

WellNest Counseling

Bringing wellness to your nest



Week 9: The Peace Process

Rule of Thumb: Use short concise sentences.

Please complete this workbook before your live meeting.



At this point in your journey, you should be getting more comfortable with some of these key concepts. As a refresher, here is what you have learned so far:

The Parenting 5 Foundations:

1. Informed
2. Emotions
3. Boundaries and Values
4. Safety
5. Fun

Active Listening:

1. Slow down, be present, and listen with intention
2. Refrain from interrupting
3. Try not to label or judge
4. Do not compare

Reflecting Feeling:

Simply state the child's feelings back to them, "You are feeling word." Do this first before any other parenting skills are incorporated.

Hand-Brain Model:

When the brain is connected, we think with our upstairs and downstairs brains together. However, when we get sent into fight or flight, we lose access to our upstairs brain, thus flipping our lid.



Anchor yourself:

- **A**wareness of what's going on in your body
- **N**ame the emotions
- **C**onnect to your calming tool
- **H**onor the process
- **O**pen to connection
- **R**ecommit to your parenting goals

Harbor:

- **H**old space for your child and ALL of their emotions
- **A**cept ALL of the emotions – emotions are okay
- **R**emember their calming tool(s), model it
- **B**e low and slow
- **O**pen to connection
- **R**eassurance verbally – tell them they are safe



Root-to-Bloom Process for Looking Beneath the Surface of Behavior

- FLOWER: Outward expression of the child's behavior.
- ROOTS: Everything beneath the surface that the parent must pause and take into consideration:

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|---------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| → Feelings | → Context of situation | → Quality of secure attachment |
| → Unmet needs | → Brain development | |
| → Thoughts | → Nervous system regulation | |
| → Beliefs | | |

Intentional Conversations:

1. Reflect feeling
2. Get consent
3. Say what you see
4. State how what you see makes you feel
5. State the needs, values, and/or desires
6. Make a request

Parenting tool bag:

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|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Name it to tame it ● Connect to redirect ● Engage, don't enrage ● SIFT ● Box Breathing ● Understand "can't" versus "won't" ● Chase the "why?" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Listen vs Lecture ● Make time for conversation ● Sportscast ● Humility rather than righteousness ● Use self-esteem-building responses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Calm cave/corner ● Energy-releasing movement ● Soothing music ● Touch ● Distress signal |
|---|---|---|

Reflect:

1. How are these concepts going for you? Which ones do you feel strongly about? Which ones would you like to work on?

The PEACE Process:

Now that you have a better general idea about how to have intentional conversations, let's concentrate on what that means for you as a parent. You've likely gotten a ton of advice about how to help your kids calm down when they are upset or hurting, either physically or emotionally. Admittedly, I have been the one to give you some of those tips (see above). In reality, there is no magical parenting move you can do that will make everything easier and better. There is no one trick that will get your child to stop a



tantrum and cooperate. But there is a general process you can use to help your child regulate, and that is The PEACE Process.

When to use the PEACE process:

As mentioned above, this is a framework for how to respond in trying moments. You can literally use this method in all the situations that arise in your parenting.

- Sibling conflict
- Child not following through with an agreement
- Setting and keeping boundaries
- Hitting or other harmful behaviors
- Families struggling to work together
- Parent-child disagreement
- Power struggles
- Conflict resolution

Let's explore what this method is:

P - Presence

E - Empathy

A – Acknowledging what is true

C – Conscious Communication

E – Exploring solutions together

Step 1: Presence

You've probably heard and experienced by now how disconnected our world is. We are so distracted by screens, work, and obligations that we have trouble being fully present in the moment. It takes intention and practice to be fully available, and this starts with ANCHORing yourself before coming in with your intentional parenting method. Whatever your calming tool is, use it. Even if it is just for 30 seconds before you intervene with your kids. Your goal here is to set your thermostat so you can control the emotional tone in the room. You want to invite connection by being present and receptive. We leave judgments at the door and fully listen to our kids.

If the situation does not allow for you to take a moment to regulate yourself, for example, safety, that's okay. Respond as best you can, and when you have a moment to reorient yourself, take it. The beautiful thing about parenting is that everything can be a teaching moment for your kids. There will come a time in their life when they don't have time to regulate and anchor themselves and will need to react. Your children will model how they handle these situations based on how you did. So, it is perfectly reasonable to say, "I am not completely present, but I am going to do my best!"

