

WellNest Counseling

Bringing wellness to your nest



Week 3: Parenting Styles and The Foundations

Rule of Thumb: We parent in response to how we were parented.

Please complete this workbook before your live meeting

Parenting Styles

The four commonly accepted parenting styles are authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful. If you are here working on this workbook, you likely don't fall into the neglectful category. For this reason, we will focus only on the authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles. During this workbook and this program, I will refer to the remaining parenting styles as such: "**Power over**" to describe authoritarian, "**power under**" to describe permissive, and "**power with**" to describe authoritative. Read below to learn more about each style:

Power Over (Authoritarian):

- There is minimal space for the child's feelings, thoughts, needs, desires, wants, and voice. The parent is at the top of the hierarchy and the child is at the bottom.
- The child is to be "seen and not heard" and must be trained to "be good"
- Parents make unilateral decisions without considering the child's perspective, development, feelings, needs, or opinions. "I am the parent and I know best!"
- Parents must "rule with an iron fist" so their child does not turn out "spoiled and entitled."
- In order to avoid vulnerability and protect their own internal sense of powerlessness, the parent's physiological state moves to the "fight" response.
- Fear and shame are used as tools to control children's behavior or the parent's external environment. This includes: yelling, shaming, threatening, punitive time outs, name-calling, any kind of physical harm, withholding food, isolation, and comparison.
- Demand obedience without any explanation is common. "Don't ask why, just do it!"
- Children are punished, lectured, shamed, or criticized for their mistakes.
- Parents blame children for their own lack of emotional regulation.
- Parents retaliate against the child's dysregulated and disoriented behavior.
- Parents act from fear without awareness or reflection.
- Parents want to control who their child is, how they feel, and how they act in order to be seen as a "good parent."
- Love and acceptance are conditional on the child's success, achievement, performance, or behavior.
- Parents see their child AS their behaviors, and focus on molding, sculpting, or correcting behaviors, rather than trying to understand the behaviors, meet the core need, accept the developmental stage, and model the skills the child will eventually grow into, on their own time, at their own pace.

Power Under (Permissive/Uninvolved):

- Parents struggle with being present, physically or emotionally, and children are expected to “raise themselves.”
- Parents may struggle to set grounded boundaries from clear values. The stress of needing to parent from a place of confidence and leadership can be too much to bear, so they prefer to keep quiet, stay passive, and allow their children to make their own decisions.
- May feel confused about what they value.
- Struggle with using their voice and communicating their feelings and needs.
- May experience little support and choose very loose boundaries for the sake of temporary ease.
- Do not believe they are a competent teacher.
- May feel their child’s rejection or “no!” as emotional abandonment, so they avoid doing or saying anything that will upset their child.
- Fear of conflict may keep them quiet; they may believe they are incapable, powerless, or helpless.
- May have very low self-esteem, and spend much time in a physiological state of flight, freeze, or shutdown.
- This parent may be completely, or partially “checked out.”
- Not physically or emotionally available. (We recognize that this is not always a choice of the parent to not be present).
- This parent is devoid of warmth and nurturance and may appear “there but not really there.”
- Sees parenting as a burden to escape.

Power With:

- We have access to and are committed to developing a sense of safety and security.
- We believe that children deserve to be treated with respect, kindness, and understanding.
- We are our child’s first advocate. We are willing to stand up for our child when people in the public eye do not understand and want to punish the child for being a child.
- We commit and recommit to curiosity. We are willing to look beneath the surface of behaviors and understand the “why” behind the moment. We seek to understand child development. We are willing to look within when overwhelmed in the presence of the child and understand the “why” beneath the parent’s own impulse and behavior.
- We are committed to self-awareness, accountability, and attunement as one of the most important parenting tools.
- We ask for help when we need it and believe we are worthy of receiving support.

