

Encounter Toolkit

For Parent Coaching in Catholic Schools



Welcome

We are created for encounter. For Catholics, this means relationship in two dimensions. In a vertical sense, encounter describes our sacramental relationship with God. In a horizontal sense, encounter characterizes our relationship with others. Encounter is about the reconciliation and healing of persons in Jesus Christ. Encounter is the relational basis for safety, love, and flourishing. One of the most beautiful and challenging encounters happens in the context of parenting. Parents encounter children at their very best and absolute worst—every day of the week. Parents must navigate each of these encounters while experiencing their own life issues. This can lead to misunderstanding or conflict.

When things go sideways, parents may become overwhelmed, paralyzed, or defensive. Children may ratchet up challenging attitudes and behaviors. The result is a negative feedback loop. This *Encounter Toolkit* is perfect for parents of kids (aged 4-12) who feel stuck in such a loop. It is excellent for parents of children who are manifesting unhelpful behaviors.

The *Encounter Toolkit* relies on a premier, evidence-based parenting program known as First Approach Skills Training ([FAST](#)), a collaboration between the University of Washington and Seattle Children's Hospital. FAST consolidates the best developmental, clinical, and applied research on parenting and child behavior. FAST is practical and easy to understand. Although FAST isn't faith-based, it is balanced and compatible with Catholic values for family life education. FAST offers positive parenting skills and strategies, a great alternative for parents who are stuck in unhelpful patterns such as criticizing, threatening, or yelling. The *Encounter Toolkit* contains links to short FAST videos and materials which are free to view or duplicate.

The *Encounter Toolkit* is meant to be shared in the context of a special coaching relationship. The Child Health and Wellness Partnership is collaborating with Revive Hope and Healing Ministries to create an initiative that matches trained coaches with a parent or small group of parents whose elementary-aged children are enrolled in Syracuse Diocese Catholic schools. Parent coaches are people of deep faith. They are people with real-world experience and insight, having successfully raised their own children over many years. The *Encounter Toolkit* is designed to be jointly completed by coaches and parents. It provides skill-based content to spark discussion, facilitate reflection on parenting struggles, inspire prayer, and catalyze collaborative problem-solving.

In the safe space between coach and parents, it may happen that mental health concerns become part of the conversation. The child may be struggling with anxiety, depression, grief/loss, or trauma. Parents may be dealing with similar issues. To be clear, the *Encounter Toolkit* and coaching relationship are a behavior management initiative for parents, not a counseling program. The toolkit and coaching relationship are helpful for situations where kids are arguing, throwing tantrums, or showing mild to moderate defiance behaviors. The toolkit and coaching relationship neatly complement professional mental health support. Parent coaches are trained to provide referrals for licensed counseling services. The Child

Health and Wellness Partnership works closely with school-based [ADAPEP](#) counselors in several Syracuse Diocese Catholic schools. ADAPEP counselors are wonderfully experienced and competent professionals with a mature Catholic faith. They work with children in schools during the instructional day. Where available, their services are free to students.

The Child Health and Wellness Partnership collaborates with Mobile Counseling of New York ([MCNY](#)) to provide a range of school-affiliated services, including counseling for students and marriage/family therapy for student families. MCNY has counselors with immediate availability. MCNY services are funded through parent insurance.



Toolkit Learning

A legendary family therapist once observed that for every parent action, there will always be a child *reaction*. Problems emerge when actions and reactions become stuck in a negative feedback loop. Rather than a shared blessing, the parent-child encounter bogs down in frustration and conflict. How might the parent and child become un-stuck?

The *Encounter Toolkit* can help. It is designed for busy people with limited time. The toolkit includes eleven short behavior management modules. Each module contains a brief video (2-5 minutes) along with easy content for reflection. Modules are organized in a *hybrid flipped* format. In this format, coaches and parents individually complete a module on their own time, to be followed by a meeting for discussion and application. Hybrid flipped learning is designed for efficiency and flexibility. The individual time required to complete a module is less than twenty minutes. The amount of time spent meeting is up to the coach and parents. **The key to success is making sure these meetings happen.** The impact of the *Encounter Toolkit* depends on content application conversations between coaches and parents. Without these meetings (virtual or face-to-face), the content loses effectiveness in terms of restoring and healing the parent-child encounter.