Reflect:

1. What is your most accessible calming tool? What about your child?



2. Think of a time you were able to center yourself before responding to your kids. How does this differ from a time when you didn't get to center yourself beforehand?

Step 2: Empathy

As always, the theme of intentional parenting is connecting that feeling first, which lives in the right hemisphere of the brain. Webster's defines empathy as the ability to be sensitive to and aware of the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of another person vicariously. This means you don't need to have had the experience of the person to understand what they are feeling and *feel with them*. In fact, many of us adults won't be able to experience what our kids do because the world is so different from what we experienced as kids. That doesn't mean you can't empathize with them. Empathy is so important because when people (no matter their age) *feel felt and understood*, defensiveness eases and connection takes its place. With connection comes cooperation.

Empathy is a skill and while we all have it naturally some come by it a little easier than others. But because it is a skill, it can be learned. As a therapist, we literally have a whole class on how to be empathetic. Many people use certain phrases or responses that they *think* are empathetic but are actually punitive or condescending. Sometimes people use phrases they *think* are empathetic because they are feeling uncomfortable and don't know what else to say. And sometimes we jump to meeting others' needs like clarity or acceptance and forget to engage in empathy first. Let's look at some examples that are *not* empathy:

Sympathy - bringing back to yourself, "Oh, I am so sorry for you," or "I feel terrible for you."

Advice – assuming the other person wants to know what to do. Yes, even your kids. Sometimes we just want to be heard, we are not seeking a solution.

Explain/Analyze - thinking that if you explain the why behind the way it will help. "You're just mad because..." This can be a helpful response, but it is not empathy.

Correcting – pointing out other perceptions or misinterpretations that person is making. "Well, maybe he didn't know you weren't done with the toy when you put it down and he grabbed it."

Telling a story – those of us who are neurodivergent (ADHD/autism/other) tend to launch into a story about ourselves. Our intention is that we are just trying to connect with the other person, however, most people take it as one-upping or not feeling heard. If you aren't neurodivergent you might still be at fault for this. One-upping is a no-no when trying to convey empathy.

Interrogate – asking, "Why did you do that?"

Diagnosing – saying, "Sounds like you just need more sleep."

Silver Lining – stating something positive that came out of the situation.



Cheerleading – reassuring a person, “You’re so strong! You can do it!”

Most of the concepts above are not necessarily “bad” things to do (minus interrogating), it's just that they aren't illustrations of empathy. Everyone needs a cheerleader, advice, or an explanation sometimes and there is an optimal time to use each of these. Empathy is just the first step to take before these other needs are met. So, let's look at what empathy *actually* is:

Reflecting Feeling – “You feel mad that your Lego ship is broken.” Or, “You feel hurt because you weren't invited to the party.”

Body Posture – make sure your nose, knees, and toes are all facing the person to whom you are listening. Don't cross any body parts like your legs or arms, keep an open body posture.

Making Eye Contact – this is one of the best ways to show you are listening.

Put the Phone Down - literally, out of your hand. Not just face down on your knee or in your hand. Put the phone away.

Mirror Nonverbals - Have you ever noticed that when you are really attuned to someone, you copy each other's body posture? One person crosses a leg, then the other does. This is a good sign that you are using empathy.

Retelling in Your Own Words – after your child (or friend- this stuff works with all ages and all relationships) finishes talking, repeat what you heard back to them in your own words. If you get an emphatic “yeah” or “exactly!” from the other person, they likely are feeling felt and understood!

Step 3: Acknowledge What is True

Now that you have connected with your right brain, it's time to connect with your left brain. We've talked a lot about being connected to the downstairs and upstairs parts of the brain when kids (and adults) have flipped their lids. Well, the other part of that equation is to connect the right (emotional) and left (logical) parts of your brain (or your kids). We do this by acknowledging what is true. Think back to last week and how you learned to state what you see, without judgment. For example, when your child's room is messy instead of, “Why can't you keep your room clean?! You are so disorganized! How are you going to get through life?” say, “I see clothes on the floor and items have fallen off your shelves.”

In this step, you also want to keep in mind the developmental norms we went over a few weeks ago. Expecting a 3-year-old to remember to put their clothes in the dirty laundry every day would be developmentally inappropriate. Having age-appropriate expectations helps you have appropriate responses. You won't feel as frustrated with your 3-year-old about not being able to clean if you expect that they can't clean by themselves yet.



