

toolkit

for tricky times

This ultimate toolkit is designed to help you support your kids in cooperation, find joy in your family, and parent calmly.



Dr. Chelsey & Dr. Robin

Welcome

We are so glad you are here! Parenting our children is one of the greatest, most joyful, hardest, most confusing journeys we will ever go on. Being here- exploring ways to parent positively, desiring to disrupt cycles of shaming, fighting, or negativity, and learning more about your child(ren) is SUCH a gift to your family. Parenting was never meant to be done alone: it takes a community, a village, a world to thrive as a parent. Welcome to our community.

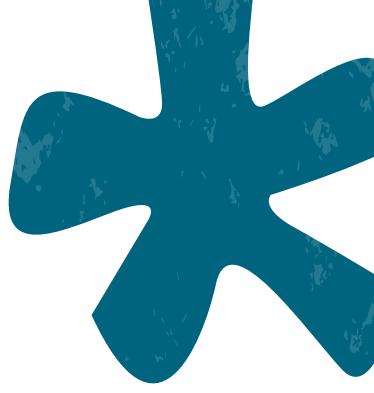
In this toolkit, you'll find three sections:

- frameworks & tools: learn about your child's brain and consider powerful tools to help them cooperate
- activities, rituals, & challenges: try out these activities with your family, and build connection!
- affirmations, mantras & reminders: parenting is hard and we all deserve support. use these resources to support yourself.

So glad to have you here- sending big warm hugs!



Dr. Chelsey & Dr. Robin



Frameworks & Tools

In this section, we will introduce you to our key frameworks, as well as a couple of tools. Implement the tools as soon as possible- and spend some time with the frameworks, which will help you understand and appreciate the tools.

Key Frameworks:

Regulation

Co-Regulation

Key Tools:

Presence & Praise

The Three Yesses

Recasting



Regulation



Regulation refers to a person's state of well-being, including the different domains of mind, body, and spirit (physical, emotional, social, & cognitive).

Many things affect our state of regulation, including.....

- if we are hungry, exhausted, etc.
- how we perceive & process the world (lights are too bright, room is too hot)
- how much social/emotional energy a given task takes
- whether an activity is too hard or too easy
- perceptions around how much attention we have gotten
- and much, much more!

A well-regulated child is STABLE and FLEXIBLE at the same time.

A child who is **DISREGULATED** (their body systems are out of alignment, and you're seeing big behaviors like hitting, yelling, kicking, retreating, crying, whining, running away, fighting, etc.) needs HELP to get regulated again. A **DISREGULATED CHILD CANNOT (IS NOT ABLE TO) COOPERATE.**



Co-Regulation

CO-REGULATION is what adults do with children. Children read the feeling state of "their" adults, and they are hard wired to take on their adults' feelings.

Kids are reading your emotional state – always – and paying extra attention to:

- your tone, even if it's only a tiny bit of edge in your voice (some children are more sensitive to this than others)
- the hunch of your shoulders & worry lines on your brow
- how much social/emotional energy a given task takes
- whether an activity is too hard or too easy
- perceptions around how much attention we have gotten
- and much, much more!

Parenting with co-regulation in mind means the adult takes more responsibility for the emotional landscape.

Tool # 1:

Praise & Presence

Presence & praise are, by far, your strongest parenting tools. The vast majority of childhood problems and tricky, stubborn or perplexing behaviors can be resolved by making sure your child is getting enough praise & presence.

It really is about presence. Presence is the highest form of praise- it is to say to your child.... YOU MATTER MORE THAN ANYTHING, and I giving you my TIME. The quality and cadence of your presence matters more than the quantity (read: 5 minutes of high quality presence is better than an hour of playing legos and checking emails at the same time).

There is a LOT of research on PRAISE- and what we know beyond a shadow of a doubt is that most kids hear MUCH more about what they are doing poorly or need to shift than they ever hear about what they are doing well- and that is true in both classrooms and at home. How well your praise works in order to inspire cooperation depends on the quality of your praise. So what's good praise?

Effective praise is...

***effusive**
& authentic

***frequent**
100x/day

***specific**
no "good job"

***immediate**
within 2 seconds

***sealed**
with touch



Note: Effective praise is not very wordy. Often times, fewer words will hold more power. Say what matters, and that's all. If it feels like there is nothing to praise, find something. Praise the shards- the tiny pieces you'd like to see more of.

Doing

Praise & Presence

Start small. As you begin to use praise & presence to shift the culture of your home and get the kids to cooperate, follow this method.

1

Notice.

How often do you praise your kids? What do you say most? Are most of your words correction or direction? How often does "good job" come our of your mouth?

Taking turns.
in our game-
awesome.

2

Practice.

