# CONNECTING PRACTICES HANDBOOK

**Strategies for Everyday Connection and Lifelong Growth**

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## Created by Empowered to Connect

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**for all the caregivers—
may you be empowered with confidence,
curiosity, compassion, and connection.**

*As you use this resource, when you read "your child" think about the child, adolescent, or young adult in your life for whom you are providing care.*

*The Connecting Practices were designed to support parents, foster parents, family members, coaches, teachers, child care professionals, youth service workers, mentors, and more as you care for children of all ages.*

# CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

## Connected Caregiving

## Key Frameworks

## Connecting Practices

# INTRODUCTION TO CONNECTED CAREGIVING

Connected caregiving is an approach to adult-child relationships that focuses on building and maintaining a secure, positive relationship over time. Adults provide appropriate boundaries and expectations, along with appropriate support and empathy.

This approach supports children through attachment-rich interventions that can strengthen their ability to develop a healthy sense of self, independence, and strong socio-emotional skills. Ultimately, this can empower children to meet the demands of their environment with support, encouragement, and guidance.

Research shows that the long-term benefits of healthy, safe, adult-child relationships are immeasurable. As children grow into adulthood, among many other benefits, they are can be empowered to show resilience in the face of challenges, regulate during stress, maintain healthy relationships founded in trust, contribute through their work, and meet their full potential.

Some concepts in this resource are informed by Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI®), developed by the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development (KPICD). TBRI® is an evidence-based, attachment-rich, trauma-informed intervention designed to equip caregivers and professionals with the knowledge and skills to meet the complex needs of children who have experienced adversity, early harm, toxic stress, and/or trauma.

TBRI® uses 3 core principles: Connecting, Empowering, and Correcting to meet the needs of the whole child. Empowering Principles address the physiological and ecological needs of children, Connecting Principles address relational needs, and Correcting Principles address discipline and behavioral needs. You'll see these principles reflected throughout this resource.

Connected caregiving supports all children, and is especially beneficial for children who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), are neurodiverse, were adopted or are in foster care, or have complex medical needs. This approach can empower you to empower the children in your care.

# INTRODUCTION TO KEY FRAMEWORKS

The key frameworks are necessary mindsets and insights which lay the foundation for the implementation of connected caregiving strategies.

When we understand the complexity and nuance around behavior, whole-person needs, child development, stress, human reactions, and our own mindsets about discipline, we can move intentionally towards becoming safe, supportive adults.

# INTRODUCTION TO CONNECTING PRACTICES

The nine Connecting Practices are brain-based, attachment-focused, trauma-informed, and relationship-driven strategies for supporting and relating to children.

The Connecting Practices can provide the understanding and skills you need to cultivate the relationships that you desire and children deserve. They can empower you to become a more self-aware and child-aware caregiver.

Each Connecting Practice has three Core Components. As you begin to practice the components and layer them together, you will take meaningful steps towards connected caregiving.

BE CURIOUS

BE PRESENT

BALANCE NURTURE & STRUCTURE

REPAIR, REFLECT, RE-ADJUST

EMPOWERED TO CONNECT

CONNECTING PRACTICES

MEET NEEDS

GIVE VOICE

RESPOND THOUGHTFULLY

TAKE PLAY SERIOUSLY

USE SCAFFOLDING

## KEY FRAMEWORKS

**Framework for Change**
**Framework for Behavior**
**Framework for Behavioral Change**

# FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE

Change - you likely came to this resource with a desire for something to change. Perhaps you want a child, adolescent, or young adult in your care to change. Perhaps you're seeking behavioral change. Perhaps you'd like the temperature of your home and the relationships in your life to experience positive changes.

Change starts with us. When we humbly assume a growth mindset, consciously learn, unlearn, and relearn, and willingly implement new habits and practices, we are laying a foundation for hope and for healing for ourselves and for those in our care.

> **Mindset matters.**
> **What's your mindset?**

## GROWTH MINDSET VS. FIXED MINDSET

### GROWTH MINDSET

- I am open to trying new things.
- When I fail, I can learn.
- When others succeed, I am inspired.
- Challenges help me grow.
- Feedback is constructive and helpful.
- I can grow in my abilities.
- I persevere when things are hard.

### FIXED MINDSET

- I like to stick to what I know.
- When I fail, I am no good.
- When others succeed, I am threatened.
- I don't like to be challenged.
- Feedback and criticism are personal.
- I am only good at certain things.
- I give up when it gets too hard.

# MODEL OF CHANGE

**INFORMATION**
Knowledge

**IMPLEMENTATION**
Practice

**TRANSFORMATION**
Change

### Information is knowledge
• Be open to learning new information and developing deeper insights.
• Change begins through continuous learning, unlearning, and relearning of ideas.

### Implementation is practice
• Consider how to implement newly learned concepts into daily practice.
• Implementing requires learning, unlearning, and relearning habits.
• As we discover new ways of thinking, we will also discover new skills to practice.
• When we practice these new concepts and skills over and over, we can begin to see change.

### Transformation is change
• As we deepen our understanding of the Connecting Practices, remember there are no quick fixes and one-size-fits-all approaches.
• When implemented over time, the Connecting Practices can support positive change in relationships.

**Relearning can be challenging.
What do you need to unlearn?**

# LEARNING, UNLEARNING, & RELEARNING

**LEARN**
Gaining new knowledge, skills, or practices

**UNLEARN**
Letting go of prior thoughts, feelings, or behaviors

**RELEARN**
Implementing new ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving

# FRAMEWORK FOR BEHAVIOR

As we approach behavior, it is important to expand our view beyond what we see on the surface. People are multi-faceted, and behavior is impacted by the state of the whole person including their brains, bodies, and belief systems.

Some of our automatic reactions and behaviors are based on past experiences. The good news is, we are not stuck in the past. New experiences can shape and shift our responses.

Ultimately, all behavior is communication. Behavior communicates what we are feeling, what our current state of being is, and what we need. Seeing beyond the behavior on the surface allows us to respond to the deeper root causes.
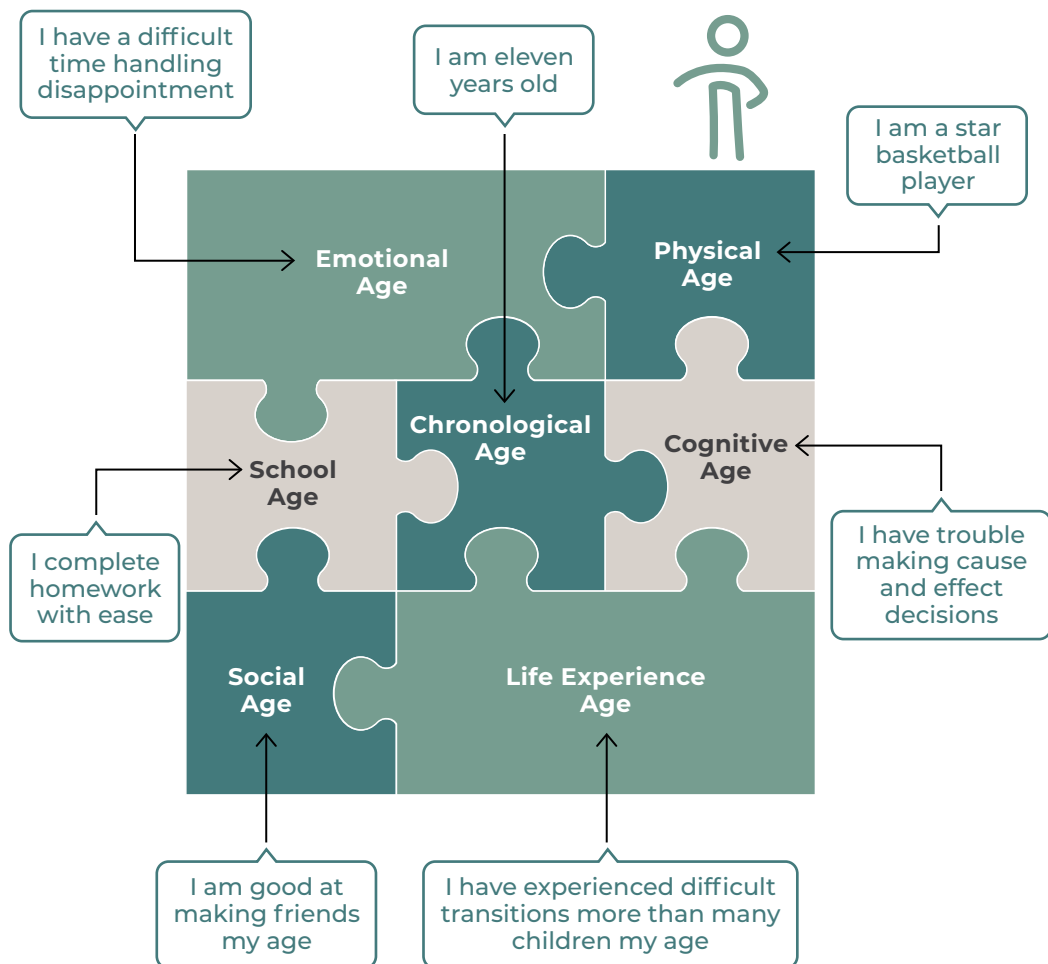
Let's approach behavior with empathy and curiosity. When we do, we are empowered to find strategies that support long-term healing, change, and growth.

