

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# Helping Children Behave

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**Session Length: 2 hours**

## Objectives

Participants will:

- Examine ineffective responses to misbehavior
- Identify ways to encourage wanted behaviors
- Explore common guidance problems
- Practice guidance techniques

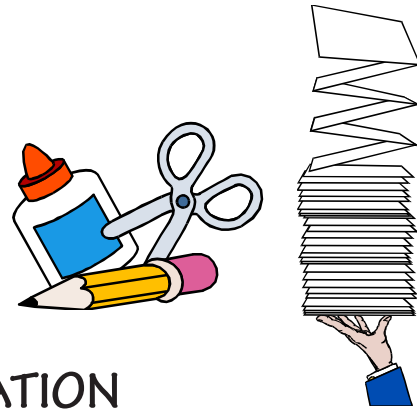
## Synopsis

Helping children behave appropriately requires attention and guidance from parents. This session is designed to help participants learn techniques for increasing desired behaviors in their children, including praise, reinforcement, limits, redirection, changing the environment, and modeling suggested by Crary (1993). In addition, ineffective methods of dealing with misbehavior are discussed and communication skills that augment guidance are demonstrated. Participants are encouraged to practice guidance skills and explore their application with their children.

## Session Outline



Procedure	Time
Welcome/Session overview	10 minutes
Homework review	15 minutes
Ineffective responses	15 minutes
So what works?	35 minutes
Planning and practice	35 minutes
Concluding ideas	05 minutes
Homework	05 minutes
<b>Total Time for Session 5</b>	<b>120 minutes</b>



## MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

- ▶ **Here's what you will need to have ready for the group:**
  - **SELF-STUDY** – The Appendix (pp. 197–) contains short articles on child development and parenting issues for additional reading. Likewise, the Resources (pp. 187–190) and References (p. 191) sections can direct you to other materials for self-study.
  - **COPIES OF MATERIALS** – Make copies of the following hand-outs, located at the end of the session:
    - *Things That Don't Work* (p. 115)
    - *Guidance That Works* (pp. 116–117)
    - *Sample Scenarios* (p. 118)
    - *How to Hold a Family Meeting* (p. 119)
    - *Guidance Plan* (p. 120)
    - *Session Five Evaluation* (p. 121)
  - **SUPPORT MATERIALS** – Equip meeting room with a flipchart and easel, eraser board, or chalkboard. If you are using a flipchart, have masking tape or push pins available to hang completed pages for easy reference. Have extra pens, pencils, and paper available in case participants need them.

## PROCEDURE



10 Minutes

### WELCOME / SESSION OVERVIEW

**1** Welcome participants as they arrive.

**2** Introduce the session:

- Today's session will focus on what we can do as parents to help children behave the way we would like them to. Helping kids learn good behavior requires guidance and attention on the parent's part.
- Fortunately, there are many tried and true techniques that parents can use in their job as guides for their children. We'll examine some of these techniques and look at how and when to use them with children of different ages. You may already be using many of them without giving them a name. We'll take time to share experiences and practice some of these guidance ideas.
- We'll also discuss some of the less-than-effective ways parents deal with misbehavior and why they don't work.
- Before we get started, let's review the homework task.



15 Minutes

### HOMework REVIEW

**3** Review homework. Encourage a brief discussion using some of the following questions:

- It was suggested that you practice using I-Messages during the week, even if it meant catching and correcting a You-Message. It was suggested you use three (3) I-Messages per day, and that you also practice some of the other skills from last week, like broken record and active listening. Let's discuss the assignment.
  - ? *Let's talk about an I-Message attempt that you feel turned out pretty good. Give us a quick background and share what happened.*
  - ? *How did you make yourself remember to use I-Messages?*

- ? *How did your child react? Was it different from what you would have thought? In what way?*
- ? *How about using other techniques, like good body language or broken record? How did that go?*
- ? *How about an attempt that didn't work well? What happened?*
- ? *In retrospect, how would you have done it differently?*

**4** Thank participants for their willingness to try the assignment. Encourage them to keep on practicing I-Messages and active listening.



