



# Greater Good in Education

SCIENCE-BASED PRACTICES FOR KINDER, HAPPIER SCHOOLS

## TAKE-HOME SKILL: SAVORING MOMENTS OF CONNECTION WITH KIDS

*"There is no such thing as a perfect parent. So just be a real one."*

—Sue Atkins

### OVERVIEW

Reflect on caring memories with your child to feel closer and foster greater personal well-being

### PLANNING FOR IT

#### WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- When you are feeling stressed
- If you are doubting your parenting/caregiving ability
- To strengthen your sense of connection with your child
- To increase your well-being
- If you need a “pick-me-up”

#### TIME REQUIRED

- 20 minutes

#### LEVEL

- Adult

#### MATERIALS

- N/A

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Parents/caregivers will:

- Reflect on a caring experience with their child

#### ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- Making Practices Culturally Responsive
- Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs
- Making a Practice Trauma-Informed

#### CHARACTER STRENGTHS

- Gratitude
- Self-Compassion

#### SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Relationship skills

#### MINDFULNESS COMPONENTS

- Focused Attention
- Open Awareness

### How to Do It

#### REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

To begin, take a minute to relax in a way that is most comfortable for you, such as engaging in deep breathing, mindfulness, or a grounding practice, like paying attention to the feeling of your feet on the floor.

#### INSTRUCTIONS

While there are many memories you create with your child, some of the most special are when things are at their best between you. You can harness the power of these meaningful memories by calling them to mind and savoring them. Not only does this feel good, but it also helps remind you of your ability to support and care for your child.

Start by bringing to mind a time when you felt really connected, close, or in sync with your child. For example, this can be a time when you felt joy while helping your child grow, when you showed up right when they needed you, or when you comforted, supported, soothed, or protected them. Focus on this single memory of a positive relationship experience.

Next, take about a minute for each of the following reflections.

1. Reflect on the sensory details of your memory. What did your child look like? What were they wearing? What were you wearing? What was the air like?
2. Reflect on the emotions of your memory. How were you feeling at that time? For example, did you feel excited, proud, calm, or relaxed? What physical sensations were you feeling in your body?
3. Reflect on the thoughts and meaning of your memory. What were you thinking during that time? For example, were you thinking about how your child really needed you at that moment?
4. Reflect on the significance your memory holds for your future. How close did you feel to your child at that time? How will it affect your relationship in the future?

Finally, take about a minute to let your mind wander in any way related to this memory. For example, you can think about things that came up for you during your earlier reflections or about how this memory is related to other relationships in your life.

#### REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- How do you feel after reflecting on this experience? What emotions are coming up for you?
- How might you extend this practice to other relationships or experiences in your life?

#### THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

##### EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Mothers (approximately half of whom were Latina) were randomly assigned to four-week guided programs: Some mothers savored a positive memory of feeling connected with their toddler, while others savored a positive individual experience. Compared to mothers who practiced personal savoring, mothers who practiced relational savoring felt greater positive emotions like gratitude and pride, and greater closeness to their child immediately after the program; they were also more sensitive to their children's cues three months later.

What's more, three months later, Latina mothers who worked on Savoring Moments of Connection With Kids continued to practice savoring more frequently and were better able to view themselves and their children as motivated by mental states—thoughts, feelings, and desires—and to understand their children's actions in light of their mental states, which are key to empathy.

##### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

While being a parent/caregiver can be a deeply meaningful and hopeful experience, some moments can be overwhelming. Daily [parenting hassles](#), like continually cleaning up the same

messes, difficulty getting privacy, or struggling with kids resisting bedtime, can accumulate and lead to tremendous amounts of stress. Without a reprieve, you can begin to feel despondent and question your competence as a parent.

On the flip side, positive emotions contribute to our well-being. People who practice savoring positive experiences tend to be [less depressed](#) and experience [more happiness](#). Remembering a positive experience that you had with your child can be especially helpful when you need a boost as a parent/caregiver. When you can hold on to feelings of connection with your child, they can become an enduring reservoir of positivity that you can dip into when you're under parenting stress. It may also help strengthen your relationship.

#### SOURCES

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