Pick a set amount of time, (a few minutes or hours) during which you will practice offering praise. Remove distractions & put your phone up. Notice everything your kid(s) do well. Praise everything.

3

Evaluate.

Take stock of how you're feeling. Notice if your children have an easier time cooperating. Attend to each child- what kind of praise do they like? Adjust your praise for each child's profile. Keep practicing.

Wow, putting shoes on! First toe, then foot... you've got it!

You are almost ready to share!

Nice coming to dinner on time.

Praise & Presence: Make a Plan & Reflect

Where will you integrate praise & presence? What would you like to focus your praise on for your child(ren)? How does it feel to shift toward praise?

Brushing teeth!
Nice!

Reflect

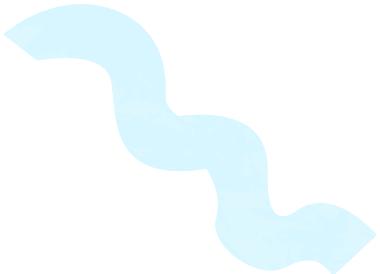
Praise & Presence

Use this space to reflect on how each of your children responds to praise & presence. Does your child like big praise, or soft praise? Do they shy away at your praise or drink it up? Each child is different: taking the time to tailor your praise to your child is important.

How did it feel for YOU to praise?

How did your children respond?

What will be your strategy to keep up with praise?



Tool # 2:



The 3 Yesses

Sometimes, kids get stuck. They might not want to leave the park, or they might be struggling with math homework. Maybe they want something their sibling has or don't want to participate in the family vacation. The 3 Yesses works to help your child FEEL FELT. When children feel understood and like their grownups "get them," it's easier to stay (or get!) regulated... and cooperate. This tool is not about *resolving* the situation or issue for the child- but it does support you to help the child feel felt- and then you get to hold the boundary.

**Ask your child 3 questions,
from their perspective, to which
they can answer *yes.***

Why It Works

- Child need to know their grownups understand their perspective. This language structure allows the grownup to communicate "I hear/feel you."
- This language structure gives adults a way to connect with the child that also honors the boundary. Many kids only need the connection to cooperate.
- The child may need more time to do the emotional, social, and cognitive processing that needs to happen for them to be able to cooperate.

Doing The 3 Yesses*

some *true*examples

The 3 Yesses in The Park

Child does not want to leave the park despite grownup letting her know ahead of time and grownup is worried about a big tantrum, so she makes a *plan* to connect to the child with the three yesses. At the end of the next park date, she says to her child...

"You love the park? You want to stay here all night long? The swings & slide are your favorite?" She held the boundary- "gosh, it's time to go" after the Three Yesses. Because she feels felt, the child is now more likely to cooperate with leaving.

The 3 Yesses with 2 Straw-Cups & 3 Kids

My in-laws had 2 straw-cups, and I have three kids. These cups were coveted. At every mealtime, my 3 kids fought over them. One morning, one child also ducked under the table, in a tantrum about the straw-cups. I took a deep breath, calmed my worried about what everyone else was thinking and pulled her onto my lap.

"You REALLY want a straw-cup? You love those straw-cups. You can't wait for a straw-cup, you need one now? You can only drink out of a straw cup?"

Here's what happened: she sat on my lap for the rest of the meal until sister finished her juice and handed over the straw cup. Did I fix the situation? No. Did I give her a straw-cup? No. Was she able to sit at the table with family? Yes. That was enough.

The 3 Yesses on Vacation with a Teen

On vacation with their 13 year old, these parents were exhausted and annoyed she refused to participate in family games with grandparents & cousins. The teen sat in her room, sulking, on her phone, because she could not bring a friend. Her parent went into her room, and sat on the floor against her bed.

"You really wish you could've brought a friend? You're counting the days till we go home? Those games we brought are too babyish?"

She felt felt. Did she leap into family game night? No. But the parent and the girl were able to come to compromise: she could come down for one game... only because her parent could acknowledge that she wasn't delighted to be on family vacation.

Reflect The Three Yesses

Use this space to reflect on how each of your children responds to the three yesses. If you try it and notice that one particular child really responds to it- know that it is likely that for this child, what's important across their upsets is the need to connection emotionally and feel felt. We all need this sometimes, and some need it more than others.

How did it feel for YOU to use the three yesses?