**Behavior is multi-faceted. Consider the whole person.**

**Behavior can be impacted by experiences.**

**All behavior is communication.**
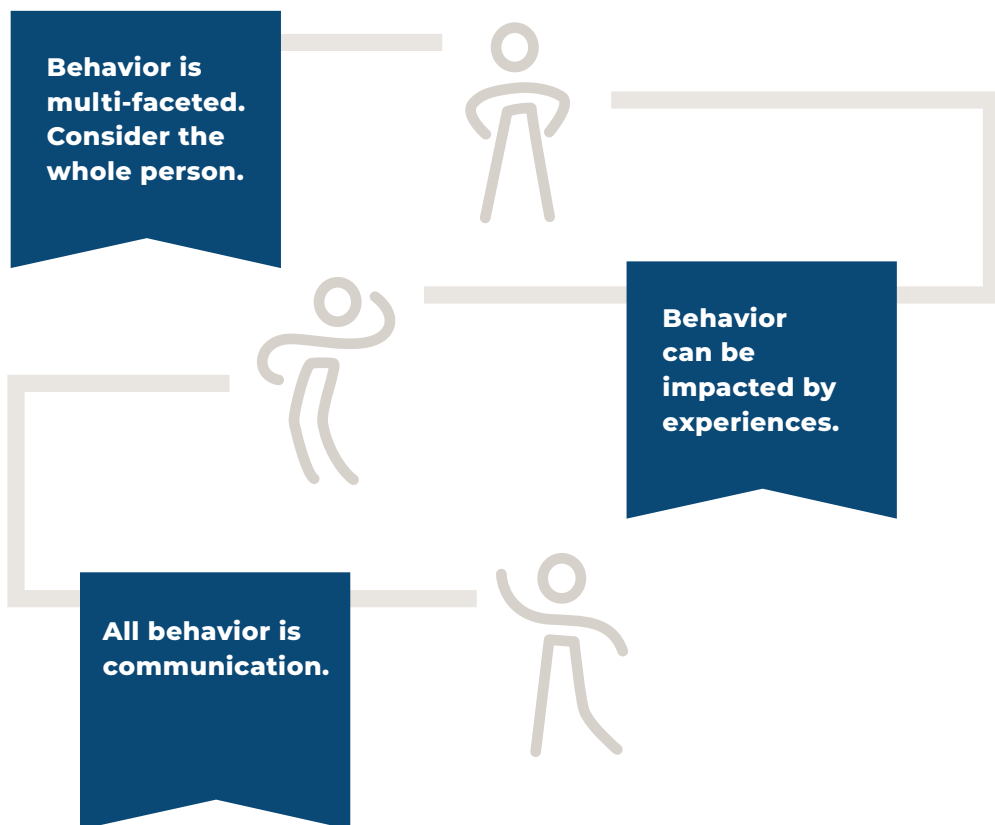
# DEVELOPMENTAL PUZZLE

There are many different aspects or domains of development, like pieces of a puzzle. A child's development isn't linear- different domains (pieces of the puzzle) progress at different rates. Children are developmentally complex. A child's chronological age may not be the same as their "ages" across the developmental puzzle. They could be a lower "age" in one area, while being advanced in another "age." Understanding the complexity of multi-faceted development empowers us to support a child's current needs rather than being stuck wondering "why aren't they acting their age?"

I have a difficult time handling disappointment

I am eleven years old

I am a star basketball player

**Emotional Age**

**Physical Age**

**Chronological Age**

**School Age**

**Cognitive Age**

I complete homework with ease

I have trouble making cause and effect decisions

**Social Age**

**Life Experience Age**

I am good at making friends my age

I have experienced difficult transitions more than many children my age

Children who have experienced toxic stress and/or traumatic experiences may have a lower threshold and heightened response. What appears to be a minor situation could cause intense discomfort, fear, or pain - resulting in perplexing behaviors.

## TYPES OF STRESS

*Research by Center on the Developing Child*

**POSITIVE STRESS**

- When someone experiences something that causes a stress response
- They are able to adapt to meet the challenge
- They grow and develop resilience and capacity to handle stressors

**TOLERABLE STRESS**

- When someone experiences something that causes a significant stress response
- They have support and time to heal and recover
- They grow and develop resilience and capacity to handle stressors

**TOXIC STRESS**

- When someone experiences something that causes a very significant stress response once, frequently, or over a long period of time
- They lack support and/or time to heal and recover
- They develop a heightened stress response and lower capacity to handle stressors

## TYPES OF TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES

Trauma begins with a stressful event. Then, a person experiences that event. Their experience individually and uniquely affects them. What makes the experience traumatic (or not) is the person's response. In other words, trauma is how someone experiences what happened.

**ACUTE**
One traumatic experience

**CHRONIC**
Ongoing traumatic experiences

**COMPLEX**
Ongoing traumatic experiences, in the context of relationships, usually with a caregiver

**VICARIOUS/SECONDARY**
Ongoing traumatic experience of witnessing or hearing about other people's trauma

**COLLECTIVE**
When entire groups of people experience trauma

**GENERATIONAL**
When the impacts of trauma are passed down from generation to generation

When a child is regulated and feels safe, they have full access to their brain. When a child becomes dysregulated or stressed, they can lose access to the upper parts of the brain, responsible for logic and reasoning.

# BRAIN STATE

**Upper Brain**
**Thinking / Reflecting**
- Seeking logic/reasoning and cause & effect
- Develops function over time
- Development is heavily influenced by experience

**Lower Brain**
**Survival / Feeling**
- Seeking safety/security and affection/nurture
- Fully functioning at birth
- Largely instinctual

**?  Do they feel safe?**

# PHYSIOLOGICAL STATE

When we perceive any kind of stressor, our bodies have an automatic stress response. These survival mechanisms are in place to protect us until we regain access to our upper brain and can start thinking again.

**FIGHT**
"I won't."
- Controls by any means
- Appears defiant
- Displays verbal aggression
- Displays physical aggression
- Bullies others
- Demands perfection from others

**FLIGHT**
"I'm out."
- Escapes by any means
- Appears silly to deflect
- Distracts others or themself
- Hides or covers their face
- Falls asleep
- Demands perfection from themselves

**FREEZE**
"I can't."
- Avoids by any means
- Appears to ignore
- Appears frozen or stuck
- Affect appears blank
- Falls asleep
- Demands isolation from the outside world

**FAWN**
"I will."
- Pleases by any means
- Appears compliant
- Defers to other people
- Says yes to avoid conflict
- Seeks perfection from themselves
- Demands are driven by others

# FRAMEWORK FOR BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

When supporting children with perplexing or confusing behaviors, we often do not know how to set boundaries in order to address the behavior. To support lasting healing, growth, and change, while building and maintaining trust and connection, we need to shift from a punishment mindset to a loving limit mindset.

## What is a punishment mindset?

### PUNISHMENT MINDSET

**"My child doesn't know how to behave."**

- Discipline means to punish
- Children need consequences as a punishment to learn and grow
- Punishment teaches a lesson that will change behavior for the long-term
- Children learn how to behave when they are scared of getting in trouble
- Adults need to punish children in order to show they are in charge
- The child needs to do something different

## How does a punishment mindset impact my response?

| MY VIEW | MY BELIEFS | MY RESPONSE |
|---|---|---|
| If I view a child's behavior as... | Then I believe I'm responsible for... | So I... |
| • Willful<br>• Black and white<br>• One dimensional<br>• On purpose<br>• A choice<br>• Always Intentional | • Controlling the behavior<br>• Gaining compliance<br>• Making and enforcing rules<br>• Teaching a lesson | • Lecture<br>• Reward<br>• Punish<br>• Ignore |

A person's experience of regulation, felt safety, and connection (or lack thereof) can impact their behavior.

Discipline means "to teach" not "to punish."

Let's re-frame our thinking. Instead of thinking a child is GIVING you a hard time, think about them HAVING a hard time.

## What is a loving mindset?

## LOVING LIMIT MINDSET

### "My child is doing the best they can."

- Discipline means to teach
- Children need loving limits to learn and grow
- Scaffolding skills, meeting needs, and supporting co-regulation supports long-term growth
- Children learn socio-emotional skills within safe relationships
- Adults need to share power appropriately while balancing nurture and structure
- The adult might need to provide different support

## How does a loving limit mindset impact my response?

| MY VIEW | MY BELIEFS | MY RESPONSE |
|---|---|---|
| **If I view a child's behavior as...** | **Then I believe I'm responsible for...** | **So I...** |
| • Communication<br>• Nuanced<br>• Multifaceted<br>• Having a purpose<br>• A response<br>• Sometimes Unintentional | • Understanding the behavior<br>• Supporting regulation<br>• Setting appropriate limits, while giving support<br>• Supporting growth | • Stay curious<br>• Meet needs<br>• Use scaffolding<br>• Balance nurture and structure<br>• Take play seriously<br>• Stay present<br>• Respond thoughtfully<br>• Give voice<br>• Repair, reflect, re-adjust |

# THE CONNECTING PRACTICES

**Implementing Strategies to Empower Children**

### BE CURIOUS
Be Mindful of History
Be Mindful of Attachment
Be Mindful of Why

### BALANCE NURTURE & STRUCTURE
Use Nurture to Cultivate Trust
Use Structure to Cultivate Growth
Use Routines and Rituals

### BE PRESENT
Be Physically Present
Be Emotionally Present
Be Attuned

### MEET NEEDS
Meet Emotional Needs
Meet Physical Needs
Meet Sensory Processing Needs

### USE SCAFFOLDING
Set Appropriate Expectations
Support Skill Building
Practice Outside the Moment

### TAKE PLAY SERIOUSLY
Play to Connect
Play to Cultivate Growth
Play to Redirect

### GIVE VOICE
Share Power
Offer Choices
Offer Compromises

### RESPOND THOUGHTFULLY
Practice the Pause
Use Communication Thoughtfully
Use the Appropriate Redirection

### REPAIR, REFLECT, RE-ADJUST
Repair After a Rupture
Reflect After an Interaction
Re-Adjust Expectations and Supports

**CONNECTING PRACTICE**
# Be Curious

**CORE COMPONENTS**
**Be Mindful of Attachment**
**Be Mindful of History**
**Be Mindful of Why**

# WHY?

👉 **Being Curious is the foundation for connected caregiving.**

When we are curious, we become observant and reflective. We look at what is going on with us, the child in front of us, and the environment.

As we cultivate trusting adult-child relationships, curiosity allows us to understand more deeply what we and a child bring to our relationship, so we can move from automatic reactions to thoughtful responses.
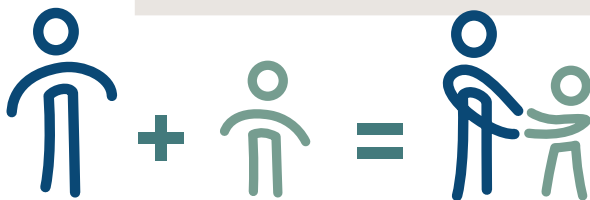
Building a healthy adult-child relationship requires us to be curious about what each person brings to the relationship - their temperament, preferences, personality, history, and unique perspective.

