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RAISING PARENTS

DEALING WITH STRESS

Activity guide



**Alba Iulia
2026**

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Activity within the project no.
2024-2-RO01-KA210-ADU-000290814



**RAISING
PARENTS**
DEALING WITH STRESS

Project coordinated by

PSIHO  **it**

in partnership with



**Funded by
the European Union**

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the National Agency and Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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BUILDING THE GROUP AND GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER. ENHANCING PARENT-CHILD COMMUNICATION

Objectives:

- To develop effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills in parent–child relationships.
- To strengthen trust, empathy, and emotional connection among participants.
- To encourage self-expression, active listening, and collaborative interaction.

One truth, one lie

Objective: To facilitate group bonding and encourage participants to become familiar with one another in a relaxed and engaging way.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: No materials required.

Activity description:

Participants sit in a circle. Each person shares two statements about themselves: one true and one false. The statements may relate to hobbies, family, work, favorite activities, or personal experiences. The rest of the group guesses which statement is true and which is false.

The activity encourages interaction, curiosity, and openness while helping participants feel more comfortable within the group.

Needs and expectations

Objective: To explore participants' expectations, emotional needs, and learning goals related to the program.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: 3 large sheets of paper, markers

Activity description:

The facilitator prepares three posters with the following prompts:

- What I would like to DO during this project
- What I would like to FEEL during this project
- What I would like to KNOW or LEARN

Participants rotate between the posters, adding their ideas and reflections. A plenary discussion follows, allowing participants to share their expectations and identify common themes.

Community agreement

Objective: To collaboratively establish a safe, respectful, and supportive group environment.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Large sheet of paper, markers, post-it notes

Activity description:

Each participant writes on one post-it note something they can offer to the group (an intention) and on another note something they need from the group (a request).

Participants then share their reflections in plenary and collaboratively create a group agreement based on shared values such as respect, confidentiality, active listening, empathy, and participation. The final agreement is decorated and displayed in the room throughout the program.

Identity cards

Objective: To encourage self-expression, strengthen group cohesion, and support interpersonal connection.

Duration: 45 minutes

Materials needed: colored paper, markers, music

Activity description:

Participants write their names on cards and create symbolic self-portraits using drawings, colors, or symbols.

The cards are then shuffled and redistributed randomly. While music plays, participants move around the room. When the music stops, they try to identify and find the owner of the card they received.

In the second stage, participants complete additional prompts on their own cards, such as:

- The height of my dreams
- The weight of my responsibilities
- A lesson life has taught me
- Something I have become immune to

Participants pair up and discuss their reflections. The activity promotes self-awareness, empathy, and authentic communication.

Memory game on effective communication

Objective: To increase awareness of communication barriers and promote constructive parent–child communication strategies.

Duration: 45-60 minutes

Materials needed: Printed communication cards:

- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uq71VON0Bzr0a7ANXjE2IfF1zOr6szwH/view?usp=sharing> (front);

- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/112mZ95IJHT1qrDVFBuDhAiOa-GD8irdN/view?usp=sharing> (back);

- https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LKOXL-veunw04EB-bzpYrLj_DBl5WaiIKZhe30WMSSs/edit?usp=sharing (questions).

Activity description:

The facilitator introduces the concept of effective communication and briefly presents Gordon’s communication roadblocks.

Participants are divided into teams and play a matching memory game involving Gordon’s 12 communication roadblocks. Whenever a pair is identified, the group answers a reflective question related to parent–child communication or explains why the identified behavior may hinder effective communication.

The facilitator encourages discussion and reflection on healthier communication approaches.

Daily journal

Objective: To encourage self-reflection, emotional awareness, and evaluation of newly acquired skills.

Duration: 10 minutes

Materials needed: Reflection forms and pens

Activity description:

At the end of the day, participants complete a brief reflective journal focused on:

- Skills acquired or practiced

- Emotions experienced during the activities
- Insights gained
- Activities they found most meaningful

The journal supports personal growth and ongoing self-awareness throughout the program.

The Magic Tree

Objective: To help parents recognize their personal strengths, support systems, and aspirations, and to reflect on the relationship between their resources and goals.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Blank sheets of paper, pens or pencils

Activity description:

Participants draw a tree representing themselves.

- The roots symbolize personal qualities and supportive people in their lives.
- The trunk represents identity and inner stability.
- The branches symbolize personal, family, or parenting goals.

After completing the drawing, participants reflect on whether their current “roots” feel strong enough to support their aspirations and identify areas where further growth may be needed.

The activity promotes self-awareness, resilience, and reflection on personal development.

Life Map

Objective: To support parents in reflecting on significant life experiences, emotional challenges, and personal growth.

Duration: 50 minutes

Materials needed: Blank sheets of paper, pens or pencils

Activity description:

The facilitator invites participants: Take a sheet of paper and draw your lifeline. It can be straight, ascending, or descending. Mark with an X where you are today. Add important events from your life, starting with the earliest memories. Use the following symbols to reflect on each event:

- (^) for positive or favorable experiences
- (*) for negative or difficult experiences
- (!) if you learned something valuable from it

- S / SS / SSS to indicate how stressful it was (little / medium / very)
- (R) if the moment involved a risk
- (A) if it was your personal choice
- (X) if it was the only option you had

Once the line is complete, participants are encouraged to find a partner and share parts of their lifeline. Suggested reflection questions include:

- What does this line say about the way I've lived so far?
- What have I learned from my life experience?
- Who usually made the decisions in my life?

This activity fosters introspection empowers parents to understand how their personal story shapes their behaviors and beliefs and opens space for meaningful connection with others in the group.

Pay attention to the one next to you!

Objective: To foster empathy, openness, and interpersonal connection among participants.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Printed worksheets with participants' names, pens or pencils

Activity description:

Each participant receives a sheet with a table that includes the names of all group members. Next to each name are two boxes. Over 15 minutes, participants interact with each other to discover and write down **one similarity** and **one difference** between themselves and every other person. For example, if A, B, and C are in the activity, A will find one thing they have in common with B and one difference, then repeat the process with C — and so on.

At the end of the exercise, participants reflect on:

- What new things they discovered about others
- What surprised them most
- How similarities and differences contribute to group diversity

The activity encourages curiosity, empathy, and social connection.

My favorite game as a child

Objective: To reconnect participants with positive childhood memories and encourage reflection on children's emotional needs and experiences.

Duration: 30 minutes.

Materials needed: Sheets of paper, markers or pens, flipchart or whiteboard

Activity Description:

Participants work in pairs and reflect on a favorite childhood game or activity associated with feelings of joy, freedom, safety, or connection.

Each participant creates a drawing representing the chosen memory and then shares the story behind it with their partner.

The activity concludes with a group discussion exploring common themes such as imagination, belonging, creativity, and emotional safety.

Participants are encouraged to reflect on how their own childhood experiences can help them better understand their children's needs.

Mirror communication

Objective: To develop awareness of non-verbal communication and strengthen empathic responsiveness.

Duration: 20 minutes

Materials needed: No materials required

Activity description:

Participants work in pairs. One participant acts as the "leader," performing slow gestures and facial expressions, while the other mirrors the movements as accurately as possible.

After several minutes, participants switch roles.

A group reflection follows, focusing on:

- The experience of leading and following
- The importance of body language
- How children communicate emotions non-verbally

The facilitator highlights the role of attentive observation and emotional attunement in parent-child relationships.

Storytelling without words

Objective: To enhance non-verbal expression, creativity, and emotional understanding.

Duration: 25 minutes

Materials needed: Small objects or images (e.g., toys, cards, household items)

Activity description:

Participants select an object or image and use only gestures, movement, and facial expressions to represent a parenting-related story or situation.

