



Session 4

In the Zone: Challenge and Support Growth

Handout Guide

Handout	Quantity Needed
Challenge Growth Posters	1 copy of each poster
Family Handout 4.1a Some Key Ideas: Challenge Growth	1 per family
Family Handout 4.1b Some Key Ideas: Provide Support	1 per family
Family Handout 4.2 Understanding the Growth Zone	1 per participant
Family Handout 4.3a At-Home Activities Guide	1 per family
Family Handout 4.3b POST IT: A Guide for Your Week	1 per family
Family Handout 4.3c THINK ABOUT IT: Feedback that Motivates Growth	1 per family
Family Handout 4.3d TRY IT: How Do You Think About Failures and Setbacks?	1 per participant
Family Handout 4.3e TRY IT: Set Up Your Lifelines Beyond the Family	1 per family



CHALLENGE GROWTH

Some Key Ideas

Having other people challenge us to grow isn't always fun. But we all need others to believe in us and expect more from us. Challenging growth means

“Push me to keep getting better.”

70%
of US parents
believe challenging
growth is strong in
their family.

What Does Challenging Growth Involve?

Search Institute has identified four everyday actions that challenge growth:

Expect my best: Expect me to live up to my potential.

Stretch: Push me to go further.

Hold me accountable: Insist I take responsibility for my actions.

Grow from failures: Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks.

Why Is It Important for Families to Challenge Each Other to Grow?

Challenging ourselves and encouraging each other is part of how we learn and grow. Without challenge, we get bored.

When parenting adults **challenge kids to be their best**, young people:

- Learn to talk about different points of view.
- Test their own abilities.
- Practice managing emotions.
- Stay focused on long-term goals.

In the process, young people discover their **power to shape their own lives**.

What Does Challenging Growth Look Like During the Teen Years?

As kids move into the teen years, they need to become more self-motivated. So while parenting adults often need to encourage their kids, they also can shift responsibility by:

- **Asking challenging questions that help kids clarify their own thinking.**
- **Encouraging kids to consider differences in opinion.**
- **Gradually sharing more responsibilities as youth demonstrate growth.**

BE AWARE!

Not all the ways we might challenge our kids are good. The following hurt kids' motivation:

- Emotional manipulation
- Dismissing kids' experiences and emotions
- Inconsistent or harsh discipline



PROVIDE
SUPPORT

Some Key Ideas

An important part of a good relationship is to support each other. We do this by giving practical help to each other, giving feedback, and standing up for each other when we need to. Providing support means

77%
of US parents
believe providing
support is strong in
their family.

“Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.”

What Does Providing Support Involve?

Search Institute has identified four actions that provide support:

Navigate: Guide me through hard situations and systems.

Empower: Help me be confident and take charge of my life.

Advocate: Stand up for me when I need it.

Set boundaries: Put in place limits that keep me on track.

Why Is It Important for Families to Provide Support to Each Other?

When youth have support from parents, they are more likely to:

- Feel secure and confident;
- Be more engaged in school and learning;
- Have lower rates of substance abuse; and
- Experience less stress or emotional problems.

Parents also need support. When they have support from family members, extended family, and friends, they are more likely to:

- Use positive parenting practices;
- Experience lower stress from work-family conflicts; and
- Be able to provide the support and advocacy their kids need.

What Does Providing Support Look Like During the Teen Years?

When they are young, babies and children depend on their parenting adults for almost everything. As they grow, they can do more on their own. They may get better than their parenting adults at some things (such as school subjects, technology, or other talents).

But that doesn't mean they don't need support. It just means that the ways parenting adults provide support needs to shift. Kids learn to take initiative, solve problems, and be responsible—all critical parts of growing up. Parenting adults are still there to give perspectives about new challenges in life, help problem solve, guide them, and place limits when needed.



Understanding the “Growth Zone”

What happens:

Your experiences:

Too Easy
(The Boredom Zone)



What you’re doing is too easy because you already have the skills and knowledge you need to do it. So you get bored and don’t put any effort into it.

As a result, you don’t really get any better because it’s not interesting or motivating. You’re not challenged to grow in that area.

What are areas in life where you haven’t tried hard because it was easy for you and you weren’t pushed to learn or improve?

