




Lead your own 15- to 60-minute professional development workshops with Sprouts Discussion Guides!

Pair the Discussion Guides with key concepts, skills, and handouts from the [Sprouts Professional Development](#)  series for ready-to-use content for your team meetings or in-house professional development. This resource is designed to give you maximum flexibility to “choose your own adventure” based on the needs and interests of your team or agency.

Each guide includes suggested questions to guide group discussions, and how you use and combine these questions will help you:

Connect

Build connections among participants

Reinforce

Reinforce and deepen understanding of key concepts and skills

Practice

Promote use of targeted skills in professional practice


Problem Solve

Encourage problem-solving regarding barriers to using the targeted skills



Facilitator Tips

How to Use this Resource to Lead Professional Development Workshops

- **Complete Sprouts PD yourself** before leading any workshops with this resource. When you are familiar with the key concepts and skills in Sprouts PD, you can decide how to best use the guides to support your team members’ implementation of skills in their professional settings with young children and families.
- **Intended Audience:** Plan to use this resource only with those who have completed Sprouts PD themselves. Use this resource to lead your team through supplemental boosters or workshops *after* Sprouts PD, not as a replacement for the full Sprouts PD program.
- **Workshop Planning:** The guides and questions can be used in any order. Customize each workshop to your preferred length (15 - 60 minutes) and objectives (see above). Decide how much time to spend on each discussion question and/or how many questions to discuss during the session.
- **Resources:** Use the accompanying **Slide Deck**  as a visual aid and flexible teaching tool during the workshop. Distribute the listed handout(s) to your participants before, during, or after the workshop. You can print hard copies or share the link: **Handouts** (dpbh.ucla.edu/seeds-handouts/) for digital access.
- **Optional: Use these workshops to build your team members’ leadership and facilitation skills.** Invite team members to serve as small group leaders during the workshop. Prior to the workshop, provide them with the guide so they can prepare to facilitate discussions in groups of 3 – 8 participants and then report back to the larger group at the end of the workshop.

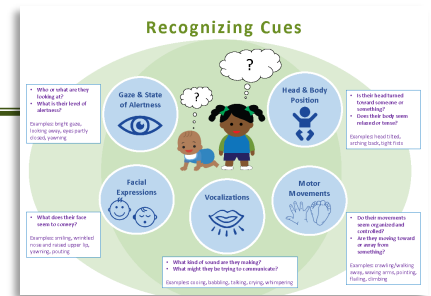




Key skill: Use intentional observation to recognize cues

Use Sprouts PD Discussion Guide SLIDE DECK.

Choose from the discussion questions below.
Estimate 5 – 15 minutes per question.



Handout Link:
dpbh.ucla.edu/seeds-handouts

Connect

Build connections among participants.

What is one of your favorite sensory experiences (something you smell, taste, hear, see, or feel)? What do you enjoy about this experience? How does it make you feel?

- Slowing down and connecting to our sensory experiences can be very regulating, especially if they are associated with a positive memory or experience.
- Connecting with others over shared sensory experiences (like having an afternoon coffee break with coworkers or going for a walk with a friend/partner) can strengthen our professional and personal relationships.

Reinforce

Reinforce and deepen understanding of key concepts and skills.

Think of a child who had a strong (positive or negative) reaction to a sensory experience. What cues told you the child was having a strong reaction? What did you learn about the child from observing their cues?

- A young child's cues can include their (1) gaze and state of alertness; (2) facial expressions; (3) vocalizations; (4) head and body position; and (5) motor movements.
- Observing a child's cues can tell us how regulated/dysregulated they are in the moment, what they might be thinking or feeling, what they like/dislike, what they can/cannot tolerate, and what the child can/cannot do (where they are developmentally).

Practice

Promote use of targeted skills in professional practice.

What strategies have you used to become better at recognizing a child's cues? What did you actually do in the moment to recognize that child's cues? What was successful? What was challenging?

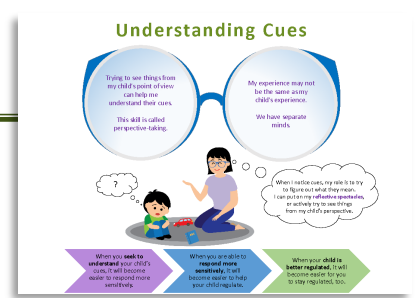
- Adopting a stance of wondering and being curious can help us recognize a greater number and variety of cues.
- When we remain curious and do not assume a child is going to react in a certain way to a particular experience, we may notice cues and learn information about a child that we would have otherwise missed.

