

WellNest Counseling

Bringing wellness to your nest



Week 6: Mindsight: The Art of Seeing

Please complete this workbook before your live meeting.

Rules of Thumb:

Never do for a child that which they can do themselves
Encourage the effort rather than praise the produce

Congratulations!

You are now halfway through this course! I hope you feel proud of yourself and all that you have accomplished so far. Even if you are spending just 5% more of your parenting time using these new skills, that is a win! This is hard work and it takes time to build new habits. You've got this!

Before we jump into to this week's topics, which are *being seen* and *using mindsight*, let's review:

So far you have discovered and established your values, learned about your parenting default mode and the different parenting styles, begun to implement the 5 foundations to parenting, discovered your attachment style, and understood the science behind the nervous system and how it contributes to behavior.

As a reminder, the 5 parenting foundations are:

1. Informed– As parents, we do our best to be informed about best parenting practices and we understand it is a skill that can be learned. We embrace the science behind child rearing and understand that many of society's expectations of children are developmentally inappropriate and unrealistic. We reflect on our parenting honestly, even though that may bring about uncomfortable feelings. We take ownership of our own mistakes as parents. We own our own feelings and emotions that affect our parenting. We try to parent intentionally and have forgiveness for ourselves when we make mistakes and are imperfect.

2. Emotions – We try our best to understand our kids' perspectives, pay attention to their feelings and emotions, and connect with our kids. We welcome our children's feelings (even the big loud angry ones) and help co-regulate through connection. We are loving towards our kids.

3. Boundaries and Values – We parent out of our values, which help us provide boundaries for our kids. We set limits for clarity that are centered around our core values. We support our kids' needs and meet their emotions so that they may also meet the boundaries and values of the family.

4. Safety- We aim to provide a space that is safe, warm, and loving, emotionally and physically. We use consequences instead of punishment. We hold empathy for ourselves and our kids along with compassion and forgiveness. We practice non-violence by connecting and communicating rather than using force, coercion, punishment, shame, blame, or guilt.

5. Fun – We aim to have fun! We try to laugh as much as we can, play, and enjoy each others' interests. Through play and joy, we gain healing, understanding, connection, and cooperation.

Reflect:

1. Of these 5 foundations, which are starting to become easier to you?
2. Which of the foundations are still a challenge for you?
3. Are you able to notice when you fall back into your default mode?
4. Have you noticed how your nervous system reacts to stress in parenting?
5. What coping skills have you found to be helpful to center yourself when you become dysregulated?
6. How does your child's nervous system react when feeling stressed?
7. What is a coping skill or calming tool you have found works for your child?

Mindsight: The Art of Seeing

The second 's' in Dan Siegel's four s's is Seen. The art of seeing a child is so much more than just looking at them. When a child is being seen, we are referring to understanding and interrupting their inner world. Looking "underneath" the behavior and figuring out what is truly driving it. For example, my son, who is 3 at the time of making the workbook, became extremely upset one night before bed. He started refusing to go to bed, crying, yelling, and swinging his arms around. I could have picked him up angrily and hauled him off to bed, feeling frustrated that he was once again refusing to engage in bedtime routine. Instead, I got curious about what was going on. I got down low, started speaking slowly, and reflected his feeling, "You are really mad and not ready to go to bed." He calmed down for a minute, then looked over at the box of magna-tiles and said, "My spaceship!" At that point I understood. I have picked up the magna-tiles and in the process destroyed the spaceship he had spent the last 30 minutes building. Now that I understood what was going on, I was able to effectively parent him and respond to help him regulate and achieve the goal of going to bed. If you have a teen, I am sure you have experienced a similar situation, only slightly more mature. It could be that your teen daughter couldn't find the right outfit for the party, or your son's priorities were more aligned with impressing his friend than leaving the event early. The problem is, sometimes kids can't express their true emotions, so it's our job as parents to look beneath the behavior and figure out what is driving it.

We do this by perceiving, making sense, and responding.

