



Confident Parenting Group Ages Three to Seven

Delivered by CASA's Core team

How to Use this Workbook

This workbook will help you follow the sessions in CASA's Confident Parenting series, and help you reflect on your own experiences. The workbook includes sections for you to take notes and write down questions.

“Pause and Reflect”

There are times when the facilitator will encourage you to pause and reflect: either in your workbook, or by taking a moment to think. You can also write down questions you might have when you follow up with a CASA staff member.

Session One: Child Development

Sleep is important because it:

- Helps our brain rest and grow
- Promotes our physical health
- Helps us control our emotions and actions
- Affects our moods, brain development, family relationships and behavior

It's best if your child's bedtime routine:

- Is stable and consistent
- Has calming activities
- Is the same time every night

Pause and Reflect

What does my child's bedtime routine look like?

What time is bedtime?

How long does it take my child to fall asleep?

Does my child wake in the night?

What time is my child up in the morning?

As children grow, the amount of sleep they need changes.

How much sleep does my child need for their age?

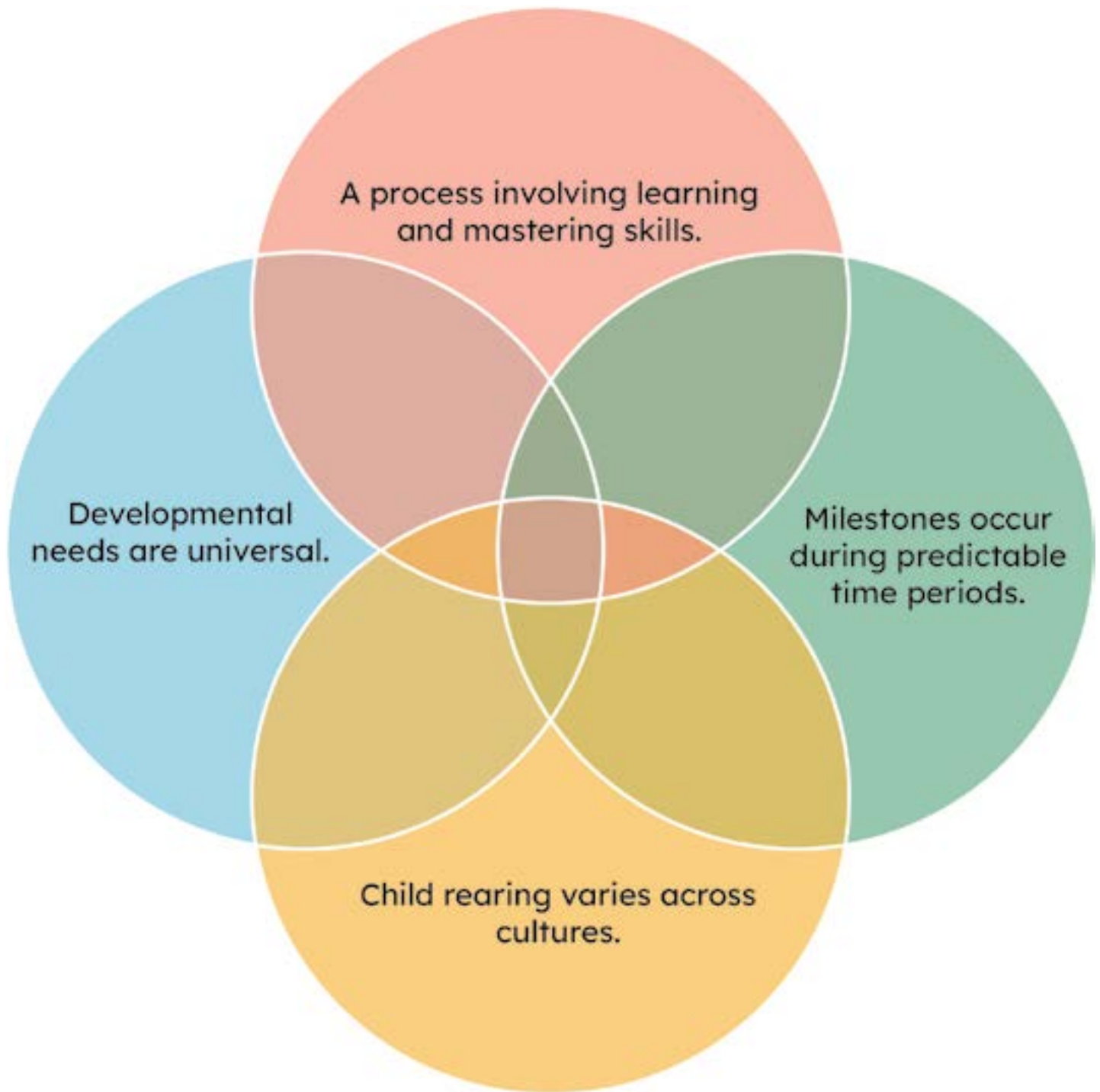
Is my child getting enough sleep?