15 Minutes

## INEFFECTIVE RESPONSES

**5** Lead into a discussion of ineffective responses to children's behavior using some of the following points:

- Over the next two meetings, we'll discuss ideas for providing guidance to children and ways to help children learn to control their own behavior. As with many things, there's good news and bad news. The bad news is there is no magic formula that makes guidance and discipline easy. The good news is there are lots of proven techniques and strategies that can work very well when parents invest the time.
- First, let's quickly review some of the things parents do when they want to correct misbehavior. Over the years, parents have come up with a lot of desperate measures to try to get children to behave.
- Unfortunately, some of these end up like the alligators-in-the-swamp story. All parents really want to do is "drain the swamp" (get kids to behave), but they suddenly find themselves "up to their necks in alligators" (dealing with even worse behavior). They really want to help their children behave appropriately, but they end up with chaos.
- Let's look at some things that parents find themselves doing that almost never work. You'll recognize some of these, I'm sure. Keep in mind we're not saying these things are "wrong," but rather that they just don't work very well.



Handout,  
p. 115

## 6 **Distribute *Things That Don't Work* handout and review the points. Model how some of these interactions might sound. Encourage questions and cover some of the following points:**

- **Questions:** Often, in frustration, parents think that if they can only figure out why their child is misbehaving they can stop it. Unfortunately, most younger children don't know why they are misbehaving and older ones are apt to give you "reasons" you won't like. Typical questions include: "Why don't you listen to me?" "What am I going to do with you?" "Didn't I tell you to mow the lawn?" "How many times do I have to tell you to clean that room!?"
- **Pleading and begging:** Parents may feel so overwhelmed or helpless over their child's behavior they start begging the child to be good. Sometimes we think that maybe if we can make the child feel guilty or sorry for us, the child will behave. It may sound like this: "Come on, honey. Be good for Daddy and please, please, go to bed now." "We're going to Aunt Helen's. Please promise me you won't touch any of her figurines, okay?" "Sally, I'm begging you, please turn off that radio."
- **Statements of fact:** Many parents think if they just point out one more time what the child should be doing, the child will do it. They assume the child is not aware that he is misbehaving. Parents say things like: "You still haven't taken out the trash." "You're still not listening to me." "You haven't put those toys away yet."
- **Lectures:** Some parents hope that if they talk long enough and really make the child see their point they will be able to appeal to the child's reason. Another form of lecturing involves long-winded attempts to make the child feel guilty or ashamed for the bad behavior. Parents assume that if they can make children feel remorse, the behavior will stop.
- **Hostile responses:** Parents may feel anger and frustration over the misbehavior and direct hostility toward the child in a futile attempt to shock or shame the child into compliance. Unfortunately, hostile responses also hurt children's esteem and feelings. Examples include verbal put-downs ("You are acting like a spoiled brat." "I'm sick of you and all the mess you make."), threats ("Now you're going to get it." "If you leave clothes on the floor one more time you've had it!"), or severe punishment ("You're grounded for the

rest of the school year!” or “You can never use the telephone in this house again!”).

- **Spanking:** As we’ve discussed before in this group, the purpose of any guidance or discipline technique is to teach. Responding to bad behavior with spanking or hitting hurts children and sets them up to feel angry, withdrawn, and uncooperative. It’s also hard on parents who may feel helpless, guilty, or out-of-control after they spank. The experts say spanking does little to change children’s behavior in the long run. It closes down communication and makes it more difficult for parents to teach and guide their children toward appropriate behavior.



35 Minutes

## SO WHAT WORKS?

### 7 Introduce the discussion of guidance techniques using some of the following points:

- If there’s one thing that’s been learned about parenting over the years, it’s this - the best way to improve a child’s behavior is to reinforce what you want to continue. In other words, reward what you like.
- Attention is a powerful “reinforcer.” Attention and recognition from others, especially parents, is a basic need.
- With all children, but especially with young children, your attention is the thing they most treasure and want. Children figure out pretty early what kind of attention parents will give (e.g., praise, spanking, scolding, smiles, pats) and how to go about getting it (e.g., coloring a pretty picture, putting toys away, pinching sister).
- If your child can get your attention and praise by putting her toys away or other “good” behavior, she is very likely to continue those behaviors.
- However, if the only way a child can get her parents’ attention is to hit her sister or pull books off the table, she’ll likely continue those behaviors. To a child, any type of attention is preferable to no attention.

- By giving children the right kind of attention, including guiding or directing them toward behaviors you want, many misbehavior problems can be altered or eliminated. Let's look at the basic strategies.