Connection is possible. Adults must intentionally build felt safety and trust.

**BE CURIOUS**
**Be Mindful of History**
**Be Mindful of Attachment**
**Be Mindful of Why**

# Be Mindful of History

Being mindful of history helps us to become self-aware and child-aware. When we reflect on our past experiences, we can see how they impact our present, allowing us to pursue relational connection without barriers.

## THE WALL BETWEEN US

People bring their history to relational interactions. As adults, if we are not mindful and actively making sense of our past experiences, they can unintentionally build a wall that separates us from one another. Instead of assessing the situation and child clearly, we can become reactive and our view can be cloudy and distorted.
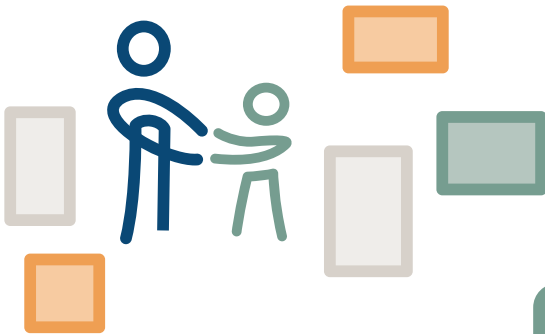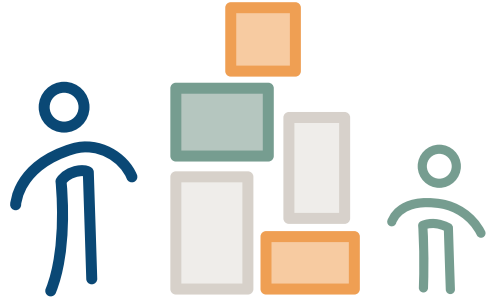
When we as caregivers become aware of the impact of our past experiences and our child's, we can assess the present moment with clarity and insight, and move towards relational connection.

**? What is getting in the way?**

## WHERE TO START?

- Identify situations, behaviors, and events that bother you, upset you, or cause you to shut down.
- Ask if your reaction may be connected to your past, your family of origin, or a personal stressor.
- Be curious about the child in front of you! What situations, behaviors, and events bother them?
- If you could look beyond the surface, what might be going on with them?

# Be Mindful of Attachment

Being mindful of attachment begins with developing an understanding of attachment patterns and how those patterns impact relationships. When we reflect on our patterns and walk towards earned secure attachment, we can become a secure base and safe haven for others.
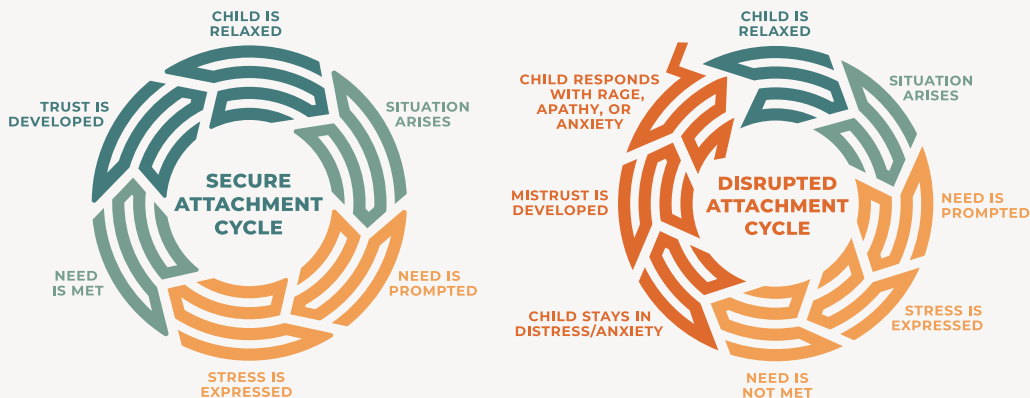
## ATTACHMENT PATTERNS ARE FORMED THROUGH INTERACTIONS BETWEEN CAREGIVERS & CHILDREN

### SECURE ATTACHMENT CYCLE

- CHILD IS RELAXED
- SITUATION ARISES
- NEED IS PROMPTED
- STRESS IS EXPRESSED
- NEED IS MET
- TRUST IS DEVELOPED

### DISRUPTED ATTACHMENT CYCLE

- CHILD IS RELAXED
- SITUATION ARISES
- NEED IS PROMPTED
- STRESS IS EXPRESSED
- NEED IS NOT MET
- CHILD STAYS IN DISTRESS/ANXIETY
- MISTRUST IS DEVELOPED
- CHILD RESPONDS WITH RAGE, APATHY, OR ANXIETY

**Early attachment patterns can impact the way people engage in relationships throughout their lives.**

### THE ATTACHMENT DANCE

- **child** → History & Attachment Behaviors →
- **you** → History & Attachment Style →
- Need Expressed
- Need Met
- = Shapes Parent & Child Attachment
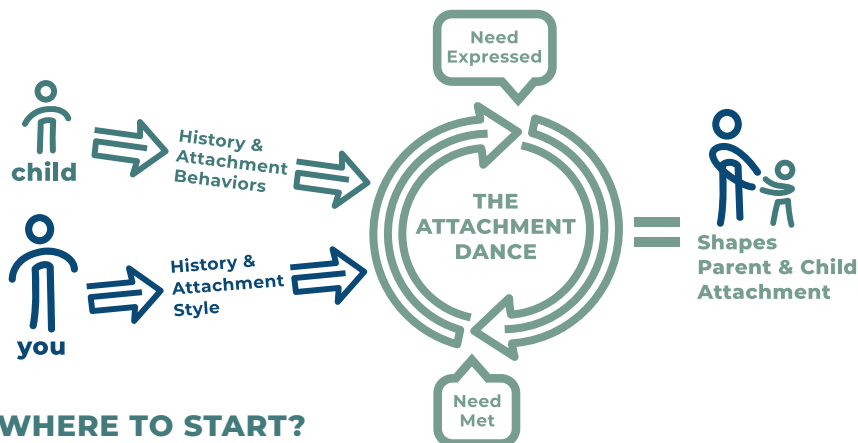
## WHERE TO START?

- Explore! Attachment Styles and Patterns are complex. Learn the basics of the four Attachment Styles, and think about your own tendencies.

- Identify your relationship patterns—do you tend to dismiss the needs of others or get emotionally entangled? What do you "bring to the dance?"

- Consider your child's early attachment cycle experiences.

# Be Mindful of Why

Being mindful of the "why" behind behaviors, reactions, emotions, and experiences allows us to look beyond what we see on the surface. When we carry ourselves with humility, curiosity, and intentionality, we support ourselves and others from a holistic, integrated perspective.
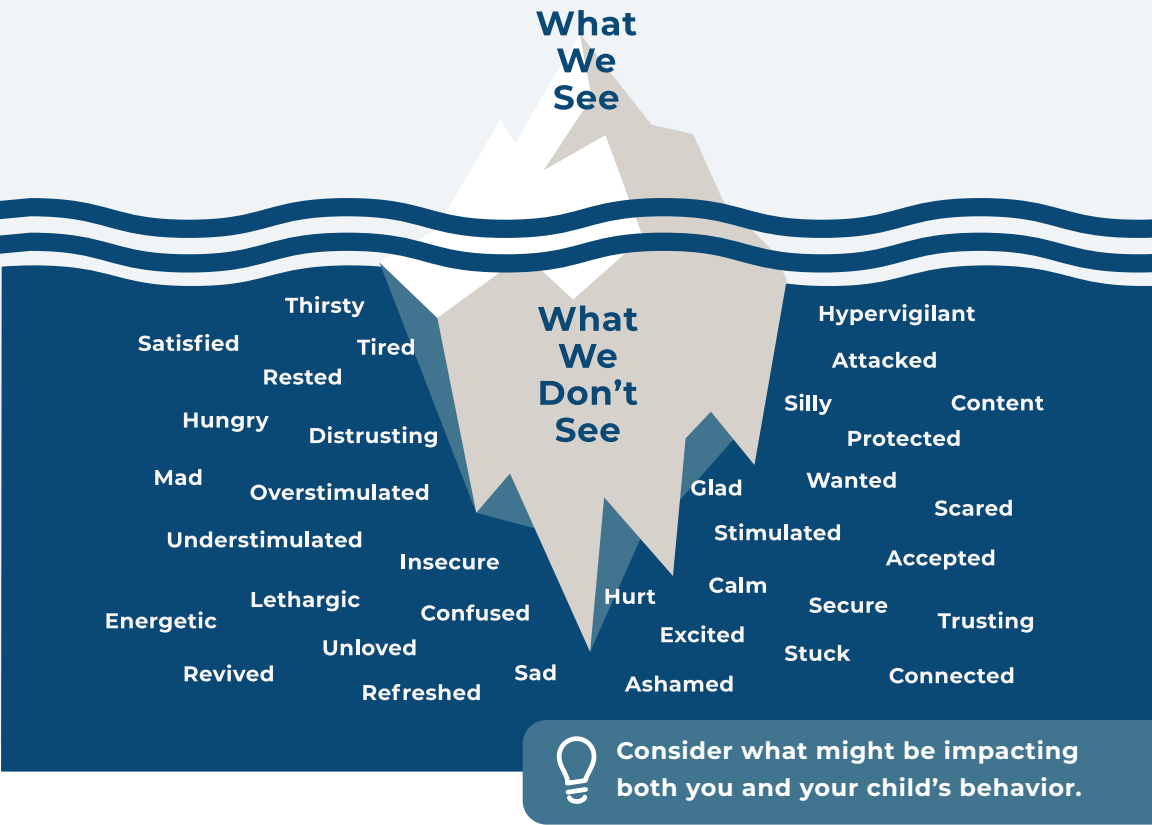
**TAKE A WHOLE PERSON PERSPECTIVE & LOOK BENEATH THE SURFACE**

What We See

What We Don't See

Thirsty
Satisfied
Tired
Rested
Hungry
Distrusting
Mad
Overstimulated
Understimulated
Insecure
Lethargic
Energetic
Confused
Unloved
Revived
Refreshed
Sad

Hypervigilant
Attacked
Silly
Content
Protected
Glad
Wanted
Stimulated
Scared
Accepted
Calm
Hurt
Secure
Trusting
Excited
Stuck
Ashamed
Connected

**Consider what might be impacting both you and your child's behavior.**

## WHERE TO START?

- When you encounter a behavior, take a moment to look beneath the surface. What more might be going on here?

