



Target Audience: Parents and children of all ages

Family Connection Kit

Activity

A fun connection activity for the whole family

Duration: 30 minutes
Class/Group Size: 6+

Materials:

- Script
- Selected clips below, ready to play
- Small ball or other *"speaking object"*

Goal

The family will feel the benefits of maintaining a good, open connection. We will be reminded of why we love our family and the joy of being in a family in general. Every family member will feel how valued they are in the family unit and the impact they can have on the atmosphere in the home.

Description

Every parent knows the value of having a good connection among family members - and the challenges of maintaining such a connection alongside homework, late-night study sessions, sports practices, recitals, work deadlines and conflicting schedules. In

just thirty minutes, this uplifting workshop sequence will renew the good connection that can exist in any family, take the family beyond squabbles that can accumulate over time, and establish a positive foundation both for family interactions and life outside the home.



Directions

Begin with one of the following games

(even small children participate as equals, in whatever way they can):

- (1) The Pointing Game:** Everyone sits in a circle, tight enough that we are in arms' reach of the center. Everyone closes their eyes, and raises their right hand, pointing it straight at the ceiling. Now, without looking, we all slowly lower our pointed fingers until we find all the fingers in the center point.
- (2) Counting To Ten as One:** In this game we will try to count to ten together as if our family is a single person. We sit in a circle. Anyone can say "one", then someone else says "two", and so on until we get to "ten". No one should say two numbers in a row, and if two family members start to say the next number at the same time, we have to start back at "one". (If there are small children who can't count to ten, we can agree to let them say "one" every time). We are not going around the circle in a special order, or giving cues. The goal is to become sensitive to one another without using words.
- (3) The Funny Words Game:** We sit in a circle. Each participant in turn answers the question: What helped us to feel like a connected family last week? Besides answering the question, each participant comes up with a random word, which the next participant must include in their answer, (for example: "ladder," "motorcycle," "carrot").

Next: Watch one of these clips together

- (1)** The Power of Compliments
- (2)** The Secret To A Happy Family
- (3)** The Pig of Happiness
- (4)** What Do People Need?



Directions

(continued)

Next: Introduce the workshop, with a few important guidelines. Take turns reading a rule out loud:

Now we will answer a few questions together. During this workshop, there are a few rules:

- (1)** No one is more important or less important. We're all equal, and very important.
- (2)** We don't argue, interrupt, or say anything that would diminish what another has said.
- (3)** Imagine we have a pot in the center of the circle, and we are adding ingredients to a soup that we will all enjoy, each tries to add some good thing to compliment what the previous person has contributed.
- (4)** We strive to come to an answer out of our connection, just like how we were only able to succeed in the game by feeling and thinking together.
- (5)** We are all listening closely to the person holding the speaking object.

First Question:

Each of us turns to the family member on our right and answers the question, *"What is something special that the person next to me contributes to the good atmosphere in our family?"*

Read one or all of these quotes:

"Family is the most important thing in the world." – **Princess Diana**

"Family is not an important thing, it's everything." – **Michael J. Fox**

"Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family: Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one." – **Jane Howard**



Directions

(continued)

Second Question:

How does having a good connection in the family give us confidence in life?

Third Question:

What is good about the way we are talking together now, according to these special workshop rules?

Read one or both of these quotes:

What is good about the "You can kiss your family and friends good-bye and put miles between you, but at the same time you carry them with you in your heart, your mind, your stomach, because you do not just live in a world but a world lives in you."

– **Frederick Buechner**

"What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family."

– **Mother Teresa**

Fourth Question:

How do the relationships in our family end up influencing other families and maybe even other people in the world?

Concluding One-Word Impressions:

Each participant says one word describing the feeling he/she is coming out of the workshop with. The next person expands that word into a sentence, explaining what that person meant; and then adds his/her own one-word impression. For example, if the mother said, "*warmth*", the next person might say, "*Mom is feeling the warmth of having us all together and getting along so well*".



The Science Behind it

- Kids do better on tests when they're first asked to think of a positive memory.

2.3[6] Bryan, T., & Bryan, J. (1991). Positive mood and math performance. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 24(8), 490-494.

2.3[7] Staw, B. M., & Barsade, S. G. (1993). Affect and managerial performance: A test of the sadder-but-wiser vs. happier-and-smarter hypotheses. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 304-331.
- Physicians actually did a better job integrating data of medical cases after they were given a bag of candy.