The *Encounter Toolkit* uses FAST parenting skills to help parents break negative feedback loops with their children. Becoming un-stuck means changes are needed in the parent-child encounter. Parents can expect that with deployment of new skills and actions, children will push back with reactions. Before starting the modules, coaches and parents should discuss the following change principles.

1. *Start small.* Parents can expect best results by starting small. Praise and reward simple, positive child behaviors such as getting out of bed when asked. Don't start with a big request such as completing a list of weekend chores.
2. *Stick with it.* Escaping the negative feedback loop means breaking unhelpful behaviors and habits. This takes time. Don't give up! You are teaching your child that good behavior is better than unhelpful behavior.
3. *Expect push-back.* New parent actions will result in child reactions. When unhelpful behavior no longer "works" for the child, it is normal for them to double down and try harder, at least for a while. Parents that are consistent will help kids accept new limits.

Accessibility. The *Encounter Toolkit* is delivered in an electronic format known as **.pdf**. Your computer will have a reader for this format. Many .pdf readers have a "read aloud" feature. Some users will find it helpful to take advantage of this feature. If English isn't your first language, you can translate the content into your preferred language. Simply copy *Encounter Toolkit* text from your .pdf reader and drop into Google Translate (link [HERE](#)).

Causes of Child Behavior (FAST Module #1)

[VIDEO](#)

For Individual Reflection. The video suggests that unhelpful child behaviors are linked to factors associated with the child, parent, and environment. These factors can positively or negatively influence parent-child feedback loops. Write down factors you believe might be influencing encounters with your child.

1. **Child Factors.** Examples might include (but aren't limited to) developmental concerns (delays, learning difficulties), temperament, anxiety, interests, goals, or peer (friend) relationships.

2. **Parent Factors.** Examples might include (but aren't limited to) personality traits, anxiety, interests, goals, life stressors, or support network.

3. **Environment Factors.** Examples might include (but aren't limited to) family finances, neighborhood safety, availability of support, or custody arrangements.

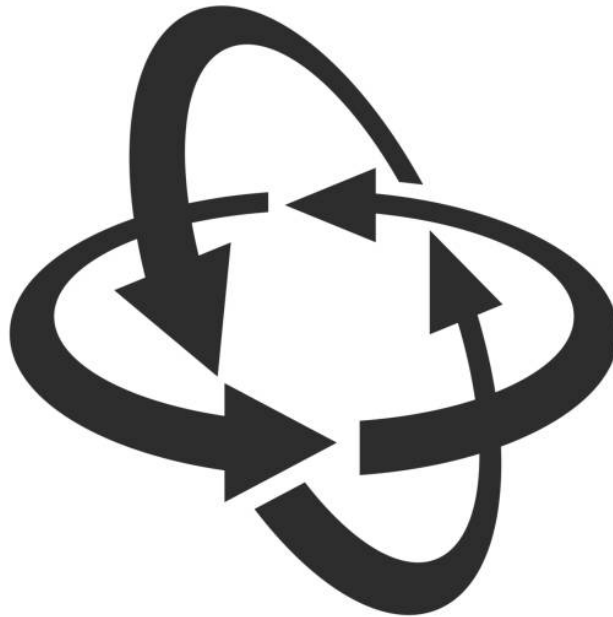
Highlighting Activity. Highlight above factors (all categories) you believe are currently having the MOST impact (positive or negative) on your parent-child encounters.

For the Coaching Meeting. Consider the following in terms of negative feedback loops between parents and children.

What factors did you highlight from the individual reflection? Share how these factors are currently impacting (positive or negative) your parent-child encounters.

Dr. Shoenfelder-Gonzalez makes a fascinating comment, that “we think we are teaching our kids, but they are also training us.” Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Share whether/how reflection on the factors causing child behavior is helpful to your parent-child encounter.