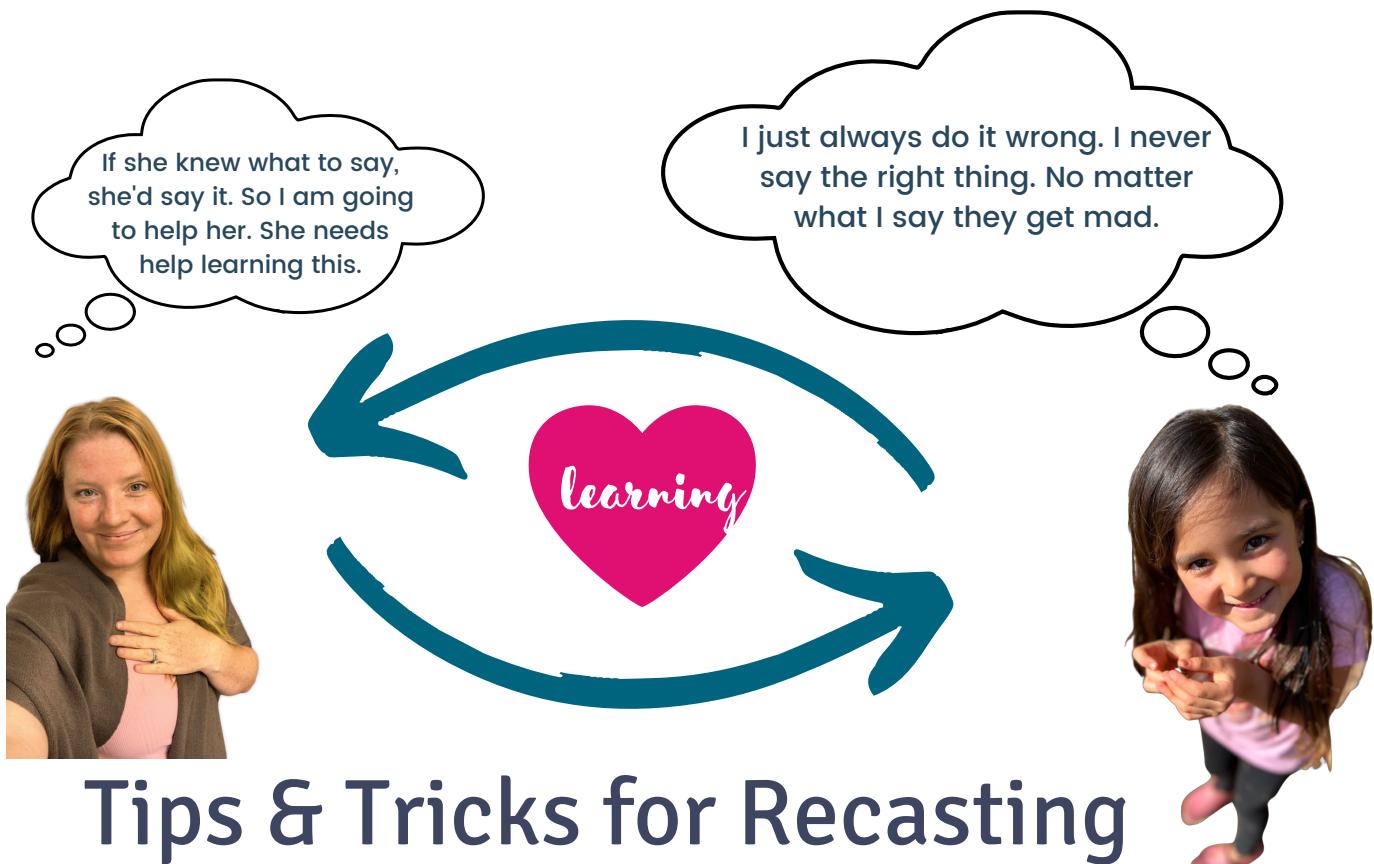
How did your children respond?

When, where & with whom does it seem like you'll use the three yesses with, going forward?

Tool # 3: Recasting



Got a kiddo who says provocative things, like "i hate you/school/playing with X?" Or maybe you're just sitting at the dinner table and your child says, in an inappropriate voice "give me more noodles, now." Or... maybe your child whines for a popsicle or demands a toy their sibling is holding. All of these are GREAT opportunities for recasting. Recasting is simple giving your child a model for what they *could* have said that would have been more socially appropriate. So your child demands more noodles? You recast "more noodles, please," with the hope that they repeat back. When things become more provocative with your child- like when they say "I hate school/X/etc.," go for recasting the feeling... it might sound like "wow, it was a tough day at school" or "mom, I wish I had more friends" or "dad, I'm really frustrated."



Tips & Tricks for Recasting

- Literally say *the thing* they COULD have said. You are looking for a small bit better- even if the child repeats with 10% improvement, HOORAY!
- Recasting is an act of GRACE. It is to say to your child... I know that if you know what the right thing was, you would have said it, and so I'll model for you.
- Recasting is a pretty significant perspective shift: it is to begin to believe that if the child knew how to be, they would be that way. It takes care for yourself to be able to hold that your child is not intentionally being challenging.