Is our current sleep routine a good fit for our family?

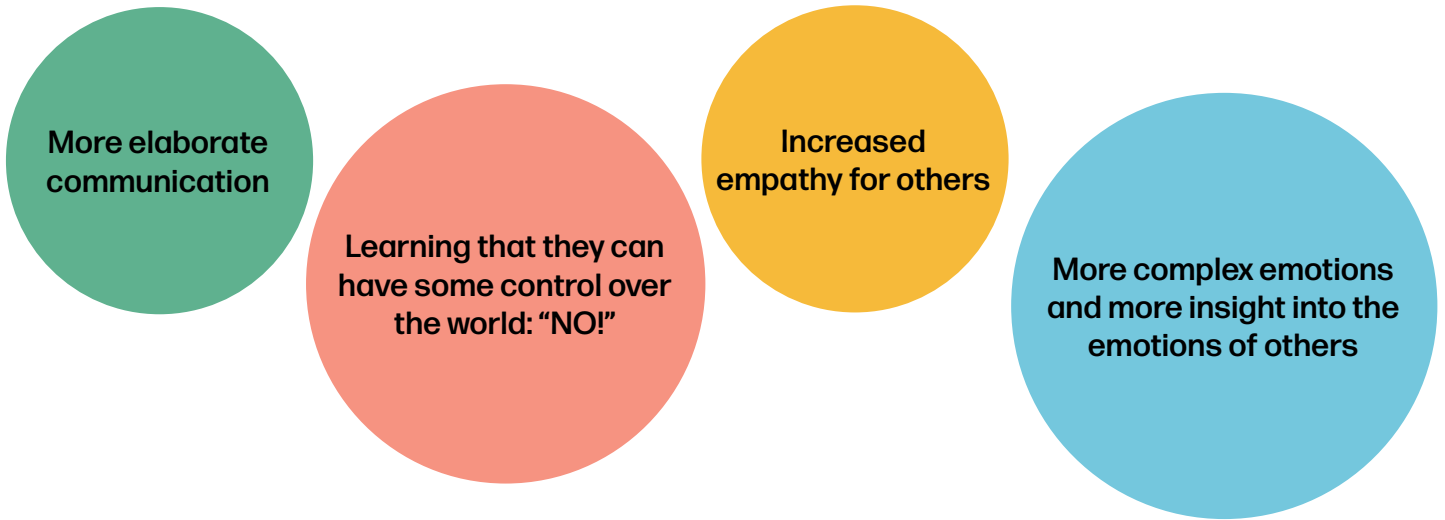
Handouts found here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1N1TVguWyJMnulL79UeVaNBvXo2TGeNpd?usp=sharing>

