

PIP Introduction

Welcome to PIP! PIP is a unique program that has been serving parents for 3 years in Austin and over 30 years in Seattle. We provide community-based programs that help parents meet the challenges of parenting through mutual support and shared information. Research and experience show that what new parents need more than anything is peer support – the ability to share experiences, information, and resources with other new parents. Research tells us that being in a group with other parents:

* decreases the isolation that new parents face
* increases parenting skills, knowledge, and confidence
* provides emotional nourishment, guidance, access to resources, and role modeling
* enhances the couple relationship
* decreases parent stress and anxiety
* normalizes the early parenting experience
* enhances a child’s school performance

PIP groups help parents develop “parent wisdom,” the internal confidence that makes you the “expert” about your own child. This wisdom develops over time and comes from within. It is our goal to provide a structured, supportive, and informative environment where these strengths can grow.

**Format of PIP meetings:**

We have two hours for each meeting.

* **Sharing** – we will start the group with time for sharing. This is an opportunity to share both the highs and lows for the past week.
* **Baby Time –** we may spend some time on songs or games for the babies.
* **Break** – a chance for informal socializing, and connecting one-on-one with other parents. The hosting family typically provides a simple snack.
* **Topic Discussion** – the first few topics are pre-planned, but then we will decide as a group which topics you would like to cover for the remaining weeks. Your facilitator may choose to have one or two guest speakers to enhance the topic discussions, depending on availability, but many PIP Groups do not have any speakers.

**There are a few guidelines for the meetings:**

1. **Mutual respect shown for all** – People have varying views on how to parent, and PIP meetings offer a safe, comfortable environment where people should be able to share their parenting styles without being judged. PIP believes that there is not just one right way to parent a child, and that we’re all doing the best we can as parents.
2. **You have the right to pass** –We encourage you to share your experiences (even the worrisome ones), because we know that speaking your worries out loud sometimes makes them easier to bear, and allows others to support you. However, you can always choose not to share.
3. **Confidentiality** – Please don’t share specific member information outside of your Group.
4. **No Side Talking** – Of course some side talking may occur while you are attending to your child, but it is important that parents not engage in side talking with each other while another parent is speaking so that everyone can be heard.
5. **Put Phones Away –** Unplug for the time you are in your PIP meeting. Put your phone on vibrate if there is an emergency situation where you may need to be reached, otherwise, keep them put away during the meetings.

**Other points to note:**

1. **Please try to attend all meetings:** The social connections and social support of a PIP Group are strongest when the members attend all the meetings, and actively participate in discussions. If you’re going to miss a meeting, make sure to let either the leader or the host know, so we all know that you’re OK.
2. **Contagious illnesses:** if you or your baby has vomiting, a new body rash, diarrhea, eye infection, sore throat, fever, or coughing we ask that you stay home and take care of yourself or the baby so we can all be healthy for the next PIP meeting.
3. **Hosting duties rotate among the group members’ homes:** Later, we will pass around a hosting schedule for people to sign up. We encourage everyone to host, if possible. If you do not feel comfortable hosting or cannot host for some reason, that’s no problem. You may offer to organize a parents’ night out activity, or you may offer to bring the snacks to someone else’s house when they take their turn at hosting.
4. **Pet or food allergies:** If you have pets, let others know about this before the meeting at your house, so those who have allergies are aware. We also ask that all pets be put in separate rooms while the meeting is happening. When preparing snacks, be aware of common allergens (nuts, dairy, eggs, wheat, and shellfish).
5. **Making connections:** Sometimes a PIP Group gels immediately, and sometimes it takes a few weeks for the connections to start to build. Sometimes in the beginning, members can only see all the ways they are different from each other. But we hear over and over from PIP participants that over time, they come to see all the things they have in common with each other, and they make deep and lasting connections to each other. One of the best ways to strengthen the bonds within a Group is for the members to get together more often, outside of the regular Group time. Consider meeting other parents for walks in the park or the mall, meeting for mom’s movies, or coffee, and so on.
6. **Handouts and resources:** If you have resources to share with your group, you can post them to your group’s Facebook page, or any other method of communication that your group decides is best.
7. **PIP Alumni Groups**: Your group leader will be with you for the first 6 weeks as your group develops and connects. You will then be encouraged to continue meeting as a group for as many weeks, months, or years as you choose. PIP offers tools to support you through the transition to being an independent group, and as you continue forward.

Be sure to ask if there are any questions.