

PRACTICE TOOL

HELPING CHILDREN DO WELL WITH LEARNING TIME

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LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS
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HOMework AND LEARNING

Homework and learning time can be stressful for children and for the adults who are caring for them. There are things we can do to help create conditions for them to succeed with learning time. Thinking about the setting conditions is especially important. We can also find ways to decrease stress and risk and increase the sense of safety.

Children do well if they can. If they can't we need to find out why so we can help them. Ross Greene

CARE PRINCIPLES

- Relationship Based 
- Developmentally Focused 
- Trauma Informed 
- Family Involved 
- Competency Centred 
- Ecologically Oriented 



Four questions that are helpful here

- 1. What am I feeling now?** Am I ready to help this child? Do I have enough time? Am I able to be tuned into the child and be calm and supportive?
- 2. What does the child feel, need, expect or want?** What kind of day has the child had? Have they had a difficult day? Are they at their baseline or already a little agitated and stressed? Is there something that would help them become ready for learning?
- 3. How is the environment affecting the situation?** Is there a space for learning? Do we have the equipment and resources we need? Will other children and young people affect the situation? Are their distractions in the environment?
- 4. How do I best respond?**



Physical space

- Create a learning space that is especially for learning time. If you are using the dining room table you could put a cloth on it to show it is now a learning space.
- Set up the equipment and resources the child will need – computer, iPad, colouring pencils, paper and pens. Consider having a 'learning box' so it is easy to pull out and pack away.
- Have some activities on hand in case learning isn't working – a 'back up box' with things like colouring, brain games, lego or a basketball.



PRACTICE TIP

- Does the child have enough to engage them?
- Is the space private and free from distraction?
- Do they have what they need to learn? Is it in good working order?
- Are the activities and tasks achievable for them?
- Is there anything about the activities that will lead to frustration?



Relationships and attunement

- Focus on your relationship with the child. Negotiate agreements and expectations, get their ideas about what will help.
- Consider writing a learning agreement and negotiating expectations like:

✓ We will help each other
✓ We can ask for a break
✓ It's OK to make mistakes
✓ It's OK to ask for help
✓ We will listen to each other

- Use the words the child comes up with.
- Try to make it fun and engaging for the child by using pictures, symbols, colours – draw up the plan together. You can write it on a place mat, a ball, a piece of paper you put up on the wall or even a t-shirt you wear.



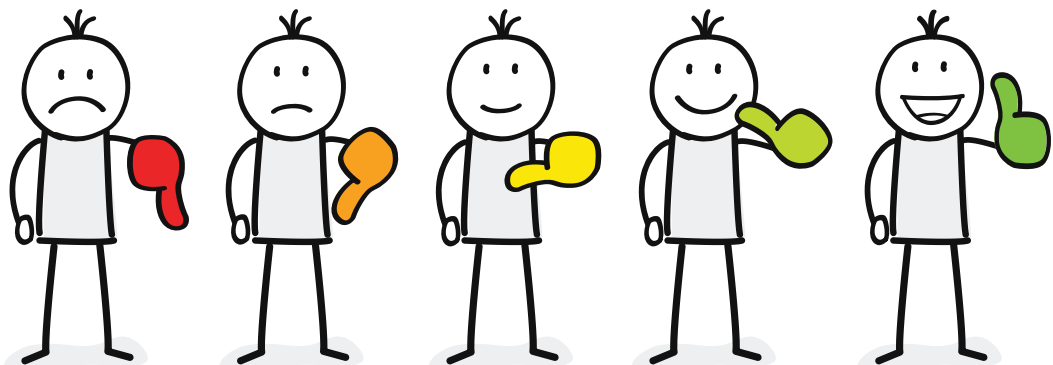
PRACTICE TIP

If things start to go off track you can guide the child back to the working agreement. Be empathetic and calm. For example you could say, 'I know sometimes it can be frustrating working out sums, but remember we were going to try to help each other. Let's see if we can work it out together.'



Emotional space

- Is the time right for you and the child? (Ask yourself 'what am I feeling now?')
- Helping the child tune in to their own emotions is important.
- Using a scaling question can be helpful to understand how the child is feeling. Talk about where they are on the scale and what would help them to be ready to learn.




CARE AND TCI RESOURCE

CHILD YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES


Learning can work best in short bursts – see an example below.

TIME	ACTIVITY
2 mins	Ready to learn scale – help identify if the time is right to learn.
3 mins	Body regulation activity – e.g. yoga poses, star jumps, bounce a ball together.
10 mins	Learning activity – remember to give positive feedback.
1 min	Check in – do you want to keep going or will we have a quick brain break?
2 mins	Brain break – choose from list below or keep learning.
10 mins	Learning activity – can be the same or a different task.
1 min	Reflect – What was one thing that worked? What is one thing we could do differently next time?
1 min	Woohoo – you have finished a 30 minute learning session. Congratulations! Let's pack up now and see what is next on our plan.


Brain break and body regulation activities




Shoot some hoops or bounce a ball together



Listen to music or dance along to a video clip




Do some body drumming




Try some yoga poses and stretches




Time how long it takes to run around the house




Get moving and shake it out



Watch a funny cat clip on YouTube



Grab some pencils and do some colouring in



Lie down for some balloon or deep belly breathing



Remember

- Celebrate success (especially small wins!) – praising the effort works best:
 - ‘I enjoyed listening to you read that page’ is better than ‘Good reading’
 - ‘You gave that a really good go’
 - ‘You wrote three sentences today – great work!’
- Avoid power struggles – you may need to drop or change an expectation.
- If children experience success and maintain their relationship with you they will be more willing to learn next time.
- Maintain good relationships and open communication with the school to support positive learning experiences.
- If homework is stressful and the strategies aren't working reach out to the teacher and school. If you need help with this, involve others in the child's care team. You don't have to feel like you need to do it all on your own.
- Work to find solutions with the teacher, school and care team – keep advocating for a better solution if it's not working – hang in there and reach out for help.