Handout,  
pp. 116-117

## 8

**Distribute *Guidance That Works* handout and cover each of the strategies. Encourage questions. Model how techniques may be used with children of different ages. Include some of the following points:**

### ■ PRAISE

- Praise tells a child that you like what he did. Praise can be given with words, gestures, and facial expressions. Praise is a type of attention that children crave, because praise makes them feel respected, happy, and proud.
- Praise is one of the easiest guidance strategies to use. When you see your child doing something you want to encourage, give him some praise. Things parents find helpful to praise are cooperation, thoughtfulness, going to the potty, being gentle with pets or younger siblings, trying something new, eating all the carrots.
- To be really effective, praise should be specific, immediate, and sincere.
- However, it is possible to sabotage praise. Avoid coupling praise with indirect criticism, for example: "You did a good job cleaning the bathroom this time. I hope you'll remember to do it this way all the time." Sometimes parents feel they should sandwich a criticism with some praise or compliments to reduce its sting. All this does is confuse a child and make her wonder about your honesty.

### ■ REWARDS

- The basic idea is that rewarding a behavior increases the frequency of that behavior.
- A reward can be anything a child wants, needs, or likes - food, praise, attention, toys, special treats. In order to be effective, a reward should be given immediately after the good behavior is witnessed or observed.



- Parents should decide what behavior they want their child to do, determine whether the behavior is reasonable for the child's age, decide on an appropriate reward, then watch carefully for the behavior. When the child does the wanted behavior or attempts it, a reward is given.
- When the child begins to perform the behavior frequently, slowly decrease the rewards (e.g., reward less frequently). For example, you can reward every other time the behavior is done, then reward occasionally, and eventually stop giving rewards for that particular behavior.
- This technique differs from what some people call "bribing." When a parent bribes a child he usually says something like "Here's some candy. Now I expect you to go play quietly with your toys" (desired behavior). With reinforcers, the parent "catches" the child in the act of doing the desired behavior and gives a simple reward.
- Another approach for using rewards involves negotiating with the child for desirable behavior. For example, a parent may say to her child on the way to the grocery store "If you listen and follow directions while we are at the store, you can buy some candy when we are finished shopping." The parent reminds the child of the upcoming reward during the shopping trip by gently asking "Remember, if you want to buy candy later, what should you do?" At the end of shopping, the parent can again reinforce the desired behavior when the child picks out her candy by saying "You did such a good job of listening and following my directions, you get to buy some candy."
- When you reward you are reinforcing a behavior and you send a clear message that you like the behavior. The child is more likely to continue that behavior because he has, in a sense, been praised and complimented for it.

## ■ REDIRECTION

- Redirection is most useful with younger children. It is helpful when the child's activity or behavior is unsafe, annoying, or disturbing others.

- Redirection involves replacing something the child is doing that you don't like with an activity that is acceptable to you. This may involve directing the child's attention to a whole new activity (e.g., distraction) or substituting something else for one part of the undesired activity.
- The parent must decide on how to redirect or make a substitution, calmly and firmly intervene, explain briefly why, and encourage the child to carry on with the new activity or substitution. For example, Billy is trying to cut his apple with a sharp knife. Dad is concerned about accidents, so he takes the sharp knife away and replaces it with a dull knife saying "This sharp knife is for cooking; here's a knife that's better for cutting apples."

## ■ CHANGING THE ENVIRONMENT

- Sometimes the easiest solutions are the best for younger children with behavior problems. Changing the environment or the surroundings is one technique for encouraging behavior you want or limiting behavior that you don't want in young children.
- Changing the environment is a helpful strategy, especially when redirection isn't appropriate for the issue at hand. Many parents of young children swear by this technique because, with thought, it so often can help stop problems before they really begin.
- This technique can be used for safety reasons (e.g., the child is pulling the cat's tail and you know the cat scratches), when what the child is doing causes conflict (e.g., the toddler is playing with the remote when older brother is watching TV), or just to make the parent's life easier (e.g., putting a step stool in the kitchen so the child can get her own juice).
- The child's environment can be changed or adjusted by adding to it, limiting it, or changing the way things are arranged.
  - **Adding to the environment** might include things like providing books, new toys, or new activities. It can also include broader strategies for helping the child behave,

such as taking drawing materials to the doctor's office so the child can entertain himself during the wait.