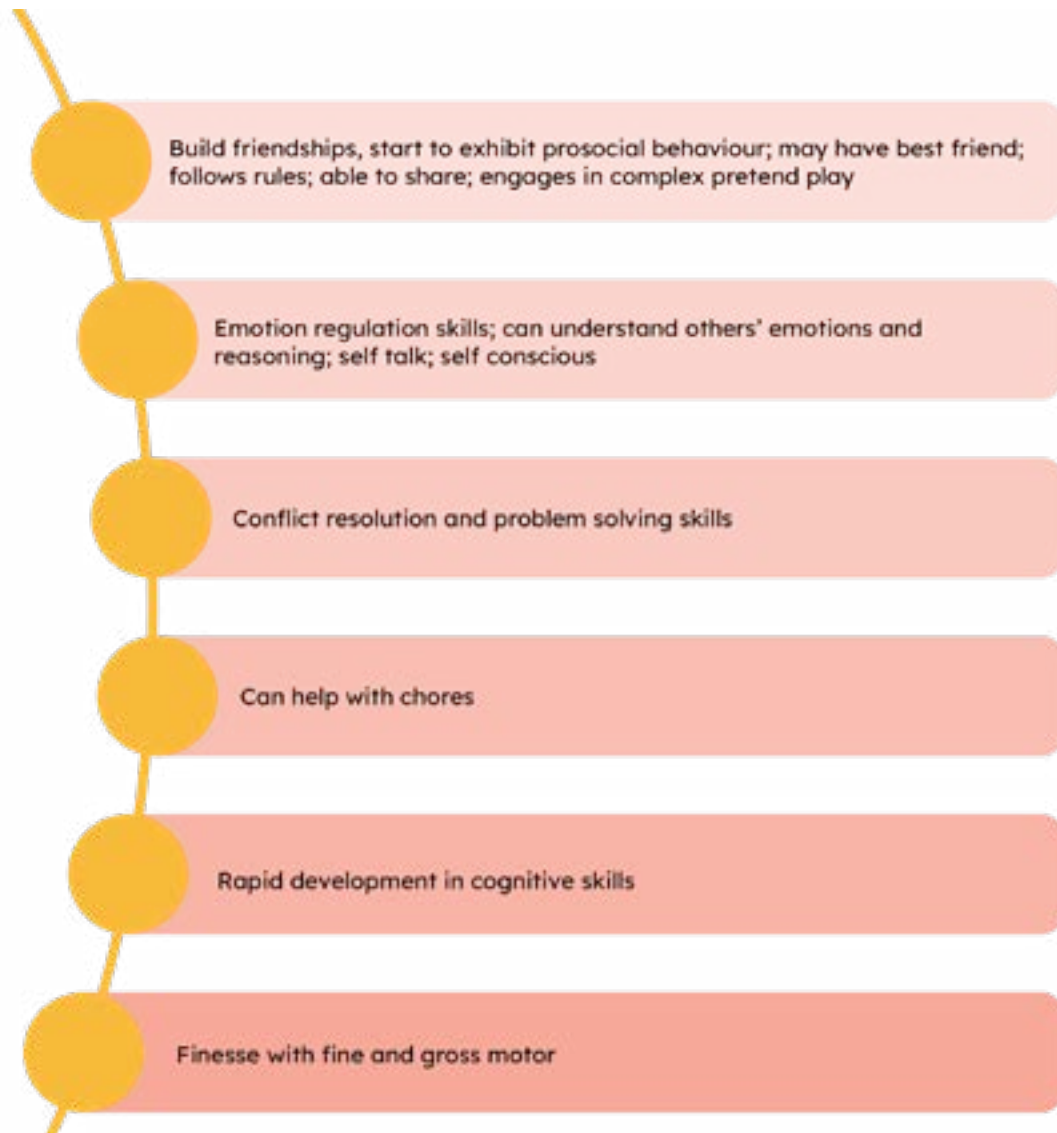
What is child development?



Preschool (Three to Five Years)



Early School Age (Four to Seven Years)



Development and Behaviour



Your Role

You are your child's guide. Your role is to provide a nurturing environment, support positive social interactions and be a role model. Children can't do this on their own. They need you to show them how. The role of all caring adults in your child's life is to build positive foundations.

Pause and Reflect

Who are the caring adults in my child's life?

What do I want them to know about my child?

Relationships Matter

Your relationship with your child provides the foundation they need to grow and develop. Back-and-forth interaction impacts social and emotional development; we call this “Serve and Return.” (Alberta Family Wellness Initiative)

Executive Functioning (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIT73VpSEUA&t=39s>)

Executive functioning helps us take in and organize information, think flexibly, prioritize tasks, find ways to manage stress and manage our self-control. It is key for learning!

