

Reconnecting Families

Parent Workbook



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Produced by Fairfax County Public Schools
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In partnership with

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It can be difficult for your child to understand why you lived apart for so long. You must make a heartfelt apology as part of the healing process with your child. It takes a strong person to say “I’m sorry.” It takes an even stronger person to forgive. A sincere apology has four parts:

- You must admit fault. Admitting fault doesn’t mean you had a choice but will comfort your child.
- You must say you understand the effect your actions had on your child.
- You must show that you are truly sorry.
- You must promise to fix the problem and never do it again.

***I am sorry** for the sadness and confusion you felt when I moved to this country and left you with abuela. At the time it seemed the best thing to do to build a better future for our family. I missed you so very much. I was so excited about having you come to live with me in the U.S. I never thought it would take as long as it did.*

Now that we are together again and I understand how my leaving made you feel, I will do whatever I can to help you learn to love and trust me again. I also understand that you miss abuela, and I will do whatever I can to help us stay in touch.

Practice your apology with a friend or in front of the mirror before you share it with your child.



Let's have a conversation to start the day...

What great things are you hoping will happen today?

If you get upset or angry during the day at school, what do you do to feel better?

What do you like least about school? Most?

What do you hope happens today?

When you return home what is the first thing you'll do?

After a long separation, it's important to spend as much time as you can getting to know your child again and showing you are there for them.

Let's have a conversation to end the day...

Describe the best part of your day today.

I missed you. What happened today that you want to tell me about?

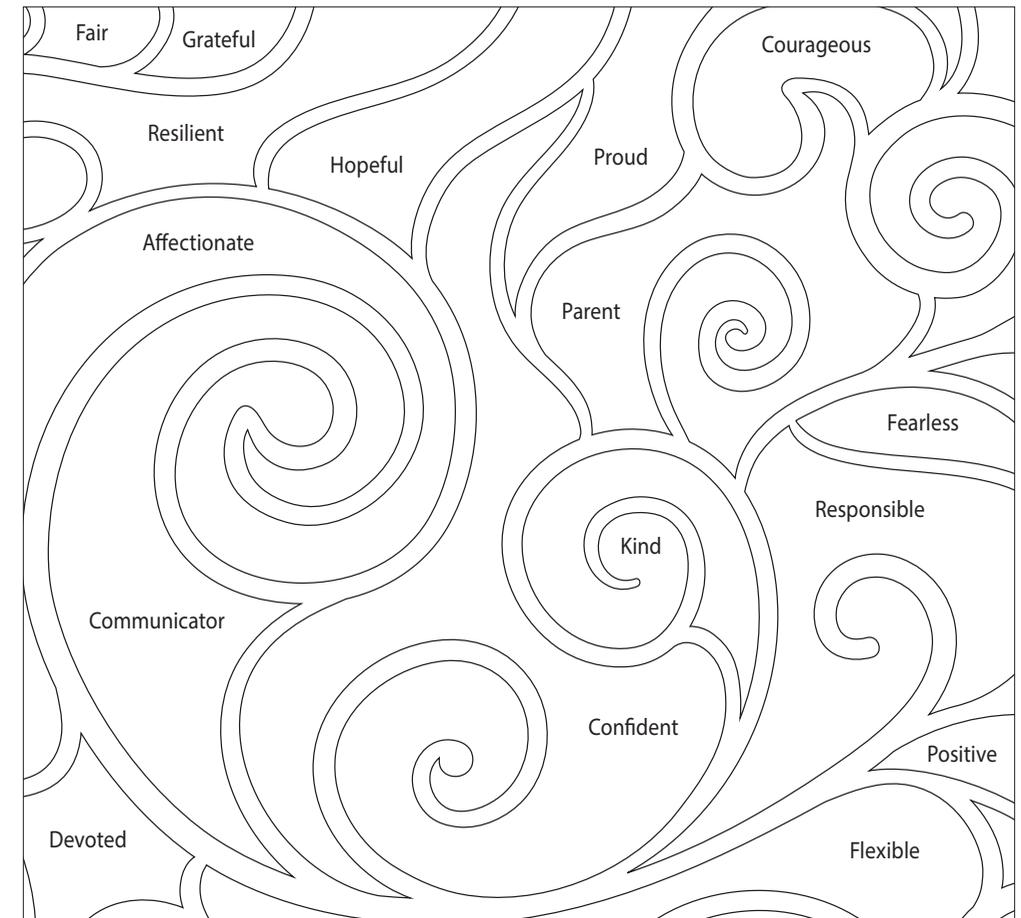
Tell me or show me something you learned today.

Talk about something that made you upset or angry.

What was the kindest thing you did for someone today?

The words below represent assets. Assets are positive traits. When life gets difficult we turn to our strengths. We can always add to our assets. It may take work, but it is worth it. What assets help you be an effective parent?

1. Write your name in the middle
2. Color in all the words that describe you.
3. Add any other words to describe you.



When your child misbehaves (all children do!) you can follow this example:

Your son, Elias, went to a friend's house after school without telling you. You could not reach him. You were very worried.

1. Tell Elias the rule he broke.

"Elias, I was worried. Our rule is you come right home after school. You did not do this."

2. Tell Elias why the behavior was wrong.

"I need to know you are safe. I need to depend on you to follow our rules."

3. Tell Elias his consequence.

"As a consequence and to show me you understand I want you to come directly home from school tomorrow. You may not see any friends after school."

4. Tell Elias how to behave the next time.

"Next time you get an invitation to a friend's house, call me."

Discipline children or "teach" children acceptable behaviors so that they can eventually self-discipline.

Punishment that causes pain or suffering (such as, spanking or name calling) does not teach. The better behavior will not last long. If your child has been mistreated or even abused in the past, this kind of discipline may cause more rebelliousness than you expect.

A parent's job is to balance being firm with being kind. Let your children know what you will or will not put up with. This is called **setting limits**. Children need limits to feel safe. Without limits children can feel confused. Without limits children can feel abandoned.

This style of parenting may not be how you were raised. We know now that these methods are the best and most effective.

Some useful limits are:

- Clean up your own messes
- Use appropriate language
- No hitting
- Go to bed on time
- Attend school every day
- Treat each other with respect

Children respond well to being given choices. Here are some examples:

- "You may do your homework after school or after dinner. Which do you choose?"
- "You can eat what I made for dinner, or you can make yourself a sandwich. You choose."
- "You can help by vacuuming or washing the dishes. Your choice."
- "If you finish studying, you will have time to watch TV or listen to music."

Recognize your child's small steps to success. Show your appreciation with words, for example, "Thank you for washing the dishes. It will be so nice not to see a sink full of dirty dishes first thing tomorrow morning!"