The group attempts to interpret the story before the participant explains its meaning.

The facilitator leads a reflection on how children often communicate emotions and needs through behaviors rather than words.

My invisible balloon

Objective: To strengthen emotional connection and highlight the importance of playful interaction.

Duration: 20 minutes

Materials needed: No physical materials required.

Activity description:

Participants imagine holding an invisible balloon and pass it around the circle using exaggerated gestures and body movements.

As the balloon changes shape, size, or weight, participants adapt their movements accordingly.

The activity concludes with a reflection on how imagination, playfulness, and shared attention contribute to stronger parent–child relationships.

The silent sculptures

Objective: To explore parent–child dynamics through non-verbal expression and body language.

Duration: 25 minutes

Materials needed: Open space, optional props (scarves, chairs).

Activity description:

Participants work in pairs. One participant shapes the other into a “sculpture” representing a parent–child interaction, such as seeking comfort, asking for attention, or expressing frustration.

Participants then reverse roles.

A group reflection explores:

- Emotions conveyed through posture and positioning
- Messages communicated without words
- The role of empathy and presence in relationships

Drawing our voices

Objective: To increase awareness of communication styles and emotional tone in parent–child interactions.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Paper, colored pencils or markers, background music.

Activity description:

Participants visually represent their own voice when communicating with their child using colors, lines, shapes, and symbols.

They then create a second drawing representing their child’s voice.

In pairs or small groups, participants discuss similarities, differences, and emotional impressions.

The activity encourages reflection on tone of voice, emotional climate, and congruence between words and emotions.

Creative introductions

Objective: To encourage authentic self-expression and explore diverse communication styles.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Paper, markers (optional).

Activity description:

Participants introduce themselves using one of three communication methods:

- Verbal presentation
- Non-verbal expression through movement or gestures
- Graphic or symbolic representation

After each introduction, group members provide supportive and positive feedback.

The facilitator highlights how communication styles influence relationships and emotional connection.

EXPLORING EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES THROUGH ART

Objectives:

- To increase emotional awareness related to parenting experiences and challenges.
- To support emotional expression through artistic, symbolic, and reflective activities.
- To strengthen emotional regulation, empathy, and self-awareness.
- To encourage parents to recognize and verbalize emotions in a safe and supportive environment.

New behaviors, old situations

Objective: To help parents explore alternative perspectives and responses when facing recurring parenting challenges.

Duration: 50 minutes

Materials needed: 3 chairs, flipchart or board

Activity description:

The facilitator introduces a familiar parenting-related problem or recurring difficult situation.

Three chairs are arranged in the room, each representing a different perspective:

- The adult self
- A calm and relaxed person
- A wise and experienced person

Participants take turns sitting in each chair and responding to the same situation from the perspective represented by that role. They are encouraged to adjust posture, tone, and mindset in order to fully embody each perspective.

After exploring all three viewpoints, participants reflect on:

- What changed between perspectives
- Which responses felt most constructive
- Which attitudes they would like to integrate into their parenting

The activity encourages cognitive flexibility, emotional awareness, and conscious problem-solving.

Weather report

Objective: To increase emotional awareness and support reflection on thoughts, emotions, and stress responses.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Blank sheets of paper, pens or pencils

Activity description:

Participants are invited to describe their emotional state using the metaphor of a weather forecast.

The facilitator guides reflection through questions such as:

- What emotions are present right now?
- How intense are these emotions?
- What thoughts accompany these emotions?
- What supports or challenges these thoughts?

Participants may write their reflections as a weather report, using symbols such as storms, clouds, sunshine, rainbows, or changing skies.

The activity concludes with a discussion about emotional awareness, emotional acceptance, and the importance of identifying emotions before reacting impulsively.

Upside Down

Objective: To help participants explore emotional transformation and identify healthy coping strategies.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: A3 sheets of paper, colored pencils, markers, or crayons

Activity description:

Each participant receives the name of a difficult emotion from another group member.

Participants create a drawing representing the opposite or transformed version of that emotion using symbols, colors, and abstract elements.

After completing the artwork, participants present their drawings and explain:

- What positive emotion or state is represented
- What personal strategies help them move from distress toward emotional balance

The facilitator encourages discussion on emotional regulation, resilience, and self-care strategies.

Colors of my parenting journey

Objective: To support emotional expression and reflection on parenting experiences through color and abstract representation.

Duration: 25 minutes

Materials needed: Large sheets of paper, colored pencils, markers, crayons, or pastels

Activity description:

Participants close their eyes and recall a recent emotionally significant parenting experience. They then choose colors, shapes, and lines that symbolically represent the emotions associated with that experience.

Afterward, participants share their artwork and explain:

- The meaning of the chosen colors
- The emotions represented in the drawing
- What they discovered about themselves during the activity

The facilitator emphasizes the value of artistic expression as a tool for emotional awareness and communication.

Clay Emotions

Objective: To externalize and process emotions through tactile and creative expression.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Modeling clay or playdough in different colors

Activity description:

Participants use clay to create an object, figure, or abstract form representing a parenting-related emotion such as guilt, frustration, fear, exhaustion, or joy.

After completing their creations, participants place them in the center of the room and briefly describe:

- The emotion represented
- How this emotion appears in their parenting experience
- What helps them cope with or regulate this emotion

The activity supports emotional awareness and encourages acceptance of complex emotions.

The mask I wear as a parent

Objective: To encourage reflection on the difference between internal emotional experiences and external behaviors.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Paper masks or cardboard templates, scissors, glue, colored markers, decorative materials (stickers, yarn, etc.)

Activity description:

Participants decorate one side of the mask to represent the emotions and behaviors they usually show externally as parents (e.g., calmness, patience, confidence).

The other side represents emotions that are often hidden (e.g., fear, exhaustion, insecurity, frustration).

Participants voluntarily share their masks and reflect on:

- The emotional effort involved in parenting
- The importance of acknowledging hidden emotions
- Healthy ways to express vulnerability and seek support

The facilitator emphasizes emotional authenticity and self-compassion.

Emotions in Color

Objective: To facilitate emotional expression, empathy, and interpersonal understanding through artistic interpretation.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Paper, watercolors, colored pencils, or crayons, brushes and water containers.

Activity description:

Participants create an artwork representing a parenting-related emotion.

Once completed, the artworks are displayed around the room. Each participant selects another person's artwork that resonates emotionally with them and explains:

- What emotion or story they perceive.
- What elements they connect with personally.

Finally, the original creator explains the intended meaning behind the artwork.

The activity highlights the subjective nature of emotional interpretation and promotes empathy and connection.

Emotion timeline

Objective: To increase awareness of emotional fluctuations and coping strategies in daily parenting life.

Duration: 50 minutes

Materials needed: Large sheets of paper, colored markers or pencils, stickers (optional).

Activity description:

Participants create a visual timeline of a typical parenting week, marking emotional highs and lows using colors, symbols, drawings, or keywords.

They also identify:

- Situations that triggered emotions
- Coping strategies used
- Sources of support and relief

Participants share selected moments in pairs or small groups.

The facilitator guides reflection on recurring emotional patterns, emotional regulation, and the importance of self-care.

Lego emotions

Objective: To support emotional expression and reflection through symbolic construction and creativity.

Duration: 40 minutes

Materials needed: LEGO pieces or similar construction materials.

Activity description:

Participants choose an emotion frequently experienced in parenting and build a symbolic structure representing that emotion.

The constructions are displayed in a shared gallery. Participants observe the creations and later present:

- The emotion represented
- The meaning behind the structure
- What the emotion reveals about their parenting experience

The facilitator encourages discussion about common emotional experiences and healthy coping mechanisms.

