



	Physical Touch (x 10)	Child Led Activity or Parallel & Present Time (15+ min.)	Sincere Compliment or Acknowledgement (x 5)
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			
	Notes: _____ _____ _____ _____	Notes: _____ _____ _____ _____	Notes: _____ _____ _____ _____

## Attachment Challenge

Parenting children with attachment challenges can be incredibly difficult. Finding ways to connect with kids who have trouble trusting adults may leave parents feeling hurt, angry and defeated. Kids who have survived trauma, neglect and abuse require parents willing to be present and engaging, even when the child isn't readily responsive or able to reciprocate. The Attachment Challenge is a way to be mindful of a child's need for positive interactions that aren't contingent upon good behavior.

Appropriate physical touch is healing for traumatized children. For kids able to tolerate or accept physical touch, the Attachment Challenge calls for 10 instances of contact daily. Hugs, hand holding, sitting on a parent's lap (if appropriate) or brushing a child's hair can be highly nurturing experiences. Games allowing non-competitive/non-aggressive physical contact can also provide chances for healthy touch. For highly sensitive or reactive children, parents will need to be more creative- giving their child a manicure or asking their teen to assist them with the clasp on a bracelet can facilitate safe physical contact. Simply sitting next to a child as they watch TV or play a video game may also gently initiate touch.

*Parent Tip: It's often very difficult for hurt kids to accept physical affection, particularly if they did not initiate contact. If this is true of your child, you may want to start with 5 instances of daily contact.*

Spending time together in child led activity is integral to creating safe, loving relationships for most traumatized children. During

this time, caregivers should allow the child to choose all activities and assume the role of an active observer. If your child is very reactive, you may need to simply be parallel and present with him/her. Sitting close to your child while she is playing Legos may be all the intimacy she can currently tolerate. Begin there.

*Parent Tip: True child led activity means adults ONLY intervene with directives in situations where safety is compromised.*

Children with trauma histories often have low self-esteem, deep shame and feelings of inadequacy and unworthiness. These children need correction and teaching, but also a great deal of praise. Although it may be difficult to praise children with behavior issues, the Attachment Challenge asks parents to provide 5 instances of sincere praise or acknowledgement daily.

*Parent Tip: Kids who have lived through trauma have often developed a highly sensitive "lie detector" and are able to sniff out insincere compliments. Working to find the good in challenging children is as helpful for parents as it is for kids.*

There will be times the Attachment Challenge seems impossible. Give yourself (and your child) lots of grace. Self-care is a necessary component of parenting traumatized children. Seek as much self-care and support from those around you as possible while completing the Attachment Challenge. You can do it!