Reflect Recasting

Recasting is SUCH an act of grace: it is to say to your child... I know if you knew the right thing to do, you'd do it... and I know you are trying. Use this space to consider the role recasting might play in your family. It is a tool that works especially well with kids of all ages who tend toward provocative statements when they are upset. It also works well for parents who want to correct their children... but the correction feels yucky or gets challenging fast.

How was it for you to pause and recast your child's statements?

How did your children respond?

What are the provocative things your child says that you want to recast? Are there ever moments where your child says something like "I hate you" but really mean "it's really hard and I need a hug?" You can recast those, too! What is your child's behavior telling you?

Tool # 4:



How to Talk About a Tough Day

So, have things been tricky? Maybe your child grabbed something at a playdate and the other child cried, or maybe there was a grocery store tantrum about who got to push the cart that resulted in you having to leave the store. Maybe your child threw a pencil at school or maybe they squabbled all afternoon. If you must say something, find a quiet/reflective/calm time (like putting your child down to sleep) and call the day tricky. Connect. Assure them it'll get easier and prime them forward. Remember, if you thought it was tricky it was definitely tough for them, too.

that was tricky

Framing the challenge as "tricky" makes it neutral-and normalizes tough moments. It's not bad or good-just tricky times. Focus on the feeling, and less on lecturing or teaching.

it's going to get easier

Children need to know that things won't always be so tough-and it's true that if it was a rough day, they are struggling. Assure them with your vote of confidence that they will know what to do next time.

i'm working on.... what about you?

Modeling is one of our strongest parenting tools. Show your child some vulnerability, by considering one thing you're working on. If you yelled or slammed a door, let them know you're working on quiet voices or breathing when you're mad.

we'll figure it out together

Your child, be they big or little, needs to know you're on their side. Simply closing an unresolved challenge with "we'll figure it out together" lets them know you've got their back.

Reflect

Tricky Day Talks

Look, when things are hard, your child needs- more than anything- to know & feel that you know that they are trying, that they are wonderful and loved, and that you will help them figure it out so it is easier! Try this out- i

How was it for you to pause and recast your child's statements?

How did your children respond?

What are the provocative things your child says that you want to recast? Are there ever moments where your child says something like "I hate you" but really mean "it's really hard and I need a hug?" You can recast those, too! What is your child's behavior telling you?

Sacred Space, Rituals & Challenges

In this section, we will introduce you to some practices that you can integrate into your family to really deepen connection and support cooperation. In order for your child(ren) to cooperate, they need to have frequent experiences of connection with you.

Is This Familiar? Try Our... *cootie catcher* for Connection!

Mom: So, how was school today?

Kid: Fine.

Mom: So what did you do?

Kid: Nothing.

Mom: Who'd you play with?

Kid: I don't know.

Mom: Just tell me one thing, something...?!?!?

What gives? If you're the parent of a child who goes to school and gives these sorts of answers.... well, I am and I am frustrated! I want to know more about all that my child experienced and lived with during that time: I'd love details about who they played with, how they felt during learning, what stories they read... mostly I just want to know what it is LIKE.

At the heart of this problem is the reality that my child, tired from all the social interaction of the day, might just not be ready to feed my curiosity. Maybe they are more ready for my connection, though.... and maybe I can shift the things I say to engage in connection, more than curiosity....

Look, if your child isn't <yet> ready to spill all the juicy details from preschool or third grade, it is ok. There are other ways to get the juicy details AND support good development.

When we think good development AND connection, some things that come to mind are...

