BREAK THROUGH LEARNING CENTER

WHOA

Why Hang Onto Anger?

PARTICIPANT JOURNAL

A 12-week course in emotional regulation and democratic parenting

MOLLIE M. HUGHES, EdD

FILLABLE EDITION

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Getting Started

> *"Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."*
>
> — Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Preamble (1948)

INTRODUCTION: WHY HANG ONTO ANGER?

The Suitcase

You walk into a room with a suitcase in your hand. Packed inside the suitcase are your experiences: what guides your attitude about yourself and others. A very large suitcase may contain the remains of broken relationships, losses and defeats, mistakes and misjudgments. Tucked in the side pockets might be moments of regret and guilt that keep slipping out under stress. Hidden in secret compartments are the unforgivable mistakes. These private experiences might seem so terrible that you run a personal risk if you expose them. This is an opportunity for you to begin to **unpack your suitcase.**

Unpacking

No matter how you rationalize the way you should think and feel about your parenting, your baggage will not allow room for change and growth. So, before you can get to a place of thinking, learning and teaching, you will need to unpack your emotional baggage.

Ask yourself a few questions as you reflect. How did you feel about coming to a parenting class? Did it feel fair? Do you feel blamed, attacked, misunderstood, even defeated by your current situation? Do you blame an ex-partner, a child or "the system" for what they have done to make you feel this way? Do you think they should be here, too? Does it feel like someone or something has control over your job, your children, your freedom or your choices? Maybe you have hidden your feelings by packing them so tight in your suitcase that you have to sit on it to keep it from bursting open. Then your bag is pretty full.

Who Is Responsible for How You Feel?

You do not have to solve your problems, merely look at them from a more strategic and compassionate point of view. First, who is responsible for how you feel? The hard truth is, **you are responsible for your own feelings.** No one carries your suitcase. You carry it yourself. Therefore, no one else can control the feelings inside. Once you realize it is you and you alone carrying this burden, it is easier to let go of the misery and pain. However, some people have carried this suitcase for so long that it feels terrifying to let it go. No matter how much you want to find relief, the bag is so familiar, so predictable. **It will be your choice** to decide if you want to go on feeling the way you do, or take the risk of letting the contents go.

Whatever the reason, **welcome!** Our goal is to lead you to self-discovery, not to put you down, make you feel bad or try to change you. We will help you build skills in conflict management, effective communication and emotional regulation, much in the way we hope you will guide your children toward self-sufficiency, problem solving and critical thinking, by understanding and practicing **democratic parenting.**

WHAT IS DEMOCRATIC PARENTING?

Democratic parenting is not a new idea. It is taught in many modern parenting courses. It is a style of parenting first suggested by Alfred Adler, a medical doctor, psychotherapist and founder of the school of individual psychology. The parent guides a child's development through building skills in 2-way communication, firm yet consistent boundaries, problem solving and mutual respect. Democratic parenting sets shared boundaries, uses effective communication, and builds fairness and respect between child and adult. It is the shared practice of universal human rights: every person, including every child, has the right to be treated with dignity.

WHERE HUMAN RIGHTS BEGIN

TRY IT

Watch: *What Are the Universal Human Rights?* by Benedetta Berti (TED-Ed). You will find the video in the Pre-Class Assignment on the course website.

> *"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home, so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere."*
>
> — Eleanor Roosevelt, remarks at the United Nations, 1958

This is where the story of democratic parenting begins: with the dignity of each person, reflected in the **Four Principles of Dignity**, the right to **value, acceptance, voice and choice.**

The curriculum grew from a collaboration between Jayne A. Major, PhD, *Breakthrough Parenting: Moving Your Family from Struggle to Cooperation* (1998), and Mollie M. Hughes, EdD, *Parenting Dignity: Raising the Human Child* (2003, 2009, 2014). The online course also draws on popular authors, TED speakers, current research and past participants.

But how can an adult parent in this democratic way when stress, conflict or strong emotions get in the way?