- Take a whole child approach! Meet those "beneath the surface" needs to get at the root of the issue.

- Practice getting comfortable noticing and naming what's going on beneath the surface of your own behavior.

## CONNECTING PRACTICE
# Balance Nurture & Structure

## CORE COMPONENTS
**Use Nurture to Cultivate Trust**
**Use Structure to Cultivate Growth**
**Use Routines & Rituals**

# WHY?

**Balancing Nurture and Structure is the foundation for connected parenting.**

When we balance structure and nurture, we set loving limits, while supporting children's physical and emotional needs.

As we provide the appropriate amount of structure, we support a child's growth. As we provide the appropriate amount of nurture, we support their ability to trust others. Both are critical to secure attachment and overall well-being.

**Am I providing HIGH structure?**

**Am I providing HIGH nurture?**

**Children need high levels of BOTH!**

## BALANCE NURTURE & STRUCTURE

**Use Nurture to Cultivate Trust**

**Use Structure to Cultivate Growth**

**Use Routines and Rituals**

# PARENTING STYLES

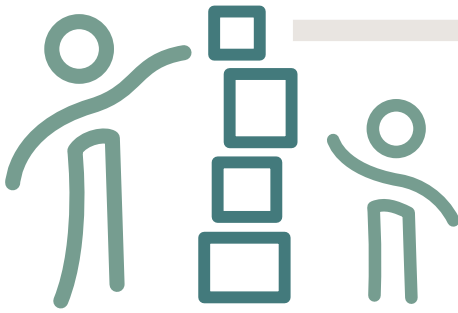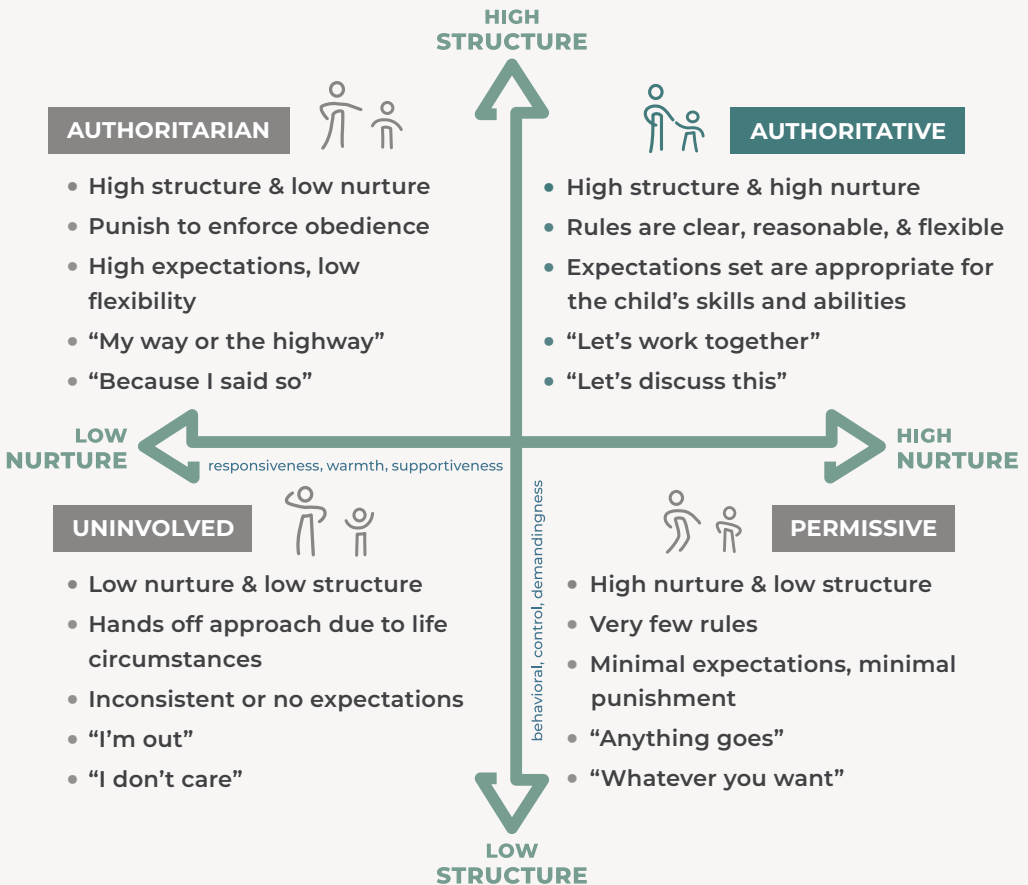**HIGH STRUCTURE**

**AUTHORITARIAN**

- High structure & low nurture
- Punish to enforce obedience
- High expectations, low flexibility
- "My way or the highway"
- "Because I said so"

**AUTHORITATIVE**

- High structure & high nurture
- Rules are clear, reasonable, & flexible
- Expectations set are appropriate for the child's skills and abilities
- "Let's work together"
- "Let's discuss this"

**LOW NURTURE**

responsiveness, warmth, supportiveness

**HIGH NURTURE**

behavioral, control, demandingness

**UNINVOLVED**

- Low nurture & low structure
- Hands off approach due to life circumstances
- Inconsistent or no expectations
- "I'm out"
- "I don't care"

**PERMISSIVE**

- High nurture & low structure
- Very few rules
- Minimal expectations, minimal punishment
- "Anything goes"
- "Whatever you want"

**LOW STRUCTURE**

## 👍 BENEFITS OF AUTHORITATIVE PARENTING

Time and time again studies show that children benefit from authoritative parenting.

Check the chart and see where you fit when it comes to providing HIGH structure and HIGH nurture for the children in your care!

Which is easier for you to provide? Rules, boundaries, and limits? Or compassion, warmth and support? Authoritative parenting provides both!

# Use Nurture to Cultivate Trust

Using nurture to cultivate trust begins with valuing and prioritizing each child's unique characteristics and needs. When we nurture children relationally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually, we lay the foundation for a trusting relationship.

| Nurture Means | Nurture Looks Like | Nurture Tells the Child |
|---|---|---|
| • Valuing<br>• Accepting<br>• Supporting<br>• Meeting core needs<br>• Connecting | • Listening to them<br>• Having fun with them<br>• Taking care of them<br>• Supporting their interests, hobbies, and passions | • Your feelings and opinions matter<br>• You are loved and secure with me<br>• You are worthy, valued, and safe with me<br>• You can trust me |

# Use Structure to Cultivate Growth

Using structure to cultivate growth begins with identifying needed boundaries, loving limits, and supports to scaffold towards development. When we provide needed structure, we create an environment that fosters long term growth.

| Structure Means | Structure Looks Like | Structure Tells the Child |
|---|---|---|
| • Guiding<br>• Setting boundaries<br>• Creating predictability<br>• Teaching values<br>• Correcting | • Being consistent<br>• Creating predictability<br>• Setting and enforcing limits<br>• Having conversations before, during, & after a behavior | • Your body has limits<br>• We show others they matter through our actions<br>• You can trust me<br>• You can be prepared<br>• I will use my authority to help you, not to harm you |

## WHERE TO START?

- Find your balance—do you tend to lean towards structure or nurture?
- Find intentional ways to increase nurture while building connection.
- Find intentional ways to increase structure while building connection.

# Use Routines & Rituals

Using routines and rituals allows us to provide predictability and consistency for ourselves and children. When we use routines and rituals, we create patterns that support overall felt safety, trust, and growth.

## ROUTINES CAN BE BUILT INTO...

Transitions
Meal times
Rest/bed times
Getting ready
Completing tasks
Cleaning or tidying

**Routine:** a usual order or way of doing something

**Routines build trust and felt safety**

knock knock

who's there?

This makes me feel important, special, and loved.

**Ritual:** a repeated, intentional moment of connection, built into the day, often as part of a routine

## RITUALS CAN INCLUDE...

Yearly traditions
Weekly traditions
Daily traditions like...
• Nicknames
• Secret handshakes
• Special notes
• Catchphrases

**Rituals build trust and connection**

## WHERE TO START?

- Identify your routines. Do you need to change them? Practice them outside a stressful moment? Or come up with any new ones?

- Think about a relationship that feels tense, disconnected, or distanced. What rituals can you add in to help that child feel special, seen, and celebrated?

**CONNECTING PRACTICE**
# Be Present

**CORE COMPONENTS**
**Be Physically Present**
**Be Emotionally Present**
**Be Attuned**

# WHY?

☞ **Being Present is the essence of connected caregiving.**

When we are physically and emotionally present, we attune by slowing down, paying attention to both our needs and a child's, and responding with compassion, empathy, and support.

As we stay present we are able to "be with" a child, taking a collaborative, connected stance to support regulation and growth both in the moment and over time.

**Offering our full presence and maintaining our own regulation lays the foundation for co-regulation, felt safety, and connection.**

## REGULATION

when we experience a balanced and steady state of internal energy, emotions, thoughts, and physiological processes

**EXTERNAL REGULATION:** when someone can only find and maintain regulation with direct intervention from an outside person

**CO-REGULATION:** when someone can find and maintain regulation with the support and assistance of an outside person

**SELF-REGULATION:** when someone can find and maintain regulation by themselves, as a result of countless co-regulating experiences

| External Regulation | > | Co-Regulation | > | Self-Regulation |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**BE PRESENT**
**Be Physically Present**
**Be Emotionally Present**
**Be Attuned**

# Be Physically Present

Being physically present allows us to communicate our availability to one another. When we are physically present, we prioritize relationships by communicating "I am with you" through actions and nonverbal cues.

**If our attention is elsewhere, our presence is missing.**

### HOW TO BE PHYSICALLY PRESENT

**Show up relationally**

**Give your full attention**

**Communicate a sense of "being with"**

**Use engaging nonverbal communication**

**What distracts you from being physically present?**

## WHERE TO START?

- Practice turning your face and attention to your child when they are speaking to you. Offer warm nonverbal communication as you actively listen.

