Ten Hot Tips for Mediating Vignettes to Assure the Best Incredible Years® Participant Learning

Carolyn Webster-Stratton

Overview

The purpose of showing Incredible Years® vignettes in teacher and parent training groups is to model key interaction skills and to promote participant self-reflection, group discussion, problem solving, and role play practice experiences. Many of the vignettes represent positive examples of parent-child or teacher-child interactions while others show interactions that could be improved upon. It is a guiding principle of the program that there are many ways of parenting and teaching effectively, so vignettes are meant to stimulate discussions rather than to be a prescriptive recipe for parenting or teaching. The underlying theory of video methods in training workshops is based on the work of Bandura's modeling, social learning and self-efficacy theories (Bandura, 1977; 1982). Research shows that watching video models of others in common situations is a powerful teaching tool.

Based on my early research evaluating the effects of video modeling in conjunction with trained leader-lead group discussion and practices we found in randomized control trials that this method of training was superior to self-administered video (with no group discussion) and to group discussion alone (without video modeling) (Webster-Stratton et al., 1988; 1989; 1990). I learned that video modeling plus a collaborative group discussion and experiential practice approach produced higher program outcome effect sizes and more sustainable behavior results at 1-year follow-up. While therapists are usually verbally oriented, it seems clear to me that participants learn a great deal more from observational and performance-based training methods than from didactic teaching or lectures. Participants watching and modeling how others interact and IY group leaders using these video interactions to trigger participant reflection, problem solving and practices is a key learning process to the success of the Incredible Years programs.

In the IY program showing the vignettes is an active and therapeutic process. As participants view vignettes, group leaders will lead discussions that help participants to make sense of what they see in the vignettes, pick out key points that will become the "take home" messages for the content area, and help participants think about how these key ideas apply to their own interactions with their children or students. These conversations will include ways that strategies are adjusted to meet children's developmental levels, the cultural context of the family or classroom, individual parent or teacher styles or preferences, and the goals that parents and teachers have for the children. There are a number of video mediating strategies that will enhance the group leaders' effectiveness in using these vignettes. This document is designed to review ten key tips to effective video mediation strategies.

Tip One: Select core vignettes and pace the number of vignettes you show strategically

Group leaders will not have time to show all vignettes listed in a session or workshop protocol. For parent 2-hour weekly groups, leaders generally can show 6-9 vignettes depending on the length of the vignettes. For teacher one-day 7 hour workshops, group leaders will show approximately 20 vignettes. The session or workshop protocols indicate some core vignettes that are selected to be shown to all groups because they illustrate key principles that apply across age and developmental level. Other vignettes may be more relevant for a particular age group (toddler, preschool, or primary grades). Depending on the program, core and specific age group vignettes are indicated with an asterix or a † symbol. Newer group leaders will

begin by showing core vignettes. As group leaders become more familiar with the programs, they should become familiar with all vignettes, to that they can select vignettes that are particularly relevant for particular families or teachers or children. In groups where participants find the topic material new, unfamiliar, or confusing, group leaders will want to show more vignettes to help them understand the key concepts, to see how to use a particular strategy, and to appreciate how the children respond to this approach.

When choosing additional or alternative vignettes consider the following:
• participants' goals and difficulties
• participants' understanding, knowledge, and prior familiarity of the content and principles being taught
• vignettes that represent the developmental level of children that the participants are interacting with
• vignettes that have children with temperaments and development similar to those of the participants' children or students
• vignettes that represent the culture of the families or teachers

It is important to realize that the participants' verbal and cognitive understanding of the strategy being discussed does not necessarily translate into actual behavioral change. When participants do the practices, group leaders will be able to see how much behavioral learning is actually occurring. Every group is different, and the pacing and number of vignettes shown will be influenced by each person's background education, knowledge and family culture as well as the child's developmental and behavioral problems. This "tailoring" of video vignettes, discussion and practices to the participant's goals and needs is a key element of the Incredible Years therapeutic approach.

Tip Two: Mediating vignettes & narrations with pauses to assure participant focus and engagement
The video vignettes are not used by group leaders in a passive way like showing a movie, rather group leaders pause both the narration and the actual vignette several times. For example, for each new topic in an IY program there is an introductory video narration that summarizes the key interaction strategies and child developmental milestones that will be explored in the parent group session or teacher workshop day. It is important that the group leader pause these introductory narrations at various points to ask questions about the content and word definitions used, to explore what participants are understanding, and to see if they have questions about the information provided. For example, they might ask, "*What does the narrator mean by the word self-regulation or school readiness?*" or, in order to be sure the participants see the relevance of the concept for their children they might ask, "*Do you agree with the rationale the narrator makes? How does this approach to emotional coaching address your goals for your child?*" Group leaders can also use this discussion to explore whether participants have concerns about how the content fits with their current philosophy of parenting or teaching. A lot of content is covered in these introductory narrations, and pausing for discussion allows the participants to digest the information, stay engaged, and not tune out if it doesn't make sense or conflicts with their ideas.