Graphic brainstorming

Objective: To initiate reflection and discussion on emotions that are difficult to manage in parent–child relationships.

Duration: 20 minutes

Materials needed: flipchart and markers

Activity description:

Participants reflect on emotions expressed by their children that they find difficult to manage.

Using symbols, colors, or drawings, they visually represent those emotions on paper.

Participants then explain:

- Why these emotions feel challenging
- How they usually react
- What emotions arise in themselves as parents during those moments

The facilitator records recurring ideas and themes on a flipchart and guides a discussion about emotional triggers, empathy, and emotional regulation.

The parent's emotional landscape

Objective: To encourage reflection on parenting-related emotions through symbolic and visual representation.

Duration: 50 minutes

Materials needed: Paper, colored pencils or markers, magazines for collage, glue and scissors

Activity description:

Participants create a symbolic “emotional landscape” representing their parenting experience.

They may use natural elements such as mountains, storms, rivers, sunshine, or forests to symbolize:

- Emotional challenges
- Sources of stress
- Personal strengths
- Support systems

After completing their landscapes, participants reflect on:

- What areas represent challenges
- Where they identify safety, support, or hope

- What emotional changes or movement are visible
- Voluntary sharing and group discussion follow.

Final debrief

Facilitate discussion on:

- What was easy or difficult to express?
- Common themes across participants.
- New insights gained.

Daily Emotional Map

Objective: To increase awareness of emotional experiences throughout daily parenting routines.

Duration: 50 minutes

Materials needed: Paper, colored pencils or markers

Activity description:

Participants create a visual map of a typical day with their child.

They identify emotionally significant moments and represent emotions using symbols, colors, drawings, or keywords.

Participants then reflect individually on:

- Which moments generate the most stress
- Which moments bring connection or joy
- What emotional needs appear throughout the day

The activity concludes with voluntary sharing and discussion focused on emotional balance and self-awareness.

Exploring emotional challenges through Art Collage

Objectives

- To support emotional expression through visual and symbolic exploration.
- To increase awareness of both positive and difficult aspects of parenting.
- To strengthen empathy, reflection, and emotional connection within the group.

Duration: 120 minutes

Materials Needed: Printed emotion images, magazines and newspapers, glue sticks and scissors, A3 paper or two A4 sheets per participant, colored paper and markers, calm background music.

Activity description:

1. Warm-up: “Walking with emotions” (20 minutes)

Participants walk around the room observing emotion images displayed on the walls or floor.

They choose an image that reflects their emotional experience as a parent and reflect on:

- What emotion the image represents.
- Situations connected to that emotion.
- How the emotion appears in their parenting experience.

Participants then briefly share their reflections in a circle.

2. Main activity: “Two-Sided Parenting Journey – Art Collage” (60 minutes)

Participants create a collage representing both nourishing and challenging aspects of parenting.

Using images, words, colors, and symbols, they explore:

- Joy and connection
- Stress and fatigue
- Hopes and fears
- Personal resources and vulnerabilities

Participants may keep the two emotional dimensions separate or integrate them into a single visual narrative.

The facilitator encourages intuitive creation without focusing on artistic skill.

3. Small group sharing

Participants share their collages in groups of three or four.

Suggested reflection prompts include:

- What emotions emerged during the activity?
- What surprised you?
- Which aspects of parenting feel most visible in your collage?
- What strengths or resources appeared?

The facilitator emphasizes respectful listening and emotional safety.

4. Group reflection

Participants gather in a circle and reflect on:

- What they discovered about themselves as parents?
- How artistic expression supported emotional awareness?
- What emotions or messages they want to remember?

The facilitator highlights the complexity and emotional richness of parenting.

5. Closing ritual: “A word or color to take home” (5 minutes)

Each participant chooses one color, image, or word from their collage that they would like to “take home” as a personal reminder or intention.

The session ends with grounding exercises and a short closing reflection.

BUILDING RESILIENCE, TRUST AND EMPATHY

Objectives:

- To strengthen emotional resilience in the face of parenting challenges and stressful situations.
- To foster empathy, trust, and emotional connection within family relationships.
- To support parents in recognizing and using their personal strengths and support systems.
- To encourage perspective-taking, self-confidence, and constructive communication.

The Parenting Ladder

Objective: To help parents reflect on their personal growth journey and recognize how life experiences have shaped their parenting values and abilities.

Duration: 40–50 minutes

Materials needed: Images or drawings of ladders, parenting challenge cards, sheets of paper, pens or markers.

Activity description:

Stage I – Personal reflection (10 minutes):

Participants choose a ladder image that symbolizes their life so far. The facilitator invites them to reflect in writing:

“What does this ladder say about your journey as a person and as a parent? Was it steep, shaky, strong, or supported? How has your climb shaped the way you raise your child today?”

Stage II – Small group sharing (15 minutes):

In triads, each parent shares:

- One life challenge they’ve overcome
- What ability or trait they developed from it (e.g., patience, resilience, assertiveness)
- How that ability helps or shapes their current relationship with their child

Stage III – Choice and perspective (10 minutes):

The facilitator offers new ladder images and asks:

“If you could change your ladder — live a different journey — but lose all the lessons that shaped the parent you are today, would you do it?”

Each parent chooses to keep or trade their ladder and explains how their past has influenced their parenting values and style.

Stage IV – Parenting strengths in action (10–15 minutes):

Each participant receives a card describing a common parenting challenge (e.g., managing tantrums, setting boundaries, supporting a child’s anxiety, rebuilding trust after conflict). As a group, participants reflect and decide which parent is most naturally equipped (based on earlier sharing) to handle each situation — recognizing each other’s strengths as caregivers. Everyone is matched with a challenge.

Reflection:

“What part of your journey are you most grateful for in your parenting today?”

The inner backpack

Objective: To strengthen self-awareness and emotional resilience by identifying internal and external resources that support parenting.

Duration: 40–50 minutes

Materials needed: Blank sheets of paper, pens, colored markers, optional printed backpack templates

Activity description:

Participants receive a blank sheet (or a drawing of a backpack) and are asked to reflect on what “resources” they carry with them that help them stay strong during parenting challenges. They divide the backpack into three sections and fill them in:

- **Section 1:** Inner strengths (e.g., patience, determination, kindness)
- **Section 2:** Supportive people and relationships (e.g., partner, friend, counselor, faith)
- **Section 3:** Values, beliefs, or coping strategies (e.g., "I’m doing my best", "Every child is different")

After 10–15 minutes of reflection and drawing, participants share in pairs:

- One thing in their backpack they rely on most

- One thing they wish to strengthen or add to their backpack

The session ends with a short group reflection:

“What’s one thing you will take from someone else’s backpack to inspire your parenting?”

Walking in the children's shoes

Objective: To develop empathy by encouraging parents to understand children’s emotional experiences and perspectives.

Duration: 40–50 minutes

Materials needed: Parenting scenario cards, child-shaped outlines or blank paper, pens or markers

Activity description:

The facilitator distributes short parenting scenarios (e.g., a child refusing to do homework, sibling conflict, lying, and temper tantrums) and a paper with a child-shaped outline. Each participant reflects individually on the questions:

- “How do I usually react when I see this behavior?”
- What does my child think when he/she has this behavior?
- What do I do when I know about his/her thoughts?
- What might my child be feeling when he/she has this behavior?
- What do I do when I know about his/her feelings?

Then, participants form small groups (3–4) and share:

- What they observed regarding their reactions during the exercise.
- A possible emotion or need behind the child’s behavior.
- A more empathetic or emotionally aware way to respond.

To conclude, the facilitator invites everyone to answer:

“What changes when I choose to respond with empathy instead of control?”