THIS IS NOT A COURSE IN ANGER MANAGEMENT

> *"Let us not look back in anger, nor forward in fear, but around in awareness."*
>
> — James Thurber

What? Isn't this course called Why Hang Onto *Anger*?

Yes, it is. But "anger management" is really a general term for understanding and regulating our emotions. How we feel about ourselves is driven by how we learned to **perceive** the world (our Core Beliefs) and the people in it. Our sense of worth is built on our sense of Belonging, on our willingness to be Vulnerable, and on our ability to show Empathy to the people around us, especially in times of CONFLICT, even when it feels so unfair.

For example, in Week 1 we explore the connection between Vulnerability and Emotional Regulation. Being vulnerable is not the same as being fragile. Emotional Fragility is when hard feelings knock us over, so we choose to avoid them, hide them or lash out. Vulnerability, as Dr. Brené Brown describes it in the online Week 1 TED Talk, is the courage to feel those same feelings and let ourselves be seen.

In the following weeks, we explore our Core Beliefs that are formed when we are young and influence our Perception of the world and the people in it. We change through our experiences, through making mistakes and learning that mistakes are opportunities for understanding and change. However, Perception is not made of stone. The human brain is flexible, and new, thought-provoking information can reshape our point of view, and how we see behavior in ourselves and others.

So think of WHOA as an Educational Journey into **Conflict Management and Emotional Regulation.**

The WHOA course is **Adult-Centered**, which means it focuses on the needs of the parent: **you.** You are your child's best chance of reaching their full potential, but *you cannot teach what you do not know.* You are your child's best teacher. You will inspire them to become critical thinkers and problem-solvers as they navigate a challenging world.

The WHOA course and Democratic Parenting will guide you toward better relationships with your co-parent and your children. It starts with understanding your own needs, thoughts and feelings.

YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF THE OUTCOME

WHOA is a **court-approved parent education course.** That means courts accept it when parent education is ordered or recommended in high conflict cases. It means a court requires you to be here. Yet, many parents enroll on their own. WHOA is not therapy or counseling. It is not tips and advice. It is an academic approach to implementing skills applicable in both childrearing and relationship building. *What you get out of it depends on the time, energy and genuine commitment you put into it.* It is designed to keep you engaged with others through both weekly Study Hall and class participation. It will introduce options for handling conflict with more successful outcomes. The choice is yours.

To finish this course:

- **Attend every scheduled class and Study Hall. Attendance is mandatory.**
- Complete all assignments from the online course site and in this journal.
- Participate in class and Study Hall discussions.
- Keep what others share in class confidential.
- Study Hall is recorded for quality assurance and then erased.
- Complete the online survey and final class assignments to receive your certificate.

If you do these things, I guarantee you will become more comfortable as a decision maker, a parent, a friend and a person. Not because we changed you, but because of your own commitment to building trust in yourself and others.

I wish you well in this difficult but worthwhile work.

Dr. Mollie M. Hughes

Director of Education, Break Through Learning Center

HOW THIS COURSE WORKS

WHOA runs for **12 weeks.** Each week has four parts that work together:

1. **Watch.** Each lesson on the course website opens with a short talk (usually a TED talk).
2. **Read.** Read that week's section of this journal. It explains the ideas behind the talk and gives you activities to practice them.
3. **Write.** Complete the weekly online assignment (Summary, Analysis and Application) and the journal entry for the week.
4. **Talk.** Bring your questions and insights to Study Hall and class.

Weekly deadlines

- Weekly online assignments are due **two days before Study Hall.**
- Email your assignment to your classmates (copy your facilitator) and comment on each other's work **at least one day before Study Hall.**
- Attend Study Hall **one day before class** as assigned. Study Hall is recorded for quality assurance and then erased.
- Your facilitator's welcome email lists your class's exact dates and times. Keep your own calendar.

THE HISTORY OF THE HEART

Across the 12 weeks you will write your own story in three parts. Each part builds on the one before it.