Step 4: Conscious Communication

The PEACE process is all about using the skills you have gathered over the last 8 weeks and putting them all together in times of conflict. The goal of this process is to attempt to bring down defensiveness and communicate in a way that does not do harm to another's self-esteem or self-concept. Using this process and being intentional with your words allows you to set boundaries and hold empathy at the same time. This is a tricky skill, and this is why we have a guiding framework like this. We pull on elements from week 8 in this section, stating clearly what you see and what your values are as a family.

So far in the PEACE process you have communicated:

- Your feelings and needs for yourself
- Your child's feelings and needs with empathy
- Factual statements about what is currently going on
- The ability to listen and hear your child's perspective and reflect it back to them

Some phrases that help avoid defensiveness and establish connection:

- Tell me more...
 - Example: "Sam, I heard you yell at your brother after he knocked down the Lego ship you worked so hard on, so you pushed him. Tell me more about that."
- Is it true that...
 - Example: "Tim, is it true that you knocked over your brother's Lego ship?"
- I wonder...
 - Example: "I wonder what you were feeling to have done that?"
- Am I getting this right?
 - Example: "Sounds like you two both had some strong feelings and were not sure what to do. Am I getting that right?"

Step 5: Exploring Solutions Together

The last step to this process is essentially problem-solving. As much as we can, when the situation allows for it and with developmental age-appropriateness in mind, we invite our kids to problem-solve with us. If we step in with punishments too quickly, we risk pushing our kids into their fight-or-flight response. The more we can work collaboratively with our kids, the better chance we have of coming up with a positive solution, protecting our relationships, and teaching the true lesson we mean to teach.

This all looks a little different depending on your child's age:

Age 0-7	Parents will likely have in mind what the solution is based on their family values and will help guide their kids to that solution while being open to their kids' input. For example, if you are trying to encourage your kiddo to clean up you might say, "I see you are having trouble working as a team and not wanting to clean up, but the toys do need to be picked up. Would you like to pick up the blocks or the Legos?" Understanding your child's needs or frustrations will help you figure out how to meet the goal in a flexible
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	way. If your child usually picks up the blocks, maybe they can pick up something else today. Or, if your child is just so excited about the next activity, maybe you set a timer and try to race it.
Age 7-12	Parents may still have a solution in mind, but at this age, family values are clear through modeling and consistency. The parents will still lead, but as the kiddo gets older, the parents give more autonomy and responsibility to come up with solutions within the boundaries and values of the family.
Age 13-Adult	Kids are starting to develop their own values as they mature into adulthood. This can cause kids to become rebellious as they sway between agreeing and disagreeing with the family's values. Parents and kids will spend more time talking about why rules are the rules, which values they stem out of, and what compromises can be made to meet the most needs possible. Not all needs will be met because sometimes a value is more important than a need. For example, the value of safety is more important than your child's need to socialize or be seen as cool.

Re-establishing Family Values:

As you can tell from the chart, the way we discipline is heavily rooted in your values system. Making sure you are clear on what your values are and that you and your family have agreed upon these values will guide you in how you discipline your children. In week 2, we worked to establish what your values were as a framework. As you have gone through this process, some of your values may have changed. Let's take a moment to revisit your family values. Below is a list of values that might resonate with you. Circle 10 values that your family holds. Feel free to write in any values that are not included.

Accomplishment	Creativity	Fun
Accountability	Decisiveness	Generosity
Accuracy	Delight of Being	Gentleness
Adventure	Democracy	Global View
All for One and One for All	Determination	Goodness
Beauty	Discipline	Goodwill
Calm	Discovery	Gratitude
Challenge	Diversity	Happiness
Change	Dynamism	Hard Work
Charity	Efficiency	Harmony
Cleanliness	Enjoyment	Health
Collaboration	Equality	Honor
Commitment	Excellence	Human-Centered
Communication	Failing Forward	Improvement
Community	Fairness	Independence
Competence	Faith	Individuality
Competition	Faithfulness	Inner Peace
Concern for Others	Family	Innovation
Continuous Improvement	Flair	Integrity
Cooperation	Freedom	Intelligence
Coordination	Friendship	Intensity



