

Facilitation Tips

Principles, Not Techniques

Point out to your participants that the purpose of Positive Discipline classes is to learn tools that are based on principles, not just techniques. Tools based on principles can be used in many different ways in many circumstances. If they learn techniques without understanding the principle, it will sound technique-y and false. When they understand the principles, they will be able to add their heart and wisdom and use the tool in unique ways that fit the situation—instead of sounding like a script.

An example of some underlying principles: Kind and Firm, Connection before Correction, Encouragement, Understanding that there is a belief behind behavior and that a misbehaving child is a discouraged child.

Participant Sharing After an Activity

The reason we ask participants to share what they learned from an activity instead of lecturing (telling them what they should have learned), is that they learn so much more from each other, and from the wisdom that is reached when they experience the activities, than from you trying to be the expert.

Timing is a tricky facilitation skill. Learn to sense when everyone is still engaged in the sharing, and when it has gone on so long that people are getting bored.

Offer mini lectures ONLY if some important point has not been brought out from the participants. Do not repeat what participants have already said. Allowing the learning to come from the group makes your job much easier. As we say over and over, "Trust the process." Many of the activities work in spite of you, not because of you. When facilitators understand this, they can relax and enjoy the process (mistakes and all) along with participants.

Roleplaying

It helps to let your participants know that most people feel uncomfortable with role-playing at first, but soon learn to love role-playing when they discover how much more they learn.

Exaggerating during Role-playing

1. It brings more fun into the learning.
2. Another reason to ask role-players to exaggerate is that it is not easy to get into role-playing anger when you are not angry—when you are not in a flipped lid state.
3. It can be helpful if you demonstrate so they can watch you exaggerate.

Why only 60 seconds or so for a role-play

1. Letting people know you are looking for a 60 second role-play script discourages including too many details when describing a situation with explanations and causes.
2. Keep reminding the volunteer to stick to the last time the challenge happened: “Who said and did what? Then what happened?”
3. 60 seconds is usually plenty of time for participants to get the “feelings” that are going on. Use your judgment about letting the role-play go a little longer.

Competent Giant

We hope you included the last part of the activity that is encouraging. It is important to do this so parents are left with feelings of encouragement instead of discouragement. This is also true for The Jungle activity.

Mistaken Goal Chart

Many people are not used to being aware of their feelings and say what they “think” instead of what they “feel.” This is fine. You can follow up with, “When you think that, what is ONE WORD to describe how you feel. If they still struggle, point to the second column of the Mistaken Goal Chart and ask them to find the feeling that comes closest. (Do not use the Feeling Faces poster at this point, because you are helping them identify the feelings that help them understand the Mistaken Goal.)

Top Card

We didn’t explain this well in the video Guide, so be sure to read the activity in the Teaching Parenting Manual. You’ll find a fun, interactive activity on Top Card at: <https://lynnlottte.com/top-card-activity>.

Two Lists Activity

You might want to start the Challenges List with the example of “not listening” to make sure it is on the list, and “good communication skills” is on the Characteristics and Life Skills list. Then you can show them how you will use the challenge of “not listening” to teach a skill to improve listening.

Start the Asking Vs. Telling Activity by asking for a volunteer to play a child with the challenge of “not listening” and proceed with the activity. After processing by asking the child what she is thinking, feeling, and deciding, take the child to the Characteristics and Life Skills list and ask, “Are you learning anything on this list?”

Participants learn from experience that the “volunteer child” always says he or she learns more of the characteristics and life skills from the “Asking parent” than from the “Telling parent.”. Right away they “get” that they can use “challenges” to teach “Characteristics and Life Skills.”

Keep Characteristics and Life Skills list handy for every class and use it after most activities to have the volunteer “child” refer to it and ask, “What are you learning on this list from what you just experienced?” **Then you**

will ask those playing the adults to look at the characteristics and life skills to see if they are modeling any of these.

It is also encouraging for group members when you let them know that during the class, they can look forward to learning how to deal with most of the challenges on the list in ways that help children develop the characteristics and skills.

Two Lists Challenges

What should I do when parents or teachers ask a question about how to handle a challenge they are having with a child?

Never give them an answer. Remember that the Positive Discipline experiential teaching method is not about YOU being an expert. It is about helping participants learn skills to be experts in their own lives. Instead of taking time away from others to provide personal coaching, give one of the following responses:

1. There is an activity coming up that will teach you how to handle that challenge.
2. You might want to sign up for the PHPPSS so you can receive many suggestions.
3. Would you be willing to look through the tool cards and report back how many tools you found that could be helpful for that challenge?
4. It would be great if you would find an answer to your question in one of the Positive Discipline books and come back next week and share it with all of us.
5. Don't use this one: For personal coaching I charge \$\$\$.(It is not ethical to promote your coaching business when someone asks a question during a Positive Discipline Class. This doesn't mean you can't let class members know (on a business card or flyer) that you are available for personal coaching. However, for questions asked

during a class or workshop, one of the above responses in more appropriate.

PHPPSS

Here is a very brief history of the PHPPSS. Adler and Dreikurs often did what Adlerians now call the “Family in Focus.” They would interview a parent (or a teacher) in front of a large audience. During the interview they would “guess” the mistaken goal and would give parents suggestions for encouragement. People in the audience would watch in wonder and think it was magical how they could understand so much about the child and what would be encouraging and helpful. Dreikurs taught other Adlerians to do the “Family in Focus” and it always seemed magical to those watching. Lynn Lott decided it wasn’t magic and that she would figure out what they did and put it into steps that others could follow. She added the steps of role-playing and getting the whole group to brainstorm for solutions. Together we improved the steps to what they are today.

