character:**



Playful Idea: Make up a story about a person or animal who clearly represents your child and something they did, and weave an ABC affirmation into the story.

Identifying a “Gift-Gone-Awry”

INSIGHT

Even from a young age, you can help your child discover God’s purposes for them.

- Kids tap into their strengths to achieve what is important to them. When that strength is tainted by sin, we often get what we call “misbehavior.” But the strength is still there. We call this the “gift-gone-awry.”
- Looking for the gift-gone-awry to develop brings hope when parents face frequent misbehavior.
- You can empower and equip your children with the values and skills to use their gifts “on track” for honoring purposes.

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Ephesians 2:10

TOOL Gifts-Gone-Awry

Misbehavior	Gift-Gone-Awry	Gift on Track	Skills/Values Needed
Arguing/Backtalk*	Honesty; Strong feelings/opinions; Confidence	Authentic, connected relationships; Respectful honesty in conflict	Empathy; Self-control; Conflict resolution skills
Yelling	Expressiveness; Desire to be understood	Sing; Call siblings to dinner; Give announcements in a class	Ability to articulate feelings and ideas clearly; Self-control
Stubbornness	Determination; Intensity of focus	Take on a positive challenge; Develop a specific interest area	Flexibility; Listening to others' ideas
Bossiness/Strong Will	Leadership; Assertiveness	Lead a family meeting; Help teach a Sunday school class	Empathy; Flexibility; Conflict resolution skills
Lying	Creativity; Good memory; Desire to keep the peace	Storytelling for younger siblings; Peacemaking	Sensitive to conscience, Holy Spirit conviction; Value truth and intimacy
Stealing	Courage; Ability to take risks, Planning; Value money	Plan activities with healthy adventure; Help manage family budget	Sensitive to conscience; Holy Spirit conviction; Generosity
Insecurity	Awareness of the feelings and perspectives of others	Opportunities for compassion and focusing on the feelings of others	Understand how to anchor their value in Christ
Impulsiveness	Energy; Living in the moment; Quick responses	Quick response sports; Spontaneity and joy	Stop and think: Learn from the past and apply it to the future
Whining	Persistence; Insight into people (and what makes parents give in...)	Persistence to advocate for the needs of others	Ability to articulate desires respectfully; Delay of gratification; Contentment
Complaining, Irritability	Sensitivity; Awareness of problems	Solve problems with solutions that benefit all involved	Flexible; Creative thinking; Awareness and gratitude for blessings
Defensiveness**	Strong sense of right and wrong; High standards	Help develop family rules with thoughtful rationale	Humility; Teachable heart; Understanding of God's love
Overly concerned about fairness	Strong sense of justice	Acts of compassion and service; Facilitating solutions that all involved think are fair	Empathy; Listening to others' perspectives

**Research has shown that argumentative children are less likely to lie or be deceitful. In the long run, they are more likely to adopt the values of their parents because they passionately exchange ideas instead of going underground with their perspectives.*

***The kids who have the hardest time admitting guilt often feel the worst about having done something wrong, even if it doesn't show. For example, perfectionists tend to be defensive people.*

Examples of Key Biblical Leaders

Misbehavior	Gift-Gone-Awry	Gift on Track	Skills/Values Needed
Saul/Paul: extreme persecution of the early Church	Zeal; Leadership; Determination; Knowledge of the scriptures used to destroy the Church	Gifts used to build up the Church and bring the gospel to the Gentiles	To know who he was persecuting (Jesus) and understand the gospel
Moses: killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew	Passion for and protector of God's people; Decisive	Boldly confronted Pharaoh; Led God's people to freedom from their oppressors	Maturity (from 40 years of shepherding); Verbal confidence (initially through help from Aaron)
Peter: impetuous, spoke before he thought	Passionate lover of Christ; Decisive; Expressive; Confident	Primary leader of the early Church; Boldly preached to thousands and healed many	Wisdom; Humility through failure and grace; Indwelling Holy Spirit

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

Fill in this chart for your child's Gifts Gone Awry.

Misbehavior	Gift-Gone-Awry	Gift on Track	Skills/Values Needed



Playful Idea: Laugh at yourself and tell your kids when you notice one of your "gifts-gone-awry." "There goes micromanaging Mama again! Should I count every paper in your backpack or let you be responsible?"

Motivate, Model, Practice, Praise

TOOL Motivate, Model, Practice, Praise

BUILD CHARACTER TRAITS AND SKILLS

Identify one or two character traits or skills your child struggles with. Describe it in a concise, child-friendly way – i.e., flexibility, “peaceful waiting,” “respectful anger,” etc.

We will look at Jesus’ example of how He trained and sent out the 72 disciples as our guide. He didn’t start with just telling them what to do!

