

Parent Emotion Socialization of Adolescents

The Direct Emotion Socialization Practices (PESA) coding system aims to assess parents' attempts to socialize their child's emotions through capturing parents' use of constructive or destructive comments or responses to their child's opinions, beliefs, feelings, and emotions. The DESP includes seven real-time, mutually exclusive codes: three to capture positive constructive responses, three to capture negative destructive responses, and one neutral code to capture all other interactions. The positive codes are Acknowledgement, Active Engagement, and Scaffolding, and are arranged such that Scaffolding is the most active and constructive, and Acknowledgement is the least active constructive response. The negative codes are Dismissing, Mild Rejection, and Firm Rejection, with Firm Rejection being the most active and destructive, and dismissing being the least active and destructive code.

Instructions

1. Coders will watch an interaction once before they commence coding.
2. Coders will then go over the interaction again until every second has been assigned a code.
 - a. One instance of a code (aside from no code) should start when a verbal statement or facial expression begins and end when that statement or expression ceases.
 - i. Facial expressions should only be coded if they have a clear onset and offset, function as communication with the child, and can clearly be categorized as positive or negative (i.e. sticking their tongue out).
 - b. In the case of a parent speaking for a long period of time, if the parent pauses for **three seconds or more** before continuing the time before and after that pause should be coded as separate instances.
 - c. Parents may switch quickly between codes within one period of speaking, and this should be coded if it is clear.
3. Only parent behaviours are to be coded.
 - a. This code focuses on parent *responses to* and *prompts about* their child's emotional expression and verbal statements but is not bound to child's expression and statements made within the recorded interaction. (E.g., a parent can affirm or deny something during the interaction that the child said in the car ride over.)
 - b. Context derived from prior moments in the interaction can be used to decide whether a parent's statement is positive or negative.
 - c. If a child is expressing more than one sentiment (e.g., their facial expression communicates one emotion, but they are verbalizing another), code the parent's response to either, even if the second sentiment is not addressed.
4. Priority rule: If two codes seem to be equally plausible, then the code recorded should follow these rules:
 - a. Positive takes priority over negative.
 - b. Active engagement takes priority over other positive codes, and mild rejection takes priority over other negative codes.

- c. If the parent response communicates both affirmation and denial (i.e., a disapproving tone of voice paired with an approving phrase) the code should capture what is **most clearly being communicated to the child**.
5. Once coded, the interaction should be reviewed to check for tonal consistencies (i.e., ensuring an instance of acknowledgment isn't said with the same tone of voice as an instance of dismissing), and to reconsider any instances where the coder was uncertain.

1. Scaffolding

An attempt to **guide** the child towards a new perspective in order to help further both parent's and child's understanding of the child's opinions, beliefs, feelings, and emotions, and/or **work towards a solution to problems** (when relevant), while being open and respectful, and allowing the child to maintain autonomy.

Cues:

- Challenging or probing questions that elicit new information/insights to the child
 - These questions are typically phrased in such a way that communicates that the parent is leading the child to the “correct” answer.
- Offering/explaining **new or alternative perspectives** to the child including their own
- Offering relevant anecdotes/stories/hypothetical situations to the child that **challenge the child's perspective** or help the child understand an alternative perspective
- Offering solutions to problems expressed by the child

Examples:

- “Could it be possible that your sister gets that way because she feels ignored by you?”
- “You say you don't like that game, but last time we played you were laughing a lot.”
- “What do you think we can do about it?”

2. Active Engagement

Responding to the child's opinions, beliefs, feelings, and emotions in a way that is **accepting and validating** and seeks to further parent's understanding but not the child's understanding. Active Engagement communicates that the parent is listening, is on the same page as the child, or is trying to be.

Cues:

- Paraphrasing or repeating
- Asking questions to elicit information about the child's opinions, beliefs, feelings, and emotions
- Providing examples of a past experience to gauge similarity and further parent understanding
- ask about or help define/clarify emotions to further parent understanding
- explicitly validating statements that clearly communicate parent agreement or approval

Note: if a statement seems ambiguous as to whether it is Active Engagement or Scaffolding apply the following question: “is the parent seeking information for themselves (Active Engagement) or proposing new information for the child (Scaffolding)?” Another way to think of this is whether the parent is soliciting info about the present/past (Active Engagement) or is trying to move the child toward a better future (Scaffolding).

Examples:

- “What do you like about it?”
- “I’ve noticed you two don’t get along”
- “It looks like that’s really upsetting for you.”
- “Is it because it’s unfair?”
- “So what I hear you saying is...”
- “You know what, I think you’re right”
- “Oh, so is this like that time when you...?”

3. Acknowledgement

Responding to the child’s opinions, beliefs, feelings, and emotions in a passive, affirming manner without validating, accepting, or scaffolding. Typically, short simple responses to communicate that the parent is listening, but do not involve information about the parent’s perspective beyond agreement.