- **Limiting the environment** might include things that reduce stimulation so the child calms down (e.g., no roughhousing) or physically removing things that are involved in the misbehavior (e.g., removing crayons or scissors). It may also involve restricting activities in certain areas (e.g., tricycle riding outdoors only, play-dough played with in the kitchen only, loud toys outdoors only).
- **Changing the environment** might include simplifying or rearranging things to address behavior problems or head them off before they happen (e.g., installing a low coat rack so the child can hang up her coat or putting toys on low shelves so the child can reach them).

## ■ SETTING LIMITS

- The technique we'll discuss today is most suitable for younger children. Next week, we'll discuss how this technique is modified for use with older children. However, the basic idea is the same no matter what the child's age. The idea is to help children learn to control their own behavior by setting consequences for bad behavior and enforcing those consequences everytime the undesired behavior happens.
- For younger children, consequences should be simple and straight-forward. A short time-out or taking away a toy for a short time are examples of good consequences to use with younger children. Spanking is not considered to be an effective consequence, as it emotionally upsets children and makes it difficult for them to pay attention to what you want them to learn.
- Children usually judge what you will do by recalling what you have done in the past. Therefore, when limits are set, parents must always be consistent and follow-through. Being consistent means acting to enforce the limits every time they are broken. Children become confused if parents enforce a rule one day and ignore the rule the next.

- There are 3 parts to setting limits for guidance:

**(1) Establish a clear rule or request.**

Make sure you have explained to the child in a firm, gentle way what the rules/expectations are and what the consequences for defiance are. When you have set the limit, get the child's attention immediately when you see a behavior that's unacceptable. In a kind, clear way, tell the child the rule and wait a minute for compliance.

*"Timmy, remember there's a rule about jumping on the furniture. I want you to stop it."*

**(2) Give an explanation of the choices.**

If the child fails to obey, explain the choices. Tell the child what he may do instead of the bad behavior and what will happen if he continues to ignore or defy you.

*"You may go outside if you want to play rough. If you keep jumping on the furniture, I will take you to your room for a time out."*

**(3) Immediately follow-through with assisted compliance, if needed.**

If he persists, assist the child to comply, gently and firmly. Physically direct the child to do what you asked.

(Parent gently takes Timmy by the shoulders and leads him away from the furniture, then escorts him to his room for a time out.)

- It's important to give a lot of thought to how you will use this technique. Understand what you want the child to do and what you will do if the child defies or ignores you. Remember, if you don't follow-through, you are teaching the child to ignore you.

## ■ MODELING & INSTRUCTION

- Modeling is an effective teaching technique that can be used to help children learn new behaviors. Effective guidance involves helping children learn the behaviors parents expect and want through modeling and simple instruction.

- If you want your child to learn from modeling, you must do exactly what you want your child to do. Children will learn good behaviors as well as bad ones from what they see you do.
- If you want your child to speak quietly, say “please,” or pick up after herself, then you need to monitor those behaviors in yourself and make sure you are providing a “model” that you want your child to copy.
- Simple instruction is used to help teach children new behavior or how to do a task. The most important rule is to keep it simple. Young children get lost when there are too many words. They really can’t remember more than one instruction at a time.
- For example, it would be difficult for a young child to follow this instruction: “Mary, please remember to wipe your feet when you come in from playing, and if you have mud on your pants when you come in, take the pants and put them on top of the washing machine, but be careful not to knock over the bottle of detergent that’s on top of the dryer.”
- Ideally for young children, verbal instructions should be short, with gestures and demonstration of how to do the expected behavior.



35 Minutes

## PLANNING AND PRACTICE

### 9 Lead participants in a planning and practice session for using guidance techniques.

- Several sample scenarios are provided for use as role plays or case studies so that members can practice applying skills. However, discussion may be more productive if participants volunteer real life situations and problems to work on.
- Help parents experiment with praise, reinforcement, limits, redirection, modeling, and changing environments. Spend time allowing participants to practice the steps involved in implementing these techniques. Discuss their uses with children of different ages and temperaments.

Handout,  
p. 118

- Parents will enjoy spending time planning how to use reinforcement. It may be productive to show them items that other parents have used that worked well, for example, star charts, spinners, marble jars, etc. Encourage creativity. If appropriate, allow group members to spend time actually making some reinforcement tools to use at home.
- It's also helpful to let parents experiment with using different guidance techniques on the same discipline problem and weighing how each might work with their own children.