2.3[8] Isen, A. M., Rosenzweig, A. S., & Young, M. J. (1991). The influence of positive affect on clinical problem solving. *Medical Decision Making*, 11(3), 221-227.
- Princeton Neuroscientist Uri Hasson showed that when someone is telling a story or expressing emotions in a group, the brains of both speaker and listeners show a neural synchrony in conversation, which is like an overall, widespread synchrony across the brain.

2.5[5] Stephens, G. J., Silbert, L. J., & Hasson, U. (2010). Speaker-listener neural coupling underlies successful communication. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 107(32), 14425-14430.
- Dr. George Vaillant summarized the outcome of his 60 years of studying 800 men and women in what makes humans flourish, saying, "The only thing that really matters in life are your relationships to other people,".

3.7[1] Vaillant, G. (2002). *Aging well: Surprising guideposts to a happier life*. Scribe Publications.
- Positively connected people are happier and thus more productive.

3.7[2] Oswald, A. J., Proto, E., & Sgroi, D. (2009). *Happiness and productivity* (No. 4645). IZA discussion papers.



The Science Behind it

(continued)

- For 32 years, doctors were collecting data from more than 12,000 citizens, and were able to show that our happiness depends not just on our own actions, thoughts and behaviors, but on the actions, thoughts and behaviors of the people to whom we're directly connected, and on the people to whom they are connected, and so forth.

6.2[11] Christakis, N. A., & Fowler, J. H. (2007). *The spread of obesity in a large social network over 32 years. New England journal of medicine, 357(4), 370-379.*
- "The average student cooperating performed about 2/3 of a SD above the average person within a competitive or individualistic setting "

3.9[2] Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1989). *Cooperation and competition: Theory and research. Interaction Book Company.*
- Every person is connected to every other person in the world in just under 5 degrees of separation.

5.2[3] Markoff, J., & Sengupta, S. (2011). *Separating you and me? 4.74 degrees. The New York Times, 21.*
- Social Pain is the feeling we get when we are insulted or rejected, and it was found to activate the same regions of the brain as physical pain.

3.4[14] Eisenberger, N. I., & Lieberman, M. D. (2004). *Why rejection hurts: a common neural alarm system for physical and social pain. Trends in cognitive sciences, 8(7), 294-300.*
- Neurons that fire together wire together, which basically means that if you respond to a social situation (or any situation) in a way that you know is wrong, in a way that you feel you can't control, it simply means that you are addicted to that emotional state, that you have a set path of neurons linking that certain incident to your automatic response.

2.8[2] Keysers, C., & Perrett, D. I. (2004). *Demystifying social cognition: a Hebbian perspective. Trends in cognitive sciences, 8(11), 501-507.*

2.8[3] Boahen, K. (2005). *Neuromorphic microchips. Scientific American, 292(5), 56-63.*



The Science Behind it

(continued)

- Longitudinal studies have shown that positive emotions play a considerable role in building psychological resilience, and generally expanding your range of thoughts and actions to choose from in different situations.

2.3[9] Fredrickson, B. L., Tugade, M. M., Waugh, C. E., & Larkin, G. R. (2003). *What good are positive emotions in crisis? A prospective study of resilience and emotions following the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11th, 2001. Journal of personality and social psychology, 84(2), 365.*
- In a study, a camera was locked on the subject's eye to track its movement, and it showed that positivity created a wider scope of what people were scanning for in their environment. In other words, we actually see more when we are positive.

2.3[5] Isaacowitz, D. M., Wadlinger, H. A., Goren, D., & Wilson, H. R. (2006). *Selective preference in visual fixation away from negative images in old age? An eye-tracking study. Psychology and aging, 21(1), 40.*
- Employees can work for longer hours with increased focus and under more difficult conditions when they have a foundation of positive social interactions.

3.8[3] Heaphy, E. D., & Dutton, J. E. (2008). *Positive social interactions and the human body at work: Linking organizations and physiology. Academy of Management Review, 33(1), 137-162.*
- For random people to succeed in collaboration, participants need to get to know and trust each other, communicate accurately and unambiguously, accept and support each other, and resolve conflicts constructively.

3.9[5] Johnson, D. W. (1972). *Reaching Out: Interpersonal Effectiveness and Self-Actualization.*