It might help participants understand why we stick to the steps and don't analyze or discuss the challenge. Adlerian Psychology includes the theory (Holism) that when we solve a small part, it generates to solve a bigger part of the whole. When people get off the steps and start analyzing for bigger problems, then nothing gets solved. This is why we say, “Stick to the steps.”

I (Jane) share with participants that I had problems in the beginning when doing the PHPPSS. It was hard to stick to the steps. But I was told to “trust the process” —or I would be fired. These steps have been very carefully designed (and used for over 30 years) to follow the Adlerian model to help people learn what they need to learn and are ready to learn. It does not work if we talk about more information or give more advice.

Also it was hard for me when the PHPPSS didn’t turn out with a happy ending. I wanted the volunteer to experience a magical solution. Now I make a point of sharing that we learn as much from what doesn’t work as what does. This is a process that keeps “cooking” because people often learn more after the PHPPSS process as they keep thinking about it. One participant provided a great example. She tried something that didn’t seem

to work in the role-play and sent us an email sharing how well it had worked when she tried it at home.

Occasionally, we have a volunteer who says her or she has tried everything. When this happens, ask the volunteer if he or she would role-play something he or she has tried that didn't work. During the role-play, it may become obvious to everyone else (and sometimes to the volunteer) why it didn't work. That helps everyone understand that the PHPSS is as much (or more) for observers as it is for the volunteer. When we try to make sure it turns out "perfect" for the volunteer, we are missing the point and not trusting the process. A huge part of the PHPSS is that observers learn as much or

even more by watching—because they aren't emotionally involved. Your participants will get used to this and will eventually love it.

One way to keep participants more fully engaged is to give everyone a copy of the PHPSS and ask participants to take turns reading the steps—one at a time. Then, as the facilitator, follow the step that has been read. Participation is increased even more by asking for at least one other person to "interrupt you" if anyone "gets off the steps" by asking questions or giving advice other than making suggestions for what could be tried during the brainstorming for solutions step. Then they know interruption is part of the process.

Recently, Jane volunteered to be the person who needed help with one of her grandchildren. She learned from experience how uncomfortable it feels when people wanted to "discuss causes and give their opinions." She also felt extremely uncomfortable when people looked at her when they were giving the suggestions, instead of looking at the flip-chart and the person who was writing down the suggestions. She felt bombarded with advice—some of it that she didn't like and wouldn't choose. This is why it is so important to give advice to the flip-chart, not to the volunteer. Keep practicing. You will learn more and more and will become more and more confident.

I hope this helps you know why it is so important to stick to the steps and to be very firm about it. Recently, Jane was coaching a group doing the PHPPSS, and the volunteer wanted to give more information. She kept interrupting and saying, "No. Just stick to what happened in the 60 second scene you are describing." The volunteer kept trying to give more information, and Jane kept interrupting and telling her she couldn't. When the PHPPSS process was done, she laughed and told everyone how much it helped her that she had to stick to the steps, and to then choose one solution to try.

Role-playing during PHPPSS

Be careful about facilitating role-plays too much. A lot of information comes out when the role-players are spontaneous instead of trying to stick too much to the script. Jane was role-playing a teacher who was having problems with a child who was being defiant no matter what she tried. As she role-played the teacher, the feeling that came up for her was such frustration that she said, "You little stinker."

The "real" teacher (whom Jane was role-playing) burst out laughing and said, "That is exactly how I feel." She may not have even admitted to herself that was what she was feeling and thinking while describing the scene. This is why it is important to get a good description of what happened, and start the role-play out that way; and then allow for spontaneity as people get into the role. This can allow for rich information that can be very helpful to the volunteer and everyone. At the end of the role-play, the brainstorming for solutions produced some really good ideas that the "real" teacher tried and that worked well in the second role-play.

Having said that, we want to stress again, that even when the second role-play doesn't "seem" to work, the most important part of the PHPPSS is that the volunteer and everyone else felt encouraged and supported. We learn as much from what doesn't seem to work as we do from what does seem to work.

The Jungle

Even though we have you do this activity early in this training, it is a good idea to wait until the group has had more time to get used to experiential activities—and have built some rapport.

We don't do this activity as much as we did in the past, and use our intuition as to when it might be helpful.

When we do this activity, we warn people that it can be very intense so they shouldn't volunteer unless they are ready to feel their feelings and to learn what children might be feeling. After we give the instructions to the volunteers, we ask again if they would like to drop out. If one or two drop out, others might volunteer to take their place, or we do the activity with fewer people.

One parent pointed out that a "real" child wouldn't say, "I'm a child and I just want to belong." That is the point. Children wouldn't say it but that is what they are trying to let us know. We tell parents that children don't even know their hidden beliefs. They are subconscious. Positive Discipline teaches parents to be "detectives" to find the hidden beliefs behind discouraged behavior. Remember that a misbehaving child is a discouraged child who believes (deep down), "I don't belong, and my misbehavior is my 'mistaken' way to find belonging and significance." That is why it is called a "Mistaken Goal." The real goal is belonging and significance. So, when a child "misbehaves" the hidden message is, "I'm a child and I just want to belong." Again, the point of this activity is for parents to know what a child is really asking for when they misbehave—to belong.