Perceiving: conveying attunement and understanding to your child's internal mental state in such a way that makes your child feel truly understood

Making sense: understanding what is actually going on in your child's mind

Responding: responding, rather than reacting, to what you see and understand in a timely manner

When this "triad of connection" as Dan Siegel calls it, is made, kids start to form a sense of self based on their parents' understanding of them. However, to be able to see our children truly and honestly, we need to be aware of our own experiences from childhood and how that influences our perception of parenting and your child. In short, *mindsight* is the ability to know your own mind and the mind of another, understanding a person's true intentions. During this process, kids also learn about themselves as individuals *and* how to be a part of a "we" in a relationship.

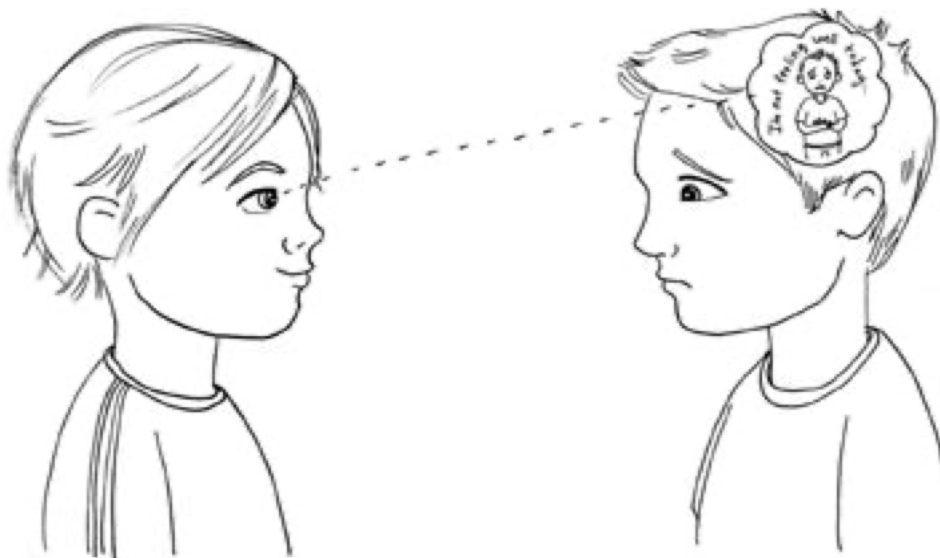
Mindsight is not rescuing or excusing behavior. You are still going to hold your kids to a high standard and have realistic expectations. And discipline (teaching) will still be necessary. Using *mindsight* offers a more accurate perception of your child, thus allowing you to choose a course of action that will allow you to send the message you want your kids to learn. When using *mindsight*, we have more compassion and understanding of the behavior, so hopefully instead of meeting your child with anger, you will be able to meet them where they are emotionally, help them cope, and then help them reach the goal.

MINDSIGHT=
 SEEING WITH
YOUR MIND



Just like “eyesight” is seeing with your eyes, “mindsight” is seeing with your mind. It means two things...

First, it means looking inside your own mind to see what is going on in there. Mindsight lets you pay attention to the pictures in your head, the thoughts in your mind, the emotions you experience, and even the feelings in your body. It helps you know yourself better.



The second part of mindsight is seeing someone else’s mind and trying to look at things the way they do.

Adapted by WellNest Counseling from the Whole-Brain Child by Dan Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson.

So with that in mind, let's reflect:

1. When you think back to your childhood, how would you describe your parents' ability to understand you? Did you feel seen?
2. Are you able to have deep and meaningful conversations with them?
3. How do you think your parents' ability (or lack of ability) to see you impacts your parenting today?
4. Think of the last time your child came to you upset. What messages did you convey about understanding them and their perspective? (Shame, blame, felt seen...?)

What gets in the way of using mindsight?

Ignoring their feelings

We do this *all the time* as parents. We don't mean to. Most of the time it's a response conditioned by society. Take some examples:

Example 1: Your toddler falls, looks to you, and starts crying. What do you say? Likely, "You're okay, don't cry!"

Example 2: Your teen comes to you fuming because her frenemy has bought the same dress and her plans to wear it to the dance too. You say, "Oh it's not that big a deal!"