Special Time (FAST Module #2)

VIDEO

For Individual Reflection. The video introduces the idea of Special Time. This is a 10-15 minute one-on-one time. Special Time works best if it happens daily. It improves self-esteem, decreases negative behaviors, and most importantly, elevates the importance of the parent-child encounter. In Special Time, the child picks the activity and (within reason) leads you through it.

The video suggests becoming a “sportscaster” who describes positive behaviors, much like a sports announcer on a broadcast. No instructions or judgment!

Example: “You’re putting blue Legos on the green base. You’re building it higher!”

Special Time “Do”	Special Time “Don’t”
Let the child choose and lead the activity.	Teach the child what to do.
Keep sportscaster comments flowing.	Criticize child or minor misbehaviors.
Stay in the moment, enjoy your child.	Bring up the past or future.
Roll with changes.	Be rigid and inflexible.
Ignore minor misbehaviors, handle major misbehaviors as usual.	Be a law enforcement officer.

Special Time Ideas

Lego, building blocks
Walk the dog
Craft or project
Draw or color
Sports (play catch, frisbee, kickball)
Make a treat
Build a fort
Play with dolls or action figures

Tips and Troubleshooting

My child can’t decide on an activity OR chooses activities I can’t stand!

Brainstorm activity ideas with your child, making a list. Limit certain activities based on your tolerance.

My child is making a mess or trying to annoy me!

Ignore messes and minor misbehaviors. Look away until it stops, begin making positive comments again. If a rule is broken or something becomes unsafe, cancel Special Time and try again tomorrow.

What if my child refuses Special Time?

Offer Special Time when screens aren't available. Nothing can compete with screens! Give them a few minutes to change their mind. If nothing changes, let them know you are looking forward to Special Time tomorrow.

What if my child gets angry when Special Time is over?

Set and blame a timer. Tell them you wish there was more time, looking forward to tomorrow. Offer five extra minutes of Special Time tomorrow as a reward for a calm voice and body while ending today's time.

I don't have time for this!

Start small, five minutes per day. Weigh the time burden of Special Time against time spent in the negative feedback loop. Which is the better option?

For the Coaching Meeting. Share your experiences with Special Time. What happened? What changed? What did you learn about your child? About yourself? Share prayer intentions related to Special Time and the parent-child encounter.



Supercharging Praise (FAST Module #3)

[VIDEO](#)

For Individual Reflection. Supercharged praise is powerful. It can help break the negative feedback loop. In order to be useful, it must be honest and real. Don't manufacture false praise. Don't praise things you feel aren't praiseworthy. Children will easily see through parent faking. Be specific, linking the praise to a positive behavior. Share praise to help your child feel capable and acknowledged. Catch your child doing positive things!

Examples: "I like the way you are playing nicely with your brother."

"You did a good job putting away your shoes when I asked."

"You're rinsing your plate and putting it in the dishwasher. That's so helpful!"

Look for positive "opposite" behaviors and praise these often.

Unhelpful Behavior	Positive "Opposite" Behavior
Not following instructions.	Following instructions the first time.
Screaming when upset.	Using calm words when upset.
Bothering brother or sister.	Sharing with brother or sister.
Getting dressed very slowly.	Finishing all steps of getting dressed.
Intentionally making a mess.	Picking up after playtime.

Avoid Generic Praise: "Good job, buddy."

"Thanks for being good."

Avoid Using "But": "Good work cleaning up the table, but your room is still messy."

1. Write down 2-3 unhelpful behaviors that keep happening.

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2. What would you like your child to do instead of the unhelpful behaviors? What is the positive “opposite” of the unhelpful behaviors?

3. Choose two child behaviors you will praise this week.

Use the below chart to track the two behaviors you will praise this week. Place a check mark each time you supercharge praise for the chosen behavior.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Chosen Behavior							
Chosen Behavior							

For the Coaching Meeting. Share your chosen behaviors for supercharged praise. What happened when you “caught” your child in the behavior and offered authentic, supercharged praise? What did you learn about yourself as a parent? Share prayer intentions related to your chosen child behaviors and the parent-child encounter.