- We are willing to grow and heal our inner sense of self, so we can access confidence, clear leadership, and a positive state of mind.
- We commit to developing intuition, and listening to our own inner voice.
- We are willing to accept that we are the most developmentally mature member of the parent-child dyad, and are willing to model accommodation, adaptation, and meeting the needs of a person who cannot meet those needs on their own.
- We believe that kids are always doing their very best with what they can access in the moment. We believe that about ourselves, too.
- We embrace restorative justice (rebuilding the relationship after an offense) and seek to understand how to best navigate conflict as safely as possible, where everyone's needs, experience, and wants are honored.
- We choose the relationship first and use skills and tools that respect the connection and the relationship.
- We let go of control and step into vulnerability, humility, and radical trust. We love and accept who our child is unconditionally.
- We commit to emotional attunement and empathy. We hold space for our child's feelings and their voice.
- We commit to collaboration and believe that we will discover what works best for our unique family by committing to communication, exploration, patience, and discovery.
- We model self-accountability when harm is done to the child or the relationship.
- We seek joy, find humor, and celebrate the little moments with our children.

Roadblocks to Power-With Parenting:

Parents tend to parent out of power over or power under parenting when they are in a place of fear or stress. Parental fears are very real and very valid. You are, after all, in charge of the well-being of your child and charged with contributing positively to society by ensuring a functioning adult is the product of your parenting. Wow, that's a lot of pressure! No wonder we always feel scared and often parent out of fear! I challenge you to get curious about your fear and see what is behind the barriers you have to power with parenting.

- Fear of not belonging and judgment
- Fear for our children's safety in the bigger world
- Fear for our children's social success in the world
- Fear of "being out of control," powerlessness
- Fear of "coddling"
- Fear of inadequacy
- Fear of "failure"
- Other?



1. What of these fears (if any) are most alive in your parenting?
2. What keeps you from practicing power with parenting?
3. Offer yourself compassion and understanding about the fear you hold. In doing so, we can think of what we would like to believe instead. (Ex: "I fear I get judged when my child is being disrespectful to me in public" → "My response to my child is a reflection of my parenting, not my child's behavior.")

Generational Parenting Patterns:

The way you parent is a response to how you were parented. Let's look at some of the power dynamics in your family of origin. As you better understand where your default patterns come from, you will have more compassion for yourself and control over changing them, if desired.

1. Drawing from the information above, what power pattern was most consistently present in your childhood home?
2. If you had two caregivers in your home growing up, did they have similar or inconsistent parenting patterns?



3. If you were raised with the power over or power under pattern, can you recall a specific event that stand out in your childhood where this dynamic was at play?

4. Recalling this event now, how do you feel? This is what you think about but rather how it feels in your body.

5. In your, child's mind, what did you think about yourself because of experiencing this kind of behavior from your parents or caregivers? What do you think about yourself today, as an adult?

6. How has this thought about yourself remained present in your life? Has it shown up in other ways?

7. What would you like to believe instead?

8. If you could travel back and put yourself in your parent or caregiver's shoes, what do you think they were feeling at that time they were displaying some behavior that led to disconnected communication? (Ex: shaming, yelling, punishing, hitting, blaming, manipulating, neglecting, ignoring...)

Your Current Parenting Pattern:

1. Drawing from the information above, what parenting pattern beliefs and strategies are most consistently alive in your parenting and in your home?
2. If you are partnered, do you have a similar parenting style, or is there some inconsistency?
3. Recall a time, or several, in your parenting, where you were able to access one or more Transformational Parenting Pillars.
4. Recalling these memories, how do you feel?

5. When you were parenting from the Power With dynamic, how do you imagine your child felt? What kinds of thoughts about themselves and the world do you imagine they were having during this experience?

6. Recall a time, or several, where you found yourself slipping into the Power Over or Under pattern? (Remember, there is no judgment here. Often, these behaviors are left over from our own childhoods. You are in the right and perfect place!)

7. Recalling this scenario, how were you feeling when you slipped into Power Over or Under parenting?

8. What support were you needing when you slipped into Power Over or Under parenting?

9. What kinds of thoughts were running through your mind when you slipped into Power Over or Under parenting?

10. We invite you to pause here and offer yourself grace and kindness. What kind and loving words can you offer yourself at this moment?

