



WEEK 6 | YOUR TRANSFORMATIVE PARENTAL JOURNEY

Making Sense of **Secure Mindsight and Brain Science**

When we understand the way our brain is structured, how it works, and how to support optimal brain growth and activation, we are giving ourselves and our children the gift of a lifetime. Right now, as parents, we are living with the most sacred, and enormous of missions: We wield the tools that literally shape our children's brain.

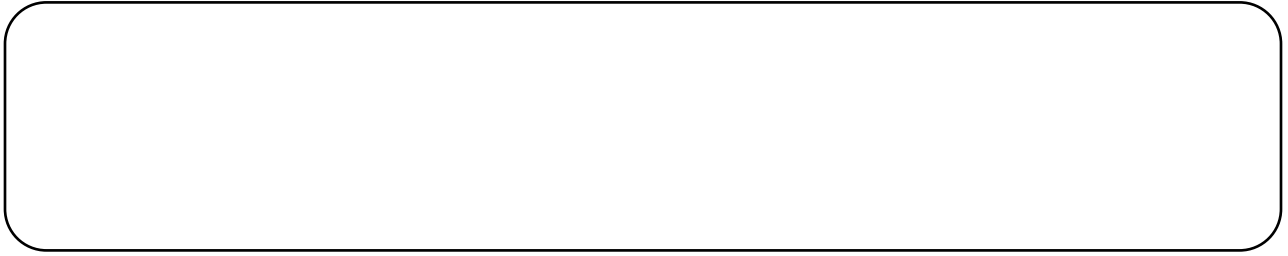
Before we look forward and initiate ourselves even more deeply into this process, let us reflect back on what we have learned so far and how you are integrating.

The Tools We've Gathered So Far

The Ten Pillars of Empowered Parenting

Which of the ten pillars are you finding easier to practice?

Which pillar is continuing to be a challenge for you?



How to name and recognize our attachment style based on how we were parented.

Are you able to notice when you are slipping into insecure attachment?



Do you notice when you are securely attached within, and are therefore able to connect with your child?



How to be aware of when we and our children are climbing the nervous system “thermometer.” We have learned to focus our awareness on our physical, verbal, and nonverbal cues of stress.

What have you learned about your nervous system thermometer? What is your first cue that stress is rising, and a sensory calming tool must be activated?



How to engage a sensory calming tool to engage the parasympathetic nervous system, and to restore safety in the body (self-regulation).

What is your sensory calming tool?



How to support your child to find safety in their body before any kind of teaching, redirection, verbal empathy, or problem solving.

What is your child's sensory calming tool?



How to apologize to our children from a place of self-forgiveness.

How is your self-forgiveness practice developing?

Are you finding more willingness to apologize, because it is coming from self-compassion vs. shame?

Mindsight and Empowered Parenting

The Second “S” in Earning a Secure Attachment

Mindsight is a term unearthed by Daniel Siegel describing one’s ability to “see inside their own mind, and the mind of another, with curiosity, openness, acceptance, and love.”

When our children feel seen by us, and understood without judgment or fear, their brains grow! Feeling seen is a prerequisite for feeling safe. When we feel safe, we develop, integrate, grow, and thrive.

Mindsight is our willingness to see beneath the behavior and truly get curious about what is going on within our child's thoughts and perception that is creating undesirable behavior.

“Hey, love - I saw you grab your sister's work out of her hands. Help me understand, what's going on for you. I'm curious what you were thinking and trying to do.”

vs.

“HEY! What's wrong with you? Why would you do that?!”

The Six Core Blocks That Keep Us from Practicing Mindsight with our Children

1. Conditioned Beliefs About Children

- Children are born bad and must be taught how to be good.
- Children don't know what they need, think, feel, and dream for.
- Children need to be controlled.
- Children are here to be quiet and in service toward adults.

2. Lack Of Awareness And Information

- Children Not being aware of our child's brain development creates an incongruence in our parenting. We expect our child to be able to exist and deliver behaviors that are impossible for their development.
- Children Lacking information on how children's brains develop and what they require to thrive. Our empathy, our secure attachment within ourselves and our child, and our longing to understand GROWS our child's brain. Fear inhibits growth and delays the development of the child's emotional regulatory centers and prefrontal cortex.