Motivate

- **Jesus’ example** – Jesus used analogies and parables to teach His disciples the value of the Kingdom of God (Mt. 13:44), the value of each individual to God (Luke 15:3-7), and the importance of faithfulness in serving God (Luke 12:35-48). Just before He sent them out, He helped them anticipate success - a rich harvest of ministry. (Luke 10:2)
- **Discuss the natural benefit/impact** of the character trait or skill you’d like to encourage
What story or analogy could you use to explain the value of this trait or skill?
How could you use books/TV, or other media to spark a discussion?
- **Share a scripture** that applies in a positive, non-shaming, even fun way (i.e., Proverbs has lots of fun verses to build wisdom and motivation.)
- **“What would happen if....”** scenarios. ...if Mom or Dad could never wait peacefully?
...if everyone in the world knew how to be respectfully angry?
Discuss or act out and have fun!
- **Previous success** is a strong motivator. Remind children of when they have done well with this trait/skill in the past, or any growth you notice. Express confidence in them.

Model

- **Jesus’ example** – He only asked them to do what He had repeatedly demonstrated over a long period of time.
- **Share stories** about your successes and failures with the desired trait or skill and the natural impact.
- **Tell kids what character trait you are working on** (this could be the same or different from what you want to encourage in them). Overtly celebrate when you have success so kids associate positive feelings with working on traits and skills. Build a family culture that values learning and is okay with mistakes.
- **As you model, talk out loud** about your process for the character traits you want to encourage in them. i.e., flexibility – “This is really frustrating that the rain wrecked our picnic plans. But I’m going to be flexible, take some deep breaths, and write a list of three fun things we could do instead.”

Practice

- **Jesus' example** – A father brought his epileptic son to the disciples to be healed, which implies that Jesus had delegated some of the healing to them, although we don't know when that might have started. (Matthew 17:14-16). When it was time for the disciples to head out two by two on their own, Jesus clearly explained exactly how to do what He was asking. (Luke 10:4-11)
- **Provide visual cues** as needed to help guide the kids' process (e.g., a picture schedule of the morning routine, a poster of the Peace Process steps to conflict resolution, clothes laid out in the right order).
- **Roleplay** a trait/skill. i.e., Set them up to pretend to lose a game and blow up, then pretend to lose a game and respond graciously. Discuss.
- **Offer "do-overs"** when kids struggle. After they have had a chance to calm down, offer to help them practice a better way.

Remember to practice with a Just Right Challenge in mind!

- **Just Right Challenges** help your children effectively build capability.
 - Research shows that we can do our best learning and growing when we are 80-85% likely to succeed at a challenge.
 - This momentum helps children to build on their existing skills and develop further capabilities.
 - As you practice skills and values, break it down into a "Just Right Challenge" for your child's stage and ability.
 - These smaller challenges create many opportunities for effective ("ABC") affirmation.

Praise

- **Jesus' example** – He described the impact of their work (Luke 10:18) and encouraged them in their ability to continue to minister in this way (Luke 10:19). He reminded His disciples that they were loved unrelated to these accomplishments (Luke 10:20) and joyfully praised the Father that He had chosen to work through His children in this way. (Luke 10:21)
- **Help children feel good about the natural impact of their accomplishments.** Don't make it about your feelings, which promotes people-pleasing. Use "ABC affirmation" format p.26. You can also use thoughtful questions to help kids discover the Action, Benefit, and Character of what they accomplished.
- As your children are open to it, you can **praise God as the source of all goodness.**
"Every good and perfect gift is from above..." (James 1:17)
"We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19)

**MAKE IT
PRACTICAL**

What *character trait or skill* would you prioritize as a growth area for your family?

What is your plan to build *motivation* for the character trait or skill you've identified?

What is your plan to *model* this trait or skill?

What does your child need to successfully *practice* this trait or skill?

Don't forget to follow up with an ABC Affirmation!

Build Wisdom and Responsibility Through Questions

Jesus was a master at facilitating life change. He built connected relationships; He told stories, used analogies, and asked questions.

Lots of them. Like 307. His questions were generally about the reality or truth of the situation – revealing what the listeners knew but weren’t considering and how they wanted to respond and take action about what they knew (i.e., Mark 8:27-29.)

Questions are important, but the kind of questions parents ask either hurt or help their relationship with their child. “Why did you....” questions usually sound accusing and build defensiveness, not understanding. **Make sure any questions you ask create safety for your child to share.** Start by asking truly curious questions with the goal to understand and empathize.

Then, ask questions to help your child consider the reality of the situation and decide how to make right anything they might have made wrong. **Better for your child to develop and truly own a less-than-perfect problem-solving plan they’ve created than to simply comply with your plan.**

TIP: A great way to send the message “you are capable” is to notice if you are telling your child things they already know and reframe the directive into a question, such as, “*What do your feet need before we go out the door?*”

Trash, Truth, Treasure

Category	Definition	Response	Key Questions
Hurtful Trash	Unkind, untrue statements or actions that can hurt us if we give them power.	Thoroughly Reject	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What words or actions in this situation were unkind? • What was untrue? • What do you want to do to protect your heart from those things?
Helpful Truth	Kind, entirely true, and objective perspectives that can help us grow.	Thoughtfully Respond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think this person might have been unkind? How could we pray for them? • Is there a true thing that you could learn from in this situation? • What help do you need in this situation, and how could you get it?
Heartful Treasure	Heart-filling truths that encourage us and restore our joy.	Thankfully Rejoice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you love about how God made you? • What true thought encourages you right now? • What are you grateful for in this situation? • What might Jesus (or someone who loves you very much) say to you now?