Example 3: Your middle-schooler has been invited to a birthday party, but as you pull up she starts refusing to get out of the car and go. You might respond with, "Don't be nervous! There's nothing to worry about."

In all of these cases, the message being sent and received by your kiddo is, "Don't listen to your own feelings; they are wrong." Thus, we create a distrust between your child's own body and brain connection. With repetitive messaging, kids learn, "Don't trust my feelings, they are wrong, don't show them."

Looking through our own lens (Labels)

As a species we often seek out organization in chaos. We look for explanations that make sense and that we can comprehend. As parents, we do this same thing. When kids are struggling with behaviors, emotions, or choices that are concerning to parents, parents will often subscribe labels as a means of explanation. The idea is to provide comfort in *knowing*. The problem is we don't often actually *know*. We get it wrong a lot. We end up subscribing incorrect and damaging labels to our kids. Take a look at the list of labels below. Notice that some of the labels are often seen as positive. So you are probably thinking, "What's the harm in that?" Well, sometimes there isn't any harm. Actually, I would encourage you to write to your kiddo a little describing some of the positive qualities you appreciate about them. Before you do this, keep in mind your goals for your child. If your kiddo is someone who struggles with perfectionism, then likely the label "organized" or "responsible" would be adding more pressure on them to keep up that quality, thus increasing your child's anxiety. Sometimes even a positive label can add pressure to a child, increasing their feelings of not being seen. For example, if a child is labeled, "the good one" or "easy" or "go-with-the-flow", that child might interpret that she always must be this way, thus suppressing her emotions for the desire for her loved ones to continue to see her as "go-with-the-flow". When we decide who a child is with one of these labels, we often box them into that label. This prevents us from truly seeing them and the potential they have. So, while labels can be used for positive benefits, they can be equally as harmful.

Labels, Qualities, Judgements

Ambitious	Idealistic	Quiet
Appreciative	Illogical	Rash
Assertive	Immature	Reasonable
Attention seeking	Impulsive	Reckless
Boastful	Intelligent	Relaxed
Brave	Interesting	Reliable
Broad-minded	Joyful	Resentful
Careful	Kind	Resourceful
Careless	Lazy	Respectful
Caring	Light hearted	Responsible
Clever	Loyal	Self-confident
Compassionate	Mature	Self-reliant
Considerate	Modest	Self-sufficient
Controlling	Neat	Sensible
Cooperative	Open minded	Sensitive
Courageous	Original	Shy
Creative	Outgoing	Sincere
Dependable	Overcritical	Smart
Eager	Patient	Tenacious
Fickle	peaceful	Thorough
Friendly	Perceptive	Thoughtful
Gentle	Polite	Trustworthy
Good natured	Popular	Truthful
Gracious	Positive	Understanding
High spirited	Possessive	Warm
Honest	Practical	Weak
Honorable	Productive	Well spoken
Humble	Quick witted	Wise

Reflect:

1. Which 3 labels do you assign to your child most frequently?
2. Think of the last time a situation occurred where you found yourself assigning a label to your child. Using hindsight, what might have been going on for them? What needs, feelings, thoughts, or beliefs might be present in your child at that time?

Lack of information of child development

This topic could be a whole other workshop! Due to societal pressures and expectations, parents often have unrealistic expectations of their child. Cue the dinner table scene where it's a fight every day to get your 3-year-old to sit through an entire meal. Guess what?! Developmentally they can't. 3-year-olds can only hold attention for 10-15 minutes, so requiring that they sit at the table longer than that will only cause you a very large headache and an unpleasant dinner experience. Below you will see a chart explaining very briefly about brain development for each age group based on Dee Ray's *A Therapist's Guide to Child Development*.