The web of support

Objective: To strengthen trust, belonging, and awareness of collective support.

Duration: 25 minutes

Materials needed: Ball of string or yarn

Activity description:

Participants sit in a circle. The facilitator begins by holding the end of a ball of string, naming a personal strength or coping strategy, and then tossing the ball to another participant while keeping hold of the string.

Each participant repeats the process, gradually creating a web across the group.

Reflection follows: How do our strengths connect us? How can we rely on each other and our own resources when facing parenting difficulties?

Walking in my child's shoes

Objective: To promote empathy and emotional understanding through perspective-taking.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Paper and markers, (optional) a pair of symbolic shoes placed in the center

Activity description:

Participants reflect on a recent conflict or emotionally challenging interaction with their child.

First, they describe the situation from their own perspective. Then, they imagine the experience from the child's point of view, considering:

- What the child may have felt?
- What emotional needs may have been present?
- What the child may have needed from the parent?

Participants voluntarily share insights with the group.

The facilitator highlights how perspective-taking can reduce conflict and improve emotional connection.

The tree of resilience

Objective: To strengthen self-confidence and awareness of personal strengths, values, and support systems.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Large sheets of paper (one per participant), colored pencils, markers, or crayons

Activity description:

Each participant draws a tree symbolizing themselves as a parent:

- Roots = personal values, past experiences, supportive people that give them strength
- Trunk = their current role as a parent, what keeps them standing
- Branches = hopes, goals, and strengths they want to nurture
- Leaves/fruit = small daily actions that show resilience and love

Participants are invited to share their trees in pairs or small groups. The facilitator closes with a group reflection on how resilience grows when we acknowledge our strengths and resources.

The Trust Walk

Objective: To build trust, cooperation, and awareness of vulnerability in relationships.

Duration: 25 minutes

Materials needed: Blindfolds, safe open space.

Activity description:

Participants work in pairs. One participant is blindfolded while the other guides them through the space using verbal or non-verbal instructions.

After several minutes, participants switch roles.

The activity concludes with reflection on:

- The experience of trusting another person.
- The responsibility involved in guiding someone.
- Connections between trust, empathy, and parenting.

Empathy in Action

Objective: To develop empathy and emotional understanding through role exploration.

Duration: 20 minutes

Materials needed: Paper, pens.

Activity description:

Participants work in pairs and receive a short parenting-related scenario.

One participant reflects from the perspective of the parent, while the other reflects from the perspective of an observer, friend, or child.

They identify:

- Thoughts and emotions involved
- Possible reactions
- Emotional needs of the people involved

A group discussion follows, focusing on how empathy can improve communication and relationships.

The Resilience Journey

Objective: To explore resilience through storytelling, reflection, and symbolic representation.

Duration: 40–50 minutes

Materials needed: Large sheets of paper, markers, optional calming background music.

Activity description:

Participants are guided through a short visualization exercise in which parenting is imagined as a journey with paths, obstacles, bridges, and safe places.

Afterward, participants create a visual “journey map” representing:

- Challenges they have faced
- Sources of support
- Personal strengths
- Moments of growth and courage

Participants observe each other’s maps in a gallery walk and reflect on common themes related to resilience and perseverance.

The parent's Resilience Kit

Objective: To help parents identify personal coping strategies, emotional resources, and supportive relationships that strengthen resilience.

Duration: 40–50 minutes

Materials needed: Paper, markers, magazines for collage (optional), glue and scissors (optional)

Activity description:

The facilitator introduces resilience as the ability to face and overcome difficulties. Emphasize that every parent already has resources, even if they are not always immediately visible.

Participants create a symbolic “resilience kit” by representing (through drawing, writing, or collage) the internal and external resources that help them cope with parenting challenges. The activity also includes an empathy-building reflection on family relationships.

1. Initial reflection

Invite participants to think about a recent challenging situation with their child or a family member:

- How did they react?
- What helped them, even slightly?
- What did they wish they had more of (support, calmness, understanding, etc.)?

2. Creating the kit

Participants create their personal “resilience kit,” which may include:

- Personal strengths (e.g., patience, humor)
- Strategies (e.g., breathing, taking a pause)
- Support people
- Helpful phrases or thoughts
- Symbolic elements (e.g., a shield for protection, a light for hope)

3. Empathy exercise

In pairs or small groups, participants revisit a situation from the child's or other family member's perspective:

- What might they have felt?
- What did they need?

4. Group sharing

Participants share their kits and, if they wish, their empathy reflections.

5. Final debrief

Facilitate discussion on:

- Resources they discovered or rediscovered.
- How empathy shifted their perspective?
- How to use the “kit” in daily life?

The Empathy Bridge

Objective: To encourage reflection on emotional distance and connection within parent–child relationships.

Duration: 60 minutes

Materials needed: paper, markers, different materials, glue and scissors

Activity description:

Participants create a symbolic bridge representing the relationship between themselves and their child.

They identify:

- Obstacles that create emotional distance
- Resources and actions that strengthen connection
- Feelings experienced on both sides of the relationship

Participants discuss:

- What creates disconnection
- What supports empathy and trust
- What changes could strengthen the relationship

The facilitator emphasizes the role of empathy, listening, and emotional presence in rebuilding connection.

A letter to myself as a child

Objective: To strengthen empathy toward children by reconnecting with personal childhood experiences and emotional needs.

Duration: 20 minutes

Materials needed: paper, pens

Description:

Participants write a letter to themselves as children.

The letter may include:

- Reassurance and encouragement
- Messages they needed to hear as children
- Reflections on fears, insecurities, or hopes
- Recognition of personal growth and resilience

Participants may choose whether or not to share their letters.

The activity concludes with reflection on how reconnecting with one's own childhood experiences can increase empathy and emotional understanding in parenting.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Objectives:

- To support parents in identifying personal stress factors and emotional triggers.
- To strengthen emotional self-regulation and coping abilities.
- To encourage healthy stress-management strategies through reflective and creative activities.
- To promote emotional balance, self-care, and constructive communication in family relationships.

Gratitude in words and colors

Objective: To encourage gratitude, positive reflection, and emotional well-being through creative expression.

Duration: 40 minutes

Materials needed: Sheets of paper, colored pencils or markers, sticky notes, adhesive tape

Activity description:

The facilitator begins with a short discussion about gratitude and its impact on emotional well-being, stress reduction, and resilience.

Participants divide a sheet of paper into three sections:

- Family and Friends
- Personal Achievements and Experiences
- Small Everyday Joys

In each section, participants list experiences, people, or moments they are grateful for.

Each item is then written on a separate sticky note and decorated with colors or symbols. Together, participants create a collective “Gratitude Tree” by placing their notes on a wall or poster.

The activity concludes with reflection on how gratitude can shift perspective and strengthen emotional resilience.

Mapping my stress

Objective: To help parents identify sources of stress and explore their impact on emotions, behaviors, and relationships.

Duration: 40–50 minutes

Materials needed: Blank sheets of paper, pens or pencils, markers

Activity description:

Participants are invited to draw a “**stress map**” — placing themselves in the center of the page and visually mapping out stressors around them (e.g., child’s behavior, work overload, lack of time, guilt, unsupportive relatives, etc.). They can use words, arrows, symbols, or even small drawings.

Facilitator prompts:

- Which of these stressors are external? Which are internal (thoughts, expectations)?
- Which ones affect your parenting the most?
- What do you usually do when you feel overwhelmed?

Participants then share in pairs:

- One major source of stress
- One coping strategy they’ve used successfully

The activity concludes with a group reflection:

“What’s one stressor I can start managing differently starting today?”

Sitting with emotions

Objective: To strengthen emotional regulation by increasing awareness of emotional experiences and responses.