Build Wisdom and Responsibility Through Questions

Here are some ideas to start building wisdom through questions:

Empathy - What's happening in my child's heart?

- "What are your feelings about this?"
- "That was an intense response. What was going on in your heart just now?"
- "What was your thought process about that?"
- "You seem upset. What is your body feeling right now?"

Reality - What's really going on in this situation?

- "When you look at your sister's face, what do you think she's feeling?"
- "Did this situation go the way you intended, or was it different?"
- "I made our conflict worse by getting harsh right away. I'm very sorry for that. What do you think you might have done to contribute to our conflict?"
- "Ephesians tells us to 'speak the truth in love.' How much truth was in your comment? Did you like how you said it, or do you wish you'd said it differently?"

Response - What shall we do?

- "If you wanted to handle this in a way you felt proud of later, what might you do?"
- "What solution might help everyone feel cared about?"
- "Last time you were in a tough place like this, how did you get through it?"
- "When I was a kid, I really had a hard time with this, and it often didn't go well. (Give details.) What would you like to do differently to avoid my mistakes?"
- Romans 12:21 says, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." What ideas does that give you about how you want to handle this situation?

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

How could you engage your child's capability with a question this week?



Playful Idea: Especially for young kids, ask an obviously confused question that makes them feel smart, e.g., "Do we put mustard on your cereal or milk?"... "Oh, that's right, I forgot, but you remembered!"

Team Problem Solving

Typical Power Struggle

- Child and parent(s) have opposing goals.
- Both experience strong anger from their blocked goals.
- The relational intensity of conflict can be a "payoff," feeding a negative cycle.



*Viewed as distant,
possibly disappointed.*

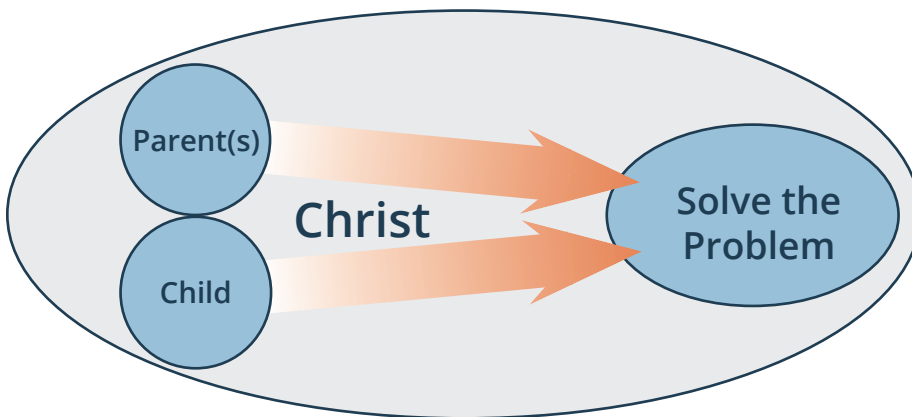


Messages Communicated

- "What's important to you is unimportant. Only what I want is important or valid."
- Child can easily receive messages of "You are unimportant." "You are a problem." "You are in control of my emotions."

Team Problem Solving

Child and parents agree on a shared goal of solving the problem and replacing the negative emotions with connection and unity.



Messages Communicated

- "What's important to each person is important."
- "You are capable and responsible to solve problems you have with people."

Family Meetings

Family meetings are a fantastic way to empower kids to take more ownership in family life. They are also an effective proactive avenue to impart values, discuss regular family challenges, and keep everyone on the same page.

Family meetings may look different depending on the ages of your children. Parents of young children may have kids bouncing off the couch cushions with very short attention spans. Parents of tweens/teens may receive blank stares, just hoping to endure the time. Wherever you find yourself on the family meeting spectrum, know that things are rarely perfect, but once a pattern of grace-filled meetings gets established, kids will usually buy-in.

Here are some guidelines for getting your family meetings started.

- **Start with fun** to set a positive tone. For younger kids, a game or fun movement activity is usually a hit. (See <https://connectedfamilies.org/resources/60-ways-moving-laughing/>.) For older kids, you might start with a hilarious YouTube video. You can also ask a question like, *"What's gone well in our family this week?"*
- **Pick a consistent time to meet** and stick with it. Sunday evening is often a good time to prepare for the week ahead.
- **Keep discussion time short** (i.e., 15 minutes) unless everyone agrees to extend the time.
- **Everyone gets to be heard.** A timer or talking stick can be helpful. Kids learn the important skills of listening and staying on a topic.
- **Decisions are unanimous.** This promotes unity as children figure out how to compromise. It also keeps kids from voting in *"Candy for every meal!"*
- **Attendance is optional**, but all decisions apply to all family members, present or not.
- **Take turns leading the meetings**, each child receiving the minimum help needed to be successful.
- **At first, the meetings should address only one problem area.** For example, *"How do we want to do the laundry?"* Or, *"How do we want to work together at meals?"*
- **It's the parent's job to make it clear what is or isn't negotiable.**

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

How could you create a family rhythm that allows for proactive connection and wisdom building, adapting these ideas if needed?

Maximize Your Growth: Application

TAKEAWAY: What is a COACH insight you want to remember?

Revisit the “Make it practical” questions throughout this session.