The 3-year-old

Cognitive and Brain Development

- Aware of differences between boys and girls
- Understands right vs. wrong
- Pruning of unused connections
- Increased blood flow to the brain
- Language explosion
- Can store episodic memory
- Visual-motor coordination improves
- Self control improves
- Emotional regulation improves

Social emotional development

- May show preference in parents
- Developing autonomy
- Curious
- Will try new things
- Still very ego-centric
- Talkative
- Feelings are felt intensely and openly
- May show bigger emotions during stressful times or changes in routine
- Pushing, hitting, kicking, or biting is common during playtime
- Need adults to help problem solve when conflict arises
- Observant of others

The 4-year-old

Cognitive and Brain Development

- Increased language
- Better number sense
- Extremely active brain growth (uses about 30% of body energy)
- Start accessing left hemisphere brain functions
- Start using logic
- Understand cause and effect
- Verbalize feelings
- Attention, perceptions, memory, language, logical thinking, and imagination all improve
- Emotional development occurs so 4's can have more meaningful relationships
- Have a more flexible imagination (can pretend with less realistic toy, e.i using a door stopper as a phone)

Social/Emotional development

- May steal things they want. 4's have not yet developed morality to know it's wrong
- Curiosity
- Asking "why" a lot
- Extremely active
- Very clumsy
- Always runs climbs and jumps
- Can start to throw with accuracy
- Become more self-sufficient
- Ask questions about body parts
- Curious about how babies are made
- Observe gender roles and mimic them
- Discovering and stimulate one's own private parts is common and developmentally normal

The 5-year-old

Cognitive and Brain Development

- Ability to read and understand language improves
- Can plan and organize in simple ways
- Blood flow through the left hemisphere of the brain increases
- Expansion of vocabulary increases along with greater understanding of emotions, thus children can begin to explain their feelings better.
- Retell stories to integrate events into their understanding
- Ability to think in terms of categories increases
- Kids can better generalize

Social/Emotional Development

- Stealing and lying begin at this age
- Begin learning how to share more
- Boys tend to be more rough and attack the tasks, while girls will tend to play chase or catch
- Empathy begins to develop by comforting or helping others
- Cooperation can also increase here, as well as controlling aggression
- 5's can begin to accept other people's perception
- Relationships become more complex in the form of negotiations, competing, and excluding others

The 6-year-old

Cognitive and Brain Development

- Can tell knock-knock jokes but lack the ability to discern nuance in verbal humor (so they spoil the punch line or their jokes don't make sense).
- Around 6 ½ the brain begin to wire and rewire creating its structure
- Early childhood connections are pruned and new, more mature connections are being made
- Dopamine levels are similar to adulthood which increases a child's ability to focus and feel motivated
- Executive function increases
- Play continues to be important because it contributes to the area of the brain that is responsible for self-control
- Self-control increases
- Mental organization begins, like sorting colors blocks in their mind without actually moving the blocks
- Begin learning rules or reading and math

Social/Emotional Development

- Can be competitive
- Cry frequently
- Seem unreasonable or disobedient
- Bedtime and meals become difficult
- Love jokes and guessing games
- 6 ½ is much calmer than 6.
- Kids begin to learn about success and failure and need encouragement from adults
- Try their hand at jokes
- Ask a lot of questions
- Enjoy challenging and intellectual tasks
- Want to be best all the time
- Want to be first
- Become frustrated when losing a game
- Can be bossy
- Tend to be dramatic
- Become ashamed when they did something wrong, so they find it hard to admit to
- Value friendships

The 7-year-old

Cognitive and Brain Development

- Brain development begins to be heavily influenced by environmental factors
- There is an increase of glucose in the brain which is attributed to their high levels of energy. This is important for the cortex to develop which is responsible for receiving information
- Dopamine increases again, which can make it difficult for kids to stop or change activities (dopamine is linked with motivation so if your child has extra dopamine, your child has extra motivation, making it hard to stop an activity). This can also cause 7's to forget to take potty breaks, so accidents are not uncommon.
- Can use reasoning to make deductions
- They can hold 3+ steps directions at one time
- They understand events happen in a related sequence and order with reason
- At this age, kids change from fantasizing about fantasy to fantasizing about real world things like what job they want.
- 7's are starting to engage in metacognition (thinking about thinking)

Social/Emotional Development

- Believes things are not fair and tend to think the world is against them
- Cry easily but are embarrassed so they try to hide it
- Develop perfectionism
- They start to control impulses
- They shift from the need to win to the need to have better deeper relationships
- 7's engage in comparison to their peers frequently
- Boys will start to discriminate against playing with girls
- 7's start to more deeply understand cause and effect from a social standpoint
- 7's can describe who is best at what or most popular
- Can follow 3 step directions
- Start to look inside themselves to learn about themselves.