After the introductory video narration is finished, the video is paused again so that the group leader can introduce the vignette to be shown and to focus the participants' attention on what they will see and what the leader wants them to look for. It is a group leader principle that each vignette should have a brief introduction. Sometimes the leader sets the context by sharing something about the child in the vignette, for example, his/her age, temperament, developmental level, or behavioral challenges. Other times, the group leader may share something about the situation, or the interaction that is going to be shown. Or, the group leader may challenge the group to look for a particular strategy to be used. This orientation to the vignette should be brief, but will give group participants a context and keep them focused on what to look for. For example, a group leader says, "*In this next vignette you'll see how a teacher (or parent) is using the ignoring strategy with a boy who is argumentative and defiant. Think about what makes her approach effective. Think about what the child is learning from this approach.*"

Tip Three: Facilitating Discussion About the Vignettes
During and after vignettes, group leaders ask questions to encourage participants to share what they have noticed so far, what makes the model parent or teacher's approach effective, or how they might handle the situation differently or more effectively. For example, the group leader asks, "*What was effective about*

this teacher or parent's ignoring? Why was it important she not give eye contact or respond to this boy's defiant attitude?" Help participants think about the benefits of this approach for the child behavior learning. For example, *"Do you think that the student's strategy for getting attention from the teacher worked? What does the child learn from this teacher's response and modeling?"* Based on participants' responses, group leaders will ask other questions that explore different aspects of the vignette. The manual provides sample questions for group leaders to use, however group leaders will also develop their own questions to tailor the discussion to the participants' particular goals. There are spaces in the manual for group leaders to record their favorite questions.

Rich discussions often happen based on small moments in the vignettes. Always pause during and after every vignette to have a discussion and allow for reflection and questions. If the vignette is worth showing, it's worth discussion. (Discussions don't always have to be long.) Some vignettes have built-in pauses—always take advantage of those and stop the video to discuss what has just happened. Pause longer vignettes two to three times through the vignette and ask participants to discuss what they saw or are thinking or feeling. It is also useful to pause at a critical moment in the middle of a vignette and ask, *"what would you do next?"* Sometimes these responses to a paused vignette can lead to a role play practice for how the participant would handle the situation before actually seeing how the vignette plays out. Then when the vignette is continued parents are watching for the things that were practiced and are more reflective and aware of the strengths in the parent-child interactions being modeled. It is important to continue to show the whole vignette as the longer vignettes provide modeling of a parenting or teaching style and relationship building as well as specific management skills.
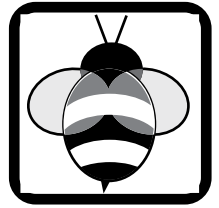
Tip Four: Identification of key principles

Throughout the program, group leaders will be helping participants to identify key interaction and behavior management principles. These may be ideas that apply to almost all interactions (e.g., the differential attention principle, or modeling principle, or calm down principle) or they may be ideas that apply to a specific topic (e.g. use labeled praise). The goal is to listen carefully to the participants' reflections and discussions and to pull out a key principle. With strategic group leader questions the vignettes will almost always elicit key ideas. For example, a group leader may ask, *"What do you notice about what this teacher or parent is paying attention to in that interaction?"* Once the group leader hears the principle, s/he will highlight it, label it as a principle or key concept, and have the co-leader record it on the flip chart using the participant's name for the principle. This should be a deliberate process. *"Oh, Katherine you got one of our key principles. Let's write that down."* Then you and the group can think of how to word it. *"So, what shall we call it—it's Katherine's principle of ignoring a behavior without ignoring the child completely."* By drawing attention to the key concept/principles, group leaders are helping to make this an idea that is overarching—and can apply to a lot of different situations. Once a principle has been identified, the group leader can refer back to it with other vignettes, use it at the end of the session summary, and notice when participants are using examples of the principles in their own interactions. Moreover, by using the participant's name with the principle, the participant's insights and expertise are highlighted, thereby increasing their confidence and self- efficacy. The group leader session or workshop protocols provide ideas for some key principles and the refrigerator or blackboard notes also provide other examples of some of the key principles that group leaders might listen for.