Back to the Foundations:

These Foundations are going to be your anchor as you explore your parenting and what changes you would like to make. Please remember, these are more like guides. There is room to adapt them to fit your values and lifestyles. Also, keep in mind the goal is not to be perfect. You are human after all. You will make mistakes. And that's okay.

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 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 other’s interests. Through play and joy, we gain healing, understanding, connection, and cooperation.

Get Curious!

Let’s reflect on The Foundations.

1. Which foundations come easily to you? This may be part of a foundation or a whole one. Share what this looks like in your family.

2. Which Foundations are challenging for you? Why are they challenging? Again, these can be part of a foundation or a whole one.

An Excerpt from the Jai Institute Parenting workbook:

Moving From Control To Connection: What Keeps Us Stuck In Behaviorism

What sets Intentional Parenting apart from any paradigm of the past, is our dedication to seeing our children beneath their behaviors, and into their deeper internal social-emotional and neurological development.

We are eliminating, slowly and surely, the need for threats, bribes, punishments, withdrawal of love and connection, praise, and rewards. Instead of hyper-focusing solely on what the child is or is not doing, we ask ourselves: What is happening deep within my child that is creating this symptom?

We are not here to change parents' behaviors, nor are we here to change our children's behaviors! Challenging behaviors will inevitably shift, but not from the parent's sheer willpower and the child's desire to "be good." This shift happens when the child experiences inner safety and when the parent integrates and embodies tools like communication, emotional intelligence, and relational safety.

We are here to look beneath the surface and ask ourselves how can I, as the parent, be with myself more compassionately and wholly so I do not need a coping mechanism like yelling, punishing, or shutting down?

We ask not "What can I do to get my child to stop XYZ or start XYZ," but rather, "How can I be with my child and show them that I love them unconditionally, and have the skills necessary to understand what is happening within their young brains and bodies?"

Mona Delahooke, author of Beyond Behaviors, eloquently explains that there are three core mistakes of the "status quo" parenting, which focuses solely on behavior as the root, rather than the symptom of a more systemic imbalance.

She writes that firstly, as parents, we are trained to address the superficial problem rather than the source of the problem.

Example 1:

Power Over/Under behavioral approach: "Stop that whining right now or you're getting a time out or you're going to lose car privileges this weekend!" or, "Oh my goodness, why do you whine SO MUCH? Just get what you want and stop making that noise!"



Power with, beneath behaviors approach: “Hey, are you feeling stressed? Let’s move outside where there are not so many people” or, “Hey, I hear you, and I wonder if we need some fresh air before we continue our negotiation? I can tell that this conversation is stressful for you,” or, “Hey, we’ve got this (parent holds out hands for a hug).

We fail to correctly interpret behavior as an unconscious expression of stress in the child or simply, where they are at developmentally; we mistakenly view it as intentional misbehavior. We expect children to change their behaviors with internal motivation that comes from synchronizing their thoughts and emotions, when their brains have not yet developed these functions!

Example 2:

Power Over/Under and behavioral approach: “If you stay calm and do not run around the store while I’m shopping, then mommy will be so proud of you, and you will get to have ice cream after your dinner tonight!” or the parent ignores the child and walks away from them while shopping, they cannot deal with the moment.

Power with, beneath behaviors approach: “This store may be a little busy tonight sweetie, so I am going to help you stay close to me. You can ride in the cart and be a supermarket hero, or you can ride in the carrier on my back in case you need snuggles.” (If the child struggles at the store, the parent can see they are overstimulated from the amount of lights, sounds, and activity. The parent would offer physical contact to see the child’s sensory system. No punishment or reward needed.)

Secondly, Mona shares that most parents have been trained to use a one-size-fits-all approach instead of tailoring the strategies to fit the individual child.

We take in generic parenting advice and behavioral techniques without considering the unique needs of the parent, the child, and the relationship between parent and child. We sometimes lack the attunement to self and intuition, and sometimes lack the clarity of truly knowing what our specific child needs. This can create more confusion and stress.