The 8-year-old

Cognitive and Brain Development

- Increase in learning through conversation, memory, and reasoning
- Can begin to focus on several parts of a task at one time (for example, know that there is the same amount of water in a glass, even if one is taller and one is shorter but wider).
- Begin to be able to reverse steps, like in math; they know that subtraction is the reverse of addition
- This age also likes to collect and sort objects according to length or another dimension
- The ability to think in abstracts has not developed yet. Children at 8 are still bound to their experiences and cannot think outside of it, although they can start to take on other people's perspectives of their experiences

Social/Emotional Development

- Tend to be resistant to rules, but eventually follow them in the end with consistency
- Usually affectionate, helpful, and outgoing
- Very interested in fairness
- Begin to understand their own emotions and start to have the ability to avoid negative emotions. i.e. walking away from a tense conversation or helping parents to get praise
- Improvement in interpersonal relationships
- Can start to understand others' perspectives and start to gain the ability to "put oneself in someone else's shoes".
- Start to pay attention to social rules and "unwritten rules".
- Being different starts to be a big deal and undesired
- Adults are still important figures whom 8's will try to seek approval from

The 9-year-old

Cognitive and Brain Development

- Starts to be able to combine logical thinking with emotional reactions
- Can focus for longer periods of time
- Enjoys learning and mastering new skills

- Is independent in schoolwork
- Can think logically and rationally
- Starts to lose interest in fairy tales
- Can master reading chapter books

Social/Emotional Development

- Starts to lose interest in approval from parents
- A dramatic shift from parental reliance to independence
- Focuses more on peers approval
- Argues less with adults
- May argue more with peers
- Prefers to play with same-sex peers

- Shows little interest in the opposite sex, has not yet developed romantic interests
- Becomes even more aware of differences amongst peers and values acceptance
- Can be competitive
- Tends to be idealistic and overly critical of self and others

The 10-year-old

Cognitive and Brain Development

- Good at memorization
- Continues to think concretely and logically based on their own experiences

- Has trouble solving problems they have not experienced yet
- Likes to organize and categorize
- Brain can process ideas faster
- Learns best by being hands on

Social/Emotional Development

- Pretty calm emotionally
- Usually flexible
- Wants to be seen as “good”
- Can use cognitive skills to regulate emotions
- May become angry quickly, but will calm down quickly too
- Tends to be cooperative
- Looks for emotional support from friends

- Seeks acceptance and will even take on the values or norms of a desired group
- Identifies self in terms of social groups
- Tends to choose peers that are similar physically and culturally
- May start to be aware of same-sex and opposite-sex attractions

The 11-year-old

Cognitive and Brain Development

- Increased processing speed again
- Can start to deduce more accurately
- Can begin to manipulate intellectual information

- Still very concrete in thinking
- Prefers to learn new skills
- Does not enjoy practicing old skills
- Better takes on other perspectives

Social/Emotional Development

- Begins to seek a variety of friends
- Enjoys working collaboratively with friends
- More moody
- Unpredictable in moody outbursts
- Sense of self develops based on internal evaluation
- Strong sense of fairness
- Concerned with belonging socially
- Continues to define identity by peer groups
- May start to challenge adults
- Can be verbally or physically aggressive, usually only in the home environment

The 12-year-old

Cognitive and Brain Development

- Puberty begins
- Can become easily overwhelmed
- However, contradictorily likes novelty and stimulation
- Becomes more impulsive due to lack of executive functions and increased awareness and cognitive function
- Sees more “gray” rather than thinking in black and white
- Tends to begin to be unmotivated by school work

Social/Emotional Development

- Tends to be excited
- Difficult to read emotionally and can be unpredictable
- Wants to make meaningful contributions
- Sense of self becomes stronger
- Peers are their primary source of support
- Changes behavior to fit in
- Even less likely to agree with parents or adults
- Begin to show more romantic interests
- Becomes aware of racial issues
- Becomes curious about sex and may experiment with sexual behaviors