Duration: 40–50 minutes

Materials needed: A3 sheets or regular paper, colored pencils or markers, pens, 4–5 chairs arranged in a circle, open space

Activity description:

The facilitator invites participants to reflect on a difficult or recurring emotion experienced in parenting (e.g., anger, guilt, anxiety, overwhelm, stress). Each participant chooses one emotion and gives it a name and identity, writing down how it feels in the body, how it “speaks,” what it wants, and how it influences their behavior.

Next, the facilitator sets up 4–5 chairs, each symbolizing a different emotion. Participants are invited to sit in one of the chairs and briefly speak *as if they were that emotion*, using first person (e.g., “I am frustration. I show up when you're ignored. I make your hands clench and your voice loud.”).

After each emotion is voiced, participants are invited to respond directly to it with a compassionate or firm message (e.g., “I see you're trying to protect me, but I want to choose a different way to act.”).

In the final stage, each participant draws or writes a calm anchor in the center of their page: a word, symbol, or image that helps them regulate their emotions when they arise.

The session ends with a brief reflection: “What is one small thing I can do differently next time this emotion appears?”

The stress-to-calm switch

Objective: To increase awareness of the body’s stress responses and practice relaxation techniques.

Duration: 20 minutes

Materials needed: Calm background music (optional), open space for free movement

Activity description:

The facilitator invites participants to recall a stressful parenting situation and express it physically through posture, gestures, and movement (e.g., tense shoulders, fast pacing, closed arms). For a few minutes, participants “embody stress” without using words.

Then, the facilitator guides them step by step to switch into calming movements—slower breathing, stretching, opening arms, grounding feet, imagining letting go of weight. With background music, participants gradually shift their bodies into positions that represent calm and relief.

Reflection: How did it feel to embody stress? What helped the shift toward calm? How can these bodily strategies be used in daily parenting life?

My Stress Container

Objective: To increase awareness of emotional burden and practice symbolic release of stress.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Small containers (jars, boxes, or cups, one per participant), paper strips, markers, tape, optional decorative materials.

Activity description:

Each participant receives a small container (jar, box, or cup) representing their “stress container.” On paper strips, they write or draw the daily stressors they experience as parents and place them inside. After filling the container, the facilitator invites them to notice its weight/volume as a metaphor for how much stress they carry.

In the second step, participants choose which strips they would like to keep (stressors they can manage or that motivate them) and which ones they would like to symbolically let go of. They share this in the group, then either tear, crumple, or discard the strips they want to release. The activity closes with a reflection on strategies for keeping the “stress container” lighter in daily life.

The garden of my resources

Objective: To help parents recognize and value personal strengths and emotional resources.

Duration: 25 minutes

Materials needed: Large sheets of paper or cardboards, colored pencils, markers, stickers, magazines for collage, glue and scissors

Activity description:

Each participant receives a sheet of paper and is invited to draw a “garden patch.” In this garden, they represent—through drawing or collage—their personal resources such as qualities, values, skills, or supportive people, symbolized as flowers, trees, or other natural elements. For example, *patience* may be drawn as a strong tree, *humor* as a bright flower, and *partner support* as a flowing fountain.

After completing their work, participants share their gardens with the group, explaining how these resources help them in their parenting role. The facilitator emphasizes the importance of cultivating and caring for one’s “inner garden” to maintain emotional and relational balance.

Time For...

Objective: To encourage reflection on time balance, self-care, and stress prevention.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Paper, colored markers.

Activity description:

Participants draw a circle divided into four areas: time for self, time for child, time for work, and time for rest.

First, participants illustrate how their time is currently distributed.

Then, they create a second version representing their ideal balance.

The facilitator guides discussion on:

- Areas of imbalance
- Sources of stress connected to time pressure
- Practical strategies for improving balance and self-care

Stress Landscape

Objective: To help participants identify stressors, resources, and coping strategies through symbolic representation.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Large sheets of paper, colored markers, stickers.

Activity description:

Participants draw a symbolic “landscape of stress”: mountains (obstacles), rivers (energy drains), safe places (resources, supports), and paths (ways of coping). After finishing, each share one mountain and one safe place with the group. The facilitator leads a reflection on how recognizing stress factors and resources can help manage emotional load.

The Stress Rehearsal

Objective: To practice constructive responses to stressful parenting situations in a safe and supportive environment.

Duration: 40–50 minutes

Materials needed: Chairs, open space, optional props.

Activity description:

In small groups, participants choose a common parenting-related stress situation (e.g., child refusing homework, morning rush, conflict with another adult). Through short role-plays, they enact the stressful situation once in the “usual way,” then replay it with alternative strategies (deep breathing, setting limits calmly, using humor, asking for help). The group discusses which strategies reduced stress and why. The exercise ends with participants identifying one concrete tool they want to apply in real life.

From Stress to Connection

Objective: To support parents in transforming stressful interactions into opportunities for emotional connection and constructive communication.

Duration: 40–50 minutes

Materials needed: No materials required.

Activity description:

The facilitator introduces the idea that in stressful situations we often react automatically. The goal is to recognize emotions and choose more intentional, constructive responses.

Recall a real situation

Participants think of a recent challenging interaction with their child: What happened? What did they feel? How did they react?

They can briefly write it down.

Role-play: automatic reaction vs conscious response (30 min)

Phase A – Automatic reaction: Participants act out the situation as it originally happened.

Phase B – Pause and reflection:

Groups reflect:

- What emotions were present?
- What unmet needs (parent’s and child’s) emerged?

Phase C – Constructive response:

They replay the scene, with the parent trying to:

- Express emotions clearly without blame
- Show empathy toward the child
- Use calmer, more assertive communication

Observation and feedback

Observers share: What changed between the two versions? Which strategies improved connection?

Appreciation exercise

Each participant receives positive feedback from the group: a strength observed (e.g., patience, openness), something appreciated in their participation.

Final debrief

Facilitated discussion:

- What they discovered about their automatic reactions?
- What helps them pause before reacting?
- How to apply these strategies in daily life?

Words that Build (or Break)

Objective: To increase awareness of the impact of language on relationships and practice constructive communication strategies.

Duration: 60–75 minutes

Materials needed: Communication examples or scenario cards, flipchart or board (optional)

Activity description:

The facilitator introduces examples of ineffective communication patterns, including Gordon's communication roadblocks: <https://www.gordonmodel.com/work-roadblocks.php>

Phrase transformation: Participants work individually or in pairs to transform reactive or harmful phrases into: empathetic, assertive, nonviolent communication.

Role-play: Participants then role-play both ineffective and constructive versions of the same interaction.

Group discussion: What felt different? What was challenging?

Debrief: Reinforce constructive communication strategies.

HANDLING CRISIS AND CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Objectives:

- To support parents in recognizing and regulating emotional reactions during conflict situations.
- To develop constructive conflict-resolution and crisis-management strategies.
- To strengthen empathy, emotional awareness, and perspective-taking.
- To encourage balanced, respectful, and solution-focused communication within family relationships.

What's your opinion?

Objective: To encourage critical reflection, respectful dialogue, and openness toward different perspectives.

Duration: 50 minutes

Materials needed: Chalk (or tape), a box, small slips of paper with statements, blank sheets of paper, pens or pencils

Activity description:

The facilitator creates a large Likert scale on the floor ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.”

Participants draw a statement related to parenting, family dynamics, or social values and position themselves on the scale according to their opinion.

Each participant explains the reasons behind their choice.

After listening to others’ perspectives, participants are invited to reconsider their position and move if their perspective has changed.