Part	What it is	Due
1. Timeline & Analysis	A timeline of your life from birth to today, and what you see in it	Week 4
2. Birth Story	The story of how you came into the world, and how you were welcomed	Week 6
3. Parent Narrative	Your story as a parent: your choices, what you learned, where you are going	Week 12

You will also create a **final presentation** (PowerPoint) about an activity you share with your child and how it practices democratic parenting skills and objectives. The first draft is due in Week 8 and the final draft (with facilitator approval) in Week 11. Presentations take place in Weeks 11 and 12.

The full assignment descriptions for the History of the Heart are in **Course Materials** on the course website.

THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF DIGNITY

This whole course rests on one belief: **every human being, including every child, is born with the right to dignity as referred to in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (see Course Materials on the course website). You will meet these four principles throughout the course.

Principle	The right	What it means
Value	to be worthwhile	Every person has value simply because they were born human. No one can take it away.
Acceptance	to be loveable	Every person can make mistakes, be forgiven and learn from them.
Voice	to be respected	Every person has an equal voice in a conversation, whatever their age.
Choice	to be capable	Every person can make age-appropriate choices and experience the consequences.

DIGNITY = VALUE + ACCEPTANCE + VOICE + CHOICE

HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL

This is the fillable edition. You can type your answers straight into the boxes.

Use only the free Adobe Acrobat Reader (on a computer, tablet or phone) to fill in and save your journal. Other apps, such as **Preview** on a Mac or the **Files** and **Mail** apps on an iPhone or iPad, may not scroll long answers and may not save your answers correctly.

To save your answers: type in the boxes, then choose **File > Save.** Some web browsers show PDFs but do not save what you type, so download the file first. Save often, and keep a backup copy.

Turning in entries: email your journal entries to your facilitator as each week asks. You do not need to send them to your classmates.

FREE WRITE: YOUR GOALS

Set some realistic goals you can reach over the next 12 weeks.

Explain: What brought you here? What do you want to achieve in 12 weeks? And, how will you know you have reached these goals?

Next: Attend your first class. Study Hall starts after your first class.

WEEK 1

Understanding Anger

01

ONLINE LESSON: VULNERABILITY

THIS WEEK

- [ ] **Watch:** *The Power of Vulnerability*, Brené Brown (TED)
- [ ] **Read:** this section, Understanding Anger
- [ ] **Due Before Study Hall:** Week 1 online assignment