Planned Ignoring (FAST Module #4)

[VIDEO](#)

For Individual Reflection. Planned ignoring is effective. But it isn't right for every parent-child encounter. It's important to note that some child behaviors must have logical consequences. These include refusing to follow instructions, rule-breaking behaviors, or safety violations. To illustrate, planned ignoring is not the right response if your child hits a younger sibling. This situation must be addressed immediately using inductive reasoning (clear explanation of why the behavior is a serious problem), time-out, and loss of privileges.

Planned ignoring is ideal for child behaviors that fall short of rule-breaking while trying hard to get a reaction out of you. Examples include whining, loudly complaining, and tantrums. Remember the change principles associated with becoming un-stuck from the negative feedback loop? Planned ignoring is a parent action that will result in a child reaction—namely, ratcheting up the unhelpful behavior for a brief period of time. If you consistently hold your ground, planned ignoring will help you break free from negative parenting behaviors such as arguing or yelling. The goal is to teach children that things are much better when helpful behaviors are rewarded with positive parent attention.

How to do it. When unhelpful behavior happens, do not say anything. Do not give eye contact. Move away or distract yourself with something relaxing or peaceful. As soon as the unhelpful behavior stops, immediately re-engage the child with your positive, undivided attention. Refrain from supercharged praise! Supercharged praise is reserved for positive child behaviors, not simply ending a tantrum.

Be gentle with yourself. Planned ignoring isn't easy. It's hard to manage your own feelings when unhelpful behaviors are (loudly) happening nearby. Try a coping strategy:

Take 4 deep breaths

Use positive self-talk ("I can do this.")

Text a friend (or parent coach)

Drink a glass of water

Wipe down the counters

Pet your dog or cat

Tips and Troubleshooting

It's been three days since I began planned ignoring. The whining and complaining are becoming worse!

This means planned ignoring is working. Becoming un-stuck may take several weeks. Don't give up! Lean into your parent coach for support.

What should I do if the behaviors become a risk to the child or others?

Risk behaviors cannot be ignored. Use inductive reasoning and logical consequences. If the risk becomes extreme, call 911 or take the child to the nearest hospital emergency room.

The behaviors drive me CRAZY. I can't consistently ignore these behaviors.

Planned ignoring will fail if it happens sometimes or occasionally. The child will learn that unhelpful behaviors continue to "work" in terms of getting a reaction from you. The negative feedback loop will continue. In consultation with your parent coach, consider a referral for licensed counseling.

For the Coaching Meeting. It takes a village to successfully implement a change such as planned ignoring. Share with your coach and fellow parents how things are going. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Your coach is available to support the change. He or she is committed to helping you fully experience the blessing of the parent-child encounter.



Supercharging Instructions (FAST Module #5)

[VIDEO](#)

For Individual Reflection. Supercharged instructions are simple and clear. They help your child understand what's expected of them. A hallmark of supercharged instruction is breaking things down into smaller steps. Children feel confident when they can master a small step. Mastery of small steps become victories that set the stage for encounter.

How to do it. With supercharged instruction, less is more. Give fewer, simpler instructions to make things less overwhelming. Parents should only give instructions if they are willing to (consistently) follow through with a consequence. Instructions should aim for the positive, what the child should do rather than what they should not do. Parents who are effective with supercharged instructions are respectful. Just like adults, children involved in a task or activity don't appreciate being jolted by a surprise interruption. Look for a natural break or open space to deliver a supercharged instruction.

Instruction	Trap	Supercharged Instruction
Would you please pick up your room?	Vague and overwhelming. Cleaning the room involves many steps.	Please begin by putting the books on the shelf.

Put your clothes and shoes and jacket on, we need to leave in 10 minutes.	Too many steps at once. Children generally won't keep track of 10 minutes' time.	Please put your pants and socks on now. We leave soon.
Stop being disrespectful!	Vague. The focus is on what not to do.	Please look at me and hold your comments while I am talking.

Setting goals.