Just Right
(The Growth Zone)



You push yourself—and others push you—to do something that is a little harder. But with effort, guidance, practice, and encouragement, you learn to do it.

When this level starts to get easy, you add more challenge (or “weight”) so you can keep getting better.

What are areas of life where you have been pushed hard and have been able to learn, grow, and improve as you practiced, built skills, and gained confidence?

Too Hard
(The Frustration Zone)



Sometimes you’re asked to do things that you’ve never done before or that are much harder than you’ve done before.

If it’s too hard, you may not be able to make any progress at it. So you are likely to get frustrated and give up—or just not try in the first place. You just stay where you are and don’t grow.

What areas of life have been so hard for you that you’ve just given up, even though you wish you could do them?



At Home Activities

OVERVIEW: What Will Our Family Do?

If You Have:	Materials	Activity Name	Description	When Will Your Family Do This?
1 minute	Family Handout 4.3b	Post It: A Guide for Your Week	Post this guide somewhere all family members will see it. The refrigerator is a great spot!	
5 minutes	Family Handout 3.5b	Talk About It	Choose one question to discuss any time you have down time - in the car, waiting in line, over a meal. Put these questions on a sheet of paper in your home - each family member can write their answers to them throughout the week.	
10 minutes	Internet-enabled device	Online Exploration	Visit www.keepconnected.info to explore extra resources on family relationships.	
10 minutes	Family Handout 4.3c	Learn About It: Feedback that Motivates Growth	A big part of challenging growth and providing support is to give feedback that is motivating and helpful. Learn about four keys to positive feedback. Identify areas of feedback that you want to work on in your family.	
30 minutes	Handout 4.3d	Try It: How Do You Think about Failures and Setbacks?	Use a checklist together to reflect on how you view failure. Learn how to rethink failures and setbacks as opportunities for growth and learning.	
15 minutes	Handout 4.3e	Try It: Set Up Your Lifelines Beyond the Family	Think about the people outside of your household who can provide support to your family.	



POST IT

A Guide For Your Week

Display this page where you will notice it through the week (such as on a refrigerator).

Think about it

Key ideas to remember

PROVIDING SUPPORT involves practical ways of helping each other complete tasks and achieve goals.

CHALLENGING GROWTH involves encouraging each other to keep getting better and to be our best.

- In positive relationships, we push each other to grow in different parts of life so that we can each be and become our best selves.
- Challenge growth is best when it focuses on someone's own goals or priorities, not on things other people wish they would do.
- We grow most in the "Growth Zone," where we are stretched to grow, but also guided and supported so we can succeed.

Talk about it

Discussion starters

1. Who is someone you admire who really encourages you to go after things that matter to you? How do they motivate you?
2. Think about a time you were facing a challenge. How did family members advocate for you? How did their response affect you?
3. How can challenging other people to grow either help or hurt your relationship with them?
4. How does having a strong relationship make it easier to push people to grow and support them?

Try it

Tips for families

1. Expect each other to do their best.
2. Shift levels of support. Give more support when people are struggling, and less when they are making progress.
3. Remind each other that making mistakes is part of learning. Praise each other for hard work, whether those efforts succeed or fail.
4. Highlight future goals. Talk with each other about the things you look forward to or dream about, and support each other in going after those goals and dreams.



Visit www.KeepConnected.info

Find ideas, quizzes, activities, discussion starters, and more to strengthen family relationships.



TRY IT

Feedback That Motivates Growth

When you want to challenge someone to grow, the way you give feedback can make a big difference. Here are four steps you can use.

HOW TO USE: As a family, talk through these ideas together. Think of examples when these have worked for you. Identify one or two areas where you all want to practice giving feedback.

Why?



Goal: Focus on what will help the person make progress toward goals.

Confidence: Be clear that you believe they can do it.

Care: Show that you care about their growth and success.

What?



When: Give feedback that's timely—but not before they are ready.

Specific: Describe specific actions that can be changed and practiced.

Strengths and Gaps: What were they doing that helped? What was getting in the way? Knowing both increases learning.

So What?



Listen, Then Share: Listen first to ideas. Then offer more, if needed.

Connect to Goals: Talk about connections to the goals that motivate.

Build Confidence: Reinforce self-feedback and ideas for growth.