- Get below their eye level—kneel, sit, or bend down as you speak to them.

- No one can give their full attention 24/7. Find intentional moments of time where you can set aside distractions to be fully present.

# Be Emotionally Present

Being emotionally present helps us to connect to the heart of our children. When we are emotionally present we are able to show compassion, grace, and empathy towards emotions, without becoming entangled or being dismissive.

**BEING EMOTIONALLY PRESENT COMMUNICATES**

**You matter**

**You are important**

**You are not alone**

**I care about you**

**I want to understand you**

**I am here for you**

## Being emotionally present takes self-awareness

**IF YOU TEND TO DISTANCE YOURSELF FROM OTHER'S EMOTIONS...**

- **Be cautious of dismissing emotions and jumping to quick fixes**

- **Ask: How can I stay present to show empathy and support?**

**IF YOU TEND TO GET CAUGHT UP IN OTHERS' EMOTIONS...**

- **Be cautious of your emotional flooding and entanglement**

- **Ask: How can I stay present to show empathy and support?**

**Meeting emotional needs requires us to properly assess the current moment. Sometimes guilt over past events or fear of future circumstances can cloud our responses.**

## WHERE TO START?

- Practice separating your emotions from your child's.

- Embrace feelings. Practice naming feelings without judgment or shame.

- Respond to yourself and to them with empathy, compassion, and support.

- Pay attention to your reactions and responses—is guilt from the past or fear from the future impacting you?

# Be Attuned

Being attuned allows us to be cognizant of distractions, tune in to the needs around us, and prioritize connection. When we are attuned to a child, we are actively providing the physical and emotional support they need in the moment.

## SLOW DOWN

- What am I distracted by? What do I need?
- How can I remove distractions and meet my needs?

## TUNE IN

- What's going on with the child?
- What's going on in their environment?

## CONSIDER NEEDS

- How can I meet the child's physical needs?
- How can I meet the child's emotional needs?

## PRESENCE > PERFECTION

## WHERE TO START?

- Identify your baseline level of presence. What distracts you from being present?
- Pay attention to your child and how they respond to different environments, situations, and stressors.
- Be flexible as you meet their holistic needs.

**CONNECTING PRACTICE**

# Meet Needs

**CORE COMPONENTS**

**Meet Emotional Needs**

**Meet Physical Needs**

**Meet Sensory Processing Needs**

# WHY?

☞ **Meeting Needs is an indispensable part of the secure attachment cycle.**

When we identify a child's whole-person needs, learning to recognize the many ways those needs are expressed, we take into account emotional, physical, relational, academic, spiritual, and environmental needs.

As we meet needs throughout all developmental ages and stages, it creates patterns over time that tell a child their voice matters.

**MEET THE NEEDS OF THE WHOLE CHILD**

Sleep
Zzz

Nutrition

Sensory

Hydration

Medical

Environmental

Academic

Social

Emotional

Relational

Spiritual

💡 **Remember: As you meet whole child needs, seek professional support when needed!**

**MEET NEEDS**

**Meet Emotional Needs**

**Meet Physical Needs**

**Meet Sensory Processing Needs**

# Meet Emotional Needs

Meeting emotional needs begins with an acknowledgment that we are emotional beings who are created to flourish in supportive relationships. When we meet emotional needs we are displaying empathy and compassion in community with one another.

**Naming & acknowledging emotions is an important part of supporting the well-being of the whole person**

## WHERE TO START?

- Practice noticing and naming your own emotions and feelings. What core emotion (mad, sad, glad, calm, or scared) might be underneath your behavior?

- Use the feelings wheel to be curious with children about their emotions.

- Notice, name, and explore the emotions of characters in books, movies, or television shows.

- Respond to children's emotional needs with curiosity, empathy, and compassion.

# Meet Physical Needs

Meeting physical needs begins with seeing people through a holistic lens. When we prioritize and meet hydration, nutrition, sleep, and movement needs proactively and responsively, we empower ourselves and children to thrive.
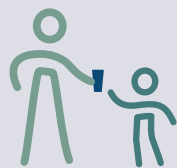
| HYDRATION | NUTRITION | MOVEMENT | SLEEP |
|-----------|-----------|----------|-------|

## PROACTIVELY
**meet needs with**

- RESPECT
- KINDNESS
- CURIOSITY
- COMPASSION
- FLEXIBILITY
- CULTURAL HUMILITY
- PATIENCE

## RESPONSIVELY
**meet needs to**

- CONNECT
- SUPPORT
- REGULATE
- DE-ESCALATE
- REDIRECT
- BUILD FELT SAFETY
- SOOTHE

## WHERE TO START?

- Be proactive. Meet your child's physical needs throughout their day to day activities. Ask yourself if they are getting enough water, nutrition, movement, and sleep.

- Respond thoughtfully. When a child is struggling behaviorally, consider physical needs first. Start by offering water, a snack, a walk, or a quiet place to rest.
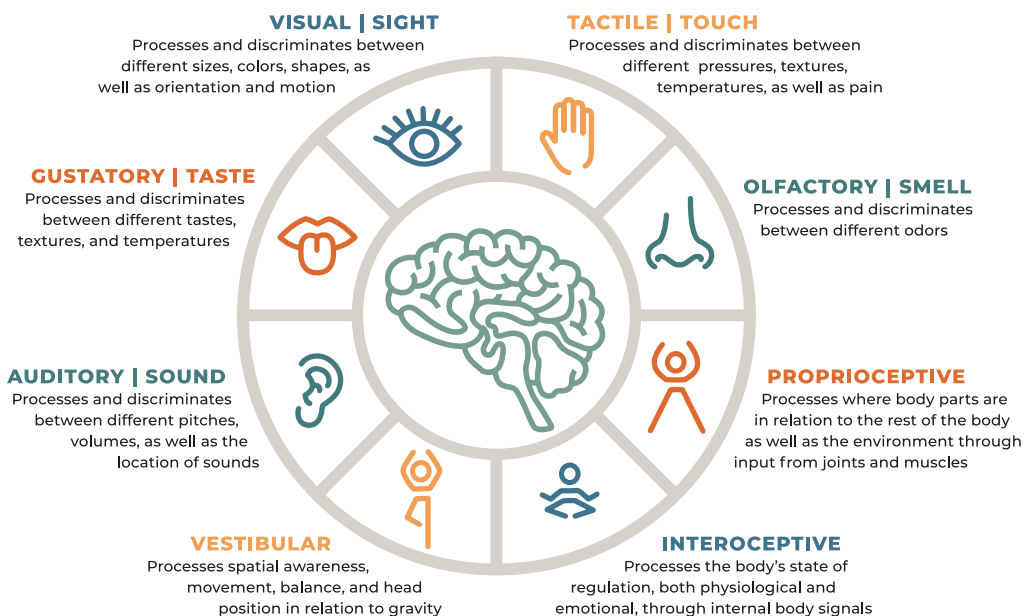
# Meet Sensory Processing Needs

Meeting sensory processing needs allows us to provide support from an understanding of the relationship between our brain, bodies, and behaviors. When we meet sensory processing needs we honor the different ways people experience the world around us.

## WHAT IS SENSORY PROCESSING?

Stimuli travel through our sensory systems to our brain. Sensory processing is the process by which the brain recognizes, organizes, and responds to stimuli from our environment and from within our own body.

### What are the sensory systems?

**VISUAL | SIGHT**
Processes and discriminates between different sizes, colors, shapes, as well as orientation and motion

**TACTILE | TOUCH**
Processes and discriminates between different pressures, textures, temperatures, as well as pain

**GUSTATORY | TASTE**
Processes and discriminates between different tastes, textures, and temperatures

**OLFACTORY | SMELL**
Processes and discriminates between different odors

**AUDITORY | SOUND**
Processes and discriminates between different pitches, volumes, as well as the location of sounds

**PROPRIOCEPTIVE**
Processes where body parts are in relation to the rest of the body as well as the environment through input from joints and muscles

**VESTIBULAR**
Processes spatial awareness, movement, balance, and head position in relation to gravity

**INTEROCEPTIVE**
Processes the body's state of regulation, both physiological and emotional, through internal body signals

## WHERE TO START?

- All people have sensory sensitivities and preferences. Some people avoid certain stimuli (like loud noises) while seeking out other stimuli (like sweet foods). Start paying attention to sensitivities and preferences.

- Consider meeting sensory processing needs proactively and responsively. Provide opportunities for your child to experience sensory inputs and needed breaks from over-stimulating experiences.

**CONNECTING PRACTICE**

# Use Scaffolding

**CORE COMPONENTS**

**Set Appropriate Expectations**

**Support Skill Building**

**Practice Outside the Moment**

# WHY?

**Using Scaffolding is critical as adults assist in children's growth and skill development.**

When we use scaffolding, we provide the appropriate amount of support, encouragement, or guidance needed for the task at hand.

As we use scaffolding, we enable a child to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal that is just beyond their current capabilities in the present moment.
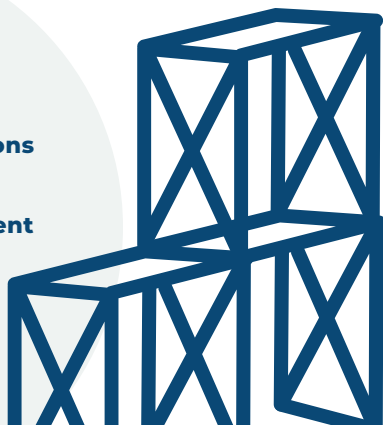
## USE SCAFFOLDING

**Set Appropriate Expectations**

**Support Skill Building**

**Practice Outside the Moment**

# Set Appropriate Expectations

Setting appropriate expectations requires an understanding of the gap between our own preconceived ideals and the reality in front of us. When we set appropriate expectations for children, we set them up for success by being mindful of what they bring to the table.

**THE EXPECTATION GAP**

How old are they?

What is their history?

Have they experienced adversity?

Are they stressed?

What is their developmental stage?

What is their emotional capacity?

Are they regulated?

Do they have unmet needs?

Do they need support?

What is their academic level?