## 10 Discuss the practice session using some of the following questions:

- ? *How did it feel to practice these techniques?*
- ? *Which technique seems to work best for your situation?*
- ? *What is going to be the most challenging thing for you in applying these guidance techniques?*
- ? *How will you evaluate whether or not these techniques are working? How might you modify them if they don't work?*

## 11 Thank participants for their work. Reassure them that most parents need time and practice before feeling completely comfortable with new ways of guiding children.



5 Minutes

## CONCLUDING IDEAS

### 12 Provide wrap-up and closure for the session. Highlight some of the following points:

- The primary job of all parents, after safety and nurture, is guidance. The world is a complicated place and your children need your help in learning the rules and getting along.
- Planning and knowing what will work and what won't work based on your child's temperament and personality are important considerations.

- Children of all ages need guidance. As they grow and change, techniques that worked may stop working. Rules and expectations will have to be altered, and new consequences will have to be used. This is when parents learn to rely on their creativity, common sense, and patience.
- One way to improve family communication and help children take part in setting rules, guidelines, and consequences is through holding regular “family meetings” to discuss issues as they arise.



Handout,  
p. 119

- 13** Distribute copies of *How to Hold a Family Meeting* handout for participants to read. If time allows, briefly review some of the guidelines for family meetings.



5 Minutes



Worksheet,  
p. 120

## HOMEWORK

- 14** Distribute *Guidance Plan* worksheets. Give the following homework suggestions:

- The homework assignment is to complete a short worksheet. Complete the worksheet so that it reflects your concerns about guidance and your goals.
- In addition, think about how you plan to begin using some of the guidance techniques we discussed today. Remember that the planning is an important step in making these strategies work. If you feel ready to begin using these ideas, go ahead. If you need some time to digest them, that’s okay, too. Hopefully, the worksheet will help you with this process.

- 15** Thank group members for coming and for their participation. Invite them to return next session.



Session  
Evaluation,  
p. 121

- 16** Ask participants to complete a *Session Evaluation* form before leaving.





## THINGS THAT DON'T WORK

### Questions

"Why don't you listen to me?"  
 "Didn't I tell you to stop?"  
 "How many times do I have to tell you?"



### Pleading and begging

"Please behave at Aunt Sally's house."  
 "I'm begging you to be quiet."  
 "Now I want you to be a good boy, Okay?"

### Statements of fact

"You still haven't done the dishes."  
 "You're not listening to me."  
 "Your clothes are all over the bathroom."

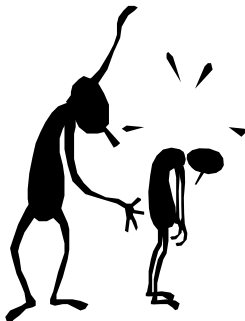


### Lecturing

"...and another thing, when I was your age, we knew how to behave. If you want to get ahead in life you have to know the rules..."

### Hostility and threats

"Now you're going to get it..!"  
 "I'm sick of you and your messes."  
 "Clean it up or else!"



### Spanking

"This hurts me more than it hurts you."





# GUIDANCE THAT WORKS

## **Praise**

*Specific, immediate, sincere.*

*Example: "You did a great job cleaning your room!"*

## **Notes:**

## **Rewards**

*Given immediately after desired behavior is performed.*

*Failure to perform the behavior is ignored.*

*Example: "You remembered to brush your teeth by yourself! Let's put an extra star on your happy tooth chart."*

## **Notes:**

## **Redirection**

*Most useful with younger children. Replaces an unwanted activity with an acceptable one. Helpful when child's behavior is unsafe or annoying. Redirection is best given in a calm, matter-of-fact way.*

*Example: "I'm happy to see you get a snack by yourself. But this sharp knife is only for cooking. Use this knife instead."*

## **Notes:**

## ***Changing the environment***

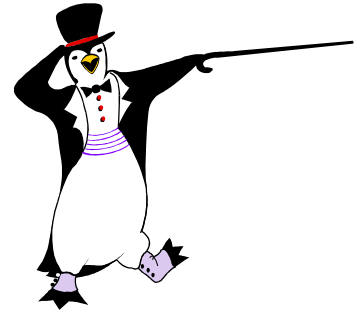
*One of the easiest solutions with younger children.*

*The parent makes changes to the child's surroundings.*

*The parent adds, takes away, or changes things.*

*Examples: Moving the TV remote out of reach; placing a step-stool so the child can reach the sink.*

