



Laughing and Learning

Why do we laugh? Laughing makes you feel good – it releases tension, increases blood flow and endorphins to the brain, improves your mood and boosts your immune system.¹ Laughing can also offer information about an individual, including how they are developing cognitively. What a child laughs at, offers insight about how development is occurring in areas such as memory, nature and characteristics of objects, self-identity, rules of language and emotions of others. As children develop, so does their sense of humor. Laughter is a learned behavior that typically happens in response to another person or thing, which means you are more likely to see laughter occur within the context of parent-child interaction.

Supporting parents in their understanding of social emotional development can have a lasting impact on the quality of the parent-child relationship. Encouraging moments when families can share humorous moments, gives families a chance to consciously engage in recreational activities that are healthy for the entire family.

Supporting families can be a laughing matter. Family support professionals are also encouraged to use laughter as a means to connect with families. Using appropriate humor can ease the tension

Table 1: Social Emotional Development Stages of Children Birth to 6

Child's Age	Social Emotional Development Stage	Supporting social emotional development
0-6 months	A baby's responses to playful physical interactions are her first steps toward humor.	Play games like peek-a-boo
6-12 months	Memory and imitation help children figure out that it is funny to do something unexpected.	Encourage laughter by being silly and doing something unexpected
1-2 years	A toddler's use of symbols and language leads to playing with reality. Incongruities are very funny.	Offer a flexible play environment; toddlers need time to explore and discover what they think is fun
3-4 years	Memory and imitation help children figure out that it is funny to do something unexpected.	Invent silly stories or change the words in familiar stories
5-6 years	Preschoolers enjoy making up silly stories. Though they enjoy sharing their humor with others, they are not completely aware of the impact of their humor on others.	Introduce knock-knock jokes

as the relationship develops and make it less difficult to explore the dimensions of the relationship. Sometimes it is stressful to begin a new relationship, especially while dealing with common life stressors that families often experience. Laughter can also stimulate circulation and aid muscle relaxation, both of which can help reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress.¹ Encourage families to spend quality time with each other as well as with

other members of their support system so they can enrich their social connections while enhancing their child's social and emotional well-being.



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strengtheningfamilies

For more ideas about how caregivers can support their child's social emotional development by developing their humor visit the [Scholastic website](#).

¹ Mayo Clinic Staff. Stress Relief from Laughter? It's No Joke. Mayo Clinic.

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-relief/art-20044456?pg=1>. Published April 21, 2016. Accessed June 26, 2017.

Author: Tiedra Marshall



Data Driven Practice

The Parents as Teachers approach is to partner, facilitate and reflect. Over the last several years, PAT National Center has learned a great deal through the partnerships with PAT affiliates, community organizations, PAT state offices and other state and national level home visiting representatives. Through ongoing support and continuous quality improvement, PAT has worked to facilitate a high quality, well-regarded model that leads to strong outcomes and positive impacts for families. PAT has reflected on their role and reputation as an evidence based model and a leader in the field of early childhood home visiting.

Partnering, facilitating and reflecting has brought PAT to an important new initiative – a movement toward data driven practice. Data driven practice is about providing quality, impactful services to achieve strong outcomes for families and to demonstrate the value of PAT. There are three interconnected pieces: Data in Motion/Updated Records, PAT Penelope 2.0 and Updated Essential Requirements.

For more information on Data Driven Practice [watch this video](#).

Source: [Parents as Teachers eBusiness Portal](#)

Using Penelope? Need Help?

Penelope Q&A sessions are available upon request for all PAT affiliate programs in Pennsylvania. Contact [Wenda Deardorff](#) or [Allyson Fulton](#) for more information or to schedule a session.

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Parents as Teachers™

The Four Big Ideas behind the Strengthening Families™: Shifting from Risk Factors to Protective Factors

This series of articles will explore the four big ideas behind the Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework identified by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP).

The Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework, developed by CSSP, is based on research focused on the characteristics and actions of parents that create environments that keep families strong and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. The five protective factors are:

- **Parental Resilience** – The ability of parents to respond productively to stress, bounce back from difficult situations and apply past learning to future difficult situations.
- **Social Connections** – Parents can identify supportive people in their lives to reduce isolation and share the joys and stresses of parenting.

- **Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development** – Parents have access to accurate and up-to-date information about their child's development and apply this knowledge to create environments that support their child's physical and cognitive development.
- **Concrete Support in Times of Need** – Parents can identify their family's needs and know where and how to access supports to meet their needs.
- **Social and Emotional Competence of Children** – Parents model social and emotional skills and provide opportunities and environments that promote their child's development of skills related to emotional regulation, communication, empathy and other aspects of social and emotional competence.