1. A more effective instruction I want to give this week is...

2. Times of day when I could give better instructions are...

3. I will watch out for/avoid these instruction traps...

For the Coaching Meeting. Coaches: Please share your parenting experiences with supercharged instructions. If you can remember a specific parent-child encounter where these made a difference, please share. Parents: Please share your goals for supercharged instructions. Coaches, please write these down and offer suggestions and encouragement. Together, we are better!

TRAIN UP a CHILD
in THE WAY he SHOULD GO;

even when HE IS OLD
he WILL NOT DEPART from it.
PROVERBS 22:6

When-Then Instructions (FAST Module #6)

[VIDEO](#)

For Individual Reflection. When-Then instructions are about rewarding activities. The parent goal is to use rewarding activities to help motivate your child to do boring tasks. The reason is straightforward. Just like adults, many daily tasks for children are boring or tedious. No one looks forward to clearing the table or loading the dishwasher. It's easier to be motivated when the boring task is linked to something fun and compelling.

How to do it. When-Then instructions combine a “need to do” with “want to do.”

Examples: “When you finish the worksheet, then you can play with Legos.”

“When you put away the toys, then you can have some screen time.”

“When you finish 5 pages of reading, then you can have 5 minutes of screen time.”

“When you brush your teeth for 2 minutes with toothpaste, then you can have an extra book at bedtime.”

Tips

Give the “want to do” reward activity right away. Don’t wait or make promises.

Avoid bargaining! This will create a brand new, negative feedback loop.

If the child doesn’t like the “want to do” activity, find another.

Brainstorm a list of “want to do” activities with your child.

Cheer your child on! “I want you to earn your reward!”

If there isn’t time to give a reward, give a ticket or token to be used later for a “want to do” activity.

Reward Activities	Bigger (Special) Reward Activities
Screen time minutes.	Bake a special treat.
Dessert after supper.	Choose the game on game night.
5 minutes of additional special time.	Invite a friend over.
Bedtime 20 minutes later.	Scavenger hunt.
Play with parent cell phone.	Go out for ice cream.
Extra book at bedtime.	Choose a movie on movie night.
Treat in lunchbox.	Special lunch.
Choose favorite music in the car.	30 minutes of screens.
Watch TV at breakfast.	Pick a streamed show.
Day off from a chore.	Day off from cleaning up.
Chewing gum.	Favorite candy.

For the Coaching Meeting. Share a situation where you used when-then instructions.

What was the context? What was the reward activity? How did your child respond to the when-then instruction followed by the reward activity? Did when-then instructions improve the quality of parent-child encounter? If so, how?



Logical Consequences: Privilege Pause (FAST Module #7)

[VIDEO](#)

For Individual Reflection. Children test limits and boundaries. There are good reasons for this. Children want to know they are valuable, safe, and loved. Limits and boundaries provide a sense of security, knowing that a parent cares enough to enforce appropriate expectations for behavior. It may seem counterintuitive, but limits and boundaries are an important way to let children know we love them. Imagine a home or school with no limits or boundaries. From the child's perspective, the possibilities might be many. Yet the consequences are potentially dangerous or downright terrifying. The absence of limits and boundaries communicates parent indifference, disengagement, or worse, love withdrawal.

Privilege pause is considered a "logical consequence." Logical consequences become necessary when things escalate beyond planned ignoring situations (whining, loud complaining, tantrums). Logical consequences are required for unhelpful behaviors that

cross a line regarding safety, mutual well-being, and respect for property. Privilege pause can be paired with time out depending on the magnitude of the infraction. Below is a list of behaviors which involve logical consequences.

High Energy Infractions–Consider Privilege Pause with Time Out	Other Infractions–Consider a Warning, Followed by Privilege Pause
Hitting, pushing.	Refusing to follow instructions.
Throwing things.	Taking things without asking.
Using negative or hurtful words for others (“dummy” or “stupid”).	Leaving home without permission.
Destroying property.	Big disrespect to parent(s).
Harm directed toward another or a pet.	Jumping on furniture.

How to do it. The goal of privilege pause is changing behavior for the better. This means redemption. Our hope and prayer is that the child will try again, this time making better choices. Logical consequences are meant to repair behavior and relationship, opening the door to restored parent-child encounter.