Low Brain: Beginning at birth and coming to maturation around ages 2 or 3

The body is the main focus of development. Physical coordination is developing. The child is constantly seeking safety and taking in their environment like a sponge. They are learning patterns and language. When stressed, this age range cannot follow verbal cues, has very little impulse control, and is 100% dependent on co-regulation to calm their body's overwhelm and to contain their emotional experience without reacting.

Middle Brain: Beginning around age 3, and coming to maturation between ages 7-12

Feelings and emotions are the main focus of development. Children are learning how to contain emotions and identify feelings.

The child is still completely dependent on co-regulation when stressed. The middle brain holds our emotional regulatory centers, and our impulse control. These are just beginning to develop and will require consistent warmth, empathy, modeling, and compassion in order to fully develop. The middle brain operates at the alpha and theta brain wave lengths, which are similar to a hypnotic state. Our belief systems are formed during this time. Supportive and life enhancing beliefs are formed when the system feels safe and calm. Limiting beliefs are formed when the system does not feel safe, and the brain is stuck in the amygdala (stress, fear, aggression, shame), and hippocampus (memory).

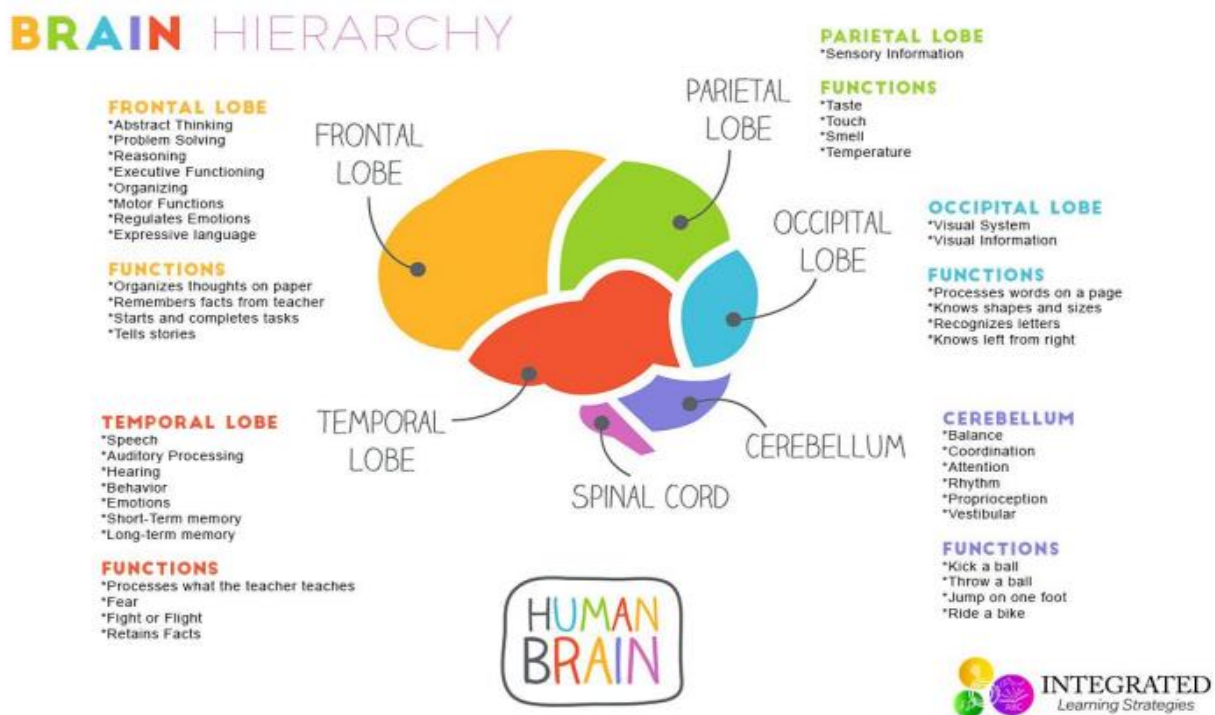
Frontal Lobe/Prefrontal Cortex: Ages Beginning around age 7-12, and coming to maturation about the age of 25

Beginning at age 7, if the brain has integrated fully in a warm and safe environment, the prefrontal cortex, or the front of the brain, **begins** to develop. The frontal cortex does not truly take flight until adolescence, when the teenage brain is restructuring itself and experiencing a rapid die off of old synapses and neurons, and a rebirth of neural pathways. ("Brainstorm" by Daniel Siegel is an excellent resource for the teenage brain).