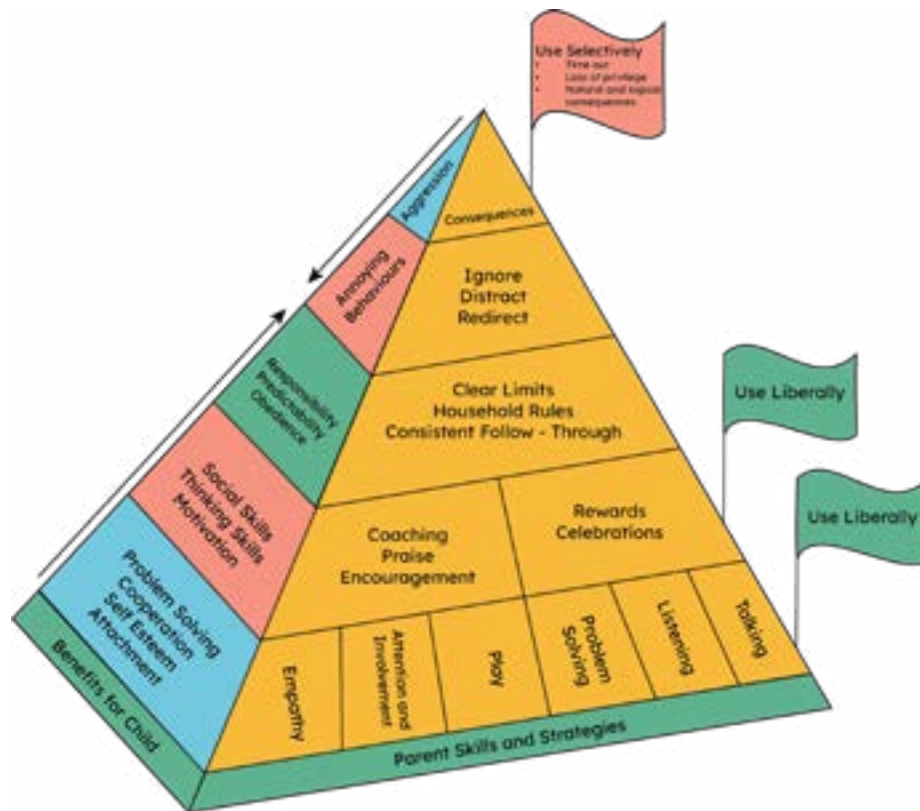
When children struggle with executive functioning, it can cause frustration, difficulty following directions, becoming easily distracted or tantrums over “minor” issues.

Executive Functioning video:

My notes, observations, and questions:

TIP: Alberta Family Wellness has many resources about executive functioning on their website:

<https://www.albertafamilywellness.org/what-we-know/the-brain-story>



Parenting Pyramid®

The ways you communicate with your child affects their foundation (bottom row). The foundation must be established before you can move up to work on the other rows (setting limits, consequences, etc).

Pause and Reflect

What am I doing to engage with my child in positive ways?

What would I like to do more of to connect with my child?

Example: Clean-Up Time

Clean-up time is a typical struggle. Your child is still still developing cognitive and emotional regulation skills.

You have asked your child to clean up repeatedly, and they are not listening. There may be many reasons for this. What does it look like when they are not listening? Lots of toys? Lots of other things going on? Are they absorbed in play?

What does it sound like when you ask your child to clean up? Loud or distracting noises? Did they hear you?

What can you do with tasks that are challenging?

- Give a five-minute warning (or multiple)
- Break down the steps
- Use a visual
- Provide a positive reward
- Use praise
- Use first/then language

End of session one!
See you next week!

Session Two: Supporting Emotional Regulation

Responding to Emotions

There is not one right way to handle children's emotions. It depends on the situation, your child and your thoughts and feelings. Our first instinct is often to want to make the negative emotions go away. What can we do instead?

Validation

Acknowledge and accept your child's emotions, whether positive or negative. All emotions are acceptable. When emotions are invalidated, it tends to make those feelings more intense.

Though all emotions are acceptable, not every behavior is an appropriate reaction. You can help your child by accepting their feelings, even if you don't feel the same way.

Pause and Reflect

Take a few minutes to think about your child's big emotions.