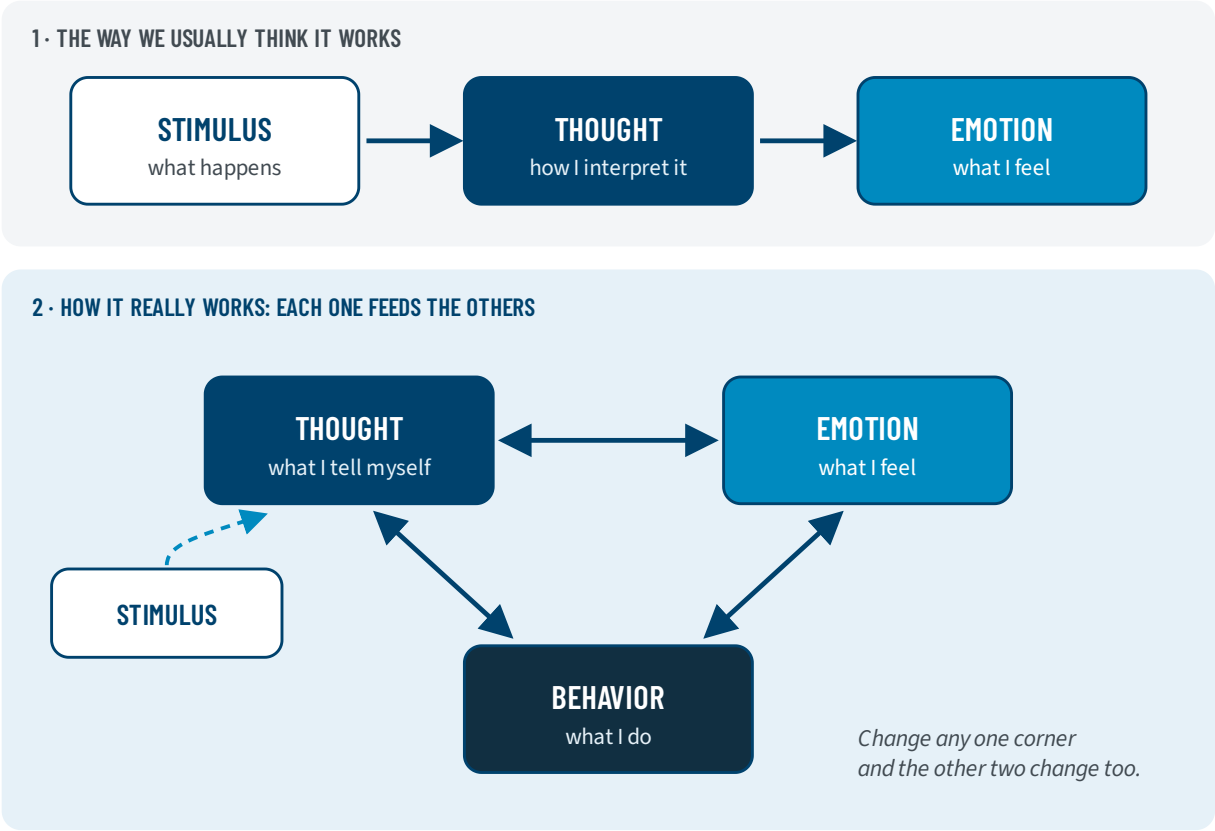
KEY CONCEPT: PERCEPTION

> *"How you think is who you are."*

Perception is the meaning we give to what happens to us. Two people can live through the same event and feel completely different about it, because each one sees it through their own experiences, beliefs and needs.

Anger is a secondary emotion. It does not come straight from events. It comes from our perception of them.

We often think it works in a straight line: something happens, we think about it, and then we feel. In real life, thoughts, emotions and behavior are connected in a circle. Each one feeds the others.



The CBT models are credited to Dr. Aaron Temkin Beck, the father of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is built on a simple insight: our thoughts come from the way we think about people, ideas and events, and our emotions come from those thoughts. As the first diagram shows, it is not the event itself that causes the emotional response. It is how we **evaluate** the event.

The second diagram shows that thoughts, feelings and behaviors are all connected, and that our beliefs are shaped by the people and events in our lives, including those from early childhood.

WHOA introduces CBT to parents to help you focus on the **outcome** of your behavior. If your behavior is producing results you don't want, then examining the way you *think* about the situation will change your reaction and produce a different outcome.

> **No one makes you angry.** Other people's actions can be hurtful, unfair, even wrong, and you have every right to set boundaries. But the anger itself comes from how *you* interpret what happened. That is good news: it means you have the power to choose your response.

Our perceptions form when we are young. However, the brain can change. Throughout this course you will practice noticing your perceptions, questioning them, and choosing responses that protect your dignity and the dignity of the people around you.

The first thoughts that flash through your mind when something upsets you are called **trigger thoughts.** They are perception in action, and you will work with them all week.

Think about it. Recall a recent moment when you got angry. What were your trigger thoughts, the first things you told yourself about what was happening?

WHY WE START WITH ANGER RESPONSES

This course begins with one belief: all human beings have the right to dignity. How we honor that right with our children shapes how they will treat us, and others, as they grow into adults.

We start with anger responses. Anger gets in the way of communication and damages trust. But understanding how we feel helps us understand how we think, and what we need.