- ABC Affirmations** to effectively affirm whatever is good.
- Gifts Gone Awry** to recognize and develop your child’s gifts.
- Motivate, Model, Practice, Praise** to be proactive in building values and skills.
- Build Wisdom and Responsibility Through Questions.**
- Team Problem Solving & Family Meetings** to solve challenges as a family.

IDENTIFY YOUR JUST RIGHT CHALLENGES

GOAL #1 Write out your specific goal:

When _____

...I want to _____.

What visual cues or reminders will help you remember the changes you’d like to make?

How might you build in encouragement/celebration, or maybe accountability with another person?


GOAL #2 Write out your specific goal:

When _____

...I want to _____.

What visual cues or reminders will help you remember the changes you’d like to make?

How might you build in encouragement/celebration, or maybe accountability with another person?

 **Reminder:** Please send a session prep form (linked in your reminder email) one day before your next session.

Extra Resources



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community.connectedfamilies.org/coaching-resources/

You'll find:

- More encouragement to find and affirm your child's gifts
- Proactive coaching examples for specific challenges
- Insight and help for children struggling with negative emotions
- Ideas to build healthy skills and rhythms in your home.

You are RESPONSIBLE for your actions



Key Verses

"Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted." *Galatians 6:1*

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." *Galatians 6:7*

Key Thought

Effective discipline puts responsibility on the child to right their wrongs.



Guiding Questions

What can I do to help my child develop wisdom about the natural impact of their actions?

How can I help my child learn to value restoration and reconciled relationships?



What this session covers

INSIGHTS

- Your children need mentoring to learn conflict resolution skills for restoration.
- Thoughtful, restorative consequences can lead to your child's discipleship and learning.
- As you build wisdom in your child, you can set firm boundaries and communicate, "I'm for you, not against you."

TOOLS

- Anger-Conflict Spectrum
- Peace Process
- Restoration-Focused Consequences
- Effective Choices and Boundaries

INVITATION: By now, you've seen the Framework build on itself - your **Foundation** work enables you to **Connect** richly with your children. That connection grows trust for your guidance as you **Coach** your children in values and skills and encourage them in their identity and capability. Now you can move into the final step: help your children know they are **Responsible** - for their actions and, ultimately, their life. But even more important, you'll share God's heart for reconciliation and connected relationships! You can mentor your children as they learn that anger and conflict aren't to be feared and you can all develop the skills to move through these challenges in constructive ways. **Leave shame and punishment behind as you invite your child into restoration and making it right. You can guide, correct, and hold boundaries while staying connected and letting your child know, "I am for you."**

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”
Matthew 5:9

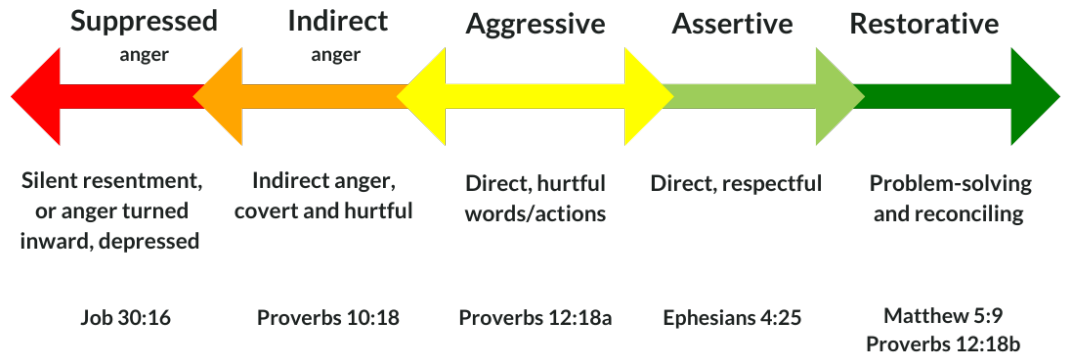
Anger/Conflict Spectrum

INSIGHT Children need your mentoring to learn conflict resolution

- In conflict, children who lack skills are usually either aggressive or passive/avoidant and resentful.
- How you experienced anger and conflict growing up impacts your response to your children.
- Conflict is a valuable opportunity to teach children skills to express respectful anger and resolve conflict well.
- Building the value of reconciliation helps your children grow toward grace-filled, connected relationships throughout their lives.

TOOL Anger/Conflict Spectrum and The Peace Process

ANGER/CONFLICT SPECTRUM



NOTE: This teaching is best understood in the context of teaching restorative anger practices in families. It is our experience that those best equipped to express civil anger in a variety of ways are first equipped for calm, respectful, constructive, and restorative expressions of anger in the context of their most important relationships.

What did you grow up learning about anger and conflict?

Conflict is _____?

Anger/Conflict Spectrum *(continued)*

Help your child grow toward more constructive ways to express anger and resolve conflict.

- Structure a break for everyone if your child is really upset and the interaction escalates.

"I'm pretty upset, but I love you and don't want to be disrespectful to you. Let's talk in a little bit."

- Ask relaxed questions and listen well. Try to ask questions that facilitate a "Yes" answer.

"You seem really upset, is that right?" ("Yeah!") "I'd like to understand that better. Do you think you're ready to respectfully solve the problem, or do you need a little more time? Either is fine."