To be successful, make your privilege pause as short as effectively possible. To illustrate, a privilege pause might involve taking away screens. Should I pause screens for 5 minutes, an hour, or 24 hours? The answer depends on the child and behavior. It’s best to start on the shorter end, watching to see if behavior changes with a screen pause of 5-10 minutes. If this isn’t effective, make it an hour. If the behaviors persist, consider taking away screens for an evening or 24 hours. Somewhere along this continuum you will discover the right length of the pause. It’s about finding a redemptive solution without punishment extremes. If children are unnecessarily punished, they will give up trying to make new (positive) choices.

Tips

Make the privilege pause immediate. Take something away right now, not an hour from now. Help the child connect the privilege pause with the behavior.

Pause one privilege, not lots of privileges. For example, you might pause Legos, but not all toys.

Use induction. Explain to the child why the behavior was a significant problem. Make clear the connection between the behavior and privilege pause.

Don't shame the child. Shame tells the child that he/she is bad. While the behavior IS bad, the child is not.

Log

Unhelpful Behavior	Privilege Paused	Length of Pause
Example: Taking cookies before dinner after being told these are for dessert.	Screens (tablet).	30 minutes.

For the Coaching Meeting. Share a privilege pause situation that happened recently. What was the unhelpful behavior? What privilege was taken away? Did the privilege pause work? Why or why not? Share prayer intentions regarding behavior and logical consequences. Parenting is hard work. Coaches, your prayers are cherished and needed!



Logical Consequences: Time Out (FAST Module #8)

[VIDEO](#)

For Individual Reflection. Like privilege pause, time out is a logical consequence meant to address significantly unhelpful behaviors. Time out is for behaviors that cross a line for safety, mutual well-being, or respect for property. Time out can be used alone or with privilege pause. You may want to reserve the “paired option” of two logical consequences for the most serious child behavior infractions, such as physical violence or intentional property damage. Child and family psychologists overwhelmingly agree that time out is the best option for immediately addressing unhelpful behaviors which can’t be ignored.

Some have argued that time outs are unnecessary. These critics indicate that parents should try instead to talk things out with the child. The problem with this idea is that

significant behavior infractions always happen when emotions are running sky-high. In the immediate aftermath of violence or property destruction, it becomes impossible for the parent to calmly facilitate a conversation or for the child to listen and absorb what is being said. Big emotions cause “fight or flight” responses in our bodies. Attempting to talk things out when big emotions are happening will make the situation worse. Time outs help everyone calm down, making it easier to reinforce limits and boundaries. Time out is time away from a rewarding activity—no play, no attention, and no entertainment.

How to do it.

1. Make it specific. When things are calm, have a family conversation about time out. Explain the reasons for time out, and 2-3 unhelpful behaviors which will result in time out.
2. Role play. When things are calm, role play a time out with the child. Incorporate one of the unhelpful behaviors identified above. Stuffed animals or action heroes can be a good way to do this.
3. Make it short. 2-5 minutes with a timer. It’s fine to stop the time out before the timer for good behavior. No bargaining, however. Don’t force an apology—this can start a new, negative feedback loop.
4. Make it powerful. Do not talk to the child during time out. Keep siblings away. Ignore questions and attention-seeking behaviors such as “you’re a MEAN mom.”
5. Make it planned. When things are calm, discuss where time out will happen when away from home.

What happens if kids refuse to participate in time out? It’s very common for parents to avoid time out because they fear their children won’t participate. Here are some options:

1. Add a minute. Inform the child you will add a time out minute if they don’t participate now. Cap the time out at 6-7 minutes. This will avoid power struggles and new, negative feedback loops.
2. Give a warning, pause a privilege. “If you don’t go to time out now, you will lose screens for the rest of the day.” Make sure to follow through.
3. Additional unhelpful behaviors. The child may break more rules in time out (swearing, destroying property). Pause a privilege. “You knocked the picture off the wall. You will not have screens this evening.”

Time Out Planner.