WE TEACH WHAT WE KNOW

When people get angry, whose fault is it: the person who is angry, or the person who did something wrong? Angry people find reasons to be angry with their children, partners, co-workers and others. They blame others for their anger. Sometimes that anger spreads to a whole system of people, such as the courts, social service agencies or law enforcement. When people feel threatened, or forced to do something they feel is unfair, they often make poor choices.

Children are excellent observers. They watch how their parents react under stress. When children feel they are treated unfairly, they are often confused. They don't yet know how to get their thoughts and feelings across, so they make poor choices or act out. Sound familiar? Children look to their parents as role models for how to react.

WHAT IS ANGER MANAGEMENT?

Anger management is simply **how we respond when we sense a threat or an offense.** Our behavior is the result of what we perceive and how we respond.

If we focus only on behavior, change is less likely to work or to last. Real change happens when there is a shift in our state of mind: in the way we *interpret* information and situations.

Example: strawberries. I like the smell of strawberries. But if I get sick after eating them, I may start to find the smell offensive, even threatening. If my friend eats strawberries in front of me, I may feel she is disrespecting my feelings. My experience has changed how I interpret strawberries. Now I avoid them, and I may even avoid the people who enjoy them.

There is no perfect way to react to any situation. There are only ways that are more productive or less productive. I can tell my friend I dislike strawberries in a way that keeps our friendship. Better still, I can try to understand what makes her love them. Our friendship matters more than the strawberries.

> *"Holding onto anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intention of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned."*
>
> — often attributed to the Buddha

AM I SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS?

It is not enough to tell people to behave better. The harder and more useful work is helping them see how the people around them experience what they say and do. Through that process, we take charge of our own feelings, thoughts and needs. We recognize how the other person is experiencing the relationship, and we accept that we alone are responsible for our part of the results.

The ideas in this journal show ways to set boundaries and limits without stepping over the boundaries and limits of others. They offer options for more thoughtful, engaged and compassionate relationships with family, friends, co-workers and yourself.

A COMMON MISCONCEPTION

Many people believe Anger Management is about *controlling* emotions. In this course you will learn that it is about **recognizing the thoughts that drive our emotions** and about healthy relationships. It is about how we think and feel about a person, place, idea or thing.

When we are in conflict, or in a co-dependent relationship, we may feel like a victim. Or we may feel we are becoming just like our angry parent. Our relationships can get stuck in the same arguments and dead-end conversations, marked by put-downs, shut-downs, threats or even violence.

Example: Aunt Clara. Say I don't like Aunt Clara because of her religious beliefs. When she comments on how I dress, I take it as criticism and start to get defensive and angry. But if I pause and look at it from her point of view, I might think about how different life is now, and how little she sees new fashion trends. That changes how I feel. Instead of snapping, I smile and say, "This is the newest style, but it must look kind of funny to you, Aunt Clara. Things were so different when you were young." I might even take her for a walk and stay longer than I planned.

So we need to meet the underlying needs of ourselves and others in ways that keep our relationships healthy and happy. That is not easy. Behavior is very hard to change.

TRY IT

Activity: Interview a Classmate

Get to know another parent in your first Zoom class. Use the questions below, take notes, and be ready to introduce yourself as well as respond to others.

- What is your full name? Do you have a nickname?
- Tell me about your family.
- What is your favorite color? What color do you dislike?
- If you could be any animal, what would you be? Why?
- What do you value most in your life?
- If you had the power to change one thing in the world, what would it be, and why?

ANGER IS A SECONDARY EMOTION

> *"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."*
>
> — often attributed to Viktor Frankl

Even though Frankl did not write those exact sentences, the quote gets his message dead-on:

- **Inner freedom.** As a Holocaust survivor, Frankl argued that no matter how brutal or controlling your outside world is, nobody can strip away your ultimate freedom to choose your inner attitude and reaction.
- **The pause.** Reacting is automatic: someone cuts you off in traffic, or an email irritates you, and you react immediately with your trigger thoughts. Choosing means creating a tiny gap of awareness, so you decide how you want to respond rather than reacting without thinking.