- Rephrase the hurtful words to be what your child might say if they were a bit calmer.

Child: *"I hate math! And you drive me crazy. You're always bugging me about it."*

Parent: *"Math is really frustrating for you, isn't it? And it doesn't help when you feel nagged."*

Conflict resolution skills take time to develop - affirm the small steps!

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

Fill in your own example for #3. What is a frequent angry response from your child?

What is their heart or struggle underneath the surface?

How could you rephrase their statement to respectfully reflect that?



Playful Idea: If a child isn't in fight/flight, you might use an *"I'll bet you wish... (insert some fantastic idea), e.g., ...that math book would turn into a comic book!"*

Peace Process

Sibling conflict is a key opportunity to teach conflict resolution skills and celebrate reconciliation!



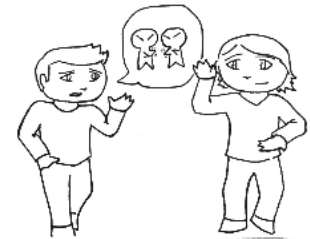
when fights happen...

use the peace process!

1. CALM down



2. UNDERSTAND
each other



3. SOLVE the
problem



4. CELEBRATE!



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Peace Process - Parent Guidelines

1 CALM down: Stop - take a break; Breathe - calm bodies; Think.

- Express empathy. *"This is hard! I love you, and so does God, even if you're angry."*
- "What does your body need for your brain to be able to solve this?"* For example, deep breathing, push-ups, draw/color, a quiet space.
- Structure time to reflect if needed. *"Let's each find a comfortable spot to take a break and think about how to solve this problem."*
- "Take some time to think about: 'What did you feel and want? What do you think your sister/brother felt and wanted?'"*
- "Great job calming down. That's really gonna help us solve this."*

"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry,"

James 1:19

2 UNDERSTAND each other: Facilitate empathy.

- "Remember to talk to each other, not me." "No blaming or harsh words."*
- "To understand each other, talk about what you felt or what was important to you."*
- Young children may need simple choices like *"Are you sad or mad right now?"*
- If necessary, state your best guess at what kids are feeling. *"You seem really frustrated. Does it feel like a long time to wait for a turn?" "And are you frustrated because it feels like you haven't had the toy very long?"*
- Kids can restate what the other person says until all can say, *"I feel understood."*

"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ."

Ephesians 4:15

3 SOLVE the problem: Facilitate solutions/reconciliation.

- "If you could do it all over, is there anything you'd do differently?"*
- "What would you like to say to your sister/brother about that?" or "Do you want to do a do-over?"*
- "Part of growing up is thinking about everybody involved. What's the one thing that's most important to each of you? How could your solution include both of those things or something else you could both enjoy?"*
- "Perfectly fair is hard to figure out. How can we solve the conflict so everyone feels cared about?"*
- Remind of success: *"This is hard, but remember when _____ and you worked it out."*

"The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."

Proverbs 12:18

4 CELEBRATE any success! Help kids feel encouraged.

- "That was hard work, but you did it! You solved your problem."*
- "You've really accomplished something! Not all adults can do this."*
- "What did you feel good about?" "What did you each do that was helpful?" "Do you want to give each other a high-five or a hug?"*

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

Philippians 4:8

Important: Do NOT get stuck on going through the steps precisely or for every little conflict, or children will resent the process. Sloppy and quick can be just fine. Expect messy and celebrate whatever is a little bit better!

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

How can you make the Peace Process a "Just Right Challenge" for your kids? (Role-playing outside the moment, focusing on calming strategies first, celebrating even the small successes?)

Typical vs. Restoration-Focused Consequences

INSIGHT

Thoughtful, restoration-focused consequences can lead to your child's discipleship and learning.

Galatians 6:1 gives insight into this.
"...if someone is caught in a sin, you who **live by the Spirit** should **restore** that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted." (emphasis added)

- Typical discipline usually involves imposing an aversive consequence designed to motivate the child not to repeat the misbehavior (which may seem effective as long as the child is in the presence of the person who imposed the discipline).
- Restoration-Focused consequences reflect the true, root meaning of the word discipline (disciple, teach).

Galatians 6:1 guides us in three important ways to:

- Focus on the true goal of responding to misbehavior – to restore, not punish.
- Make sure that when guiding restoration, we are walking in the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.)
- Watch that we don't respond or "misbehave" in a similar (yet possibly more refined-looking) way.

