

Positive Parenting Cards



Being a parent can be joyous, fulfilling, delightful... and tough. There are inevitably times in every parent's life when the frustrations, challenges and demands of parenting are intensely stressful.

The intention behind the *Positive Parenting Cards* is to invite parents to tell stories of their strengths and achievements. Each card offers a simple sentence starter that may intrigue or gently remind users of many aspects of family life. The cards can be used to open up a safe and respectful space for storytelling, reflection, and to talk about the challenges that any parent may experience.

Working with individual parents

In counselling situations, the *Positive Parenting Cards* can be used to help a parent to tell their story in a way that avoids focusing exclusively on 'the problem' and offers a reframe of the problem's dominance.

A counselling conversation might centre on a single card that holds some resonance for the parent. Alternatively, several cards might be placed face down and the parent invited to turn over each card in sequence, finishing the sentence starter before moving onto the next card. Some questions to ask might include:

- Which of the sentence starters did you most enjoy discussing?
- Which ones reminded you of your strengths and hopes as a parent?
- Did any of the sentence starters make you feel uncomfortable? Can you say why?
- Putting all your sentences and stories together, what do you know that you do well as a parent?

Parent Support Groups

Groups can use the cards for an array of activities to compare and explore different parenting experiences. For instance, you might invite each participant to choose a card, and to finish the sentence by imagining the different stages their parenting role may have gone through. How would they have completed the sentence:

- during pregnancy?
- as the parent of a baby or toddler?
- as the parent of an adolescent?
- as the parent of an adult?

Invite participants to imagine how they might complete the sentence at some time in the future.

Working with couples

The *Positive Parenting Cards* offer diverse ways for couples to explore how their expectations, hopes and choices may be similar or different. For instance, both partners can be invited to finish the same sentence starters to see what their different answers reveal. Another approach may be to explore the impacts of family backgrounds by inviting each partner to imagine how their own parent(s) may have completed sentences on the cards. Other questions to explore might be:

- What aspects of your partner's parenting do you most admire? What strengths and achievements do you notice in each other?
- Can you think of times when one or more of the cards have been particularly relevant to you as a couple? Which cards might you choose and why?
- Choose 1-3 cards that resonate for you. How do you imagine your partner might complete the sentence on each card?
- Using a selection of the cards, imagine how a parent you admire might complete each sentence. How might your responses reflect your own best hopes or wishes for the future?



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Best Hopes

Central to solution-focused and strength-based approaches is identifying where we want to get to in our lives. It is the destination or the 'preferred future' that gives counselling purpose, and there are a number of different ways of inviting people to share their best hopes or pictures of the future.

The *Positive Parenting Cards* include sentence starters that invite reflection on past, present and future experiences. However, even those cards that focus on the past or present can be re-jigged to be forward looking with a 'best hopes' reframe. For example:

- 'What gets me through tough times is...' can be extended to 'What I hope will get me through tough times ahead is...'
- 'As a parent I really enjoy...' can be shifted to 'As a parent what I most look forward to enjoying is...'
- 'I was proud of myself as a parent when...' can become 'I most hope to be proud of myself as a parent when...'

POSITIVE PARENTING CARDS

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