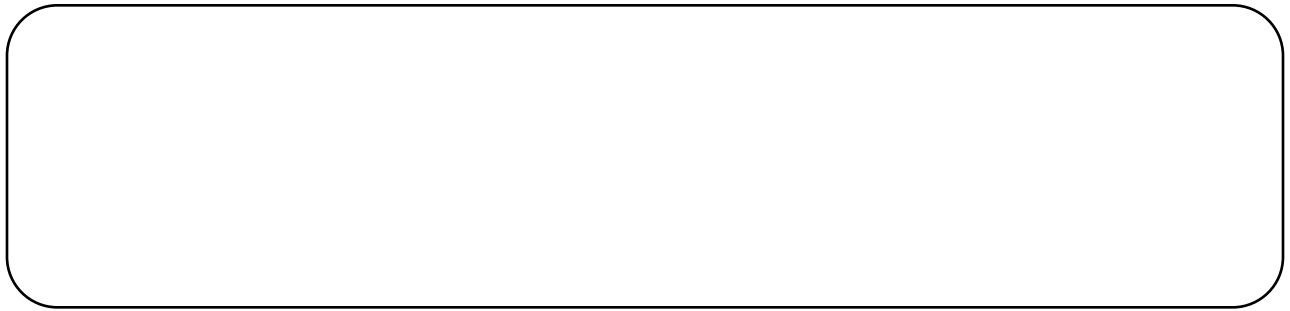
What occurs in the prefrontal cortex:

- Foresight and consideration of the future
- Understanding of cause and effect

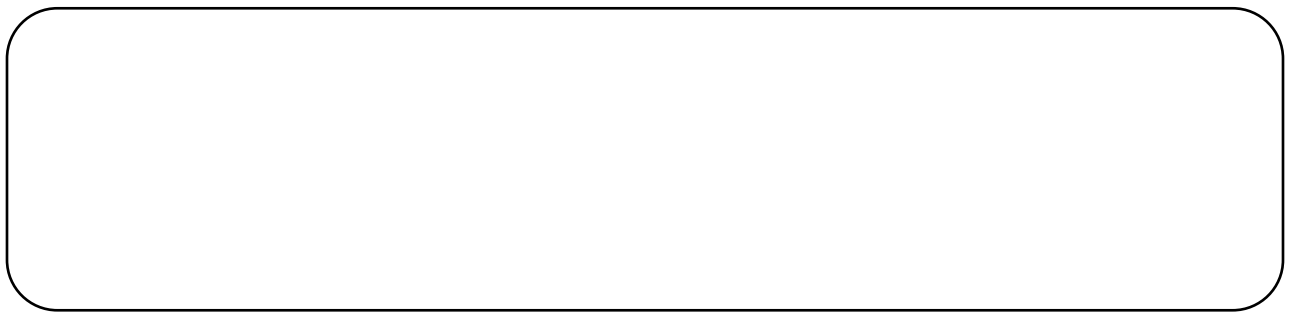
- Problem solving strategies
- Organizing thoughts
- Inhibiting aggressive or violent behavior
- Impulse control and delayed gratification
- Emotional self-regulation
- Psychological flexibility
- Focusing attention
- Understanding reasoning
- Ability to follow direction with clarity (The ability to switch from what THEY want to what YOU want or what is needed in that moment for the well-being of all.)
- Ability to follow a multiple sequenced direction (Example: put shoes on, put coat on, grab lunch box; this is not activated until a child is 11 years old, and if the child has developed within warmth and security.)
- Ability to regularly understand hypothetical reasoning
- Empathize and truly understand how their actions impact others