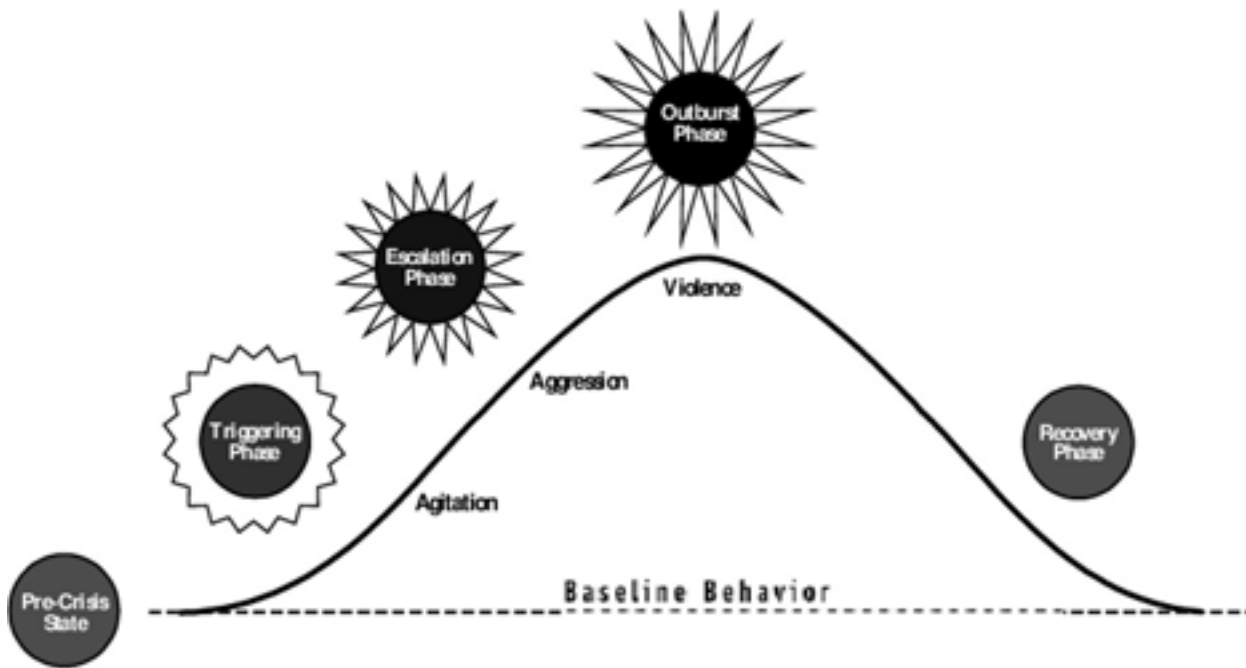
- How do I feel when my feelings are validated?
- What are some ways I can provide validation for my child?

Brain Development

"Upstairs brain" helps us make sense of our feelings, and helps us think and plan ahead. "Downstairs brain" produces our feelings. Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw>

Flipping Your Lid Video: My notes, observations and questions:

Stress Model of Crisis



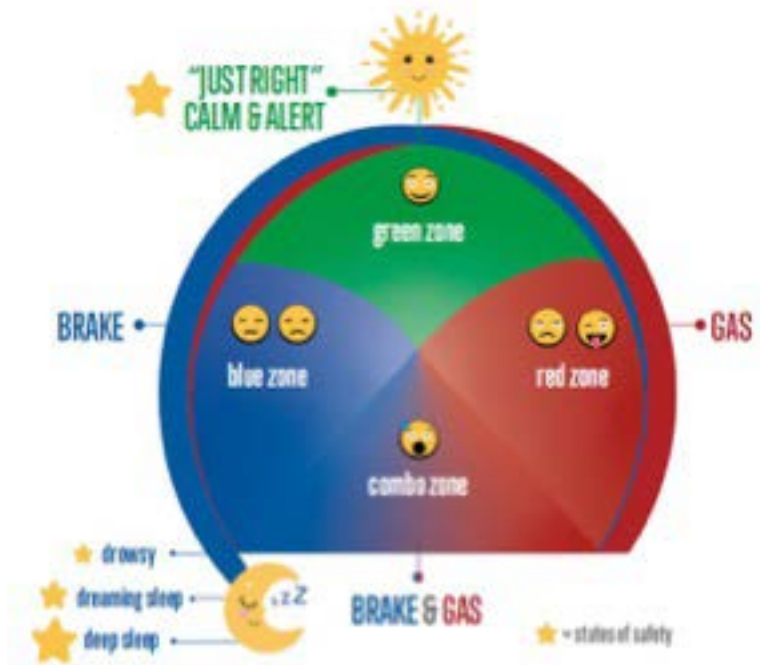
Pause and Reflect

- What does it look like, day to day, when your child is in the pre-crisis state (green zone)?
- What are you already doing to maintain that baseline behavior?
- What are the things that trigger your child to move to the escalation stage?
- What does it look or sound like when your child is in the escalation stage?