Don't get too caught up in worrying about whether something is a principle. If it seems important, call it a principle! A principle should not use psychological jargon but can be worded exactly as the participant states it. For example, a participant commented in one group that when he saw the person on the vignette ignoring her child's tantrum she looked like a Buddha, she was so incredibly calm. The group leader replied, "Oh Peter you get the Buddha principle, the importance of staying calm when ignoring." Later this group leader began to give out Buddha awards for parents that reported their ability to stay calm in a difficult situation.

Tip Five: Apply the principles to real life interactions

Once group leaders have helped participants discover a key relationship or behavior management principle, then the leader helps them think about how they can use this strategy to address their goals for themselves or their children or classrooms. For example, the group leader says, *"So you have seen the importance*

of staying calm when your child is oppositional. What calm down strategies do you use when your child misbehaves?" At this point the leader may help the group to break out into dyad buddies or a group brainstorm to come up with a list of calm down strategies.

Examples of other questions that explore participant reflection on how they will use the strategy at home or in the classroom with a particular child include: *"How do you see yourself using this approach with your child to address your goal of reducing your child's anxiety or lack of social skills?"* or, *"What do you see the barriers to being able to use this approach with your child or in your setting?"* Often these reflections and discussions will lead to spontaneous practices based on the participants' ideas or suggestions, or to address potential barriers or resistance. This encouragement of participant self-reflection, problem solving along with practice exercises is an important element of the strength of the IY participant learning process.

Tip Six: Avoid repetitive questions and answers; instead, probe deeper to explore a participant's responses to group leader questions

Often participants will comment on a positive strategy they see in the vignette. For example, a participant might say, *"The teacher or parent on the vignette is trying to redirect the boy at the same time she's ignoring his tantrum."* The group leader responds by being enthusiastic about this observation and pursues this idea. The group leader responds, *"Nice observation, do you think this is still giving the child too much attention? How does the attention principle work here ~ how long do you ignore before you use a distraction?"* These questions and discussions help to clarify the rationale for the ignoring strategy. Helping participants understand the rationale for a strategy is important to helping them develop confidence in using an alternative behavior change strategy to what they typically would do. Some good questions that get at helping participants understand the rationale for chosen strategy are, *"What's the benefit of that approach for this child? Why does it work?" "What do you think the teacher or parent's goal is?" "Why do you think the parent made that choice?"*

Tip Seven: Manage resistance to vignettes with understanding and provide rationale for their use

Sometimes when group participants first see the video vignettes, they respond with complaints that some of the vignettes seem outdated in terms of person's clothing or hairstyles. In some cases participants may feel that the people in the vignettes don't represent their reality in terms of classroom or home setting, cultural context, particular interaction styles, or diagnosis of the child, or developmental levels. Newer group leaders can feel discouraged by this and be tempted not to show these vignettes, may try hard to convince the participants that the vignettes are good, or may undermine the vignettes by agreeing with the participants that they are not useful. Although the vignettes can be a challenging part of the program to implement, they are a core part of the treatment and showing them is important to maintaining fidelity to the program.

As group leaders learn how to mediate the vignettes, resistance from the group usually disappears. Group leaders can respond to this feedback by acknowledging that some of the vignettes are indeed old, show American families, and may not look like their children, families, or classroom. The group leader explains the rationale for using vignettes, reminding the group that the vignettes are for them to think about, analyze, and react to, and not necessarily to copy.

As group leaders gain experience with participant reactions to vignettes, it is common for resistance to the vignettes to diminish. It takes skill, practice and consultation for the group leader to learn to how draw out principles from the vignettes and tailor them to the individual needs of parents, teachers and children. Below are suggestions for responding to resistance to the vignettes.

When group participants do not like a particular vignette of a teacher or parent's style or classroom, the group can still learn from watching the vignette. Remember that the goal is to be collaborative and to identify key interaction principles. So if a teacher participant says, *"I don't agree with that—she shouldn't be standing over that student like that—she's smothering her."* The group leader can respond with, *"So, I hear an important principle here—you're really tuned into how your body position might affect the child-teacher relationship. Let's look at this a bit more and write down your principle. Could you show us how you would place yourself*

if you were that teacher?" This approach identifies the key idea and then focuses the teacher or parent on how to make the interaction more effective. So, rather than trying to make the participant like what she sees on the vignette, the group leader facilitates a discussion about a key interaction principle.