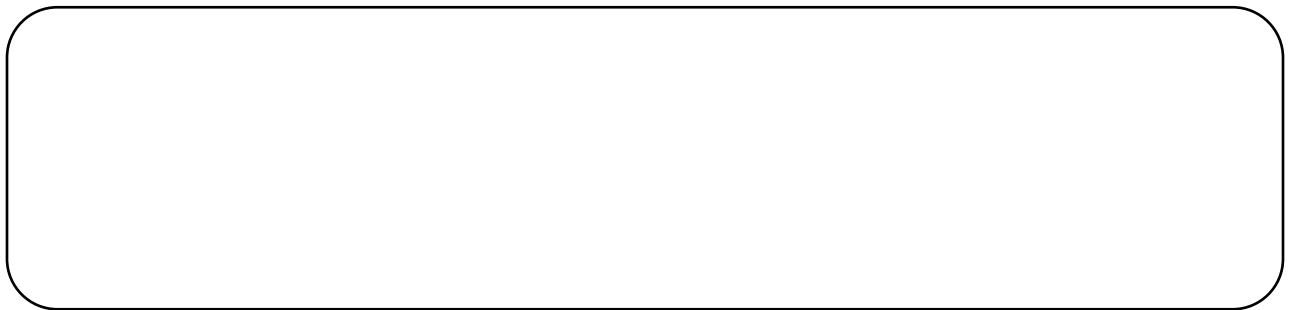
Reflecting on the information above, are you expecting developmentally appropriate behavior of your child?



Do you find yourself expecting your child to be able to act in ways that are not developmentally appropriate?



What needs to shift, if anything, in your parenting approach that is more in alignment with your child's brain development?



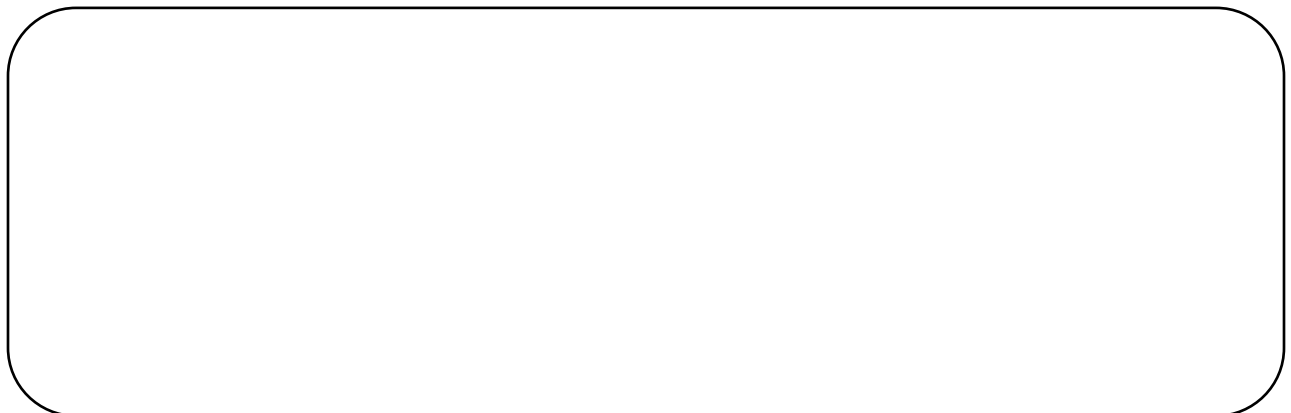
3. Seeing Through A Lens Of Judgement And Labels

- Staying stuck in labeling behaviors creates a barrier to understanding. When we come to conclusions about who a child is, we pigeonhole them and stunt their evolution.
- Notice if you find yourself attaching a label, positive or negative, vs. trying to understand where these behaviors are coming from (feelings, needs, thoughts, beliefs).

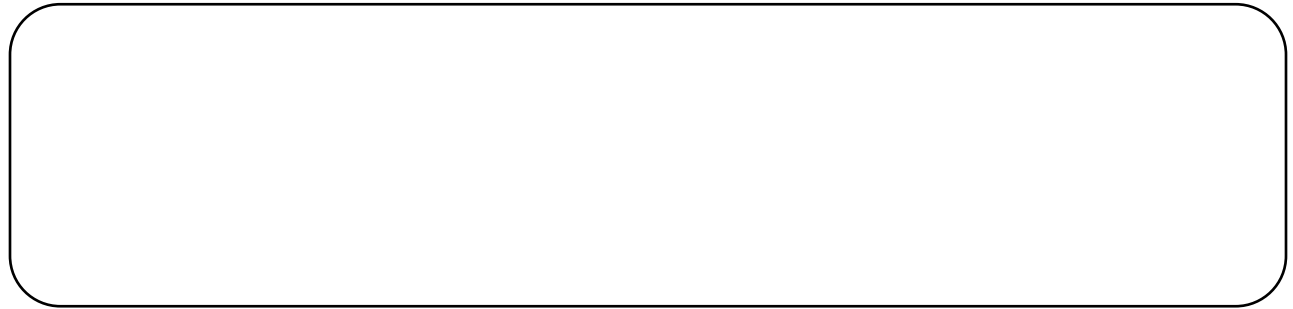
Qualities (Judgements, Labels)