Anger is a secondary emotion and is often described as:

- an intense emotional state
- part of the fight, flight or freeze response in the brain
- energy for action when we feel threatened, physically or emotionally
- energy that can be put to productive use, such as problem solving

Primary and secondary feelings

Anger is a **secondary feeling.** It covers up the unmet need underneath: the need to be loved, to be safe, to be appreciated or to be heard.

It is connected to the primary feeling: what we feel just *before* we react in anger. We always feel something else first. In this course we use a simple model: there are two primary emotions, **love** and **fear.** Anger is driven by fear-based feelings that come just before it, such as feeling:

afraid · attacked · offended · disrespected · forced · controlled · trapped · interrogated · pressured

Example: pressure. Someone wants you to do something you'd rather not do. At first you feel a little pressured. When they keep pushing, you get irritated. If they keep going, you get really mad. That leads to bad feelings, hurtful words and possibly even violence.

What if you said, "I want you to stop pressuring me," *before* the feeling grew into anger? If the person respects your feelings, they may stop at that boundary. If they don't, make it clear: "You are trying to make me do something I don't want to do. Stop." It is worth a try.

Knowing how we feel helps us respond by:

- raising our self-awareness
- helping us say exactly what we mean
- helping us learn quickly who respects our feelings, and who we want to spend time with

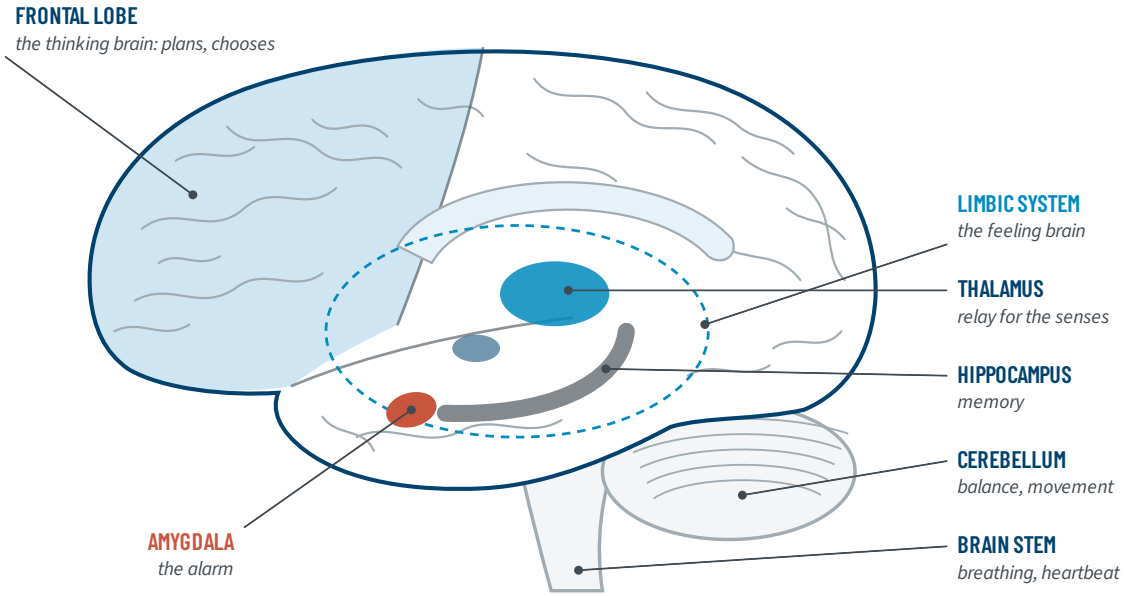
Bridge to this week's talk

In her talk, Dr. Brown describes Vulnerability: the uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure we feel when we let ourselves be seen. Many of the fear-based feelings that are beneath anger are Vulnerable feelings.

Think of a recent time you got angry. What vulnerable feeling came *just before* the anger?