Problem Solve

Encourage problem-solving regarding barriers to using the targeted skills.

Why might it be hard to recognize the cues of a young child who has a history of trauma?

- A child with a history of trauma might have unusual reactions to certain experiences in the present because they remind them of a past traumatic event.
- A child with a history of trauma may also show contradictory cues. For example, they may appear to want to be comforted, but then reject adults' attempt to comfort them.
- Looking for patterns when children have unusual reactions to certain experiences can help us anticipate what situations might dysregulate a child even if we don't understand why.




Link to Handout:

dpph.ucla.edu/seeds-handouts 

Key skill: Use perspective-taking to understand (or seek to understand) cues

 Use Sprouts PD Discussion Guide SLIDE DECK.

 Choose from the discussion questions below.
Estimate 5 – 15 minutes per question.

Connect

Build connections among participants.

**Think of a sensory experience that you enjoy, but many people do not.
How do you make sense of this difference?**

- Everyone has different sensory profiles (how we respond to sensory experiences).
- Our likes or dislikes of certain sensory stimuli may be partly influenced by positive or negative past experiences or memories we associate with those stimuli.

Reinforce

Reinforce and deepen understanding of key concepts and skills.

When seeking to understand a young child's cues, why is perspective-taking so important?

- Children's sensory and physiological experiences (for example, being hungry, thirsty, or tired) are primary for them, whereas these experiences are more in the background for us as adults.
- Young children rely on us to help them manage their sensory and physiological experiences, so it is important for us to try to understand what these experiences are like for them.
- Being curious can help us remember that our experience is separate from the child's. A child might be affected strongly by a sensory experience that we don't even notice.

Practice

Promote use of targeted skills in professional practice.

How have you used perspective-taking with a child with a possible history of trauma?

How did using perspective-taking affect your response?

- A child with a history of trauma might become dysregulated by experiences that most young children would find neutral or even positive.
Example: A child may hit another child who stands close to them because they perceive the child as a threat.
- Using perspective-taking can help us understand that the child's behavior might have been adaptive in a previous situation even if it isn't now. With this understanding, we can help them develop more adaptive ways to deal with dysregulating experiences.
Example: We might teach them a simple phrase like "I need more space."

Problem Solve

Encourage problem-solving regarding barriers to using the targeted skills.

Think of a child in your care who is engaging in a challenging behavior.

How might perspective-taking help you understand and respond to that behavior?

- Challenging behaviors may be the child's attempts to self-regulate. We can respond by helping them find another way to play in a more regulated way.
Example: At morning drop-off, if a child runs into the classroom and knocks over other children's toys, we can wonder if the child could be trying to connect with other children to manage their distress at separating from their parent. We might greet the child at the door and support them to do an activity that is regulating and connected to other children ("Let's go see what Anthony is playing...").

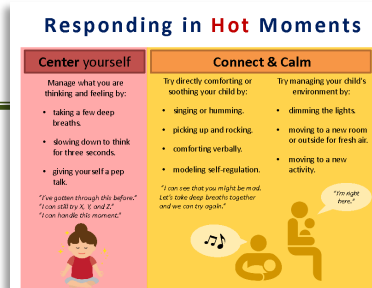




Key skill: Center yourself, then connect and provide calming experiences for the child (or adult) during a **hot** moment

Use Sprouts PD Discussion Guide SLIDE DECK.

Choose from the discussion questions below.
Estimate 5 – 15 minutes per question.



Link to Handout:
dpph.ucla.edu/seeds-handouts

Connect

Build connections among participants.

Think of a time recently when you were in a moderately **hot** moment, such as being stuck in traffic.

How did being in a **hot** moment affect your own behavior or thinking processes?

- Our thinking may be limited, and it may be difficult to consider different options for how we might manage the **hot** moment. We may respond reflexively rather than reflectively.
- Being in a **hot** moment can negatively affect decision-making and problem solving. Reflecting on how we sometimes behave in **hot** moments can help us have more patience when others (children or adults) respond with negative behaviors in **hot** moments.