TOOL

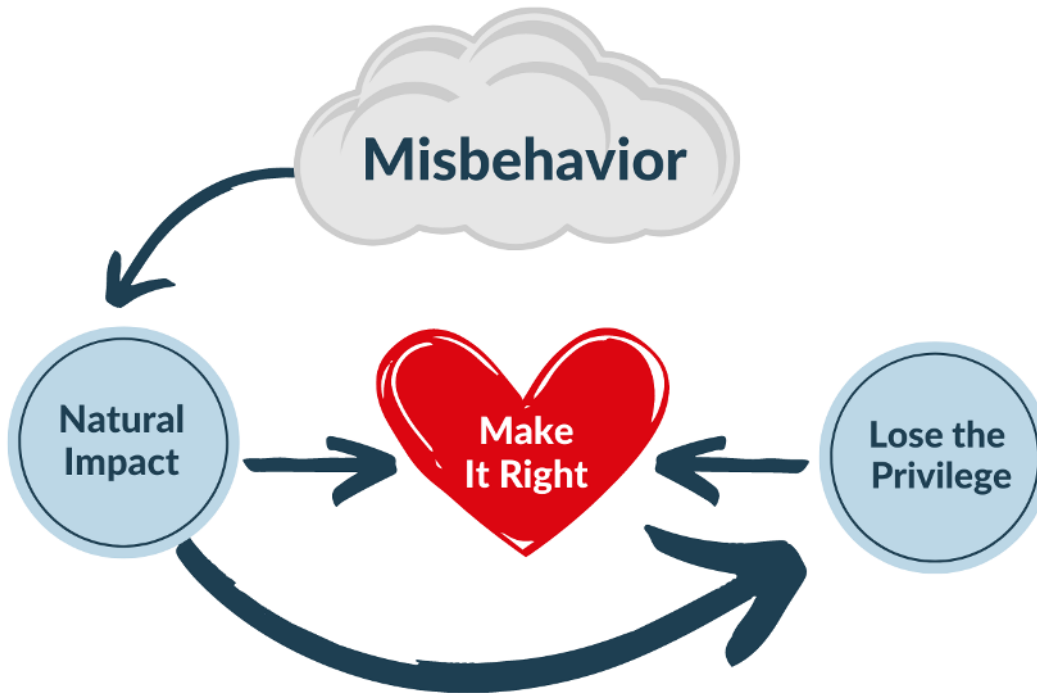
Restoration-Focused Consequences

TYPICAL CONSEQUENCES



Typical vs. Restoration-Focused Consequences

RESTORATION CONSEQUENCES



- **Restoration-Focused consequences** start with helping children understand the natural impact of their behavior on others, themselves, and possibly the environment/property around them. These different natural impacts can be both in the present or long term.
- When kids understand the natural impact(s), **they have an opportunity to sincerely choose to make right (restore) what they have made wrong.** From the natural impact flows the “make it right” action or consequences, as in the examples below.
- This may mean you are alongside your child, modeling and helping them make it right. This can be especially true for younger or neurodivergent children. **Consider how God comes alongside us** in our sin and struggles: *Romans 8:26* “...the Spirit helps us in our weakness...”
- Remember that **Focus is Fertilizer**: instead of emphasizing an unpleasant consequence, help your child “catch” the joy of restoration and affirm their efforts! If a child enjoys making it right (e.g., having fun cleaning up their mess with you or enjoying the snack they prepared to share with a sibling), celebrate it!

Restoration-Focused Consequences

- Example A:** A coaching client's son was nonchalant about striking a boy in the back with a billiard ball despite the obvious pain it caused. She required her son to call an acquaintance in the medical profession to find out what injury might have happened if it had struck him on his spine or head. This prompted the boy to choose to write a letter of apology for his carelessness. They also found out the cost of X-rays his friend received, and he helped pay those charges.
- Example B:** David was bullying his sister – randomly hitting her or shoving her out of his way. His mom discussed the natural impact: He was practicing aggressive behavior that was hurtful to both of them, and Katie was learning victim-like submission to it. His "make-it-right" consequence to offset these patterns was to follow Katie's directions while playing "Katie Says" (i.e., like Simon Says.)

He participated willingly because he understood that this would also help her avoid being bullied at school. When her instructions were timid, both her mom and brother said, "No, Katie, say it strongly!" This increased her confidence and decreased his aggressiveness.

PUTTING PRIVILEGES ON HOLD

If kids are resistant to "making it right," they can lose the specific privilege they abused until they show they value it. Also, any privileges (such as friends or screen time) that would distract them from making it right can be put on hold until they are ready to make right what they've made wrong and/or restore the relationship. **Put privileges on hold with empathy and clear messages of "I am for you".** Example: *"I want you to be able to have your screen time this afternoon, but making things right with your sibling is important. When you are ready, I know you'll make it right. After that, you'll be able to have your screen time if there's still time before dinner."*

Jesus taught that reconciled relationships are our central priority in life - with both God and others. This applies to both parents and children.

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift."

Matthew 5:23-24

How can I hold my child accountable for practicing a helpful response or fixing the problem they created?

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

What was the natural impact of a recent misbehavior?

How might your child make it right with your support?

Effective Choices and Boundaries

INSIGHT

As you build wisdom in your child, you can set firm boundaries but still communicate, *"I'm for you, not against you."*

- Giving demands without choices can feel like setting firm boundaries, but it often lays the groundwork for defiance and power struggles.
- Parents want their children to gain wisdom and responsibility, but focusing on immediate compliance can hinder that long-term goal.
- Helping kids practice making decisions affirms their capability to make choices and handle the consequences of those choices.
- This follows the Biblical pattern in which God clearly lays out our choices and their consequences *while communicating* His desire to bless us.

"This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him."

*Deuteronomy 30:19,20
(Also see Nehemiah 1:8)*

TOOL Effective Choices and Boundaries

To provide effective choices and boundaries, you can remember the phrases:

"If-Then... Otherwise... You can choose..."

