

A light gray sunburst graphic with a semi-circular base and several rays extending upwards and outwards, positioned behind the title text.

## Promoting Incredible Years (IY) Connections during Times of Social Distancing

Carolyn Webster-Stratton, Ph.D.

Many IY group leaders have reached out to us at Incredible Years Inc. to ask how to support families who have been participating in IY parent groups during the Covid-19 crises, or to help those who were scheduled to start IY groups soon. We are grateful for group leader efforts and commitment to supporting these families. This document provides tips for IY group leaders regarding how to connect with parents and continue IY work with them during the Covid-19 pandemic. We recognize that agencies cannot continue to offer IY parent groups due to the social distancing recommendations. However, parents at this time need support more than ever. We are fortunate to be able to take advantage of technology that allows people to see and speak to each other and even watch videos together.

We recommend setting up regular calls with each household, including partners and/or grandparents when possible. Below are some options for connecting with families through technology. First, we describe how Zoom can be used and then we outline a template for what to cover in 30-40 minute calls. (free zoom ends in 40 minutes) Of course, being flexible in what you cover is the name of the game. Most especially your efforts to reach out to support and show your caring for families will make all the difference.

### **How to Use Zoom**

To use Zoom group leaders will need to open a free account on zoom.com. Prior to making the zoom call, group leaders set up a meeting and send a link to the parent. When the parent clicks the link for the first time, they will be prompted to download a free App. After that the parents should be connected automatically to the call. In zoom group leaders will be able to share their desktop with the parent. This is how you would share a video, or a refrigerator note. If you do not know how to do this, you can find tutorials online.

If this does not work for you, try face time or skype. Both will allow you to see each other face-to-face but don't allow sharing of video. You could share the handouts via email or text.

## Sample On-Line Remote Sessions First Call (30-40 min)

1. Start by checking in on the family's current situation. (e.g., who is at home, whether parent is working from home, whether anyone is sick, whether childcare is available, financial situation, stress level, level of support, availability of food and basics)
2. To the extent needed, and where possible, refer families to local resources for meals, childcare or medical advice.
3. Check in with families on how they are doing setting up a schedule for their child. (See handout: *Keeping Calm and Providing Supportive Parenting on web site* [www.incredibleyears.com/parents-teachers/articles-for-parents/](http://www.incredibleyears.com/parents-teachers/articles-for-parents/))
4. Review with the family how they are talking with their children about the virus. Ask how they and their children are coping with this change.
5. Pick one concrete goal for family that is realistic and fills current need. (e.g., working on schedule, talking to child about virus, re-establishing child-directed play time, connecting to resource in community, brainstorming ideas for activities for children, self-care for parent).

Depending on level of stress and organization in household, group leaders may need to spend more than one call to cover these topics and assess family need.

When families are ready, group leaders can resume Incredible Years Parent content. Many IY group leaders have reached out to us at Incredible Years Inc. to ask how to support families who have been participating in IY parent groups during the Covid-19 crises, or those who were scheduled to start IY groups. We are grateful for group leader efforts and commitment to supporting these families. This document provides tips for IY group leaders regarding how to connect with parents and continue IY work with them during the Covid-19 pandemic. We recognize that agencies cannot continue to offer IY parent groups due to the social distancing recommendations. However, parents at this time need support more than ever. We are fortunate to be able to take advantage of technology that allows people to see and speak to each other and even watch videos together.

Take into consideration what families covered in their IY parent group. Before moving on to new content, review prior content in light of current situation. For example, how does child-directed play fit into current schedule? Does the family need a new incentive system for a new element in the child's schedule? What limits are important to enforce at this time? Depending on group leader's assessment of the family situation, phone calls may be spent on tailoring parenting strategies and responsiveness to the current

family dynamics. Do not move on to new content until families are feeling confident with using IY strategies.

The following outline can be used for reviewing old content and teaching new content during a zoom call. Zoom is ideal because group leaders can select 1-2 video vignettes to show parents during the call. With zoom, group leaders can pause vignettes for reflection and discussion, just as in a group.

### **Sample Outline for 2<sup>nd</sup> Call and Beyond**

1. Check in on progress on prior goals. Identify successes. Highlight any key principles used or shared. Encourage and praise parent's efforts.
2. Parents could demonstrate some successful parenting approach they used during the week. If child is present, child may be included in this.
3. Trouble-shoot any barriers and practice alternative responses or solutions.
4. Determine new topic for the day, that is, whether to review prior content or introduce new content. Be sure to use leader's manual and follow session checklist and sequence of topics.
5. Select 1-2 vignettes to share with parents if using zoom. Discuss and mediate vignettes just as you would in a group pulling out principles and key ideas.
6. Help parent develop a script and practice the new ideas discussed relative to the vignette and note how it relates to this parent's goals for their child and family.
7. Summarize learning and determine parent's new goal for the week including practice skill, reading IY book, and handouts.
8. Set up next zoom call.

If feasible help connect parents with buddies from their group. Encourage parents to check in with buddies during the week.

See link at our web site for handouts for each topic (Play, Praise and Incentives, Scheduled and Limit Setting, Consequences and Time Out, Problem Solving).

Note: you can set up consultation with your IY mentor or trainer if you have questions about these calls and practices.