The teens:

Cognitive development

- Increased pruning of childhood neural connections
- Increased development of “adult” neural connections
- Changes in the areas of the brain responsible for novelty seeking, social engagement, emotional intensity, and creative exploration
- Tend to put more emphasis on potential positives of a situation rather than think about the negatives
- Dopamine is increased in the brain which contributes to increased reward seeking behavior i.e. the enticing fun of speeding down a hill in a golf cart is a bigger reward than the potential consequence of getting injured

- Increased impulsivity due to increased dopamine
- Increased risk of addiction due to increased dopamine
- Melatonin (the hormone for sleep) is released later at night (closer to midnight) and held onto longer (till about 8am). This is why it is so difficult for teens to wake up for school.
- Most teens can and should be sleeping around 9-10 hours a day
- The cingulate cortex is an area of the brain that contributes to learning from mistakes. In teens this part of the brain is not done developing, so they continue to make the same mistakes

Social/Emotional Development

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased approval seeking from peers ● Decreased importance of parental acceptance ● Motivation to try new things ● Sensation-seeking begins ● Risk taking and thrill seeking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Open to change ● Need for social connection increases (parents don't count) ● Increased impulsivity, moodiness, and reactivity ● Increased vulnerability to peer pressure |
|--|--|

Reflect:

1. Looking at the information above, do you feel you have realistic expectations about your child's behavior? In what ways or not?

2. If any of your expectations need to shift, write them below:

Unrealistic expectation	New, more realistic expectations

Fear and projection

This is when you resort to your default mode: When you are afraid of imminent danger or afraid of what a behavior indicates for your child's personality. This pulls from last week's nervous system science. When your amygdala gets fired into fight or flight, your prefrontal cortex shuts off and you lose the ability to think clearly. This happens in less dire situations than you would think. For example, if your middle schooler gets a bad grade on a test, you might think he is being lazy. If he is lazy then his grades will suffer, and you must nip this in the bud now. If you don't then, he won't change in high school. If he doesn't change in high school, then he won't get into college because his grades are still suffering. See how we are catastrophizing now? The brain can't tell the difference between life-threatening situations and not getting into college. Stress is stress.

Lack of integrations and self-awareness

If you were not seen and understood, it will be difficult for you to see and understand your child. This is because you were not modeled on how to do this. You were not given the space to practice it. Let's explore some of the labels that might be holding your back today.

Reflect:

1. What was the most common label assigned to you as a child?
2. As a child, what role did you play in your family? The caretaker? The funny one? The moody one? The black sheep? The responsible one? The rebel?
3. When you were a child was there something you loved, but pretend you didn't in order to fit in?
4. As a child, did you wish you had more of a certain quality?
5. In my family's culture, or larger culture, it was not okay for a girl child to be _____.
6. In my family's culture, or larger culture, it was not okay for a boy child to be _____.
7. As a child, what did you aspire to be, no matter how unrealistic?
8. As a child, the qualities I most admired in other was _____ because:

9. As a parent, I most desire to have which qualities?

10. As a parent I find I'm most irritated, annoyed, or overwhelmed when my child(ren):

a. Display the following qualities:

b. Don't display the following qualities:

c. Do the following actions:

d. Don't do the following actions:

11. As a parent I sometimes wish that my child(ren) would:

a. Show more of the following qualities:

b. Show fewer of the following qualities:

Shaming

There is a fine line between shaming your child and seeing them. I know that sounds weird, but it's true. We also unintentionally shame our kids all the time. Shame comes from a lack of attunement with our kids' emotions. And repeated and consistent lack of attunement causes a child to internalize their emotions and come to believe that something is fundamentally wrong with them. But with a few minor tweaks to our wording, we can avoid shame. See below for an example of this adapted from Dan Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson book, *The power of showing up*:

Shame	Seeing
 <p>Big boys don't cry when they don't get what they want.</p>	 <p>I know you really wanted that! It's hard when you can't have what you want.</p>
 <p>Come on! None of your friends are nervous about riding a bike!</p>	 <p>It's scary, isn't it? I'll run beside you the whole time! You can do it!</p>
 <p>What's wrong with you that you are acting this way?!</p>	 <p>I know you weren't ready to turn off your game yet. I get it. It's hard for me too.</p>

Strategies to use mindsight

Understand can't vs won't

Ask yourself, “is this a developmentally appropriate expectation I hold for my child?” Many times, we think a child *should* be able to do something when they actually can't. Remember the 3-year-old dinner table situation from earlier? Mola Delahook, author of *Beyond Behaviors*, states that more than 50% of parents believe their 3 or under child should have the capability to resist the impulse to do the thing that they were told not to do. This type of impulse control doesn't develop till around 3 1/2 . Refer to the chart above to see if your expectations are developmentally appropriate.

Chase the why

Get curious about your child's behavior. Ask yourself, “*Why* is my child doing that? What is going on with them?” Dive deep into the behavior and figure out the motivation. It is rarely due to manipulation or children are “just bad”. The Jai institute for parenting uses a Root to Bloom process that might come in handy.

View the following example of the Root to Bloom Process:

Consider for a child:

FLOWER: Child hits you while you try to get their pajamas on.

ROOTS:

- Feelings: Disappointed to stop playing. Scared that bedtime will be stressful like usual.
- Unmet needs: Autonomy, connection, safety, play.
- Thoughts: Mommy is mad at me. Mommy is rough.
- Beliefs: I'm bad. Mommy is not safe.
- Context of situation: Bedtime started late and the child just turned off the TV. Child is up way past bedtime.
- Brain development: Under the age of 11, and cannot control impulses.
Anger=Aggression.
- Nervous system regulation: In fight or flight, unable to self regulate. Needs 100% support calming down.
- Quality of secure attachment: Raised in a power-over home with daily screaming and threats. Does not feel safe. Goes into fight/flight very easily.

Consider for a teen:

FLOWER: Yelling because they can't go to the party because they didn't finish their homework.

ROOTS:

- Feelings: mad at you and themselves, disappointed they can't see their friends
- Unmet needs: belonging, power, autonomy, independence
- Thoughts: "My parents don't understand why this is so important."
- Beliefs: "My parents don't get me. They don't care."
- Context of situation: Teen is missing the hyped-up talked-about social event because they did not do their homework
- Brain development: logic, reasoning, and problem solving still developing
- Nervous system: In the red, fight or flight, might need help regulating.
- Quality of secure attachment: If raised in power-over, does not feel safe.

Now you try:

Pick a scenario and practice recognizing all the roots that contribute to the outward behavior.

ROOTS to BLOOM

FLOWER (the outward behavior)

ROOTS: (everything beneath the surface)

- Feelings

- Unmet Needs:

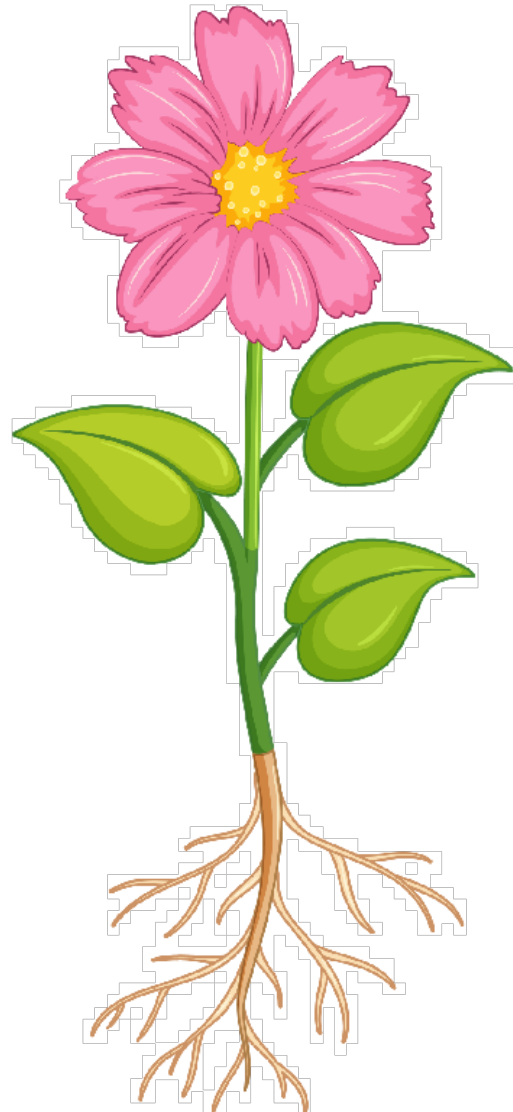
- Thoughts

- Beliefs

- Context of situation

- Brain Development

- Attachment:



Listen vs lecture

Okay, this is one of my worst habits as a parent. I often find myself lecturing on why a certain rule is that way, when I really just need to slow down and listen. Usually when that happens, I gain a better understanding of what is truly going on and then we can problem-solve.

Here's what to do:

1. When you notice your child's emotional temperature rising, make gentle contact, maybe by putting your hand on a shoulder or holding their hand
2. Take a deep breath that your child can see
3. Get eye level and say slowly, "I see you are upset (or whatever feeling is going on). I am here and listening. Tell me what's going on."
4. Then STOP talking and listen! Let your child talk until they are done. Do not interrupt!

Make time for conversation

Bedtime is a great one for this. Make time to just chat. It doesn't have to be a deep conversation every night. Just talk about their day and share about yours (on a developmentally appropriate level of course. Another colleague of mine once gave a solid piece of advice: If you don't have a child that willingly shares about their day, you start sharing about yours (again at a developmentally appropriate level). This is modeling at its finest.

Sportscast

Say what you see! Like you are a sportscaster at a game. This helps kids develop their own hindsight as well as strengthen yours. Remember your voice becomes their inner voice one day.

"I see you working hard on your project."

"I notice you brushing your teeth and getting all the spaces clean."

"I see you putting the toys away. I wonder what you'll do next."

Humility rather than righteousness to make your point

In lieu of "I told you so" or "If you would have listened..." try reflecting feeling and making neutral observations.

Reflect:

1. Pick one skill and commit to using it this week. Which skill will you choose to focus on?

Seeing does not mean rescuing: Building Self Esteem

At the core of seeing, is really building self esteem. By seeing your child you are helping him or her develop a positive and accurate sense of self. This is where our rule of thumb for this week comes in. *Never do for a child that for which they can do themselves.* When you *see* your child, you are not rescuing them. You are not saying their behavior is okay. You are not making excuses. You are simply understanding their mindset. When you *see* your child, then you can help problem solve and build their self-esteem.

Garry Landreth, a child therapist and psychologist in Dallas, Texas, developed many parenting programs. In one of his programs he used the following story to depict the importance of *seeing* your child, but also letting them struggle. Consider the following:

The Struggle to Become a Butterfly: A True Story (Author Unknown)

A family in my neighborhood once brought in two cocoons that were just about to hatch. They watched as the first one began to open and the butterfly inside squeezed very slowly and painfully through a tiny hole that it chewed in one end of the cocoon. After lying exhausted for about 10 minutes following its agonizing emergence, the butterfly finally flew out the open window on its beautiful wings.

The family decided to help the second butterfly so that it would not have to go through such an excruciating ordeal. So, as it began to emerge, they carefully sliced open the cocoon with a razor blade. The second butterfly never did sprout wings, and in about 10 minutes, instead of flying away, it quietly died.

The family asked a biologist friend to explain what had happened. The scientist said that the difficult struggle to emerge from the small hole actually pushes liquids from deep inside the butterfly's body cavity into the tiny capillaries in the wings, where they harden to complete the healthy and beautiful adult butterfly.

Remember: WITHOUT THE STRUGGLE, THERE ARE NO WINGS!

Self-esteem can be built on a daily basis just by tweaking some of your phrases you use with your kiddo. Read the following phrases, pick 1 or 2 to keep in your back pocket and look for opportunities to respond this way.

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