**Are my expectations in line with reality?**

**KEEP IN MIND!**  ▶ Age  ▶ Stage  ▶ State

## WHERE TO START?

- Consider areas where your expectations do not align with your child's capability and capacity.

- Adjust! When possible, adjust the support you are providing for your child to meet the demands of the moment. At times, you will need to adjust your expectations to meet their capability and capacity.

# Support Skill Building

Supporting skill building helps us foster growth and increase competencies. When we support skill building we find creative ways to practice needed skills and encourage children to learn and grow in small, attainable steps while honoring one another's capacities.

**Adults support developmentally appropriate skill building all the time!**

## Children need support as they build skills like...

**Riding a bike**

**Reading**

**Driving a car**

## Children also need support as they build socio-emotional skills, like...

**Managing emotions**

**Resolving conflict**

**Making decisions**

## WHERE TO START?

- Identify an area or skill where your child needs support. What is a common pain point, challenge, or emerging area of growth?

- Break up the needed skill into small, attainable pieces. For example, to learn to read, we can practice letter sounds. To learn to resolve conflict, we can practice pausing before reacting. What are components of the skill to practice?

- Consider using verbal or visual cues. Give lots of encouragement and guidance.

# Practice Outside the Moment

Practicing outside the moment helps us approach needed skills playfully and intentionally. When we practice needed skills and replacement behaviors during calm, connected times, we empower children to face future challenges.
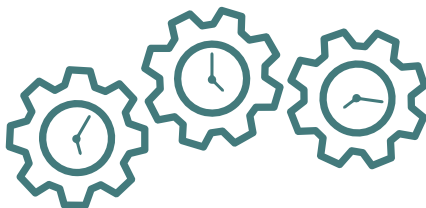
**Because people do the best they can in the moment, it is beneficial and helpful to practice and discuss desired behaviors and skills before situations arise.**

*practice* **OUTSIDE THE MOMENT** *of stress, disconnection, and conflict*

*practice* **INSIDE A MOMENT** *of calm, connection, and playfulness*

7:00
8:00
9:00
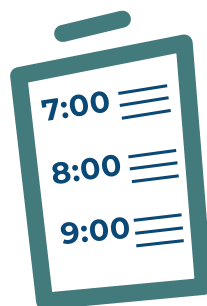
## WHERE TO START?

- Identify an area or skill where your child needs support.

- For a younger child, choose a game, activity, or role play to practice the needed skill or behavior (for example, "Let's play Simon Says!").

- For older children, find a time to discuss the needed skill or behavior. Incorporate role plays, dialogue, and scripts to set them up for success (for example, "What can you say if that happens again?").

**CONNECTING PRACTICE**

# Take Play Seriously

**CORE COMPONENTS**

**Play to Connect**

**Play to Cultivate Growth**
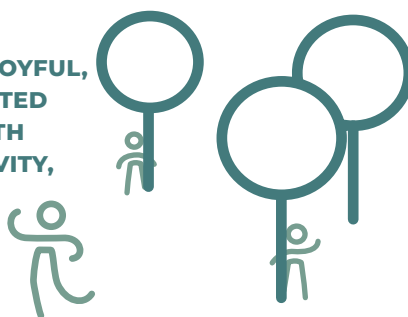
**Play to Redirect**

# WHY?

## Taking Play Seriously is a core element of a healthy, thriving adult-child relationship.

When we take play seriously, we engage in playful interactions with children in order to build connection, support growth, as well as to redirect misbehavior.

As we embrace play as a part of our rhythm and culture, we build felt safety, disarm fear, foster joy, and reap the benefits for both the adult and child.

**PLAY IS A FUN, JOYFUL, AND LIGHTHEARTED EXPERIENCE WITH A PERSON, ACTIVITY, OR OBJECT.**

### COMMON BARRIERS TO PLAY

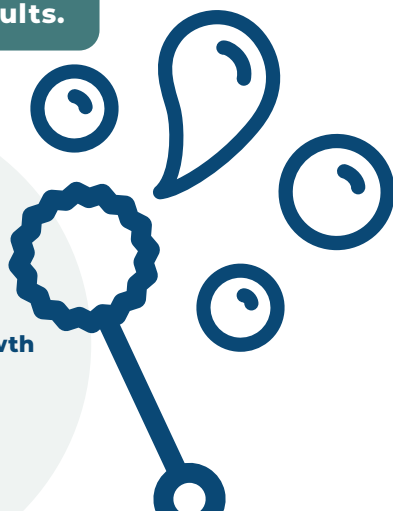- Mindset about play
- Personality differences
- Time constraints

**Play is a need for both children and adults.**

### TAKE PLAY SERIOUSLY

**Play to Connect**

**Play to Cultivate Growth**

**Play to Redirect**

# Play to Connect

Playing in order to connect allows us to experience one another's presence in a state of rest and enjoyment. When we play to connect we take into account the different ways people enjoy playing and find ways to playfully cultivate trust and attachment.

## PLAYING WITH CHILDREN...

- Shares joy, delight, wonder, and excitement
- Invests in the relationship and strengthens the bond
- Provides a chance to reconnect

**In moments of disconnection, play can be a powerful pathway to restore relational connection.**

Let's rethink "play." We all play in unique ways - what activities in your day to day bring you joy, restoration, contentment, or excitement?

Think about your child. Do they enjoy baking? Telling jokes? Planning activities? Going on adventures? Winning games? Playing pretend? Exercising? Collecting treasures?

## WHERE TO START?

- Identify your child's unique play needs and find ways to play with them that they will enjoy
- Think about a relationship that feels tense, disconnected, or distanced. How can you include play to connect?

# Play to Cultivate Growth

Playing in order to cultivate growth helps us face situations in partnership with children, finding creative methods to practice needed skills. When we play to cultivate growth we build connection by bringing play into structured and learning moments.

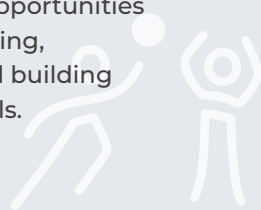**Play promotes child development and human flourishing.**

## Play Supports...

### Cognitive Development

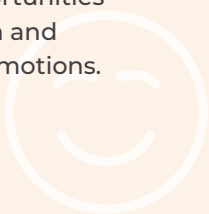Play supports development of language, executive function, and memory.
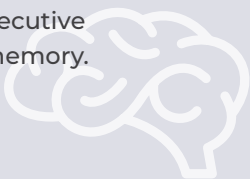
### Social Development

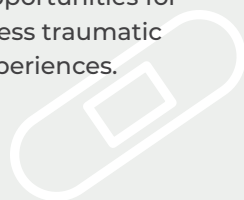Play provides opportunities to practice sharing, interacting, and building other social skills.

### Emotional Development

Play provides opportunities to experiment with and express different emotions.

### Healing

Play provides opportunities for children to process traumatic and stressful experiences.

## WHERE TO START?

- Incorporate opportunities to support your child's cognitive, social, and emotional development through play. This could include playing games, role playing, telling stories, and practicing skills in a playful way.

- If your child has experienced stressful or traumatic events, consider seeking professional support in promoting healing through play.
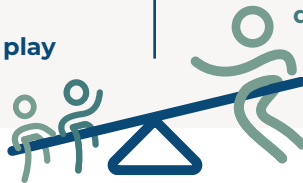
# Play to Redirect

Playing in order to redirect helps us to correct minor behaviors without breaking connection. When we play to redirect we promote the desired behavior playfully, without escalating, shaming, or provoking a child.

## When you build a culture of play...

**&**

- **Prioritize being fully present**

- **Disarm fears through safe, playful interactions**

- **Meet your own play needs**

- **Meet your child's play needs**

- **Set aside time for intentional, child-led play**

- **Connect while correcting behavior**

- **When possible, redirect playfully, without breaking stride**

- **Return to a baseline of playfulness if disconnection occurs**

## Play disarms fear.

### PLAYING TO REDIRECT...

- Diffuses situations
- Avoids escalation
- Encourages collaboration

## WHERE TO START?

- Build a culture of play - start with small chunks of intentional, child-led play.

- Identify behaviors that you tend to overreact to. Prioritize responding playfully before escalating your correction.

- Identify your baseline level of playfulness. What does it feel like when you and your child are at rest and enjoying one another's presence? This is the goal for reconnection after disruptions.

**CONNECTING PRACTICE**
# Give Voice

**CORE COMPONENTS**
**Share Power**
**Offer Choices**
**Offer Compromises**

# WHY?

👉 **Giving Voice is crucial to empowering a child's self-agency.**

When we give voice we share power appropriately, giving win-win choices and developmentally appropriate compromises.

As we give voice we allow children to practice telling safe adults what they need and negotiating those needs through appropriate communication.

