



DEAR PARENTS:

Congratulations! You have made an important choice to partner with your child to help them learn and talk about what they experience in social situations and build skills and confidence to more courageously and effectively engage with others. How you show up for them will have an impact on the way they engage when they visit Connection Zoo™.

Top 10 Tips for Engaging in Zoo Play with your Child:

Visit and Enjoy the Zoo Regularly.

The more you visit the zoo and reinforce talking openly about the animals, the more likely your child(ren) will develop a practice they can use throughout their life to more effectively manage worry or anxiety in social situations.

Create Special Connection Time.

When you explore Connection Zoo™ with your child, it is important that you put your devices away and minimize other distractions as much as possible, so you can be more present and able to really hear your child is sharing with you.

Respond vs. React.

A response is calmer and more thoughtful than an impulsive reaction, and can open the door to a healthier exchange that leads to trust and understanding. Listen to understand and then respond with statements like, "Thank you for sharing," "Help me understand" or "Tell me more."

Their Reality is Not Your Reality

How your child experiences the world may be very different from yours. Accept and honor what they tell you they feel and experience as true, and work hard to understand it from their point of view. It is important to not diminish what they are feeling with phrases like, "There is nothing to worry about," "You just need to relax," "I don't understand why you're so scared/worried/upset," or "Get over it."

Practice Patience and Flexibility.

Some days your child may want to tell you all about what they have experienced, and other days they may not. That is okay. Give your child encouragement and also space to choose when and how to share.

Practice Makes Progress.

We always hear, "Practice Makes Perfect," however, it is more helpful to approach this new practice with the belief that "Practice Makes Progress." This is about learning and growing, not achieving perfection.

Growth Happens Outside our Comfort Zone.

Discomfort is okay; in fact, it can create incredible opportunities for learning and growth. It's important that while keeping your child safe, you also allow them to feel some discomfort.

Be a Role Model.

Kids learn by watching us. Pay attention to the way you interact with your child(ren) and others, openly share your experiences with worry and anxiety and demonstrate how you talk about how you're feeling and what you're thinking.

Use with your whole family.

Everyone experiences worry, stress and anxiety sometimes. When everyone shares their stories, it normalizes the anxiety and allows family members to support each other with care and problem solving.

Celebrate Successes Big & Small.

Praise your child for effort not just results. Notice when there is progress of any kind and celebrate it together.

You've got this! Best wishes!