

Ideas for Showing Up and Being Present For Our Kids Using the 4 S's

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Safety reduces hyper-vigilance and replenishes inner coping resources.

- ◆ Make the environment structured and predictable.
- ◆ Verbal and visual communication about routines.
- ◆ Designated spaces for relaxation and recovery.
- ◆ Reassuring and restorative messages such as *"You're safe here," "You can rely on me," "It must have been upsetting when you thought I wasn't listening."*
- ◆ Be mindful of appearing threatening and escalating stress; slow down movements, lower pitch and tone of your voice, and keep body

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Being seen promotes self-expression and opens richer avenues for interaction.

- ◆ Spend time observing the child and see them for who they really are. Be curious.
- ◆ Attention-seeking vs. connection-seeking, defiant vs. anxious, lazy vs. fear of failure
- ◆ When we reframe behavior we will better recognize our own mindset and choose words and actions that are less likely to dismiss, minimize, or shame.
- ◆ Schedule opportunities for deeper conversation: *"How do you feel about...?"* or *"What was it like when...?"*

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Soothing provides comfort and develops the "upstairs brain."

- ◆ Explore what calms the child's body and brain: coloring, reading, constructing, music, and movement.
- ◆ Presence: Look for invitations to connect. Recognize when you need to be there and when to give space.
- ◆ Engagement: Active listening, reflection and rephrasing, attuned non-verbal communication.
- ◆ Affection: Be warm and playful in order to convey unconditional positive regard.
- ◆ Calm: Resist the urge to correct, challenge, or confront
- ◆ Empathy: *"I know this is really hard for you."*

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Security enhances self-soothing and long-term confidence and resilience.

- ◆ Develop trust by showing up when they need you and following through on promises to return.
- ◆ Set limits with connection: *"You were angry that we had to leave. But when we throw things, people can get hurt. I know it seemed unfair, but we have to keep everyone safe."*
- ◆ Teach how to recognize and manage emotions: feelings thermometer, hand model of the brain, songs and stories about breathing techniques, puppetry and role play for positive self-talk.

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