**? What is voice?**
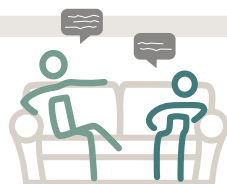
Voice is the sense of self-agency that gives us confidence to advocate for ourselves, believing we will be heard and can have influence over our circumstances and environment

## IN THE PRESENCE OF NEGATIVE BELIEFS OR LAGGING SKILLS, A CHILD MIGHT...

- Display a lack of self-agency
- Use inappropriate language
- Display disruptive behavior
- Struggle to make decisions
- Not advocate for themself
- Appear disrespectful
- Use manipulation
- Use triangulation
- Lie, hide, or steal
- Seek control
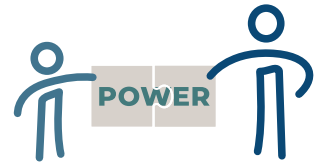- Shut down

## GIVE VOICE
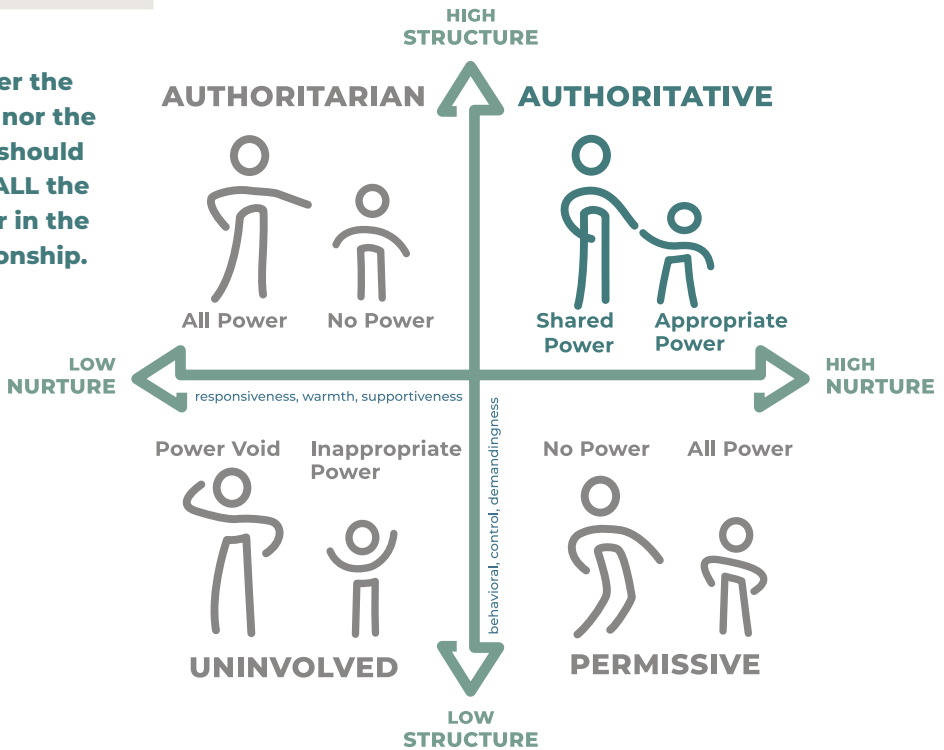**Share Power**
**Offer Choices**
**Offer Compromises**

# Share Power

Sharing power helps scaffold children toward becoming adults who can make independent, responsible, and ethical decisions. When we share power, we support children in the moment by practicing the skills needed for decision making and healthy negotiation.

**POWER**

**Neither the adult nor the child should hold ALL the power in the relationship.**

HIGH STRUCTURE

**AUTHORITARIAN**

**AUTHORITATIVE**

All Power — No Power

Shared Power — Appropriate Power

LOW NURTURE

responsiveness, warmth, supportiveness

HIGH NURTURE

behavioral, control, demandingness

Power Void — Inappropriate Power

No Power — All Power

**UNINVOLVED**

LOW STRUCTURE

**PERMISSIVE**

**Avoid power struggles!**

## WHERE TO START?

- There are many ways to share power. Reflect on the nuanced ways you can share power in your context. Every situation and child is unique.

- Pay attention - do you tend to make MOST decisions for your child? Or, do you tend to AVOID making any decisions for them? Identify needed adjustments to provide developmentally appropriate levels of control.

# Offer Choices

Offering choices allows us to encourage children to practice using their voice to communicate their wants, needs, desires, and opinions. When we offer choices we provide a balance of structure and nurture while meeting the demands of the moment.

## OFFERING CHOICES

**when an adult provides a child with two options that meet the demands or constraints of the situation while giving them an appropriate level of control**

Would you like to do the dishes together or by yourself?

### HOW TO OFFER CHOICES
- Give two choices
- Provide win-win options

Would you like to do your homework now or after dinner?

### MAKING CHOICES ALLOWS CHILDREN TO...
- Practice small choices to prepare for big decisions
- Practice using their upper brain executive functioning
- Become aware of what they want or need
- Advocate for and negotiate their needs

## WHERE TO START?

- Identify decisions you make automatically for your child. How could you offer choices at an appropriate developmental level?

- Think about a situation that leads your child to frustration, disappointment, or dysregulation. How can you offer choices to catch the behavior low, co-regulate your child, or correct the behavior?

# Offer Compromises

Offering compromises helps provide age appropriate opportunities for children to use their voice. When we allow a child to ask for a compromise, we scaffold the skills needed for collaboratively negotiating wants and needs while understanding the demands of the situation.

**OFFERING COMPROMISES**
**when an adult negotiates with a child to find a solution that meets the demands or constraints of the situation while fulfilling the needs and desires of the child and adult**

**HOW TO OFFER COMPROMISES**

- Always name it. "Would you like to make a compromise?" or "Would you like to make a deal?"
- Do not stack compromises by allowing more than one at a time

It's time for homework.

Can I have a compromise? Can I finish this game first?

Sounds like a good compromise! After this game, it's time to do homework, ok?

Ok, thanks!

**OFFERING COMPROMISES ALLOWS CHILDREN TO...**

- Negotiate their needs
- See you as their ally, mentor, or coach
- Find win-win solutions to problems
- Practice respectful language

## WHERE TO START?

- Teach your child how to ask for a compromise or a deal. Model this for quite some time as they get comfortable with this idea and language.

- When you have offered two choices and your child asks for a third, say "Would you like to ask for a compromise, like..."

- When your child is using demanding language or disrespectful behavior, encourage them to ask for a compromise.

**CONNECTING PRACTICE**
# Respond Thoughtfully

**CORE COMPONENTS**
**Practice the Pause**
**Use Communication Thoughtfully**
**Use the Appropriate Redirection**

# WHY?

**Responding Thoughtfully is a pivotal mindset shift necessary for intentional relationships and connecting while correcting.**

When we respond thoughtfully, we stay self-aware and child-aware, choosing the appropriate response that meets the needs of the child, adult, and demands of the moment.

As we respond thoughtfully it cultivates connection, contentment, and change, while empowering children to learn and grow.

## Respond Rather Than React

**REACTIONS FROM CAREGIVERS ARE...**
- **Instinctual reflexes from our stress response**
- **Emotionally driven**

**RESPONSES FROM CAREGIVERS ARE...**
- **Conscious efforts to Practice the Pause**
- **Logical and reasonable**

**Our intentions often do not line up with our impact.**

**How is your child receiving your responses or reactions?**

## RESPOND THOUGHTFULLY

**Practice the Pause**

**Use Communication Thoughtfully**

**Use the Appropriate Redirection**

# Practice the Pause

Practicing the pause enables us to respond rather than react, taking a brief moment to regulate ourselves and assess our surroundings. When we practice the pause, we offer thoughtful responses.

**When we are taking care of children and many times it can feel as if we are reacting to what is happening around us. Practicing the pause—even for a brief moment—can change everything!**

## PRACTICE THE PAUSE

- Slow Down
- Center Yourself
- Assess Circumstances
- Respond Thoughtfully

## WHERE TO START?

- When you are experiencing a stressful or overwhelming situation, slow down. When we slow down, we pay attention to how we are feeling and how our bodies are responding to what is around us. This takes practice!

- Next, center yourself. This might mean taking a brief deep breath, getting a drink of water, or moving your body for a moment as you attempt to relax.

- Next, we want to do our best to assess the circumstances with insight and clarity. This requires thinking through what is happening around us, inside of us, and inside of our children. Practice attuning to your child!

- Finally, we can respond thoughtfully! Taking those few steps in the moment enables us to move from an automatic reaction to a thoughtful response.

# Use Communication Thoughtfully

Using communication thoughtfully helps us have the impact we desire based on our intentions. When we use communication thoughtfully, we adjust our communication to the person in front of us, bringing our relational knowledge and experience to the table.

## Remember the power of VERBAL & NONVERBAL communication!

**Verbal communication can be misinterpreted if we're not paying attention.**

### VERBAL COMMUNICATION TIPS

- Use the appropriate tone
- Use the appropriate volume
- Use the appropriate cadence
- Use encouraging words

**Nonverbal communication can impact how someone experiences our words and presence.**

### NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION TIPS

- Use the appropriate facial expression
- Use the appropriate body posture
- Use the appropriate proximity (closeness or distance)

## WHERE TO START?

- Pay attention to moments when you are using too many or too few words. Simplify your words and choose a few scripts to use in moments of correction.

- Pay attention to the way you speak to your child. Make adjustments so that your impact supports your intent.

- Pay attention to your body posture and facial expressions. Make adjustments to support co-regulation, de-escalation, and connection.

# Use the Appropriate Redirection

Using the appropriate redirection helps us de-escalate and support long term change. When we use the appropriate redirection we are able to set loving limits while maintaining connection by providing compassion, empathy, and care.

As we redirect, we do not punish, threaten, or use physical punishment. We set loving limits that support our child's safety, well-being, and growth by balancing structure and nurture.

## When redirecting behavior...

### CO-REGULATE

- **Am I Practicing the Pause to maintain regulation?**
- **Am I adjusting to the person in front of me?**
- **Am I escalating or de-escalating?**
- **Am I supporting their whole-person physical and emotional needs?**

### CONNECT

- **Am I providing appropriate nurture?**
- **Am I maintaining relational felt safety?**
- **Am I offering my presence rather than withdrawing it?**
- **Am I communicating that I care for and support them?**

### CORRECT

- **Am I providing appropriate structure?**
- **Am I setting a loving limit?**
- **Am I communicating what to do, rather than only what not to do?**
- **Am I over-correcting or under-correcting the behavior?**
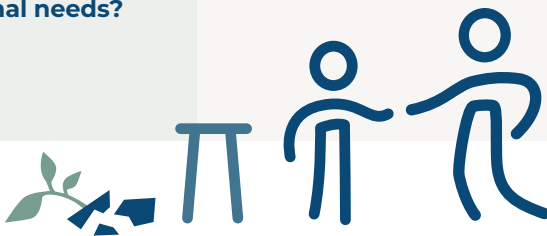
## WHERE TO START?

- Actively co-regulate to maintain felt safety in moments of needed redirection.
- Pay attention to your redirections. Do they tend to match the behavior? Make needed adjustments.
- Think about a behavior that you tend to punish or redirect with threats. Choose another strategy to support your child in the moment.

**CONNECTING PRACTICE**

# Repair, Reflect, Re-Adjust

**CORE COMPONENTS**

**Repair After a Rupture**

**Reflect After an Interaction**

**Re-Adjust Expectations and Supports**

# WHY?

👉 **Repairing, Reflecting, and Re-Adjusting are essential practices to building and maintaining healthy relationships.**

When we repair, reflect, and re-adjust we cultivate trust, renew connection, and foster emotional felt safety while determining appropriate expectations and support.