How does my child respond to stress?

Individuals cope with stress in a variety of ways. Overview of stress responses:

- Green: just right/alert
- Blue: brake
- Red: gas
- Combo zone: gas and brake



Impact of Stress on the Brain

When your child is in a stress state, they are in their “downstairs brain” and any “upstairs brain” function is offline. They’ve “flipped their lid.” In this downstairs brain state, children may lose skills, become much more reactive and may be less receptive to words and strategies.

Pause and Reflect

- What are some things that can cause your child to go into the red zone?
- What does it look like or sound like when your child goes into the red zone? How intense is it? How long do they spend in the different zones? How do they get back to green zone?
- What are the things that can happen to move them into the different zones? What happens before and after? Did something change in their schedule? Did they skip a meal?

A Shift in Thinking about Behaviour

The causes of behaviours are complex. Behaviours can be an attempt to regulate stress or a way to communicate an unmet need. They can also be due to areas of the brain being delayed or underdeveloped.

Temperament

- Intensity
- Persistence
- Sensitivity
- Perceptiveness
- Adaptability
- Regularity
- Energy

End of session two!

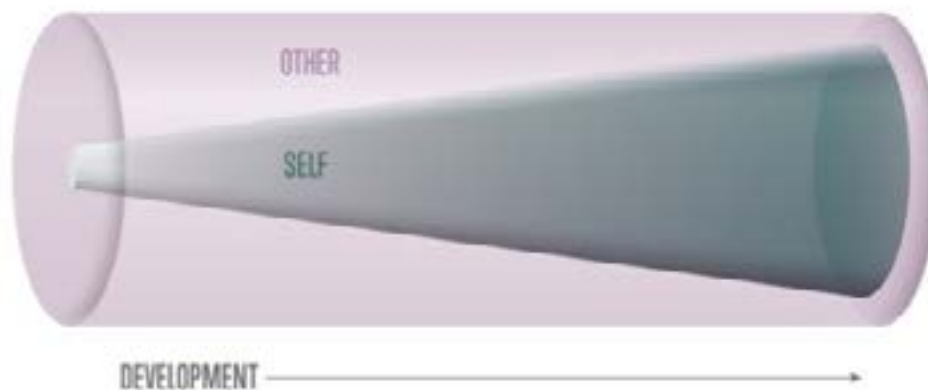
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Session Three: Strategies for Emotional Regulation

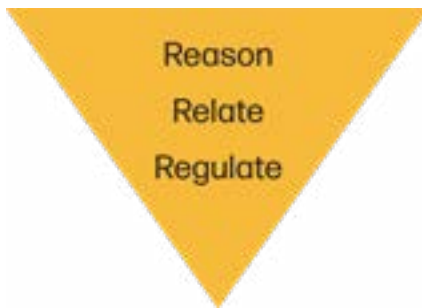
Adult Impact

It's important for caregivers to stay regulated. The calmer we stay, the easier it is for our children to calm down.

Coregulation and Self-Regulation



Regulate First!



Changing the Environment

In the home:

- Begin to recognize individual triggers, stress signs and regulation cues
- Creation of a calm space with in the home (can use when needed to regulate; keep it sensory-focused)
- Buddy box
- Time in
- Heavy work
- Child-led play and positive attention

Supporting Transitions

- Pre-warnings
- Individual warnings
- Limit number of transitions
- Visual warnings
- Sensory items
- Helper tasks
- First then
- Individual to child

Whole Brain Strategies

Integrating the left and right brain

- Connect and redirect: When your child is upset, connect first emotionally (right brain). Then, once your child is more in control and receptive, bring in the left-brain lessons.
- Name it to tame it: When big, right-brain emotions are raging out of control, help your child tell the story about what's upsetting them, so their left brain can help make sense of their experience and they can feel more in control.

Modeling Emotional Regulation

Children learn by watching you express your emotions to them and others, and by how you react to other people's emotions. Manage your own emotions; your child will benefit from seeing you use these strategies. Take care of yourself in order to be present for your child.