Now What?



Reaction: Pay attention to reactions. Do they understand the feedback? Does it make sense? Is it overwhelming?

Doable: Identify one or two changes that can make a difference now.

Repeat: Keep giving feedback that helps. Celebrate progress.



TRY IT

How Do You Think About Failures & Setbacks?

Sometimes when we challenge ourselves and each other to grow, we fall short. We make mistakes. It happens to everyone.

The question is not whether we will sometimes fail. We will. The real question is: How do we respond to failure? This activity invites your family to think about that question together.

Have all family members complete this checklist on their own, then discuss the questions that follow.

1. Here are seven pairs of statements. Pick the one in each pair that best matches your views.

_____ Successes and failures are rewards and punishments.

_____ Successes and failures are information to learn from.

_____ When you complete a task, you focus on what didn't work or go as planned.

_____ When you finish a task, you focus on what you achieved.

_____ When you don't meet expectations, you give up.

_____ When you don't meet expectations, you come up with a plan for next time.

_____ There's something wrong with you when you fail.

_____ There can be lots of reasons we fail, and some are beyond our control.

_____ When you fail, you conclude: "I'm no good at this. Why bother?"

_____ When you fail, you conclude: "That didn't work. I want to figure out why."

_____ Even when I do something carefully, I worry that it isn't right.

_____ When I do something carefully, I am usually satisfied with my effort.

- Did you mostly check statements in one column or the other?
- Where did you make the same and different choices from each other?
- Do the differences between family members reflect how you see each other?

2. The two columns represent two mindsets about failures:

Fixed Mindsets

People with fixed mindsets tend to . . .

- See failures or mistakes as signs that they aren't good enough.
- Be perfectionists, or set low expectations for themselves.
- Be self-critical and overly concerned about what others think.

Growth Mindsets

People with growth mindsets tend to . . .

- See failures or mistakes as opportunities to grow and learn.
- Have high standards, but keep a positive outlook when they don't reach them.
- Be self-motivated and have strong decision-making abilities.

3. Reflect on your own choices on the checklist. Discuss:

- Do you think choices reflect the mindset that you really have? Why or why not? Give some examples of how you see your mindset.
- What do we do in our family that reinforces one mindset or the other?

4. What are ways we can do more in our family to focus on having a Growth Mindset, using our mistakes and failures as opportunities to grow and learn?

Pick one of these strategies to try:

- ✓ Praise each other for effort and for challenging yourselves.
- ✓ Give each other a chance to correct mistakes and improve.
- ✓ Model learning from mistakes. Step back and highlight the mistake without alarm or embarrassment.
- ✓ When you give feedback to each other, focus on the process used, not just the final result. Say something like: "Maybe you could think of another way to do it," which encourages them to keep working on it.



TRY IT

Set Up Your Lifelines Beyond the Family

A plot-thickening feature of ABC's long-running TV show, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, is a series of "lifelines" to help contestants when they get stumped. The lifelines have changed over time, but they have included the opportunity to ask other people for answers or hints to questions.

This activity uses the idea of lifelines to think about who family members can turn to when they get "stumped" while working toward a goal. These people also become allies or advocates who also provide support beyond the family.

1. Start the activity by imagining that a family member has been selected to be on the TV show, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. But this time, the prize is not money. Instead, it's a goal the person has. For example, a young person may aspire to attend a particular university, to excel in a sport, or play an instrument. An adult may aspire to get a new job or become a master gardener.
2. Think about who you would want to be your "lifelines"—people who provide support to you if you get stumped on this quest.
 - **Phone a friend:** Who would you call? Why? (For example, a particular friend might be really good at motivating you.)
 - **Text a family member:** Which family member would you reach out to? (One might be particularly helpful in thinking through solutions; another might play devil's advocate well.)
 - **Ask an expert:** What professional would you turn to for advice? (This probably depends a lot on your area of focus!)
 - **Poll your family:** Which relatives would you seek input from when making a decision?
3. Have each family member identify a goal or challenge they're working on now (large or small). Identify one way others in the family can be a "lifeline" right now to help them stay focused, motivated, and moving forward toward that goal.
4. Decide as a family when you want to check back in to see how each person is doing on their goal and which "lifelines" they've checked in with.