| | | |
|----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Sincere | Well spoken | Resourceful |
| Interesting | Rash | Possessive |
| Happy go lucky | Attention seeking | Humble |
| Overcritical | Dependable | Reliable |
| Honest | Reasonable | Creative |
| Honorable | Illogical | Gracious |
| Courageous | Thorough | Stingy |
| Weak | Open minded | Mature |
| Understanding | Clever | Perceptive |
| Responsible | Respectful | Fickle |
| Neat | Self sufficient | Positive |
| Popular | Thoughtful | Warm |
| Loyal | Quick witted | Impulsive |
| Truthful | Eager | Outgoing |
| Sensible | Resentful | Careless |
| Practical | Wise | Earnest |
| Broad-minded | Original | Productive |
| Self reliant | Reckless | Shy |
| Self confident | Controlling | Careful |
| Trustworthy | Considerate | Kind |
| Gentle | Ambitious | Sensible |
| High spirited | Relaxed | Light hearted |
| Immature | Boastful | Lazy |
| Intelligent | Good natured | |

Which labels do you find yourself attaching to your child?



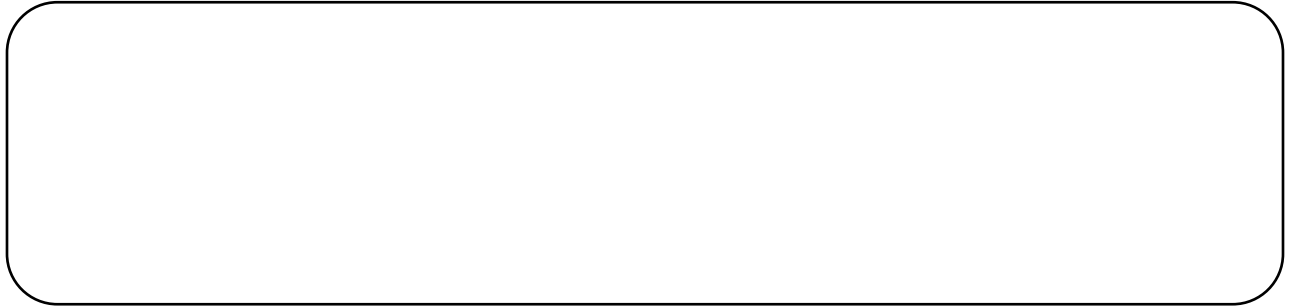
If you were to get curious and try and understand what is happening beneath the surface when your child displays these qualities, what feelings, needs, thoughts, beliefs would you find?



4. Fear and Projection

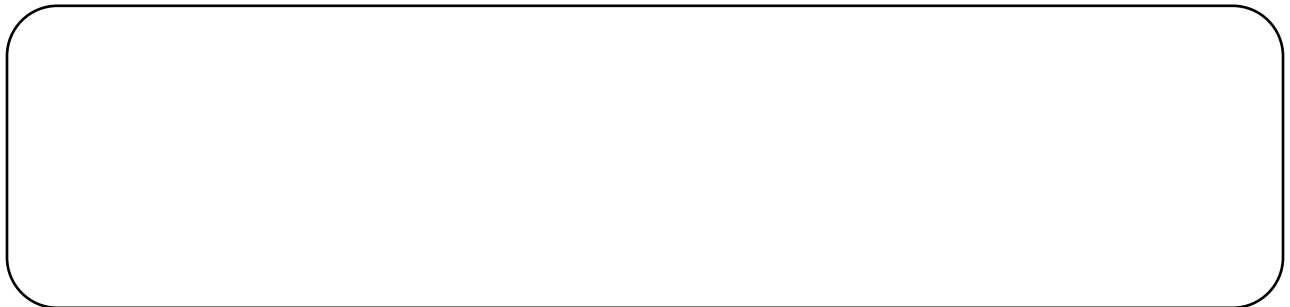
- When we witness our child display a quality or behavior that activates the fear center in our brain (our limbic system), we are not able to see clearly, and quickly begin the “fear spiral.”
- **Example:** 7-year-old is not interested in school work. The parent begins worrying that their child is not going to do well in school, just like them, and therefore not get into college. Because they will not get into college, they will not have a job, and won’t have any friends and will be miserable and all alone. (Note--this typically happens subconsciously, and most parents do not realize the intensity of fear scenarios they concoct in their minds.)
- **When we experience fear in our brain, our amygdala, a part of our limbic system or middle brain, is activated.** This is the center of the brain where we store unconscious, emotional, and somatic memory, called implicit memories. Our body is flooded with emotional, non-visual memory when our child displays a behavior that caused US stress when we were children. This is called a projection, where you see your child through the lens of your unprocessed emotional memories.