Reinforce

Reinforce and deepen understanding of key concepts and skills.

It is common to skip the step of centering ourselves (for example, taking a breath, giving ourselves a quick pep talk) when we're trying to respond to a child in a **hot** moment.

Why do we often skip that step, and does it really make a difference if we do?

- We may feel a sense of urgency to respond. A dysregulated child may make us feel incompetent or powerless, so we respond quickly because those feelings are uncomfortable.
- Centering ourselves can slow us down, allow us to consider different options, and help us respond more empathically and effectively to a dysregulated child.

Practice

Promote use of targeted skills in professional practice.

What strategies have you used to center yourself and then connect with and provide calming experiences for a child who was having a **hot** moment?

What did you actually say and do in the moment to co-regulate with that child?

- Relying on what we know about a child: If the child loves to draw, we might grab some paper and a few markers. If the child loves when we read to them, we might grab their favorite book.
- Playing to our own personal strengths and interests: If we love singing, we might sing one of our favorite songs with the child. If we love the outdoors, we might try a simple nature activity with the child like smelling a flower or listening to a seashell.

Problem Solve

Encourage problem-solving regarding barriers to using the targeted skills.

One of your colleagues is having their own **hot** moment as they are trying to respond to a child who is throwing some blocks.

How might you provide some co-regulation to your colleague as they navigate this moment?


- Modeling centering ourselves first. *For example, take a slow, intentional, deep breath.*
- Connecting with the coworker and then sharing some calming and encouraging words. *For example, "You've got this," or even better, "We've got this."*





Key skill: Follow a child's lead in play by duplicating and elaborating to build the relationship in **cool** moments

 Use Sprouts PD Discussion Guide SLIDE DECK.

 Choose from the discussion questions below.
Estimate 5 – 15 minutes per question.

Responding in Cool Moments

In cool moments, you can build your relationship with your child by following their lead in play.

To follow your child's lead in play:

- **Observe.**
Take a moment to watch what your child is doing.
- **Copy and build.**
If your child is open to it, do something similar or build on what they are doing.
- **Narrate.**
Occasionally describe what your child is doing like a play-by-play announcer.



This foundation makes it easier to

Link to Handout:

dpbh.ucla.edu/seeds-handouts 

Connect

Build connections among participants.

Think of a time recently when you were “in sync” with someone during a **cool moment, professionally or personally. What did it feel like to be in sync with them?**

- Being in sync with someone can leave us feeling understood and regulated.
- Being in sync can build trust in a relationship, so we may be more inclined to turn to that person for co-regulation in a **hot** moment.

Reinforce

Reinforce and deepen understanding of key concepts and skills.

How can we use play to build a relationship and get “in sync” with a child?

- Behaving in ways that connect to and build on the child's behaviors.
- Aiming to be responsive to the child and having our interactions develop a back-and-forth rhythm. This rhythm can be regulating for both the child and us.
- Following the child's lead in play: We can start by observing only. Then we can move to duplicating only, adding in elaborating and narrating while still remaining connected to the child's play!

Practice

Promote use of targeted skills in professional practice.

Describe a recent moment when you followed a child's lead during a **cool moment.**

What did you actually say and do to follow the child's lead? How did the child respond?

- Following a child's lead typically involves slowing down and intentionally observing the child, then if the child seems receptive, duplicating (copying) and possibly elaborating (building) on what the child is doing.
- Children may show a range of reactions when we follow their lead, depending on their past experiences. Some children may seem pleased, some may not seem to notice, and some may seem wary. Over time, following a child's lead communicates that we view the child as important (“You matter to me”) and what the child is doing as meaningful.

Problem Solve

Encourage problem-solving regarding barriers to using the targeted skills.

Think of a recent example when you were trying to follow a child's lead but became “out of sync.”

How did you try to get back in sync, or what might you want to try next time?

- Slowing down and spending a moment observing the child's facial expressions, physical movements, and vocalizations can help us recognize and try to understand their cues.
- Going back to duplicating (copying) what the child is doing before trying to elaborate again.
- For some children, having an adult follow their lead may make them anxious (especially those with trauma). We can try observing the child from a little more distance, or try shortening our time interacting with them as we build up trust in the relationship.