***Notes:***



## ***Setting limits***

*Helps child understand behavior you want.*

*Helps child understand consequences of disobeying.*

- *Set reasonable rules and limits.*
- *Immediately get child's attention when rule is broken.*
- *State consequences. Suggest alternative behavior.*
- *If child ignores or persists, immediately follow-through.*
- *Help the child comply, if needed.*

*Example: Escort the child to timeout.*

***Notes:***

## ***Modeling & Instruction***

*Instruction for new tasks or behaviors should be simple.*

*Avoid giving complex instructions (too many words).*

*It's okay if you have to repeat instructions again later.*

*Children learn from what they observe parents doing.*

*Be a model for the behaviors you want your child to learn.*

***Notes:***

## Sample Scenarios for role play or case study

Apply different guidance techniques to these scenarios and discuss the advantages of each one. Use role play to practice what you might say or do for each one, and how you would say or do it.



-----

Five-year old Shauna is jumping on the chair in the living room. Parent asks her to stop the behavior. Shauna stops for a few minutes, then begins jumping on the sofa.

-----

Six-year old Timothy is working on a project, gluing leaves on a piece of paper. Parent notices that he has a tube of super glue to work with.

-----

Three-year old Mishella wants to fold the washcloths from the laundry.

-----

Parent notices five-year old Aaron has left his coat on the floor beneath the coat hanger.

-----

Parent comes home and finds that nine-year old Melissa has washed and dried the breakfast dishes that were left in the sink that morning.

-----

When parent says it's time for bed, six-year old Mary quits playing and runs ahead to the bathroom and brushes her teeth.

-----

Eight-year old Johnny is teasing his little sister, who has started to scream and cry. Parent has set rules about not teasing sister.

-----

Five-year old Andy loves the aquarium. However, he is over-enthusiastic about feeding the fish. Parent has caught Andy with the can of fish-food, really pouring it in.

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## How to Hold a Family Meeting

A family meeting is just what it sounds like – a “formal” meeting of all family members for the purpose of sharing feelings and ideas, planning activities, setting limits, or resolving problems. Family meetings can help improve communication and problem-solving between parents and children and make the job of guidance easier. Meetings also help families build a bond of trust and help children feel accepted, valued, and worthwhile. More importantly, setting aside a special time each week to meet as a family helps demonstrate commitment to each other, to the family, and to respecting each person’s contribution.

### Here are some guidelines for making family meetings a part of your family life:

- First, introduce your children to the idea of holding regular family meetings. Get their ideas about when and where to hold the meeting. When a time and place are agreed on, let your children know it is a priority. Don’t “blow off” the meeting or allow family members to be interrupted by the phone or other distractions.
- Establish some guidelines for how you will conduct your meetings. One idea is to keep an agenda list for each week on the refrigerator door. Encourage family members to write down problems, concerns, and ideas for discussion at upcoming meetings. Other ideas might include establishing guidelines for listening, for handling differing opinions, for presenting problems, and for brainstorming solutions to problems.
- Alternate the roles of “chairperson” and “secretary” each week. The chairperson’s job is to lead the meeting; the secretary’s job is to keep a record of decisions or new rules that come from the meetings.
- Hold your first meeting around a simple issue, such as planning an outing or picnic. Use this meeting to show how meetings will be conducted. Model good listening and problem solving skills for your children.
- Family meetings should help teach children how to share ideas, discuss problems and solutions, and share power. The purpose of the meeting is not to gather the children together so the parents can lay down the rules. Each family member (children and parents alike) should have a say in all decisions that come from family meetings.

From *Positive Discipline for Single Parents* by  
Jane Nelsen, Cheryl Erwin, & Carol Delzer

## GUIDANCE PLAN

I have been having the following guidance problem with my child:

I will concentrate on using the following guidance techniques with my child in the coming week:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

In the past, I reacted to the problem in the following ways:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Here is what I plan to do differently:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

This is what I learned this week:

## Session Evaluation Partners in Parenting Session 5

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please take a minute to give us some feedback about how you liked this session.

1. Use one word to describe your feelings about today's class \_\_\_\_\_
2. What was the most important thing you learned today?
3. What guidance technique discussed do you think will work best with your child (children)? Why?
4. On a scale of 1 to 10, how do you rate today's class? (Circle your rating.)  

01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
Poor				Pretty Good					Excellent
5. Do you have any suggestions to help make this class better?