Where does fear come up for you in your parenting? (Example: My toddler hits me, I'm afraid he is going to grow up to be a violent, aggressive person just like my dad was.)



Get curious, where do your fears stem from?

If your greatest fear as a parent were to come true, what would that mean about YOU, as a parent?



Are you willing to see how your fears are trying to protect you?



5. Lack of Self Awareness And Integration

- If we were not seen and understood as children, we may struggle seeing and understanding ourselves. We may struggle accepting who we are and often wonder, “who am I, really?”

- When we live without unconditional self-acceptance and self-reflection from a longing to understand, we typically only allow a tiny portion of who are to be seen. We learn which “parts” of ourselves (qualities, strengths, weaknesses) are accepted, seen, and understood, and which are not.

Let’s explore below:

As a child, what was the most common label you heard about who you were (too shy, too loud). _____

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? _____

As a child I loved _____, but I pretended I did not, in order to fit in.

As a child, a quality I wished I had more of was _____

In my family’s culture, or larger culture, it was not okay for a girl child to be _____
_____.

In my family’s culture, or larger culture, it was not okay for a boy child to be _____
_____.

As a child, the qualities I most admired in others were _____ (people who sang, people who raised their hand in class, people who laughed and smiled).

As a child, I would often pretend to be a _____ (dancer, singer, Olympic athlete).

As a parent I am most envious of other mothers who embody these qualities: _____
_____.

As a parent I find I'm most irritated, annoyed, or overwhelmed when my child/children:

- Display the following qualitie_____
- Don't display the following qualities: _____
- Do the following actions: _____
- Don't do the following actions: _____

As a parent I sometimes wish that my child/children would:

- Do more of the following qualities : _____
- Do less of the following qualities: _____

6. Lack of Self Awareness And Integration

- Our core self-perception (belief system) is created within our subconscious by ages 7-9, and to a lesser degree, by ages 12-14.
- If we did not experience a caregiver who displayed mostly consistent willingness to understand our thoughts, our mind, our understanding of life, then we lived without inner safety, a sense of belonging, and a belief that we are loved unconditionally.
- To cope with such intense feelings associated with these beliefs, like fear, shame, heartbreak, loneliness, and anger, our brain goes into action:
 - **Our brain serves TWO main functions as we develop: What is happening and why.** Our brain creates a story that will give meaning, order and understanding to WHY an experience is happening. (Example: My parents do not seek to understand me because I am BAD, I am not loved, or I am unworthy.)
- This story, while typically untrue, is LESS painful and less dangerous to a growing child than admitting that your only source of survival is not

capable of understanding you, seeing you, and providing you with psychological safety.

- Our brain then makes an unconscious commitment to NEVER experience this pain again. (Example: A 5-year-old tries to tell their parents a story about WHY they hit their sibling, causing the parents to scream at them and force them into their room. This happened repeatedly. From this space of panic the child, in the low brain, creates a story that they are bad, there is something wrong with them--THAT'S why they hit their sibling.

Remember children cannot self-reflect! This part of the brain, the prefrontal cortex, does not begin developing until age 7, and development does not end until age 25.

From that moment on, the child makes sure to avoid trying to explain their actions and learns that using their voice only brings them to pain and disconnect.

