

The Role of a Supporter Information Sheet



Thank you for agreeing to serve as a **supporter** for a child. Your role is not just important, it's essential. You reinforce the parents' efforts and provide the child with a consistent, supportive presence. Below are clear guidelines for being most effective in this role.

Your Role As A Supporter



- **Be a Positive and Encouraging Presence**

- Your role is to offer support when they are struggling, not discipline or correct their behavior,

Here are some examples of what this sounds like:

"Hi Ryan, I know you're having trouble treating Mom and Dad how they should be treated. I care about them, and I care about you. What can I do to help you?"

"Hi, Emily, it's Aunt Christina. I know you've been having difficulty getting angry and breaking things when you're not getting what you want. What can I do to help you?"

"Hi Jackson, I heard you're having a hard time getting to school today. I know this is hard when you're feeling anxious, and you can do this. You've done hard things before and were successful. What can I do to help you?"

- Be a calm, predictable, and caring figure in their life.
- Please praise and encourage when the child makes positive choices, no matter how small.
- Remind them that you are here for them.



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Your Role with the Child



- **Reinforce the Parents' Message, Not Compete with It**
 - If the child complains about their parents, listen with empathy but do not take sides.
 - constructively redirect their frustration:
 - Example: *"I hear you're upset, and I know your parents want the best for you. Maybe we can think of a way to work through this together."*
 - Remind the child that their parents act out of love and commitment to their well-being.
- **Offer Emotional Support Without Enabling Negative Behavior**
 - Be a safe person the child can talk to, but do not encourage blaming, victimization, or avoidance of responsibility.
 - If the child shares struggles, acknowledge their feelings and gently encourage problem-solving.
 - Example: *"I understand this is hard for you."*
- **Please don't take it personally if they don't want to talk with you. They likely feel ashamed of their poor behavior or poor treatment of their family. You can still talk, even if they don't respond to you. Texting also works fine.**



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What You Should Not Do



- Do not discipline or enforce consequences.** That is the parent's role, and your involvement in discipline can undermine the parents' authority.
- Do not argue or try to convince the child to behave differently.** The goal is to model calmness and support, not engage in debates.
- Do not take sides against the parents.** Even if the child complains, your role is to support the family's efforts, not sympathize with resistance.
- Do not try to "fix" or change the child's behavior. Please avoid playing "armchair therapist".** Your job is to offer presence and encouragement, not to solve their problems for them. Please refrain from asking "Why" questions or "How did that make you feel?"
- Do not get into lecturing or shaming.** They likely already feel ashamed that you know about their poor behavior. "Less is more" with kids when trying to convey a message.
- Do not allow yourself to be manipulated.** If the child tries to get you to take their side against their parents, stay neutral and gently redirect them.

Your presence in this role is invaluable. You help create a strong support system for the child and their family. Thank you for playing such a vital part in this process!