If group participants are bothered by the cultural context, language or by the classroom or home setting, the group leader can acknowledge these differences. Once the principle has been identified, participants can be asked to think how the principle would apply in their own settings. For example, a teacher group leader might first say, *"So, this doesn't look much like your classroom."* Or, a parent group leader says, *"so in your home you don't have toys like this this."* Then the group leader might say: *"I agree that this setting is different from yours. Let's first think about what this teacher's goal is. What is she trying to accomplish?"* Or *"I hear you saying that these toys are not something you would use? What toys does your child like to play with?"* Once the group leader has gotten a principle then s/he says, *"So, this teacher is trying to pay more attention to the children in her group that are listening to her and she's trying not to give that wiggly boy any attention. She's using the attention principle to try to increase the positive behavior and reduce the negative behavior. How would that apply to your circle times or with your children? What behaviors could you attend to and what could you ignore?"*

Tip Eight: Use vignettes to trigger role play practices

Sometimes a discussion about a vignette can lead to a spontaneous role play practice. For example, in the scenario above with the parent who said she did not have toys like those shown on the video vignette the parent group the leader can reply, "so how can you bring about this kind of parent-child interaction with other things than toys in your home?" After discussion, the leader can set up a practice by saying, "lets practice using some pots and pans and water to see if we can use this child-directed and narrative language principle with things other than toys."
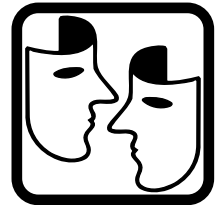
It is also useful for a group leader to pause a vignette and ask parents or teachers to think about and then role play what they would do next in that situation. Afterwards, the group can watch the rest of the vignette and discuss any differences in their role play versus the one on the vignette. Sometimes the participants do a better job!

When parents or teachers feel a vignette is not effective, it can be effective to have them replay the vignette in a live role play using what they feel to be a more effective response. Role plays or practices that are set up to demonstrate participants' ideas, suggestions and experiences help participants resolve different viewpoints in regard to a vignette and build their confidence.

Tip Nine: Use Live Modeling as well as Video Modeling

Both of these modeling methods are key to participant learning and behavior change. I recommend that vignettes shown and discussed are followed by live modeling of a related scenario in the large group. Group participants are chosen to demonstrate first the parent or teaching skill that has been modeled on the vignette. Suggestions for improvements derived from the group discussion can be incorporated into these practices. Next these practices are tailored to show how the behavior management or coaching principle used would be different for a toddler versus preschooler or early school age child, or for a child with limited language, or difficult temperament, or delayed play level. Following these large group role play practices, participants break up into dyads or triads to practice the modeled skills that most appropriate for the target child they are concerned about. During this time the group leaders can give personal feedback to dyads and help make sure that the strategy is tailored appropriately.

Another advantage of the live modeling approach is that if the group leader does not have a video vignette that reflects the particular participant's issue with a child, s/he can ask the parent to model either the child's behavior or response or their own response and other parents in the group can try out possible solutions based on their learning of the behavior management and relationship principles. These live modeling practices are mediated in the same way as the video vignettes with pause of actions for reflection and sugges-

tions followed by replays according to the feedback. I even use a Ready-Set-Action clapboard to signal the start of the practice and adds fun to the practice.

Tip Ten: Take advantage of consultations from accredited mentors or trainers

It is not possible to cover everything about IY program delivery in one 3-day workshop. Mediating video vignettes and setting up role play practices is tricky. For new group leaders this training can continue via consultations via Skype calls, or in-person workshops, or video reviews. During in-person consultation days, group leaders share videos of their group or workshop sessions. More experienced group leaders often reflect that as they have become more familiar and comfortable with the vignettes and they notice that they are no longer hearing participant complaints about vignettes! The objective is to use the vignettes to help participants discern the key principles of child-directed play and coaching interactions, using praise and incentives, effective proactive behavior management, or key child development milestones and how to apply these principles in their unique situation or setting with their particular child.

Having said that, it's not uncommon for teachers and parents to talk about trying something just like one of the people on the video. One father in a parent group commented, *"I saw that video of the father making a fort with his children in their living room and I thought I would never to do that. How weird for a father to do that. But I decided to try it anyway at home and I've never had so much fun with my children."* We also hear parents or teachers watch a vignette and say: *"That's me. I do that."*

Using these tips for mediating video vignettes will not only enhance your enjoyment of using them as a collaborative teaching tool but also increase their effectiveness at bringing about cognitive, emotional and behavioral change in participants. Moreover, using this collaborative group-based problem-solving approach enhances participants' confidence, reduces their stress and promotes a supportive network of teachers and parents.

USE VIDEOTAPES IN A COLLABORATIVE WAY
TO ENHANCE TEACHING

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