Demand: "Put your toys away!" (The child can now thwart the parent by refusing.)

1 Describe the wise decision and the *result* in terms of their goals.

*"If you put the toys away before dinner..."
"Then you can have them after dinner..."
"...which would be really fun; that looks like a cool toy!"*

2 State the result of the unwise decision gently (so it doesn't feel like a threat) and paint a "silver-lining" picture of the results of the unwise decision, which shows you're for them, not against them.

*"Otherwise, we'll put them away for you, and you can have them again tomorrow."
"I'm sure you can find other things to play with instead."
(light tone/smile)*

3 Give them the space to make the decision independently, minimizing their temptation to decide out of spite, resistance, or gridlock.

"You can choose either way and that's okay, it's up to you." (Calmly disengage and walk away.)

If-Then... Otherwise... You can Choose

Demand: "Do your homework, now!"

- 1 Describe the wise decision and the *result* in terms of their goals.

"If you do your homework before 7 p.m. tonight..."

"Then you can use your screens and enjoy your time doing that. I like watching you enjoy your games."

- 2 State the result of the unwise decision gently (so it doesn't feel like a threat) and paint a "silver-lining" picture of the results of the unwise decision, which shows you're for them, not against them.

"Otherwise, your screens will stay off, and we can find something else to do that we can enjoy."

- 3 Give them the space to make the decision independently, minimizing their temptation to decide out of spite, resistance, or gridlock.

"You can choose either way and that's okay; it's up to you." (Calmly disengage and walk away.)

Effective Choices and Boundaries Practice Worksheet

MAKE IT
PRACTICAL

Fill out this worksheet with your own example.

Demand

• "You need to _____."

If-Then... Otherwise... You can choose...

• "If _____."
Describe the wise decision.

• "Then _____."
Describe the result of the wise decision.

• "...which _____."
Enthusiastically but loosely encourage the wise decision in terms of your child's goals, showing you are on their side.

• "Otherwise _____."
State the result of the unwise decision gently so it doesn't feel like a threat.

• "...and _____."
Paint a "silver lining" picture of the unwise decision's results, showing that you're on their side.

• "You can choose _____."
Give them the space to decide independently, minimizing their temptation to decide out of spite, resistance, or gridlock.

Maximize Your Growth: Application

TAKEAWAY: What is a CORRECT insight you want to remember?

Revisit the “Make it practical” questions throughout this session.

- Anger/Conflict Spectrum and The Peace Process** to develop conflict resolution skills.
- Restoration-Focused Consequences** to guide your children to make it right.
- Effective Choices and Boundaries** to set boundaries while encouraging wise decision-making.

IDENTIFY YOUR JUST RIGHT CHALLENGES

GOAL #1 Write out your specific goal:

When _____

...I want to _____.

What visual cues or reminders will help you remember the changes you'd like to make?

How might you build in encouragement/celebration, or maybe accountability with another person?

GOAL #2 Write out your specific goal:

When _____

...I want to _____.

What visual cues or reminders will help you remember the changes you'd like to make?

How might you build in encouragement/celebration, or maybe accountability with another person?

*** Reminder:** Please send a session prep form (linked in your reminder email) one day before your next session.

Extra Resources



Scan this QR code to find free extra resources on the Framework, as well as common challenges by topic. The CORRECT heading contains podcasts and articles to give you further encouragement and ideas around what you've learned in this session.

community.connectedfamilies.org/coaching-resources/

You'll find:

- How to guide children toward repentance and restoration
- Insights on obedience
- Examples of effective, wisdom-building consequences
- Resources for sibling conflict.

SESSION 5

Applying the Whole Framework

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Galatians 6:9

Session 1

You are **SAFE** with me.

"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts." *Psalms 139:23*

Key Thought: Kids learn best when they feel safe.

Guiding Question: What's going on in me?

Session 2

You are **LOVED** no matter what.

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." *Romans 5:8*

Key Thought: Misbehavior is the golden opportunity for true unconditional love

Guiding Question: What's it like to be my child right now?

Session 3

You are **CALLED** and **CAPABLE**.

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." *Ephesians 2:10*

Key Thought: I can find and build strengths in my child, even in misbehavior.

Guiding Questions: What can I affirm?
What skill is needed?



Session 4

You are **RESPONSIBLE** for your actions.

"Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted." *Galatians 6:1*

Key Thought: Effective discipline puts the responsibility on the child to right their wrongs.

Guiding Question: What can I do to build wisdom in my child about the natural impact of their actions?

What this session covers

In this session, we will integrate the four messages of the Connected Families Framework into real-life scenarios so that you can build confidence as you lead with grace.

Utilizing the Framework in Real-Life Scenarios

Celebrate Your Progress

“Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.”

1 Thessalonians 4:9b

Just like we need to remember to celebrate when our children have bright spots throughout the day, we also need to notice our own progress. This strengthens our own brain pathways and reminds us of God’s grace and goodness in this journey.

Where are you already communicating the four messages, and where could the messages be stronger?

	How am I already communicating each message?	What is a growth area for this message?
“You are SAFE with me.”		
“You are LOVED no matter what.”		
“You are CALLED and CAPABLE.”		
“You are RESPONSIBLE for your actions.”		