ANGER AND THE BRAIN

Deep in the brain is the **amygdala** (Greek for "almond," because of its shape). It is part of the **limbic system,** the brain's alarm center, and it reacts to fear. The front of the brain, the **frontal lobe,** is where we think, plan and make choices.



Learn more: see **Anger and the Brain** in Course Materials on the course website. It shows the parts of the brain, how neurons send messages, and why the alarm goes off before we have time to think.

When the alarm goes off, the body gets ready to fight, flight or freeze. You may notice:

- **worried thoughts**
- **physical changes:** a pounding heart, faster breathing, sweating, tense muscles, cold and clammy hands, even an upset stomach
- **an urge to act:** to escape, or to strike back

After a frightening or traumatic experience, the brain can become "conditioned," so that even a small reminder sets off the whole fear reaction. This is part of what happens in post-traumatic stress (PTSD).

> **Why this matters:** when the alarm is ringing, the thinking part of the brain has a hard time being heard. That is why it helps to pause, breathe and cool down *before* you respond. The pause gives your thinking brain time to catch up. With practice, this can become more manageable and more automatic.

THREE STYLES OF ANGER MANAGEMENT

Most people handle their anger response in one of three approaches.

> **The Suppressor** sits on anger or hides it. Parents with this approach learned that anger is all bad and must be eliminated. They bottle it up until it reaches the boiling point, then explode over something small. They deny their feelings or refuse to express anger.

Trigger thoughts: "I need everyone's approval." "I only want to please everyone." "I don't want anyone to think I'm bad." "I'm afraid I'll be punished if I get angry." "If I get angry, I'll lose control." "I NEVER want to be like my angry parent."

> **The Venter** expresses their anger freely and without control. In the heat of the moment they show no mercy. They may be verbally or physically abusive and often describe themselves as "flooded" or "out of control." Afterward they often feel guilt or remorse. Parents with this style see anger as a quick, easy way to gain control, and their relationships often suffer.

Trigger thoughts: "If I throw a tantrum, I'll get what I want." "If I scream loud enough, they'll be scared enough to do what I want." "I need your full attention." "You need to do what I want or suffer my rage."

> **The Manager** accepts anger as a healthy emotion and is willing to practice recognizing the irrational thoughts that trigger it. This parent admits their own mistakes and accepts the mistakes of others, and does not take someone else's anger personally. The Manager separates the action from the person by understanding what "pushes their buttons." This parent does not blame others. They are accountable for their actions.

Trigger thoughts: "Why am I feeling angry?" "I can't change the situation, only how I feel about it." "How can I keep this from getting worse?" "Whose problem is this, mine or theirs?" "I need time to think before I act."

What is your style of anger management? Give an example.

ROLE PLAY: TRIGGER THOUGHTS

Read these situations aloud. Answer as fast as you can with your very first thought. Say the first thing that comes to mind. There are no right answers.

1. You are stopped at a red light. A billboard catches your eye and you don't see the light turn green. The driver behind you bumps your car to make you move. What are your first thoughts?
2. You have waited in line at the bank for ten minutes. A woman greets the man in front of you and cuts in line beside him. What are you thinking?
3. It has been a long day and you are tired. At the grocery store, a mother is standing over her screaming three-year-old right at the entrance. What are you thinking?
4. You walk into a room and see your child looking through the desk where you keep checks and bank statements. She seems to be searching for something. She moves from the desk to your file cabinet. What are you thinking?
5. The school calls to say your child cut class today. Your child lies to you about it. What are your first thoughts?

This week: Complete the activities and questions in this section and be ready to discuss them in class. Complete the Week 1 online assignment before Study Hall, and attend class and Study Hall.