Idea 1: From Risk Factors to Protective and Promotive Factors

The characteristics identified in the framework represent a shift from

focusing solely on risk factors to building protective and promotive factors. Risk factors are "stressful conditions, events, or circumstances that increase a family's chances for poor outcomes."^{1(p.5)} Risk factors might include substance abuse, poverty, violence in the home or transience. For many years, social service programs have focused on eliminating risk factors for children and families, but this approach can pose problems. Some risk factors can lead to poor outcomes, such as maternal age which cannot be eliminated or changed.² It may also lead us to target the wrong families. Some families with risk factors present continue to do well and provide healthy environments for their children in spite of challenges. Conversely some families that do not exhibit risk factors might in fact need support. Risk factors are not necessarily predictive of poor outcomes.

Protective factors are “the conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities or the larger society that mitigate or eliminate risk.^{3(p.18)}” Protective factors are the strengths in parents that buffer their families and children from stressful situations and events. They are correlated with good outcomes and healthy development. Protective factors are also considered to be promotive because they actively contribute to the wellbeing of a family.

The characteristics identified in the Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework are both protective and promotive in that they “simultaneously (a) prevent or mitigate the effect of exposure to risk factors and stressful life events, and (b) build family strengths and a family environment that promotes optimal child development.^{4(p.20)}” These protective factors are interrelated and work together to provide parents and children a strong

foundation for success. Although this approach encourages a focus on building on a family’s strengths, it does not ignore risks. Rather it acknowledges that focusing on risk alone may provide an incomplete picture of the family. By exploring both the risks and strengths in a family, parent educators can have a better understanding of what the family may need. Further, by building on the protective factors already present, parent educators ensure that the parents are actively involved in providing support for their families.

For more information about the nature of risk and protective factors, as well as a comprehensive look at the research behind the Strengthening Families™ approach, read the research brief The Strengthening Families Approach and Protective Factors Framework: Branching Out and Reaching Deeper by Dr. Charlyn Harper Browne.

¹ Center for the Study of Social Policy. Introduction to Strengthening Families: A Protective Factors Framework. <http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/practice/body/IntroToStrengtheningFamilies-module-script.pdf>. Accessed June 27, 2017.

² Browne CH. The Strengthening Families Approach and Protective Factors Framework: Branching Out and Reaching Deeper. http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/2014/The-Strengthening-Families-Approach-and-Protective-Factors-Framework_Branching-Out-and-Reaching-Deeper.pdf. Published September 2014. Accessed June 27, 2017.

Author: Rijelle Kraft



The Sharing Corner

The Sharing Corner is for you, by you. Share your expertise, celebrations, testimonies and news. Send an email with the information you would like to share to [Wenda Deardorff](mailto:Wenda.Deardorff).*

* Center for Schools and Communities reserves the right to determine the appropriateness of the information.

Author: Wenda Deardorff

Safe Kids Corner

Water Safety

Whether you are bathing your baby in the sink or splashing around with your toddler in the bathtub, water is great fun for kids. But it is also a place where safety must come first. Almost 800 children drown in the U.S. every year and two-thirds of these deaths occur during May – August.

Drowning is the leading cause of injury-related death among children 1-4 years old. Among those 1-14, fatal drowning remains the second-leading cause of unintentional injury-related death behind motor vehicle crashes.

Drowning Risk

- <1 year olds are more likely to drown at home
- 1-4 year olds are more likely to drown in a pool
- 5-17 year olds are more likely to drown in natural water

Safety tips

- Never leave your child unattended around water. Babies can drown in as little as one inch of water.

- Put the cell phone away, forget about all the other things you have to do and give young children 100 percent of your attention when they are in or around water.
- Empty all tubs, buckets, containers and wading pools immediately after use. Store them upside down and out of children's reach.
- Keep toilet lids closed and use toilet seat locks to prevent drowning. It is also a good idea to keep doors to bathrooms and laundry rooms closed.
- Know what to do in an emergency. Learning CPR and basic water rescue skills may help you save a life.
- Install fences around home pools. A pool fence should surround all sides of the pool and be at least four feet tall with self-closing and self-latching gates.

Author: Ashley Graves



**SAFE
KIDS**
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Family Support

31
2017

Family Support Webinars

First Wednesday of the month

10:00 AM - 11:15 AM

Aug 9 Co-Parenting

Parents as Teachers International Conference 2017

Nov 29 – Dec 1 Philadelphia, Pa.

Parents as Teachers

Until one month prior to the event, registration will only be open to Pennsylvania participants. If you have a new hire in the month before the event, contact [Wenda Deardorff](#).

PAT Foundational & Model Implementation

For new parent educators & supervisors of affiliate programs
Sep 18-22 Camp Hill, Pa.

PAT Foundational

For new approved users
Sep 18-20, 2017, Camp Hill, Pa.

PA Foundational 2: 3 Years through Kindergarten

July 31 – Aug 1 Homestead, Pa.
Sep 25-26 Camp Hill, Pa.

- Parents as Teachers and Strengthening Families

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Pennsylvania Parents as Teachers is based at the Center for Schools and Communities.

Learn more at the following sites:

[Children's Trust Fund](#)

[Strengthening Families](#)