Validation

Acknowledge and accept your child's emotions, both positive and negative. When emotions are invalidated by others, it tends to make those feelings more intense. You can help your child by accepting their feelings as normal, even if you don't think you would feel the same way.

Inside Out video: What did you notice?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QT6FdhKriB8>

Identifying and Labelling Emotions

You can teach your child to identify, label and understand their emotions. You can be an “emotional coach” as you develop awareness of your child’s emotions, use emotions as teachable moments, provide validation and acceptance for emotions and help them to label their feelings.

Emotion Coaching

1. Be aware of your child’s emotions.
2. Recognize your child’s expression of emotion as an opportunity to connect.
3. Listen with empathy and validate their feelings.
4. Help your child learn to label their emotion with words (“you look mad/sad/etc”).
5. Set limits when you are helping your child to solve problems or deal with upsetting situations appropriately.

Pause and Reflect

- What strategies have you already tried?
- Are there any strategies from today you’d like to try?
- Do you need any additional information to implement these strategies?

End of session three!

See you next week!

Session Four: Improving Behaviour Through Proactive Parenting

Being a Balanced Parent (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzNfEKZbEKs>)

Parenting with Balance video: What stood out to you?

Importance of Consistency

Children benefit from having consistency in rules and expectations – it helps them know what is expected of them. If you are going to ask your child to do something, you need to follow through with a consequence if they do not, every time. Consequences must be something that you are able to follow through on.

Exceptions

If there is a situation where you cannot enforce a rule, be clear with your child that this is a rare exception. As a parent, you can change the rules, but it is important not to let the behaviour change the rule. We are balancing flexibility with predictability.

Pause and Reflect

Think for a few minutes about your parenting approach.

- How do you tend to parent?
- Are you better at being consistent or being flexible? If you have someone co-parenting with you, what are their strengths?
- What are the rules in your house? Do you have too few or too many rules?
- Are your rules spoken or unspoken?
- How does your cultural background impact your parenting?

Using Praise to Reinforce Behaviour (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lkaasivxE8>)

It can become easy to focus on what your child is doing wrong rather than on what they are doing right. We can help by being intentional with giving them lots of praise, which helps improve their self-esteem.

Praising good behaviour makes it more likely that the good behaviour will happen again. Praising children helps them see themselves positively, which in turn leads to emotional well-being and better behaviour. Praise also can improve your relationship with your child

Important Qualities of Praise	What it Sounds Like	Instead of
Specific and genuine	"You did a great job staying near me in the grocery store"	"Great job - Why can't you do that every time?" (avoid praise mixed with criticism)
Praise the behaviour	"Nice job cleaning up your toys"	"Good boy"
Praise the effort, not the outcome	"Wow, you are working really hard at that"	"What a pretty drawing"

How to Praise Your Child video: What stood out to you?

How to Give Positive Attention

One-on-one time: It's helpful if you can try to find 10 minutes a day to focus on playing with your children. Time should be intentional and undivided. Caregivers should find an activity that is mutually enjoyable for both you and your child. Whenever possible, follow your child's lead.

Describe children's activities: Use narration to describe children's behaviour as they engage in an activity.

Nonverbal ways of positively attending: Eye contact, warm/enthusiastic voice, being physically close, physical affection.

Pause and Reflect

- What opportunities do you see to provide praise or positive attention to reinforce your child's behaviour?
- Thinking about the important qualities of praise and positive attention we've discussed in this session, what can it look like and sound like?
- How do you think you can set aside more intentional time to connect with your children?

Importance of Limit Setting

It is important for parents to set limits on inappropriate behaviours. Children will test the limits you set through testing. Children learn whether or not the rule is really a rule and whether or not you will be consistent.

Using Effective Commands to Set Limits

Commands are given in the form of a statement, and should be used when it is important that the child comply with the parental directive.

Requests are given in the form of a question, and can be used when compliance is optional or not particularly important.

Parents should use both commands, as well as requests.

