

**Introducing the Strengthening Families™
Protective Factors:
A “Speed Dating” Exercise**

Developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy

Purpose

The Strengthening Families™ (SF) Protective Factors “Speed Dating” exercise is designed to introduce participants to the five SF protective factors through several brief self-reflection and sharing activities.

This exercise may be used in two contexts:

- as a component of staff training on the SF Protective Factors framework
- with clients to encourage them to examine how their early experiences may influence their current thoughts, values, and behaviors.

Trainer Preparation

1. Based on the number of participants, set up two (2) rows of chairs facing each other.
2. Decide how many rounds participants will engage in.
 - Participants should engage in a minimum of two (2) and a maximum of five (5) rounds.
 - NOTE: Each round represents one of the Strengthening Families protective factors.

General Directions

1. Half of the participants should sit along one row, the other half along the other row.
2. “Partners” should be close enough so their knees are almost touching.
3. Begin with a very brief introduction about the exercise.
4. Conducting the rounds in the order listed is strongly recommended.

General Directions, cont.

4. The order of the rounds and respective protective factors addressed are:
 - Social connections
 - Parental resilience
 - Knowledge of parenting & child development
 - Concrete support in times of need
 - Social & emotional competence of children
5. Allow time for and solicit reflections at the end of the exercise.

Directions to Participants

1. You will have _____ rounds of “speed dating”, so you will speak with _____ different people.
2. Each round is 4 minutes, 2 minutes per person; you will get a 2-minute notice when to switch.
3. In every round, introduce yourself to your new partner by stating:
 - your whole name
 - what you like to be called, if different

Directions, continued

4. At the end of a round, the participants in one row will shift one seat to the right; the participants in the other row will not move.
5. At the end of all rounds, please share:
 - Your perceptions—good or bad—about this exercise
 - What you learned from participating in this exercise

Round 1: Social Connections

After introducing yourself, you have 2 minutes to answer these questions:

- *How important were social connections – friends, older adults, teams, religious celebrations, groups, and clubs – for you growing up?*
- ***For Staff:*** *How does this affect your current work?*
- ***For Clients:*** *How does this affect you today?*

Round 2: Parental Resilience

After introducing yourself, you have 2 minutes to answer these questions:

- *Remembering back to your childhood or youth, can you recall instances where your parent or parent figure showed resilience (being able to manage things) in the face of adversity?*
- ***For Staff:*** *How does this affect your current work?*
- ***For Clients:*** *How does this affect you today?*

Round 3: Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

After introducing yourself, you have 2 minutes to answer these questions:

- *Remembering back to your childhood or youth, what is the most important lesson you learned about being a good parent?*
- ***For Staff:*** *How does this affect your current work?*
- ***For Clients:*** *How does this affect you today?*

Round 4: Concrete Support in Times of Need

After introducing yourself, you have 2 minutes to answer these questions:

- *How important was having the basic necessities needed to survive (e.g., adequate food & shelter) to you and your family as you were growing up?*
- ***For Staff:*** *How does this affect your current work?*
- ***For Clients:*** *How does this affect you today?*

Round 5: Social and Emotional Competence of Children

After introducing yourself, you have 2 minutes to answer these questions:

- *How did your parent, or another significant adult in your life, influence the ideas and feelings you had about yourself when you were growing up?*
- ***For Staff:*** *How does this affect your current work?*
- ***For Clients:*** *How does this affect you today?*

Reflection Questions

- What are your perceptions—good or bad—about this exercise?
- What did you learn from participating in this exercise?