- Perceiving our children's behaviors through physiological stress, which ignites the centers in the brain that release fear-based emotional memory, and limiting beliefs, we cannot accurately access our child. We are not fully present and are viewing their behavior through a lens of limitation, scarcity, internalized shame, and fear.

9 Core-Limiting Beliefs

Our limiting beliefs are connected to strong emotions in our body, our nervous system, and the communication between the head, heart, and body. Our belief system creates our subconscious mind, which is responsible for 95% of all of our thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and reactions, allowing us to understand and see our subconscious.

Programming with compassion and a longing to integrate, you can begin reprogramming the subconscious through the concept of neuroplasticity, so 95% of your brain waves are working in your favor vs. against you. Let's look at the 9 core-limiting beliefs that are created as a consequence of generations of power over or under parenting.

1. I am bad. I am wrong. I am inherently defective.
2. I am unlovable and unworthy of unconditional love.

3. I am not enough and undeserving of goodness and care.
4. I do not belong. I have nothing special to offer. I am of no significance. I am no one.
5. I am incapable. I am incompetent. I am helpless. I am a failure.
6. I am alone. I don't make any sense. I am crazy.
7. Life is cold and unkind. I am heartless. I am mean and unfeeling.
8. Feeling is not safe. Intimacy is not safe. I am not safe in my body.
9. I don't matter. Life is pointless. I don't care

Connect with your breath. Pause if you need to.

Of the 9 limiting beliefs, which three are the strongest for you?

1. _____
2. _____.
3. _____

Of these top 3 limiting beliefs which ONE is the strongest for you right now?

1. _____

Are you willing to honor this limiting belief? It was created to protect you from feeling pain as a child. AND, you are not a child anymore, on the outside. Our insides will rise and evolve them; they feel safe enough to do so. Seeing yourself, and accepting this belief with compassion is the first step toward allowing it to begin the process of pruning from the brain.

If you could send a message to this belief, from a place of calm, clarity, and inner safety, what would you say?

If you could tell this belief what is true about you RIGHT NOW, what would you say?

How Can We Strengthen Mindsight? Seven Tools for Greater Mindsight

1. Notice when you fall into “logic-ing” your way through emotion.

- **Gaslighting child’s experience:** “That never happened! I never said that!” vs., “Hmm, I remember that differently. Can you share more about how you remember it?”
- **Dismissal of feelings:** “Don’t be sad, it’s no big deal.”
- **Invalidation of feelings:** “There is no reason why you should be angry right now. I’ve done everything you wanted this morning!”
- **Sarcasm and non-consensual teasing:** “Oh there you go again! Crying like the world is ending.”

2. Look Beneath The Behavior With Root To Bloom Process

Here’s an example:

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.
-

Your Turn! Practice sinking beneath the surface and naming all the “roots” beneath your child’s behavior. Choose a specific scenario and see how curious you can be.

Root to Bloom Process

FLOWER:

- Outward expression of the child's behavior

ROOTS:

Everything beneath the surface that the parent must pause and take into consideration.

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



3. Listen vs. Lecture

- Do you notice when you interrupt your child and begin lecturing them?
 - “Yeah, I know it’s hot, but we need to wear sunscreen in order to protect our skin. You know how your uncle did not wear sunscreen and he got very sick. My job is to take care of you and if I did not put sunscreen on, we both may really regret it in 20 years. You wouldn’t want a mom/dad who did not care about your skin, would you?”
- Could you challenge yourself to ask investigative questions vs. lecture?
 - “I saw you pull your sister’s book out of her hands, can you share with me about that?”

4. Resist The Urge To Capitalizing On Other's Distress To Prove Your Point

- "I told you so."

- "If you would have listened to me the first time, then..."

5. Sportscast

- Name what you are witnessing, to show support for your child's developing insight.
 - "I see you are focusing on your teeth-brushing. I see how you are going in between every tooth."
 - "I see you are picking up the dishes and putting them away. I wonder what you will do next?"

6. Can't vs. Won't — Especially With Directions

- Check-in: Is my expectation appropriate for my child's age and development?
 - Can't vs. Won't: "Your body and brain are telling me that you need support cleaning your room right now, and I am here to be that support."

7. Show Up For You!

- I am statements

- Daily Intention

- Daily Reflections