The activity concludes with reflection on:

- Respectful disagreement
- Active listening
- Openness to alternative perspectives
- The importance of flexibility in communication and parenting

Navigating in a Crisis

Objective: To increase awareness of emotional responses during crises and identify healthier coping strategies.

Duration: 60 minutes

Materials needed: A3 paper, markers or colored pencils, sticky notes, 4 signs/posters placed in the corners of the room labeled: *Fight, Flight, Freeze, and Appease* (adaptation), open space for movement

Activity description:

The facilitator begins by reading short, real-life parenting crisis scenarios (e.g., “Your child throws a tantrum in the supermarket,” “Your child hits another child in the park,” “You’re late and your child refuses to get dressed”).

After each one, participants move to one of the four corners of the room that best represents their initial emotional response: Fight (I raise my voice, control the situation); Flight (I withdraw, avoid, stay silent); Freeze (I feel stuck, numb, don’t know what to do); Appease (I give in, try to fix it immediately, overcompensate). After each movement, participants are invited to reflect: *Why did I respond this way? Was it automatic? Familiar?*

Next, each parent receives an A3 paper and draws a compass with four quadrants, labeled with four common emotional states experienced in crises: Frustration, Fear, Helplessness, and Guilt. Inside each quadrant, they creatively express: how the emotion feels in the body, what thoughts arise, what automatic behaviors it triggers, what consequences those reactions bring, and what a healthier response could look like.

Then, each participant chooses one quadrant/emotion that is dominant for them and answers the following questions:

- When does this emotion show up most?
- How can I recognize it earlier?
- What new response would I like to practice?
- What helps me stay calm? (breath, word, image, gesture)

Participants pair up to share insights and end the session by writing a personal intention on a sticky note.

From Conflict to Connection

Objective: To help parents recognize their conflict styles and practice more balanced and empathetic responses.

Duration: 50–60 minutes

Materials needed: Chairs, A4 sheets, markers, conflict scenario cards (prepared in advance), string/tape (to represent a “bridge”), open space

Activity description:

Conflict styles in action (10–15 minutes): The facilitator introduces 5 basic conflict styles (based on the Thomas-Kilmann model), written visibly in the room: **Competing** (I win, you lose), **Avoiding** (I ignore the conflict), **Accommodating** (I give in to avoid tension), **Compromising** (We both give up something), **Collaborating** (We find a win-win solution).

Participants walk around the room. For each **conflict scenario** read aloud (e.g., “Your child talks back when you ask for help,” “Your partner criticizes your parenting”), they move to the label that best represents how they would usually react.

After each move, they reflect: *What does this style protect? What does it cost me or the relationship?*

Building a bridge (25–30 minutes): Participants are split into pairs or triads. Each group receives a realistic family conflict scenario and a task:

Step 1: Each person writes or shares their first, instinctive reaction to the conflict.

Step 2: In the middle of the room, the facilitator lays down a symbolic “bridge” using string or tape between two chairs: one chair representing their perspective (the perspective of the participant), the other chair representing another person’s perspective (child or partner).

Step 3: The participant is asked to sit on the other person's chair and then is guided by the facilitator through questions like: *What do I want? What do I feel? What am I afraid of?* Then he/she returns to their seat and reflects: *What did I not see before? What can I do differently now?*

In the end, the facilitator invites open sharing:

- *What did you learn about how you approach conflict?*
- *What surprised you when you stepped into the other person’s shoes?*
- *What would “balanced resolution” look like in your home?*

The emotional thermometer

Objective: To increase awareness of emotional escalation and support emotional self-regulation.

Duration: 20 minutes

Materials needed: Large “thermometer” visual on flipchart/board, sticky notes and markers

Activity description:

The facilitator presents a large thermometer with levels from *calm* (bottom) to *explosive* (top). Each participant writes on sticky notes examples of situations with their children (or family members) that raise their emotional temperature, and places them on the thermometer according to intensity.

In small groups, participants share how they usually react at different “heat levels” and brainstorm constructive strategies for cooling down before reaching the top. The facilitator closes with a reflection on recognizing early warning signs and practicing self-regulation to prevent escalation.

Conflict role reversal

Objective: To strengthen empathy and encourage perspective-taking during conflict situations.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Chairs for role-play setup, optional props (to symbolize parent/child roles)

Activity description:

Participants are invited to role-play a common parent-child conflict (e.g., homework refusal, screen time, sibling fight). In pairs, one plays the parent and the other the child. After acting out the conflict for 2–3 minutes, they switch roles and repeat the same scenario from the opposite perspective.

In group reflection, participants discuss insights gained from being “in the child’s shoes” and explore more constructive responses. The facilitator emphasizes how empathy and role flexibility can transform conflict into opportunities for connection.

The pause button

Objective: To practice self-control and emotional regulation before reacting impulsively.

Duration: 20 minutes

Materials needed: Small paper circles (symbolic “pause buttons”), markers

Activity description:

Each participant decorates a paper circle as their personal “pause button.” The facilitator invites them to recall a recent conflict where they reacted quickly. In pairs, they role-play the same conflict twice: first reacting immediately, then replaying the scene but pressing the “pause button” (taking a deep breath, counting to three, or using another chosen strategy) before responding.

The group reflects on the differences between the two approaches and discusses how to integrate the “pause button” in real family situations.

The conflict sculptures

Objective: To explore emotional dynamics and power relationships within conflicts through non-verbal representation.

Duration: 25 minutes

Materials needed: Open space, chairs or cushions (optional)

Activity description:

In small groups, one participant describes a typical conflict (e.g., parent vs. child during a tantrum). The others use their bodies to “sculpt” the conflict scene, showing distance, posture, and emotion through their positions. After observing the frozen image, the group discusses what the sculpture communicates about power, tension, and unmet needs.

Then, participants are invited to re-sculpt the scene into a more balanced and constructive version, adding elements like openness, listening, or cooperation. Reflection follows on how even small shifts in position or attitude can transform conflicts.

The circle of truth – Words that hurt

Objective: To increase awareness of the emotional impact of language during conflicts.

Duration: 20–25 minutes

Materials needed: Chairs arranged in a circle.

Activity description:

Participants reflect on hurtful phrases they have heard or used during emotionally intense situations.

Each phrase is shared aloud and discussed respectfully.

Participants then work together to transform harmful statements into:

- Empathetic expressions
- Constructive responses
- Emotionally supportive communication

The facilitator emphasizes how language can either damage or strengthen relationships.

Crisis replay, different roles

Objective: To explore alternative responses to crisis situations through role substitution and experimentation.

Duration: 50 minutes

Materials needed: Chairs, open space, optional props.

Activity description:

Two volunteers from the group step into a parenting crisis scene (for example, a child's tantrum, a heated argument, or a sudden stressful moment). They play it out spontaneously in the way such a scene usually unfolds.

After the first enactment, the facilitator invites them to replay the same scene. This time, group members from the audience may be invited to step in and substitute one of the actors (*role substitution*), offering an alternative way of responding. The facilitator encourages trying different strategies (calm voice, active listening, clear boundary-setting, humor, empathy, or asking for support).

The exercise continues with several substitutions so that the group can explore a variety of constructive reactions. A whole-group reflection follows which interventions shifted the

atmosphere, what felt realistic, and what strategies participants could bring into real-life family crises.

The hot chair

Objective: To encourage reflection on personal reactions in conflict situations and explore alternative strategies.

Duration: 30–50 minutes

Materials needed: A chair placed in the center of the circle, paper, pens.

Activity description:

The facilitator places one chair in the middle of the group — “the hot chair.” Volunteers take turns sitting in the chair and briefly describing a recent or typical conflict situation (with a child, partner, or family member). After the description, group members from the circle suggest possible alternative responses — short phrases, attitudes, or strategies that might help in that situation.

