

Lesson Plans

Session 4: Common Childhood Stressors and Communicating About Emotions



Session Objectives

- Learn about things that are often stressful during middle childhood.
- Learn to identify the signs of stress in your child.
- Understand ways to participate in productive discussions with your son/daughter about stressful situations.

Materials List

- Sign-in sheet with the family ID and contact information
- Name tags and markers
- Objectives Posters for Sessions 4 & 5
- Ground Rules Poster
- Whiteboard
- Whiteboard marker
- Parent folders/pens
- Journey Map
- Blue Sticky Notes
- Yellow Sticky Notes
- Three Strategies for Communication Poster
- Three Strategies for Communication Handout
- Home Activity Cards
- Small paper plates and napkins
- Food handling gloves
- Selected snacks

Preparing for the Session

Create an **Objectives Poster** for use in this session and the next (see **Objectives Poster** on program website). Only include objectives from Session 5 on this poster.

Create a **Three Strategies for Communication Poster** by copying the information from the corresponding handout on the program website.

Session Protocol

Start class no later than 10 minutes after official start time.

Any parents who have not completed the assessments must first finish their questionnaires before they are allowed to join the program.

At the end of this lesson, add the copies of all handouts and homework cards to the parent folders.

Journey Map

(3 Minutes)

Review on **Journey Map** what was covered in last week's session and review what will be covered this week.

Say (or paraphrase):

"This week we are focusing on identifying stress in our children and learning strategies to help us communicate with them about their feelings. The last two weeks we learned how to deal with our stress; now we are going to focus on helping your children cope with their stress and manage their emotions."

Distribute folders to parents.

Objectives

(3 Minutes)

Use **Objectives Poster** for Session 4 to go over the session objectives:

"Learn about things that are often stressful during middle childhood."

"Learn to identify the signs of stress in your child."

"Understand ways to participate in productive discussions with your

son/daughter about stressful situations."

Ground Rules

(1 Minute)

No need to review the ground rules anymore. Simply point to the poster and ask parents if they would like to add any rules.

Check-In

(20 Minutes)

Review the home activity from last week (S3) and invite parents to report on their activities or experiences from the past week.

Suggested questions for check-in activity:

- What worked well?
- What were some challenges you experienced?
- What was the result?
- What did you learn?
- What would you change?

Total Session Length:
(90 Minutes)

Home Activity S3

Identify a situation and follow the three steps:

1. identify and manage emotions,
2. identify the things that can be controlled and can't be controlled, and
3. use the appropriate coping strategy.

Transition:

"Since we are going to talk about situations our children find stressful, we are going to first start thinking about when we were young and what stressed or upset us."

Anchor**(10 Minutes)***Large Group Discussion:*

Say (or paraphrase):

"Think of a situation when you were young that made you upset or stressed."

Have parents share situations in large group discussion.

Wait about 2 minutes for parents to write something down. Have parents discuss the situations for about 2 minutes or less.

Bring *large group* back together and ask 3-5 parents to share what they discussed.

Tell parents to hold on to the blue sticky notes because they will use them in a later activity.

Add**(28 Minutes)***Divide Parents into Small Groups of 2 (9 minutes):*

Give each parent a **blue sticky note**.

Say (or paraphrase):

"Please write down a recent situation on your blue sticky note when your child was upset or stressed. When you are done writing, turn to your partner and tell them about what you wrote."
(See facilitator note.)

Introduction to the 5 Categories (1 minute):

Introduce the 5 categories of signs of children's stress.

Say (or paraphrase):

"These are five categories that can describe the different signs of stress in children. I would like you to think about these categories for our next activity."

Facilitator Note

When handing out the sticky notes tell parents that it is all right if they do not want to write their situation down. They just need to remember it because it will be used later in the class.

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Create the following chart on the white board:

Example	Physical	Psychological	Emotional	Behavioral	Social

Signs of Child Stress Activity (8 minutes):

Divide parents into *small groups*. Tell parents to change partners and to try to work with someone they haven't worked with yet. Give each parent a **yellow sticky note**.

Say (or paraphrase):

"Please write down on your yellow sticky note signs that indicate when your child is upset or stressed. After you write down your signs, please turn to your partner and discuss what you wrote."

Bring *large group* back together and ask parents to share what they wrote down on their yellow sticky notes. Have the whole group match up the signs with the appropriate category (for example, body language placed under physical).

Write parent responses on the whiteboard in the appropriate places on the chart.

Say (or paraphrase):

"Now that we talked about the situations and signs of when our children are upset, we are going to talk about how sometimes children don't want to show their feelings."

"How can we encourage our children to talk to us when we realize that they are upset or stressed?" (Don't have parents answer this question at this point—go to next section.)

Three Strategies for Communication Activity (10 Minutes):

Present the **Three Strategies for Communication Poster** with sticky notes hiding the positive and negative signs.

Say (or paraphrase):

"Here are three strategies that some parents use to communicate with their children about their feelings."

Three Strategies:

- Responsive listening +
- Acknowledge and talk about feelings +
- Dismissing emotions -

Ask parents whether they think each strategy is helpful (positive) or unhelpful (negative). As they respond, remove the sticky notes to reveal the correct answer.

Create the following table on the whiteboard:

Strategies	Examples Parents Come Up With
Responsive listening	
Acknowledge and talk about feelings	
Dismissing emotions	

Have parents come up with an example for each strategy and add to the table on the whiteboard

Facilitator Note

Use these examples if needed:

Responsive listening:

- Looking child in the eyes when he or she is telling me something.
- Nodding/ giving verbal affirmation.
- Putting down your cell phone.

Acknowledge and talk about feelings:

- Repeating what your child has told you:
Child - "I can't believe that my teacher is giving me so much homework."
Parent - "I see that you are upset that your teacher's giving you so much homework. Let me hear more about how you are feeling."

Dismissing emotions:

- "Don't cry."
- "Boys don't cry."
- "Don't be so sensitive."

Apply

(15 Minutes)

*Role play:***Pass out Three Strategies for Communication Handout.**

Ask for a volunteer to be the child in the situation. Use the situation that the child came home crying because he or she got a bad grade. Role play *twice*—once responding with the two positive strategies and once using the negative strategy.

Large Group Discussion:

Invite parents to choose 1-2 situations for role play that were written down on the blue sticky notes in the **Add** activity.

Say (or paraphrase):

“Now apply these two positive strategies (responsive listening & acknowledge and talk about feelings) to the situations we chose.”

Facilitator Note

Possible role play option:

Facilitator: “What happened? I see you’re crying. What’s wrong?”

Parent: (response)

Facilitator: “How are you feeling about this?” (examples: mad, disappointed, embarrassed, anxious, scared)

Parent : (response)

Facilitator: “Well, I understand why you would be feeling...”
(Insert emotion child mentioned at end of sentence.)

Facilitator Note

If there is time, do role play with parents where you are the child and the parents take on the parent role.

Away**(5 Minutes)**

Explain to parents that you will be asking them about this home activity next week.

Wrap-Up**(5 Minutes)**

Remind parents of next week's session, time, and location. Provide a brief overview of the next lesson using the **Objectives Poster** for Session 5.

Invite parents to take snacks with them on the way out of the session.

Home Activity S4

Try using the two positive communication strategies (responsive listening & acknowledge and talk about feelings) at home with your child. What went well? What did not go well?