Behaviors which result in time out:

Time out location (boring place like hallway or chair in the doorway):

For the Coaching Meeting. Share your time out planner with your parent coach and other parents. Discuss options and adjust. Are there other (unnamed) behaviors which rise to the level of time out? Try to define a “short list” such that time out is applied strategically to those unhelpful behaviors which keep things stuck in the negative feedback loop. Some trial and error may be required in terms of finding the best time out location. Your coach can help.



Managing Screen Use (FAST Module #9)

[VIDEO](#)

For Individual Reflection. Screens have changed parenting forever. Screens are found on phones, tablets, watches, car seats, computers, and television. For children, screens mean social media, games, and streamed shows. Not surprisingly, screens can become an obsession. Just ask any parent who tells a child to put away screens at bedtime! Tantrums and meltdowns are commonly associated with screens. Why?

Screens stimulate the brain, generating a powerful reward chemical known as dopamine. Dopamine feels good and makes us want more. When screens are turned off, brain dopamine plummets. The child can become cranky, obstinate, or downright combative. Worse, the dopamine crash negatively impacts sleep quality and length. Screens can easily become a negative feedback loop. In today's world, it's virtually impossible to completely get rid of screens. Realistically, what's needed is a management plan that balances screens with encounter.

When are screens problematic? You might find your child choosing screens over friends or sneaking screens at night. Things are becoming problematic when kids need screens to calm down. Another clue is reduced child interests (sports, pets, reading, crafts, play) in favor of screens. The American Academy of Pediatrics has published guidelines to help keep screens from becoming an obsession. The recommendation is 1 hour/day for children under 5, increasing to 1-2 hours/day for children 6 and up. The Academy encourages parents to actively monitor screens to ensure safe, age-appropriate, and non-violent content. Watching with the child is a good way to do this. Finally, the Academy suggests parents establish "screen free" zones and times in your house such that other activities remain attractive and available. Rewards can be used to positively reinforce these rules, with pre-identified consequences when rules are broken.

Family Media Plan. The American Academy of Pediatrics encourages parents to create a family media plan. The goal is to create limits and boundaries for screens. The family media plan is sound insurance against negative feedback loops involving screens. If creating a media plan seems overwhelming, start by adding one limit or boundary per week. Be sure

to share your plan with your coach and other parents. Their support could make the difference in terms of successfully managing screen use at home.

1. **Screen-Free Zones.** Examples might include (but aren't limited to) dining table/kitchen counter, kids' bedrooms, car, kitchen.

2. **Screen-Free Times.** Examples might include (but aren't limited to) before school, mealtimes, until homework is done, until chores are done, between dinner and bedtime, if guests are visiting.

3. **Screen Limits.** When will screens be turned off each day? What is the time limit for child screen use on a weekday? Weekends?

4. **Rewards and Consequences.** What rewards will be used to reinforce the family media plan? What are the consequences when plan rules are broken?

For the Coaching Meeting. Use the [FAST three pager](#) on healthy screen use as a discussion starter between coaches and parents. What have you learned? How have you applied that learning through your family media plan? Is the plan working? Why or why not?



Big Feelings (FAST Module #10)

VIDEO

For Individual Reflection. God created parents and children with emotions. This includes big feelings. Helping children understand and manage big feelings is important. Denying big feelings may leave the child to conclude they don't matter or worse, have done something wrong. The tricky part is that parents may have learned as children to suppress or deny big feelings. Rather than confront the past, it sometimes feels easier to do what we know, even if it isn't ideal for your child. Helping your child manage big feelings may become overwhelming for parents who themselves need to be reconciled and healed from their own hurts. Your coach can accompany you through this process. Lean into this relationship. Pray. Be gentle with yourself. Reframe your child's big feelings as an opportunity to grow.

Growth Opportunity. Imagine a moment when you shared big feelings with someone else.

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1. How did you feel if/when they listened or said your feelings made sense? How did you feel if/when they acknowledged the challenges which caused the feelings?

2. How did you feel if/when they told you to calm down and get over it? That it wasn't a big deal or that you could've easily solved the challenge?

Goal. To help your child notice and express big feelings without being shut down. To use these moments as an opportunity for parent-child encounter.

How to do it.