The person in the hot chair chooses one of the suggested strategies and imagines how it would change the conflict dynamic. If time allows, a short role-play can illustrate the difference between the initial reaction and the chosen alternative.

The activity ends with a group reflection on which strategies seemed most constructive and realistic and how trying out multiple perspectives can reduce tension in crises.

The crisis compass

Objective: To help participants identify automatic reactions during crises and develop more intentional coping strategies.

Duration: 30–50 minutes

Materials needed: -

Activity description:

Facilitator defines “crisis” as a moment of intense emotional activation (conflict, shouting, loss of control). Then, he/she emphasizes that automatic reactions are normal but can be recognized and changed.

Identifying personal patterns (15 minutes)

Participants recall a recent crisis situation:

- What happened?

- What emotions came up (before, during, after)?
- What was the automatic reaction (e.g., yelling, withdrawing, giving in)?

They briefly note or map their “crisis cycle.”

Creating the “compass”

Participants draw a compass divided into four areas:

- **North – Emotions:** what I feel in a crisis
- **South – Automatic reactions:** what I do without thinking
- **East – Needs:** what I actually need in that moment
- **West – Strategies:** what I can do more constructively

They can use symbols, keywords, or colors.

Practicing regulation

Introduce and practice simple techniques:

- mindful pause (slow breathing)
- emotional time-out
- self-talk (“I can pause,” “I don’t have to react immediately”)

Participants choose 1–2 strategies to include in their compass.

Sharing and positive feedback

In small groups, participants share:

- one pattern they recognized
- one strategy they want to try

Others provide positive feedback focused on:

- strengths
- awareness
- effort toward change

Final debrief (10 minutes)

Facilitated discussion:

- What they discovered about their automatic reactions?
- Which strategy feels most realistic?
- How they can remember to use their “compass” in real situations?

The crisis traffic light

Objective: To help parents recognize emotional escalation and apply practical self-regulation strategies.

Duration: 60 minutes

Materials needed: Paper, colored markers or pencils

Activity description:

Participants create a personal “traffic light” model:

- Red represents emotional overload and impulsive reactions
- Yellow represents warning signs and emotional activation
- Green represents calmness and constructive responses

Participants identify:

- Personal triggers
- Physical and emotional warning signs
- Strategies that help them return to emotional balance

The facilitator guides practice exercises involving breathing, grounding, and reflective pauses.

The activity concludes with discussion about applying the traffic light model in everyday family situations.

Positive education to manage crisis

Objective: To support parents in understanding emotional reactions and applying positive parenting principles during conflicts and crises.

Duration: 45 minutes

Materials needed: Paper, pens, large poster or flipchart.

Activity description:

Participants are asked to describe a recent conflict situation with their children, in which they encountered difficulty managing their own emotions and understanding their child's behavior (e.g., they don't want to shower, or it's late, they have to go out, and they don't want to get ready). Choose one person for the whole group and ask them to draw a silhouette of a person on a piece of paper, then color in the areas where they felt their anger erupting during the conflict. In pairs, they share their drawing, and then, still in pairs, they are asked to share their thoughts: what is the most impulsive and spontaneous thing for you to say or do? How do you react when your child continues

to say no and provoke others in this situation? The pairs share their thoughts on a piece of paper, and then, in plenary, the trainer writes everything down on a large poster.

All participants are then asked to pause for a moment and leap into the future, 20 years from now: what kind of person would you like your child to become? What would you like your relationship to be like? Now, return as a couple, try and review the impulsive statements you wrote earlier. Discuss together whether this parental behavior can facilitate the achievement of the long-term goal you set: the person you want your child to become. Share in plenary: if these responses don't work, what other responses could we implement? Share and reflect on the slides on the principles of positive parenting.

EVALUATION OF SKILLS, PUTTING INTO PRACTICE NEW COMPETENCES

Objectives:

- To support participants in reflecting on the competences developed throughout the program.
- To encourage self-evaluation, self-awareness, and recognition of personal growth.
- To consolidate newly acquired parenting skills through reflection and practical application.
- To help parents establish realistic and meaningful goals for continued development.

Memory timeline

Objective: To help participants reflect on their learning journey, recognize meaningful moments, and strengthen the sense of group connection.

Duration: 45 minutes.

Materials needed: A long piece of string or yarn, markers, small sheets of paper, tape or stapler, two large sheets of paper (for start/end times)

Activity Description:

This is an individual activity done simultaneously by the entire group.

- Timeline setup (5 minutes): Place a long string on the floor in the center of the room. At one end, tape a sheet of paper with the date of the first session date and the activity start time. At the other end, tape a sheet with today date and the activity end time.
- Individual reflection (15 minutes): Everyone works quietly and individually. Each person reflects on the various meetings mentally reviewing the events. They then think about the moments that stood out to them—this could be information, an activity, an emotion, an anecdote, or anything else.
- Creating and placing memories (15 minutes): For each significant memory, the participant writes it on a separate small sheet of paper, including a rough time of day. They then place their paper on the string in chronological order, using tape or a stapler to attach it. For example, if the activity started at 9:30 a.m. and a memory occurred at 12:45 p.m., they attach the paper at a distance from the start that represents 12:45 p.m. on the timeline.

- Group reading and discussion (10 minutes): Once everyone has finished, the group reads all the notes aloud, reviewing the collective timeline of the day.

This string can then be hung in the room as a visual representation of the pathway.

Sliding doors

Objective: To apply stress-management and conflict-resolution strategies to realistic parenting situations.

Duration: 45-60 minutes

Materials needed: blank papers, pens, case studies

(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1y5I7CGrvOjZd_l2V7cmubVm-2XF9vibUQSuc5tMv5-A/edit?usp=sharing)

Activity description:

Within each group, participants discuss the assigned case, reflect on it together, and respond to a series of guiding questions designed to stimulate thinking—similar to the film *Sliding Doors*—about how things could have turned out differently:

- What actions could have changed the course of events?
- What could have been done to better handle the situation?
- What strategies can be adopted in the future to prevent similar situations from happening again?

Each group is also invited to consider which educational or support methodology could be applied in that specific case to help parents and children overcome the difficulty.

Finally, each group shares their reflections in a plenary session, creating space for collective discussion and exchange.

A postcard to remember our trip

Objective: To strengthen emotional connection within the group through appreciation, encouragement, and positive reflection.

Duration: 20 minutes.

Materials needed: a selection of postcards with pleasant landscapes or images, pens for each participant

Activity Description:

- **First selection:** A selection of postcards with pleasant images is presented to the group. Each participant chooses one postcard, the one they like the most. They write their name on the back of the postcard in the space reserved for the recipient. Once everyone has done this, the postcards are placed face-up in the center of the group.
- **Second selection and writing:** Participants are then asked to take a different postcard from the center. Each person writes a thought, a wish, a memory from the two-day event, or a positive message to the person whose name is on the back of the postcard.
- **Sharing and conclusion:** Once all messages have been written, the postcards are returned to their owners. The activity ends with a moment of group sharing, where participants can read the messages they've received and reflect on the experience.

I am, I can, I have the power

Objective: To encourage self-awareness, self-evaluation, and recognition of personal strengths and abilities.

Duration: 20 minutes.

Materials needed: Colored papers, pens

Activity Description:

Participants complete the following prompts:

- I am...
- I can...
- I have the power to...

Participants reflect on:

- What they learned throughout the program
- Their identity and strengths as parents
- Skills they developed or wish to continue developing

Participants share their reflections in pairs, and later introduce their partner's reflections to the group.

The activity supports confidence, empowerment, and positive self-recognition.

3-2-1: Reflect

Objective: To encourage structured reflection on learning, change, and future goals.