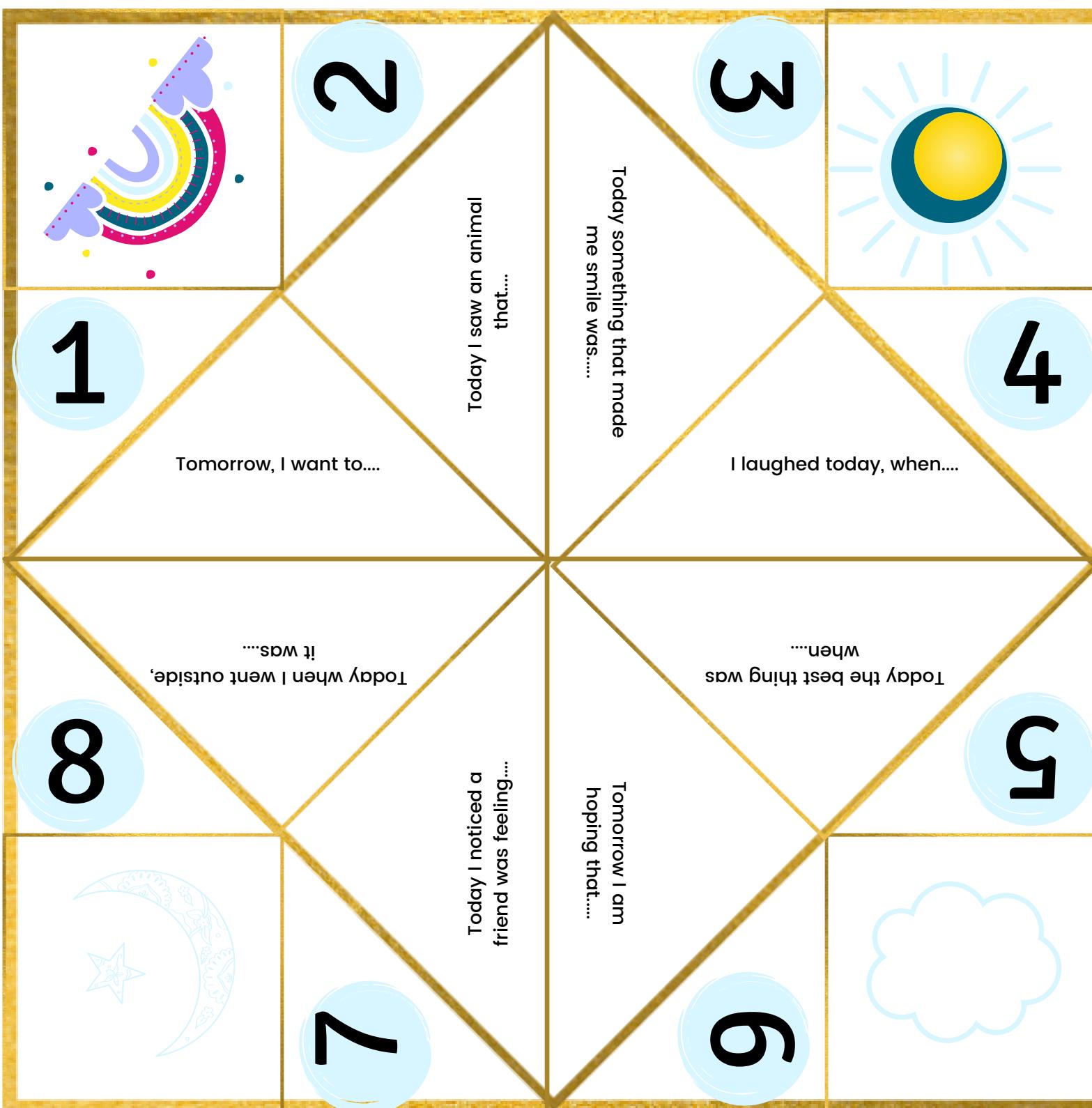
→ turn taking: in typical back and fourth connection, a peppering of questions is not the norm: back and fourth sharing is, and mostly the sentences end in periods. This is an important experience for kids to have with their parents.

→ adult modeling/sharing: It's important for kids to witness their adults acting and communicating in the ways we want them to- and also, engaging them and providing scaffolding for their engagement in the ways we want it to be.

→ respecting good development: development is forged over many slow interactions. If asking questions or inquiring about the day isn't working, there may be a better way.

So print it out, keep it light, fold up this cootie catcher and start playing with your children. Know that they are your mirror: when you share about your day, they learn HOW to share.

Cootie Catcher for connection



Print this cootie-catcher. Cut along the outside gold line (so it's a square). Fold it all together to make a fortune teller. Play the fortune teller game as a way to generate conversation after school, at dinner, or before bed.

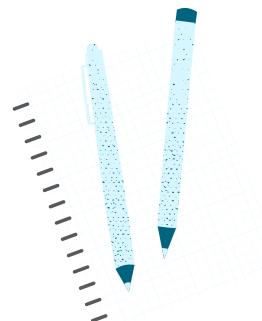
Notice that these are sentence starters (not questions!) and that whether it is the turn of the grow-up or the child, the person can finish the sentence however they would like!

Family Ritual: morning love notes

Rituals are so important for kids in establishing family culture, which in turn lays the groundwork for how children think about and know themselves. It doesn't need to be lengthy or involved- it can be short & sweet. What matters is the consistency & cadence of the ritual. Here's one I do often with my own children- that takes about five minutes every morning and is EASY!

