

CHILD-PARENT-RELATIONSHIP (C-P-R) TRAINING

Basic Principles of Play Sessions—Session 2

Basic Principles for Play Sessions:

1. The parent sets the stage by structuring an atmosphere in which the **child feels free** to determine how he will use the time during the 30-minute play session. The **child leads** the play and the **parent follows**. The parent follows the child's lead by showing keen interest and carefully observing the child's play, **without making suggestions or asking questions**, and by actively joining in the play when invited by the child. For 30 minutes, you (parent) are "dumb" and don't have the answers; it is up to your child to make his own decisions and find his own solutions. Your child is the expert.
2. The parent's major task is to empathize with the child: to understand the child's thoughts, feelings, and intent expressed in play by working hard to **see and experience the child's play through the child's eyes**. This task is operationalized by conveying the "Be-With" Attitudes below.
3. The parent is then to **communicate this understanding to the child** by (a) verbally describing what the child is doing/playing, (b) verbally reflecting what the child is saying, and (c) most importantly, by verbally reflecting the feelings that the child is actively experiencing through his play.
4. The parent is to be clear and firm about the few "limits" that are placed on the child's behavior. Limits are stated in a way that give the child responsibility for his actions and behaviors—helping to foster self-control. Limits to be set are time limits, not breaking toys or damaging items in the play area, and not physically hurting self or parent. **Limits are to be stated only when needed**, but applied consistently across sessions. (Specific examples of when and how to set limits will be taught over the next several weeks; you will also have lots of opportunities to practice this very important skill.)

"Be-With" Attitudes:

Your intent in your actions, presence, and responses is what is most important and should convey to your child:

"I am here—I hear you—I understand—I care—I delight in you!"

Goals of the Play Sessions:

1. To allow the child—through the medium of play—to communicate thoughts, needs, and feelings to his parent, and for the parent to communicate that understanding back to the child.
2. To help the child experience more positive feelings of self-respect, self-worth, confidence, and competence—through feeling accepted, understood, and valued—and ultimately develop self-control, responsibility for actions, and learn to get needs met in appropriate ways.
3. To strengthen the parent-child relationship and foster a sense of trust, security, and closeness for both parent and child.
4. To increase the level of playfulness and enjoyment between parent and child. Enjoy 30 minutes of time together!