1. Engage your child. Listen. Observe. Read body language. Resist the urge to tell the child to stop or deny the feelings.
2. Guess the feeling. Instead of asking, guess what they are feeling and invite the child to correct you. "You seem sad/angry/excited/proud/frustrated. Is that right?"
3. Validate. Acknowledge the child's feelings, even if you don't agree. Identify with them. "I get it. I would feel that way too."
4. Redirect. If the child is engaged in unhelpful behaviors, name them and (if necessary) include logical consequences. "I understand you are frustrated. But hitting isn't OK. You have a time out." In other situations (such as disappointment), offer to collaborate. "How could we solve this?"

For the Coaching Meeting. Use the [FAST three pager](#) on big feelings as a discussion starter between coaches and parents. What have you learned about big feelings? About yourself? How can you more effectively coach your child through big feelings?



Boosting Sleep (FAST Module #11)

[VIDEO](#)

For Individual Reflection. Along with good nutrition, there's nothing more important to a child's development and behavior than sleep. Sleep impacts mood and ability to focus. Insufficient sleep may be linked to unhelpful behaviors, weight gain, learning problems, and susceptibility to illness. It's easier for children and parents to become stuck in negative feedback loops when everyone is short on sleep.

How much? The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends 9-12 hours for children in kindergarten or elementary school.

What gets in the way? Screens are a big issue. You may want to make your child's bedroom a no screen zone. Other distractions can be a problem, especially loud music and noise. The single best strategy for increasing a child's sleep is simple—move bedtime a little earlier!

How to do it. Improve sleep “hygiene” by considering the following.

1. Bedtime. Keep bedtime consistent. Even one late night can negatively affect sleep for days.

2. Activity. Encourage physical activity. Tired kids sleep better. Be careful, however, to make sure physical activity doesn't happen too close to bedtime.
3. Bedroom. You may want to consider moving toys to another room such that the child's bedroom is primarily for sleep.
4. Calming Buffer. Schedule a 90 minute calming buffer leading to bedtime. The buffer time might keep lights low, with mellow activities and no screens.
5. Avoid. Caffeine, soda, candy, and chocolate in the afternoon or evening. Bright lights, loud noises, and screens—especially as bedtime approaches.

Troubleshooting

Resists Bed	Afraid to Stay in Bed	Gets Out of Bed at Night	Wakes up too Early
Limits and boundaries for screens and high-energy activities.	Check in with the child every five minutes after leaving the bedroom	Bedtime pass to get out of bed once for any reason.	Plan a quiet activity the child can do solo when they are up early.
Follow routine every day.	Reward bravery with supercharged praise, snuggles, or reward activities.	Keep interactions boring, minimize interaction while walking the child back to bed.	Reward for staying in bedroom until the hall light comes on, signaling wake up time.
Reward for following routine. Extra stories are great.	Teach self-talk, "I can stay in bed, mom is right next door."	Practice coping strategies like deep breaths, imagining a happy place.	

Talk to the doctor. If your child snores loudly, sleeps less than 8 hours/night, tosses and turns all night, or is often awake in the middle of the night.

For the Coaching Meeting. Coaches and parents, complete the family bedtime routine per the below prompts.

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1. **Bedtime and Routine.** Discuss best options in terms of bedtime. Working backwards, when should the bedtime routine begin?

2. **Bedtime Steps.** Examples might include (but aren't limited to) bath/shower, putting on pajamas, brushing teeth, washing face, going potty, setting out tomorrow's clothes, picking a book. Try to keep things simple and easy to follow.

3. **Bedtime Traditions.** Examples might include (but aren't limited to) reading a story together, picking two stuffed animals and putting them to bed, 3 hugs and kisses, 5 minute snuggle, a quiet song, saying a prayer, special tuck-in.

4. **Rewards.** What are the rewards for following all the bedtime steps? Examples might include (but aren't limited to) staying up 10 minutes later, an extra story, an extra song, an extra 5 minutes of snuggle time, a privilege coupon for reward activity the next day.

For Discussion. How have you grown as a parent over the past few months? What is God teaching you about yourself? About Him?