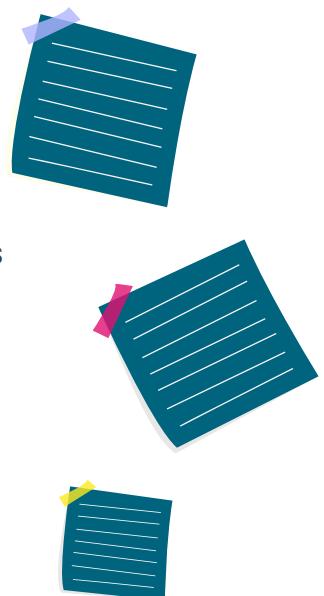
* Love Notes: Set It Up

Set it up! At the breakfast table, leave 4 cards or 1/2 sheets of table & some markers or crayons or pencils. When the kids come to eat, put on some music. Set the stage- share that you're about to do something special & sacred. Classical music, or something you all love that is meditative is good. We always use the same classical piano piece.



* Love Notes: Offer The Space & Do The Thing

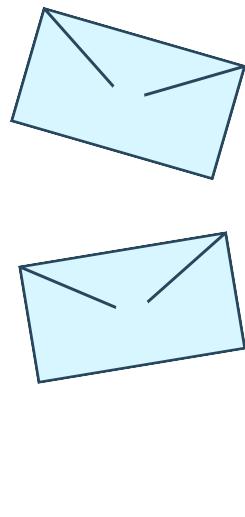
Set a timer for 3 minutes. You are creating sacred space with intentionality.



- Step 1: Have each child write their name (or the first letter of their name, or trace their name/first letter (all depending on your child's age/profile). You do one for YOU too.
- Step 2: Rotate! Everyone passes their notes with their names one person to the left or right. Now, you get to draw or write something sweet for the next person. Young children may draw or decorate. Older kids & adults can write affirmations & hopes & appreciations for the other person. Rotate again & again!

* Love Notes: Tuck the Note Away

The last person who has each love note gets to make a decision about where or how to *hide* it. You can set boundaries about hiding love notes, like "they must go into backpacks" or "they have to hide out near lunch," or "they go on the love note wall" or "you fold up and give to the person." Find a way to get the note to the person, and pair it with a way to celebrate. Ways to celebrate could be.... one word about how everyone is feeling, or a dance party to one song, or a squirt of whipped cream in everyone's mouth to send them off. You pick!



Family Ritual

morning love notes

tips & tricks

* Make it Familiar!



I set this up as a once in a while activity.... but everyday I send a note card in my kid's lunch. When they get to do their own for each other, it's exciting & familiar- they already know what these cards are for. You could also cut hearts out of construction paper or use post-its!

* Set It Up Special!



Set your kids up for success by laying out this activity the night before alongside their breakfast. It is there for them to discover- which communicates wonder & play. Leaving something like this for kids to discover is called a provocation.

* Keep It Brief & Celebrate



You're looking to give your children a FELT SENSE of celebrating their siblings/parents and selves. It can be brief- if it's too hard for them to do something like this, keep it to 1-2 minutes, and PRAISE when they do it! Over time, you can help them get more involved for more time.



Sacred Practice

wow you're amazing wall

Children hear over and over again from all their grownups all the things they need to work on. They get correction, direction, instruction.... and they NEED to hear all those times you notice they are awesome, effortful, genuinely good people.

How we use space in our homes impacts the culture of our family. Creating a "Wow you're amazing wall" is one way to create sacred space for noticing, appreciating, acknowledging, and supporting each other. It's a quiet, kind, way to love on each other.

* Find A Spot & Create Sacred Space

Designate a spot! Hang a poster paper in a hallway or designate the side of the fridge for your WOW WALL and post a name card for each person. Take care with where you place your wall, and how you set it up. Write everyone's names, or print them carefully and hang them.

* Include some special pens, or post-its & other writing materials.

If you're using a poster, children and grownups can write directly onto the poster. Designate some special pens or pencils for this. If you're using post its, include a stack! Encourage children to draw, write, or create images & words for other people in the home. Make sure to mention something about/for each child on your WOW WALL.

* Appreciate!

Take some time at the end of each day to recall great moment for your child. Write it up. When things are tricky with one child, go and read all their awesome notes. Share the wall as a family every once in a while- reading and appreciating each person.

Wow- nice helping sis!

Wow- you fed the dog!

Wow- loved how you took your time writing!

Wow- sweet positive energy!

Wow- thanks for my lunch, mom!

Dinnertime got you down? spice up your mealtime!

Try our method, which prioritizes social emotional well being, your children's EXPERIENCE of the meal, and the rich opportunities for back and fourth language, learning manners, sequencing, and joint attention that happen everyday at dinnertime!

set it up well

Set the table up before everyone comes to eat. Include: condiments, utensils, cups, water & a towel for spills at each kid's place.

eliminate all cross talk

Commotion makes it hard for many kids to eat. Eliminate cross talk: parents do not speak to each other.
Make it quiet: turn off radio, dryer, other sound in the house.