How to Phrase Commands to Increase Effectiveness

Be clear and specific

Avoid vague commands, such as "clean up"

- Avoid saying "let's" when you want your children to do something by themselves

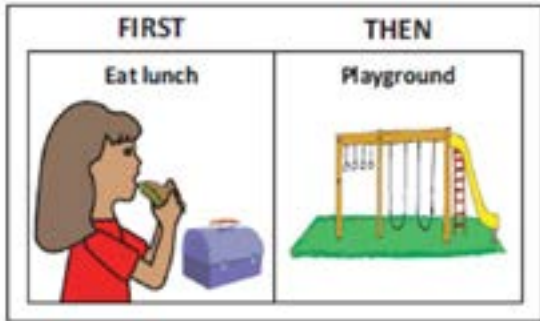
Avoid questions

- Unless you are willing to accept no for an answer

Give positive directions

- Tell children what to do rather than what not to do
- Use "when/then" or "first/then" to take the "no" out of the situation

Use first/then language



Give one command at a time

Preschoolers will not be able to remember all the parts in a multistep command, and caregivers will not be able to praise or use consequences when all those tasks are lumped together.

Give children time to comply

Wait for children to comply rather than repeating yourself.

Keep transition times in mind

Track transitions and remind children when they are coming up. Visuals help support many children in knowing what is coming and what to expect. Visual schedules are recommended for all ages and stages.

Try to Reduce the Number of Commands. Use Visuals!

Get the child's attention before giving a command

- "Connection before direction"
- Avoid giving commands from another room
- Remove distractions
- Maintain eye contact with the child
- Sometimes it is helpful to have the child repeat the command back to ensure they understood

State the command

- Use a firm voice
- Use a matter-of-fact tone without yelling
- Minimize reason for command; if pairing the command with a brief reason, keep it short

Wait five seconds

- Count to five seconds in your head while waiting expectantly
- If your child complies, you can praise their behaviour
- If not, you can give a warning followed by another five-second wait
- If your child does not comply, you can follow through with a consequence

Natural and Logical Consequences

A consequence is the result of something a person does. Letting children experience the natural or logical consequences of their actions can teach responsibility.

Natural and logical consequences can be effective when:

- The consequence is closely tied to the behavior, and gives the child a chance to learn what happens when they don't behave in the way you expect
- It is concerned with present and future behavior, and helps children learn to be responsible for their own actions
- It allows children to make a choice

While they can be effective, you must be able to think ahead and come up with a proper response. Your child must be allowed to experience the consequence. The consequence may take time to put into action and often does not work the first time.

REMEMBER: If your child is not regulated, they may not be able to make sense of consequences in the moment. Regulate first!

Pause and Reflect

Think for a few minutes about how you set limits in your home:

- How often do you set limits with your children? Too much? Not enough?
- Who is in charge in your home?
- What changes would you like to make to help your commands be more effective?
- Are you able to provide appropriate consequences for your children? What might be challenging about this for you?

Congratulations!

You have completed all four sessions of CASA's Confident Parenting Series! Thank you for joining us.

Next Steps

Though the information provided may be helpful for you and your child, it may not fully meet the specific needs you have for your child. You can connect with the CASA staff member who is supporting you about next steps for your family.

Pause and Reflect

Use this space to write any notes that might be important for you.

What new strategies have you found helpful? What do you need further support with?



*We are families and
we serve families.*

Are you looking for help or information about mental health support and services for your child, youth or young adult?

We help children and young people by helping their family and other caring adults. We know children and young people do better when the adults who care about them are supported.

We are here for you and we want to help.

FAMILY PEER SUPPORT FOR CASA FAMILIES

We provide emotional support, information, resources and help in navigating services for all CASA parents and caregivers with a child or youth with mental health challenges.

Our services are free. No waitlist.

The CASA Family Peer Support Workers are:
Lori and **Carley**

To connect with a Family Peer Support Worker
email CASA@familysmart.ca
or call: **780-487-4284**



FamilySmart

Here are some of the ways we can offer support to you and your family:

RESOURCES + VIDEOS

Our website has free resources and videos on topics important to families who are parenting a child, youth or young adult with a mental health and/or substance use challenge.

EVENTS

Every month, we host online events called 'in the know' for parents and caregivers. We watch a video and share experiences and strategies that help in the hard moments and focus on strengthening our understanding & connection with our kids.

WHY WE DO IT?

We've been there ourselves and we have connected with and learned from other families over 20+ years, and we want to share it with you.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. WE ARE HERE FOR YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE IMPORTANT TOO.

"It helped me to have someone to connect to that was supportive, could relate to my situation, and was empathetic, validating, kind and resourceful. It has helped me to feel less alone." -Parent