Justice	Progress	Speed
Kindness	Prosperity	Spirit
Knowledge	Punctuality	Spirituality
Leadership	Quality of Work	Stability
Love	Quiet	Standardization
Loyalty	Regularity	Status
Meaning	Reliability	Strength Connection
Merit	Resourcefulness	Success
Money	Respect for Others	Systemization
Nonviolence	Responsiveness	Teamwork
Oneness	Results-Oriented	Timeliness
Openness	Romance	Tolerance
Other's Point of View	Rule of Law	Tradition
Patriotism	Safety	Tranquility
Peace	Satisfying Others	Trust
Perfection	Security	Truth
Perseverance	Self-Givingness	Unity
Personal Growth	Self-Thinking	Variety
Pleasure	Sensitivity	Wealth
Power	Service (to others, society)	Well Being
Preservation	Simplicity	
Privacy	Skill	

Reflect:

1. Have your values shifted at all?

2. What are the top 3 values you hold for your family?

Boundaries:

Now that we have re-established your personal boundaries, let's take a look at your family boundaries. I want you to start to change the way you think about "rules". Instead, let's think of them as boundaries. The idea around this change is to shift from being an enforcer of rules to providing structure and expectation for your kids. With healthy boundaries, kids can learn the skills they need to be successful and contributing members of society. We trust that our kids will learn these important skills over time with repetition, modeling, consistency, and empathy. This is not to say that we hold boundaries rigidly with no negotiation. Negotiating is important, especially as kids get older. This means that there is flexibility in how the boundary is met without moving the boundary.

You can shift HOW you hold your boundaries, but not the actual boundary.



Example: The boundary is “Our family eats dinner together every weeknight.”

This boundary is rooted in the value of **connection**.

Possible strategies to honor the boundary but be flexible:

- Have a picnic outside
- Eat at the table while playing a game
- Eat together while reading a book out loud
- Everyone had a late lunch, so the family dinner is shifted to a different time
- Everyone stays at the table and everyone *chooses* to eat or not eat
- Young children can move or stand while eating

At the end of the day, *how* the boundary is met isn’t as important as keeping the boundary itself. This is why knowing which value the boundary is stemming out of is important. It helps focus you on the actual goal.

Let’s look at an example of how this entire process works.

Example: A young boy hits his older brother:

Value: Kindness, Respect

Boundary: People are not for hurting

Presence	The parent immediately goes to the child in need and makes sure they are okay. The parent then takes the time to anchor themselves, use a calming tool, and set the emotional tone with a calm reaction.
Empathy	The parent takes note of the child's body language and reflects feeling. “I’m here to help. I’m feeling frustrated because I wanted to finish my task so I know you two must be frustrated too. Sam seemed mad and didn’t know what to do after getting hurt. Why don’t you tell me what happened first?” After listening to Sam, the parent listens to Tim.
Acknowledge	The parent acknowledges what is true about the situation either out loud or internally. “We are safe, everyone is okay, we can solve this together.”
Communicate	The parent reflects what is going on back to the kids. “Sam, I see. You felt hurt when Tim hit you. You didn’t mean to knock over his Lego ship. It was an accident. And Tim, you worked so hard on that ship. You felt so mad when it broke. It took you hours to build.”
Explore Solutions	After both kids feel heard and validated: “I wonder what we can do to solve this problem. In our family, we value respect and kindness. Tim, when you feel mad what is something you can do besides hitting? Sam, how can you be more careful? What can we do now to help everyone feel better?”



Now, you try: Think of a boundary that has not been followed lately or frequently. It could be like the example above or it could be something like “everyone sits at the table for dinner.”

What is the boundary? _____

What is the value? _____

Presence	
Empathy	
Acknowledge	
Communicate	
Explore solutions	



One last note:

Boundaries can be permanent and evolving. As your kids get older, boundaries might shift quite a lot. Some boundaries will remain the same, you will have to add some boundaries, and other boundaries will change altogether. Keep in mind that consistency is important. So, once a boundary is set, the boundary stays. It may shift and change slightly, but it stays. For example, the boundary of “People are not for hurting” may shift from, “no hitting your brother” to a more expansive definition of “hurt” to include emotionally and physically. However, the boundary is still consistent, and that consistency comes from your values.

Reflect:

1. Which boundaries do you feel will be easy to set?
2. Which boundaries do you feel would be more difficult to set?
3. Are there any boundaries you and your spouse need to talk about so that you are on the same page?
4. What is one commitment you would like to make this week to your intentional parenting program?
5. Did you have any takeaways, questions, comments, or concerns?



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