Cues:

- Simple acknowledging statements
- Nodding to communicate agreement (quick and continuous)
- Comments to encourage communication

Note: acknowledging responses are typically short with few words but can involve more words or a full sentence provided it does not actually validate or dismiss the child’s expressed opinions, beliefs, feelings, and emotions.

Examples:

- “mhm”
- “yeah”
- “continue”
- “go on”
- “That’s nice”

Non-Examples:

- “Um...”
- “Maybe...”
- Slow nodding that is not clearly up and down (i.e., is ambiguous in meaning)

4. No Code

Any moment in the interaction that does not affirm or deny a child’s opinions, beliefs, feelings, and emotions expressed during or prior to the conversation. The absence of any other code.

Cues:

- Child speaking
- A parent expressing an opinion that has nothing to do with a child's expressed opinion
- Questions or comments that serve to clarify what they are talking about (e.g., "who was driving that day?")
- A parent discussing their own opinions without reference to the child's opinions

5. Dismissing

Not responding to, acknowledging, or passing judgement on a child's communicated opinions, beliefs, feelings, and emotions, or **passively** communicating discontent.

Cues:

- Ignoring the child
- Explicitly changing the subject instead of responding to the child ("let's talk about something else...")
 - if the parent waits 3 seconds and then changes the subject or it seems like a natural end to conversation it should not be coded as dismissing
- Shaking their head to communicate disagreement
- Facial expression of disbelief or displeasure that does not co-occur with other comments
- Interrupting the child to redirect the conversation (not agreeing or accidentally speaking at the same time)

Examples:

- "let's find a different topic"
- "mmmmmm"
- "Okay" or "mmhmm" or "sure" (said with sarcasm)
- "Anyways."

6. Mild Rejection

Any attempt to **downplay, minimize, or manipulate (i.e., covertly control) a child's opinions, beliefs, feelings, and emotions** without communicating any consideration for the opinion/belief/feeling/emotion.

Cues:

- Questioning the child with a tone of disbelief or disagreement ("is that *really* how you feel?")
- Downplaying a child's opinions, beliefs, feelings, or emotions in an attempt to convince them otherwise ("I don't think it's as bad as you're saying")

- Suggesting alternative perspectives including their own without affirming the one expressed by the child
- Suggesting alternative perspectives that are obviously not favourable to the child
- Responding defensively or forcefully debating with the child without acknowledging the child's point (Mom: "you're always on your phone" [FR]; Child: "Well so are you!"; Mom: "that's different, I need it for work" [MR])
- Identifying problems with the child's ideas or perspectives without working towards a solution

Notes:

- When deciding if a question and/or an alternative perspective is constructive (Scaffolding or Active Engagement) or Mild Rejection, context should be used to assess if the parent is dismissing a previously expressed opinion when the overall tone is positive/warm/open, but a negative/Firm/defensive tone indicates the statement is Mild Rejection.
- When deciding if a question and/or an alternative perspective is constructive (Scaffolding or Active Engagement) or Mild Rejection pay attention to whether the parent has acknowledged the child's perspective at all. If a child's statement is questioned and/or an alternative perspective is suggested three or more times in close succession (i.e., a succession of Active Engagement and/or Scaffolding instances that follow such a pattern) then the third statement should be coded as mild rejection.

Examples:

- "I don't know about that"
- "Well would you rather I just take your phone away?"
- Child: "I don't like that game." Parent: "Everyone I know really enjoys it."
- Child: "It would be cool to live in the city." Parent: "Really?? Cities are so crowded..."
- "I don't like when you play video games."

7. Firm Rejection

A denial of the child's opinions, beliefs, feelings, or emotions that communicates that the parent believes that they are absolutely untrue, the child is being ridiculous, or are indicative of a character flaw.

Cues:

- A statement of disagreement with the child
- Mocking or mimicking the child
- Pointing out character flaws in the child related to their opinions, beliefs, feelings, or emotions

- Communicating contempt for the child or their actions (“I *hate* it when...)
- A refusal to talk about the topic further
- Reassuring statements that limit discussion of the topic and run counter to the child’s opinions, beliefs, feelings, or emotions often by using a firm tone (“everything will be fine.”)
- Emotional directives (“don’t get mad at me.”)
- Often made obvious with a firm or harsh tone of voice, communicating contempt, control, or certainty that the child is wrong

Notes:

- A parent can be rejecting while still display warmth. (“You’re so silly.”)
- When deciding if a statement is Mild Rejection or Firm Rejection ask the following question: “is the parent trying to convince the child that they are wrong (Mild Rejection) or are they stating that the child is wrong (Firm Rejection)?” (E.g., “that doesn’t make sense to me,” vs “that doesn’t make sense.”) If this question cannot be answered the statement should be coded as Mild Rejection.

Examples:

- “That doesn’t make sense.”
- “I did not do that.”
- “Let’s agree to disagree.”
- “You’re always on your phone being lazy.”
- “You’re out of control with the video games”
- “You’re so silly.”
- “Playing video games makes you craazyyyy”