If children speak, parents may respond. If children don't speak, parents may comment on only what is on the table (wow these peas are so good!).

shake it up

Try these fun ways to shake things up once dinner is manageable:

Pirate dinner (turn table upside down- it is a shipwreck! eat with serving utensils, say "yar" a lot.

Play a connection game during dinner (roses/thorns/buds of the day)

Kids cook! Let the kids make YOU food- or involve them in cooking with you.

serve family style & ANCHOR

Serve food family style. Each child can ask for more. Give small portions. Focus on good communication & use recasting as needed. ***PARENTS MUST STAY AT THE TABLE FOR THE WHOLE TIME. YOU ARE THE ANCHOR! YOUR PRESENCE IS SO VERY ORGANIZING FOR YOUR KIDS!

focus on praise

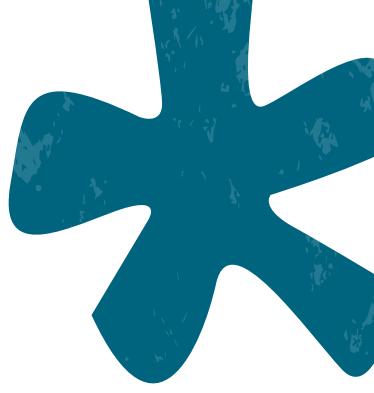
Offer ample praise
Almost everything you say should be praise & acknowledgement

no comment on food intake

Unless you have a medical reason to monitor calorie intake.... stop. Continue to offer healthy foods, and allow your child to choose what goes in their body.

Your job is to pick what goes on the table. Their job is to pick what goes in their body. Most children will feed themselves appropriately in this context, especially when you decrease commotion and chaos with this method... but it may take some time to see changes. Give it time.

challenge

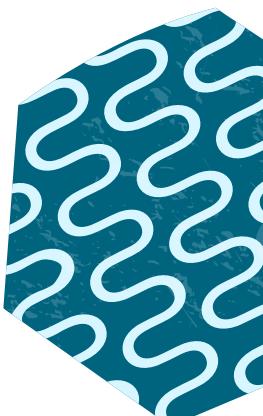


Parenting Affirmation Cards

We all need some extra love sometimes, and we all need to ground into our parenting in ways that keep us whole, rooted, and heartfelt. That is the intention of these cards. You may choose to pull one each week, or one each day, or one when you are having a tricky time. Whenever you choose to use them, know that they offer you support, guidance, and reflection. It is up to you to interpret, consider, stay with, and wonder about the card you choose.

Print what follows on cardstock, and cut on the dotted lines. Pull as needed.

Dr. Chelsey & Dr. Robin



confidence

You are enough. Trust yourself, trust that little flame inside of you telling what is right & good. Breathe deeply. What is your parenting super power today?



growth

What seeds are you nurturing?
What is growing? What is being left behind?



flexibility

In order for children to learn flexibility, they need to experience & witness it. How can you show your child YOUR own flexibility? What can YOU let go of, that has been causing tension in your relationship with the children?



quiet

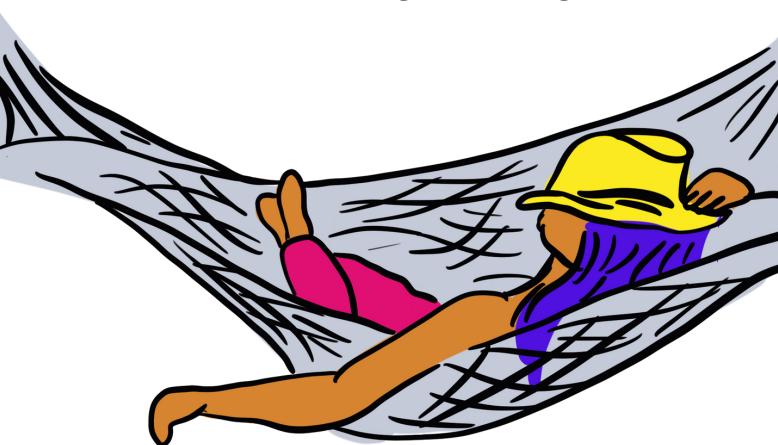
Turn off the TV. Turn down the music. Turn off the dryer. Turn down the voices. Whisper. Notice how the children respond to quiet.





rest

Rest is revolutionary. It is hopeful to say to your child "I am your grownup, and I need a rest. I am resting." Rest together.



attunement

What we humans need most is to be seen, known, heard, felt, understood. Your child needs you to tune into their world, and be. When can you take five minutes to attune to their world? Dial in, and stay there.



wisdom

Your wisdom lies in the paths you've walked in life, in the place you come from, in the people you love the most. You are wise & whole. Listen to your wisdom.



trust

Trust your child to show you the way. When they have a tough moment, trust that something is coming and something needs to be shared. Trust your child and yourself to move through those moments, and to move towards more ease.





humility

What are you learning from your kids?
Notice how much they are teaching you.