Example 3:

Power Over/Under behavioral approach: A parent of three children had a fourth child. Her first three kids felt excited by people and places and outings. The fourth child became overstimulated and felt stressed and concerned when around people and places they did not know.

The parent thinks this is not “normal” behavior because all the other kids liked to go out at that age! Instead of trying to learn that child’s specific needs to thrive and respect that child’s timeline of social engagement, the parent tries as many tricks and strategies as possible to get the fourth child to be social and outgoing like the rest of their children. (Note There is nothing inherently “wrong” with finding ways to support children who struggle to socially engage. The difference is the intent and the consciousness: “I want my kid to socially engage because that’s what kids are supposed to do” versus “I’m curious how to support my child to access spaces of community joy, in their own way, at their own pace.”)*

*Power with, beneath behavior approach: I notice that my fourth child feels a bit more timid around social settings than my other three kids. I’m willing to get curious about what could be going on for my child, and what support, if any, I could offer. My goal is to connect with my child and as accurately as possible interpret their experience. My goal is not to make them different or change them. Rather than assuming that my child is suffering because of their feelings of timidity, or their desire to observe before engaging, I will ask my child if they would like my support. “I noticed that you watched your cousins playing at the park today, and you did not join in. Do you feel comfy watching the kids play? Do you wish you could play, too? Is anything stopping you? Would you like support from me to engage, or are you feeling fine with how things are?” (*Note, you would not ask these questions quickly or intensely, but slowly and without pressure in a low stimulation, high connection space.)*

Thirdly, Mona shares that most parents connect with their children without an accurate developmental roadmap to ensure they are using the “right” parenting tools in congruence with their child’s development.

With the best of intentions, due to our collective lack of understanding of child development, we offer well-meaning strategies that misalign with what our children can execute.

Example 4:

Power Over/Under behaviorism approach: A parent sets up a “calm down corner” in their child’s bedroom. Whenever this child, who is three, hits their younger sibling, the parent brings the three-year-old to the “calm-down corner” and leaves them alone to “think about how much hitting hurts other people.” The parent tells the child to come back when the child is “ready to play nicely.”

Yes, this strategy is inarguably more compassionate than a shout at the child and forceful removal to the “time-out chair.” However, a three-year-old, whose brain and nervous system cannot self-regulate through and complete a stress cycle of big frustration, is not benefited deep down from a well-meaning calm-down corner. Yes, it may stop the hitting in the moment, yet

the principle power imbalance remains: when you hit, I remove connection from you. When you hit, you will not be responded to by a caregiver who understands that you cannot control your impulsivity, and you cannot stop your hands from hitting each time frustration arises within you.

The irony is that the brain develops through a process of sequential milestones. This means that if developmental milestones are skipped (expecting a three-year-old to control their own impulses versus greeting the child with grounded warmth and a nourishing limit), then the brain doesn't just skip to the next level of competency! This is the 8- or 12-, or even 82-year-old who struggles with frustration as deeply as a three-year-old.

A power with, beneath behavior approach: The parent understands their three-year-old is still grappling with no longer being the center of the universe in the home. There is still grief here in the child, and some hurt and pain. When a baby takes the big sibling's toys and begins to chew on them, a level of frustration and stress arises in the child's brain that signals to the nervous system: THREAT! And the three-year-old experiences a natural physiological response to threat: ATTACK! Because the parent understands where the three-year-old is developmentally, they do not expect the three-year-old to control their "hitting hands" around the baby. Instead of setting up the three-year-old, the baby, and the parent for stress, the parent is on the floor with the kids, watching the three-year-old's stress cues, and intervening before the hitting happens. When this cannot happen, because—life!, then the parent would respond with something like:

"Oopsies, sweetie, come here." Making sure the baby is okay while also tending to three-year-old, the parent reassures, "Oof, it's hard when the baby takes your things. I'm here to help. Let's figure this out. I got you darlin'!"

The start to Intentional Parenting:

1. What commitment can you make to yourself right now that will soften the cycle of Power Over or Under parenting patterns by disrupting the repetition of them?

2. Any takeaways from this week's video or workbook?

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