As we humbly repair, curiously reflect, and continuously re-adjust, it allows us to embrace the child in front of us and stay committed to the relationship.

| REPAIR | REFLECT | RE-ADJUST |
| --- | --- | --- |

## REPAIR, REFLECT, RE-ADJUST

**Repair After a Rupture**

**Reflect After an Interaction**

**Re-Adjust Expectations and Supports**

# Repair After a Rupture

Repairing after a rupture strengthens relationships. When we humbly initiate repair after a rupture, we model taking responsibility and restoring connection while reassuring children that our relationship can withstand ruptures.

**RELATIONAL RUPTURE**

Can happen in the presence of disconnection, tension, unresolved conflict, or miscommunication.

**Repairing ruptures strengthens relationships.**

**RELATIONAL REPAIR REQUIRES ADULTS TO...**

Initiate repair, own their mistakes, seek forgiveness, forgive, avoid holding grudges, offer relational presence, manage expectations, and embrace the mindset of "when it's over, it's over" and "it's not over until it's over"—meaning when the adult and child are back in a comfortable relationship rhythm.

I made a mistake earlier. I shouldn't have spoken to you so harshly. I'm sorry, I'd like to try that again.

**It is more important to relate rightly than to be right.**

## WHERE TO START?

- Identify your own barriers to repair. Which of the following is most difficult for you: accepting that you will mistakes, not taking behavior personally, saying "I'm sorry," or moving past the rupture?

- Take an opportunity to practice apologizing to your child. Notice how the experience was for you and them.

# Reflect After an Interaction

Reflecting after an interaction allows us to consider what could be changed, added, or adjusted to better prepare for next time. When we reflect after an interaction we are curious, thoughtful, and willing to learn.

### REFLECT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

- When did this happen?
- Where were they?
- What was going on around them?
- What stressors were present? How did they respond?
- What supports were present? How did they respond?

### REFLECT ON THE CHILD

- What might the behavior have been communicating?
- What might they have needed (physical, sensory processing, medical, academic, emotional, spiritual, relational, and/or environment support)?
- Were the challenges or demands of the moment too big for their current capacity at that time?
- What feelings might they have been experiencing before, during, and after this interaction?
- Could this be connected to something from the past?
- Is there a skill they need further support in developing (socio-emotional skills, cognitive skills, developmental skills)?

### REFLECT ON YOURSELF

- Did you respond or react?
- Did this escalate or de-escalate?
- Did it regulate or dysregulate?
- Did it lead to distance or connection?
- What support did you offer?
- Which Connecting Practices did you use?

## WHERE TO START?

- Build in time to reflect into your (busy) schedule. Find time and space to consider your child's needs.

- Identify which Connecting Practices you are implementing, and opportunities to incorporate other components.

- Be willing to think creatively as you re-adjust expectations and support.

# Re-Adjust Expectations and Supports

Re-adjusting our expectations and the support we provide requires us to be flexible and willing to make changes. When we make adjustments, we empower the child in front of us and support their long term growth and well-being.

**Flexibility is your friend!**

## RE-ADJUST EXPECTATIONS

The goal is to embrace the child in front of you and set them up for success.

Do I have appropriate expectations for them at this age, in this environment, at this time? Is there an expectation gap?
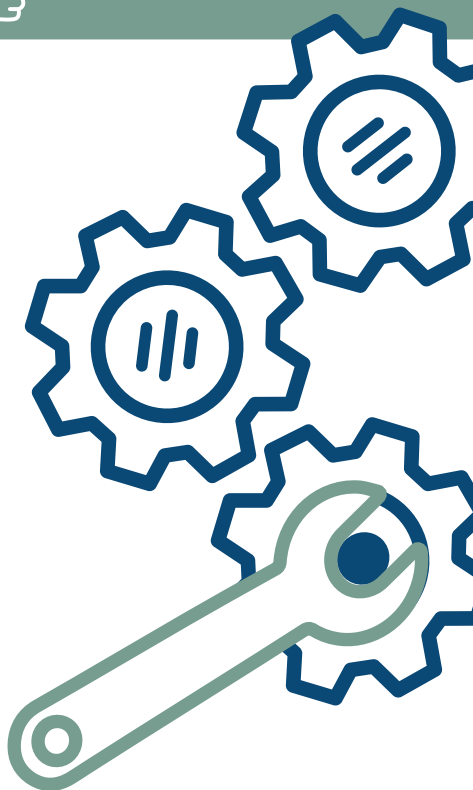
If not, what expectations do I need to adjust?

## RE-ADJUST SUPPORTS

The goal is to offer support for your child's changing needs.

Do they have appropriate support at this age, in this environment, at this time? Do they have scaffolded support?

If not, what supports need to be adjusted?

**KEEP IN MIND!**
▸ Age   ▸ Stage   ▸ State

## WHERE TO START?

- Re-evaluate and modify your expectations to close the expectation gap both in the present and for the future. Create time and space to process and potentially grieve unmet expectations.
- Re-evaluate and modify supports to meet your child's current capacity and scaffold towards growth over time. Create time and space to process and identify supports that you can provide yourself along with supports you will need to advocate for in other settings.

Dear Friends,

As you explore and apply these insights and strategies through the Connecting Practices for yourselves, your families, your communities, and the children in your care, we believe you can experience lasting change. We have seen caregivers reclaim hope, reignite passion, and find new, meaningful pathways to connection.

By choosing to do the intentional, deep, reflective work of connection- based caregiving, you are giving yourself, the children in your care, and generations to come a gift. You may even be choosing to break generational cycles.

This commitment takes self-awareness, courage, and determination. You are showing your willingness to unlearn old patterns while learning and implementing new ones. You are showing your courage by staying committed. No matter how many times you stumble or how many mistakes you make, each time is an opportunity for growth. Growth takes practice and repetition.

Remember, no matter where you are today, it's never too late to get started on the journey of connection and attachment with those you love. It is never too late to do your part in relational repair and it is never too late to start making sense of your past experiences and integrating that insight into your relationships today.

The good news is the path of cultivating connection does not require perfection, it requires your presence. Choosing to show up for yourself and the people you love, day in and day out, will be a life-changing investment into your family.

We're cheering you on and we know you are capable, strong, and resilient.

Holding on to hope,
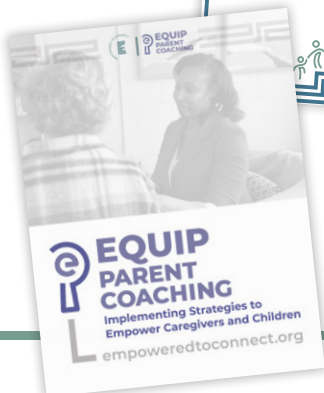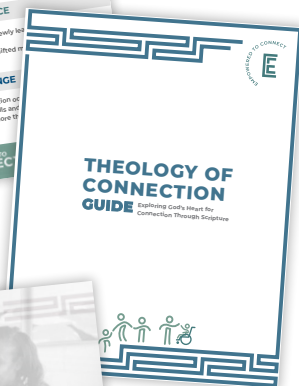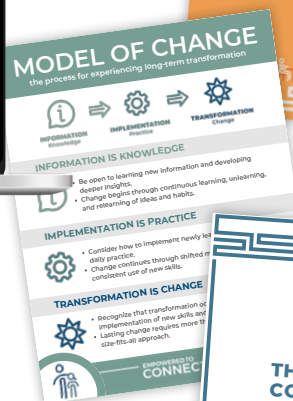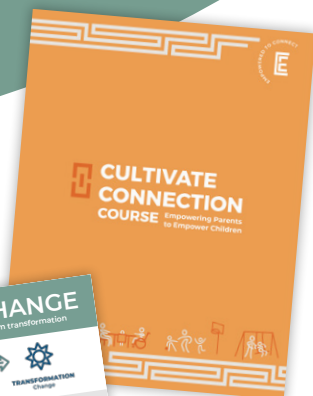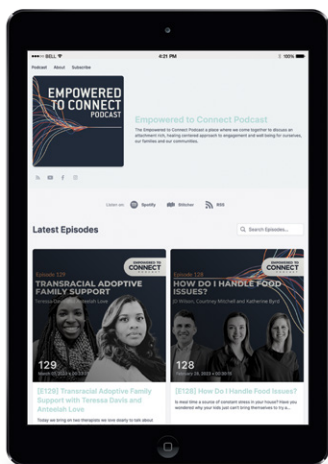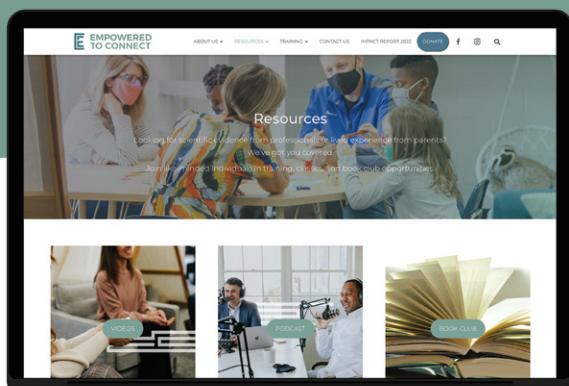**The Empowered to Connect Team**

# References

*Empowered to Connect's Connecting Practices were first published in Cultivate Connection (Copyright 2022) a derivative work of **Empowered to Connect: Connect Course (Copyright 2013)**. Major concepts have been adapted from the original course. Additional sources of theory and research are listed below for participant's reference. Any direct reference is listed as an in text citation.*

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## MODEL OF CHANGE
the process for experiencing long-term transformation

INFORMATION Knowledge ⇒ IMPLEMENTATION Practice ⇒ TRANSFORMATION Change

### INFORMATION IS KNOWLEDGE
- Be open to learning new information and developing deeper insights.
- Change begins through continuous learning, unlearning, and relearning of ideas and habits.

### IMPLEMENTATION IS PRACTICE
- Consider how to implement newly lea...
  daily practice.
- Change continues through shifted m...
  consistent use of new skills.

### TRANSFORMATION IS CHANGE
- Recognize that transformation o...
  implementation of new skills and...
- Lasting change requires more t...
  size-fits-all approach.

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