These little beings bring wisdom &
knowing- for times when we can listen.



joy

Parenting with a sense of joy is... fun.

More effective. More helpful. Easier.

Better. Find your sense of joy and hold it
tightly. Share it with your family. Build a
cocoon of protection around that joy.

Let nothing disturb it.



courage

Parenting is a
courageous act.
Sitting with a child
through challenge
takes as much
courage as setting a
new boundary or
supporting them to
play peacefully.
Courage means
showing up with your
whole heart & trying
again and again
through challenging.



gratitude

Expressing gratitude is linked to a deep
sense of well-being. Close your eyes. Open
them anew. With each breath, name
something you are grateful for.

Sometime today with your children, go on a
hunt for things you are all grateful for. Share
the gratitude together.



melodic

Use your voice to help your child cooperate. Neurological evidence shows us how much easier it is to process information when it has rhythm or is musical. So start singing!

*if singing is not your thing, use your voice like a warm blanket around your child (go for a meditative voice) - this will work too!

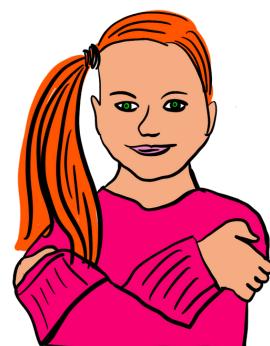


praise

Children need to be praised 100+ times a day.... or hour! Here's the truth, though... so do adults. Drop all correction, direction & instruction towards your children, yourself, and your parenting partners.

How does it feel, to only say things that are

praise?



tone

Only about 20% of communication is made up of words. The rest- we FEEL. We hear information in the tone of other's voices, and we understand



language

Sometimes a mismatch between children and adults shows up in language. Typically, the grown up uses a lot of words and the child actually needs fewer words- no words.

Challenge yourself today to say only the essentials- and if even that is too much, go for non-verbal praise & communication.



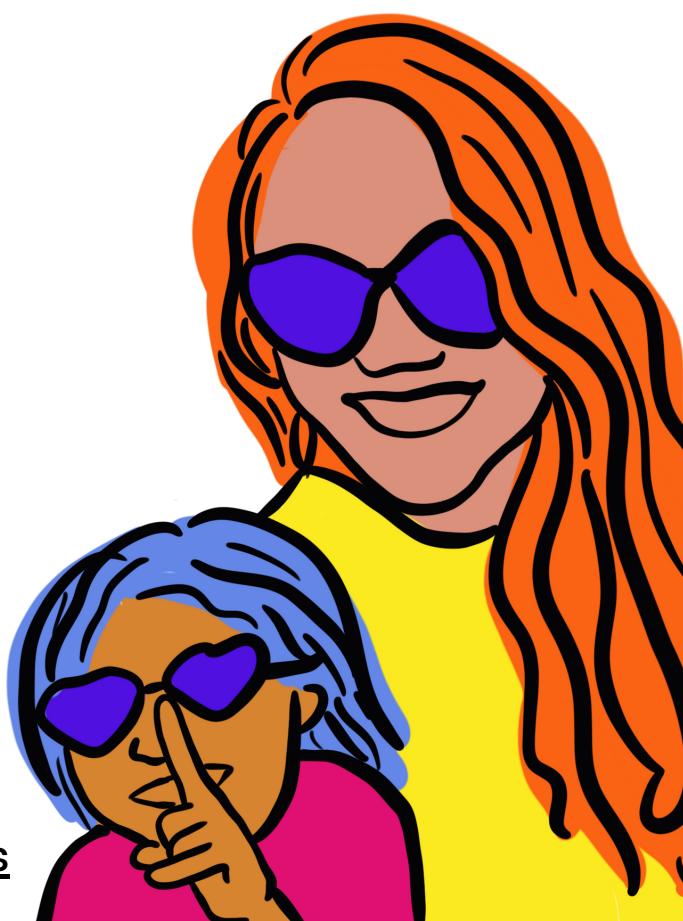
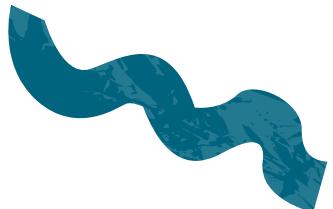


Do you need more insight?

Check out our self-guided and live support courses!

In our courses, you will learn...

- How our key framework, the 5 P's, gets kids to cooperate and lets families achieve calm.
- How to avoid resistance & arguments.
- Time-tested, research-approved strategies.
- How to use neuroscience & brain development to achieve cooperation & calm



Grab your seat!



www.guidingcooperation.org/families