Utilizing the Framework in Real-Life Scenarios *(continued)*

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

As you parent with the framework in the forefront, communicating the four messages will come more and more naturally.

One way to strengthen the pathways you are already using is through role play.

Scenario 1

Identify a real-life scenario to which you would like to apply the framework:

What does SAFE look like?

What does LOVED no matter what look like?

What does CALLED and CAPABLE look like?

What does RESPONSIBLE look like?

Scenario 2

What is another real-life scenario to which you would like to apply the framework?

What does SAFE look like?

What does LOVED no matter what look like?

What does CALLED and CAPABLE look like?

What does RESPONSIBLE look like?

Maximize Your Growth: Application

TAKEAWAY: What is one insight you want to remember?

Revisit the “Make it practical” questions throughout this session.

GOAL #1 Write out your specific goal:

When _____

...I want to _____.

What visual cues or reminders will help you remember the changes you'd like to make?

How might you build in encouragement/celebration, or maybe accountability with another person?

GOAL #2 Write out your specific goal:

When _____

...I want to _____.

What visual cues or reminders will help you remember the changes you'd like to make?

How might you build in encouragement/celebration, or maybe accountability with another person?

In order to continue the momentum of all you have learned, what are specific ways you will commit to growing in your parenting?

What are you asking the Lord for as you move into the next steps in your parenting?

Self-Coaching Questions

1 FOUNDATION: "You are SAFE with me."

What's going on with me? How can I protect my child from any hurtful or untrue beliefs I have?

Self-Calming – *James 1:19, 20*: "...be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry..."

- What tends to calm me down the most when I'm upset?
- What's the opposite of my first impulsive response?
- How could I relax my body language or posture?
- What truthful phrase, scripture, prayer, or guiding question could give perspective?

Self-Awareness – *Matthew 12:34*: "...the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart."

- What are my thoughts and feelings about this challenge?
- What am I believing about myself or my child that is affecting my response?
- What am I modeling? What messages might I be communicating to my child?
- What is a grace-filled truth that will help me be peaceful?

2 CONNECT: "You are LOVED – no matter what."

Connection – *Romans 5:8*: "...while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

- What affectionate response might best communicate unconditional love? (i.e., gentle touch, non-judgmental listening, playfulness, getting down to the child's level, kind eyes, or simply telling them they are loved)

Empathy – *Hebrews 4:15, 2:18 summary*: Jesus gets us, and that's how He can help us.

- What is my child's probable emotion and desire beneath the misbehavior?
- How could I express empathy with sincerity and respect?

3 COACH: "You are CALLED and CAPABLE."

Affirmation – *Philippians 4:8*: "...if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

- What's going partly right? What isn't going wrong that could be?
- What's something I could affirm? What is a good gift manifesting in unhelpful behavior? (i.e., persistence in whining, honesty in arguing.)

Wisdom and choices – *Luke 1:17 summary*: Connect with your child, focus on building wisdom.

- How could I create an opportunity for my child to build wisdom and learn skills?
- What two "You can _____" choices could I offer?
- What positive skill would help my child overcome a particularly challenging behavior? (i.e., help my whining child practice waiting and making respectful requests.)

Self-Coaching Questions *(continued)*

4 **CORRECT: "You are RESPONSIBLE for your actions."**

Summaries: *Galatians 6:7* - we reap what we sow. *Galatians 6:1* - gently restore someone who sins.

Natural Impact

- What is the natural impact of my child's behavior on them, others, the environment?
- What gentle, curious questions would help my child discover that natural impact?

Make It Right

- How could I hold my child accountable for practicing a helpful response or fixing the problem they created? For example, "Do you want a do-over?" "How could you solve this in an honoring way?"

Lose a Privilege

- What privilege could I put on hold (related to the misbehavior) until my child fixes the problem or reconciles the relationship?

What's Next?

- Join the Connected Families Alumni Facebook group.
- Lead a small group through one of the online courses.
 - **Discipline That Connects With Your Child's Heart**
 - **Sensitive & Intense Kids:** *Navigating parenting challenges with purpose and hope*
 - **The Power of Questions:** *Less Arguing. More Wisdom.*
 - **The Entitlement Fix:** *Growing the value of hard work and gratitude*
 - **Sibling Conflict:** *From bickering to bonding*
 - **Grace & Truth for Moms**
- Share your story (and one of our free resources) and tell others about Connected Families.
- Consider receiving training to become a Connected Families Certified Parent Coach.
- Consider giving a financial gift to join us in reaching more parents.

✦ Final Encouragement

It is our hope that your parent coaching experience serves as a launching pad for your family's continued growth! Change takes time, and you're not alone. God is with you, loving you in the middle of the messes, and He really does have enough grace for every circumstance.

It'll sometimes be tempting to feel like, *"It's not working!"* and look for a new strategy. Instead, look for the ways God *is* at work in you. Entrust the future to Him. The ultimate goal of the Connected Families Framework is not to produce well-behaved children but to lead all of you closer to Christ. So lean in to your Foundation again and again, revisit the things you've learned here, and know that God is beside you with the wisdom you need. Receive and pass on His grace and truth with steadfast faith that **"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." *Philippians 1:6***