Duration: 20–30 minutes

Materials needed: Pre-printed 3-2-1 reflection sheets (or blank paper), pens

Activity description:

Each participant receives a sheet with the following reflective prompts:

- 3 things I've learned during the sessions.
- 2 changes I've made in how I relate to my child or manage challenges.
- 1 thing I want to keep working on after the program ends.

Participants take 10–15 minutes to reflect and write individually. Then, they pair up and share their responses with a partner, focusing on encouragement and active listening.

The facilitator ends the activity with a brief pairs or group discussion: *“What do you need to keep moving forward with your parenting goal?”*

My journey through the program

Objective: To help participants visualize and acknowledge their personal and emotional development throughout the program.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: A3 paper, colored pencils or markers, optional stickers or magazines for collage

Activity description:

Each participant receives an A3 sheet and is invited to draw or create their own "path" or "road" to represent their journey throughout the program. On the path, they are encouraged to mark:

- **The beginning:** How they felt at the start of the program.
- **Key stops or moments:** Sessions, activities, insights, or challenges that stood out.
- **Turning points:** Where something shifted or changed for them.
- **Current position:** Where they feel they are now in their development.
- **A next step or destination:** What they want to continue working on.

In small groups or a sharing circle, each participant is invited to describe their road briefly, highlighting:

- *One important moment along the way.*

- *One thing they are proud of.*
- *One thing they still want to explore as a parent.*

A letter from my future self

Objective: To support goal-setting, motivation, and positive future projection.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Envelopes, paper, pens, calm background music (optional), optional printed prompts

Activity description:

The facilitator invites participants to imagine themselves 6 months from now, as a parent who has made progress and feels more balanced, confident, or connected in their role.

Guided prompt: *“Imagine it’s six months from today. You look back and realize you’ve grown. You’ve managed some challenges differently, connected more deeply with your child, and practiced the skills you’ve learned. What does your life feel like now? What are you proud of? What habits or mindsets helped you get here?”*

Participants then write a letter from their future self to their present self, starting with: *“Dear me, I’m so proud of how far you’ve come...”*

They include:

- What have they achieved or changed in their parenting?
- What obstacles did they overcome?
- What helped them the most?
- What advice does their future self give them now?

After 15 minutes of writing, participants seal the letter in an envelope and write their name on it. The facilitator collects the envelopes and offers to mail them back to participants in 2–3 months (or suggests they take them home and open them on a chosen date).

Reflection question: *“What did you discover or feel while writing from your future self?”*

The wall of wishes and goals

Objective: To consolidate learning experiences and support participants in setting meaningful personal goals.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Colored post-its or sticky notes, markers or pens, a blank wall or a large poster

Activity Description:

Introduction (5 minutes):

The facilitator explains the activity: each participant will have the opportunity to write two things on a post-it:

1. A wish or hope for the future of their parenting (both as a parent and as a family).
2. A concrete goal they intend to achieve in the coming months (a change, improvement, or new practice they want to implement with their children).

These wishes and goals can relate to daily behaviors, emotions, or deeper experiences.

Writing and sharing (10 minutes):

Each parent takes a post-it and writes their wish and goal. These can be personal reflections or something they want to share with the group. After writing, each person approaches the “wall” (which can be a wall or a large poster) and sticks their post-its, creating a symbolic “wall” of their wishes and goals as parents.

Group reflection (10 minutes):

Once everyone has stuck their post-its, the facilitator invites the group to reflect together. Each parent can choose a goal or wish from another parent that inspires them and share it with the group, explaining why they chose it. This moment serves to strengthen the sense of community and mutual support. The facilitator can also ask:

- What can we do together to support our goals?
- How can we help each other, even beyond this journey?

This activity helps parents consolidate what they’ve learned, but more importantly, it motivates them and makes them feel capable of putting their acquired skills into practice. Additionally, it fosters a supportive environment where parents can feel part of a community that grows together.

The parenting toolbox

Objective: To help participants consolidate practical parenting strategies and identify resources they can continue using after the program.

Duration: 25 minutes

Materials needed: Cardboard sheets or paper “toolbox” templates, colored markers, scissors, glue, small slips of paper

Activity description:

Each participant creates their own symbolic “Parenting Toolbox” on paper. On small slips, they write down skills, strategies, or insights gained during the sessions (e.g., “pause before reacting,” “listen without judgment,” “non-verbal connection”). They place these slips inside their toolbox. In pairs, participants share the tools they find most valuable and discuss how they plan to use them at home. The facilitator emphasizes the importance of keeping the toolbox “accessible” as a reminder of growth and progress.

The playback theatre of parenting

Objective: To encourage reflection and learning through dramatization of real parenting experiences.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Chairs for role-play setup, optional props (to symbolize parent/child roles)

Activity description:

Participants are invited to think of a recent or recurring parenting situation where they struggled. Volunteers enact the scene with the support of group members who take on roles (parent, child, or other family members). After playing it out, the facilitator pauses and invites the group to replay the scene using one or more of the new competences learned in the program (e.g., stress regulation, empathy, conflict resolution).

The group reflects together on what changed in the dynamic and what made the new strategies effective.

My next step contract

Objective: To encourage commitment to continued personal growth and practical application of newly acquired competences.

Duration: 25 minutes

Materials needed: Paper and pens, envelopes

Activity description:

The facilitator guides participants through a short reflection exercise: What skills did I strengthen? Which situations feel easier now? What challenges remain? Each participant then writes a short “contract with myself,” setting 1–2 realistic goals for the next month as a parent (e.g., “I will dedicate 10 minutes of active listening daily,” “I will use the pause technique in moments of conflict”).

Participants seal their contracts in envelopes and may choose to take them home or leave them with the facilitator to be mailed back in a month as a reminder.

The Ideal Island

Objective: To encourage reflection on personal values, emotional needs, and healthy family relationships.

Duration: 40–50 minutes

Materials needed: LEGO sets or similar building materials (or colouring materials)

Activity description:

In small groups, participants build (or colour) their “ideal island,” representing a healthy family environment where stress is managed, communication is constructive, and resilience is nurtured. During the process, the facilitator introduces challenges (e.g., “a storm hits,” “a conflict arises,” “resources are limited”), encouraging participants to adapt their strategies. Reflection focuses on how skills practiced throughout the program (empathy, communication, stress management, resilience) were used to handle the challenges.

Skills Marketplace

Objective: To recognize personal strengths and encourage mutual support and exchange of competences.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials needed: Post-its, markers, flipchart sheets.

Activity description:

Participants receive post its to write down one competence they feel they developed most during the program (e.g., “active listening,” “staying calm in crisis,” “setting boundaries”). These are placed on a wall, forming a “skills marketplace.” Participants then walk around, read each other’s post-its, and “collect” two skills they want to strengthen further. A group reflection follows, discussing both personal strengths and areas for growth.

Competence River

Objective: To support reflection on personal growth and the continuous development of parenting competences.

Duration: 30–35 minutes

Materials needed: Large sheet of paper (for facilitator to draw one big river), markers, sticky notes.

Activity description:

The facilitator sketches one large river on a flipchart or floor paper, divided into four segments:

Source – Riverbanks – Currents – Delta. Participants contribute collectively:

- On sticky notes, they write down where they started (*Source*), what resources supported them (*Riverbanks*), what difficulties they met (*Currents*), and what skills they want to carry forward (*Delta*).
- One by one, participants place their notes on the river and briefly explain their contribution to the group.

At the end, the group looks at the shared river as a metaphor for the collective journey. The facilitator highlights patterns: common resources, recurring obstacles, and shared goals. The session closes with each person formulating one sentence beginning with: **“From this journey, I take with me...”**