WEEK 2

Recognizing Needs

02

ONLINE LESSON: BELONGING

THIS WEEK

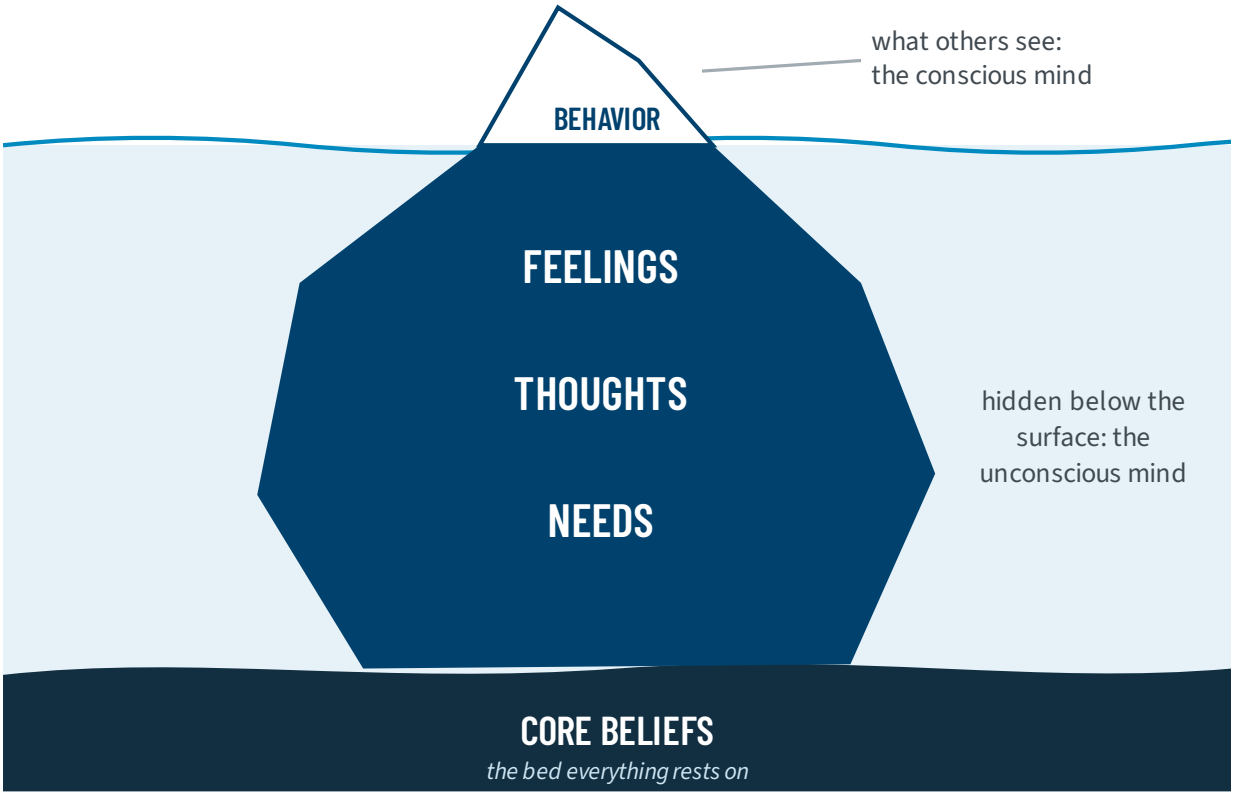
- ☐ **Watch:** *The Human Need for Belonging*, Amelia Franck Meyer (TEDx)
- ☐ **Read:** this section, Recognizing Needs
- ☐ **Journal Entry 1:** Your Needs
- ☐ **Start:** your Timeline (due Week 4)
- ☐ **Due Before Study Hall:** Week 2 online assignment

Last week we looked at the thoughts and feelings that come before anger. This week we go one layer deeper, to the **needs** underneath our thoughts and feelings. Every behavior, ours and our children's, is an attempt to meet a need. One of the strongest is the need to belong.

BEHAVIOR IS THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

> *"Behavior is a symptom, not a cause ... addressing behavior alone will not work; one must look for the causes of behavior."*
>
> — Jayne A. Major, PhD, *Breakthrough Parenting*

An iceberg is a useful picture of the mind. Only about 10% of an iceberg shows above the water. The biggest part stays hidden below the surface.

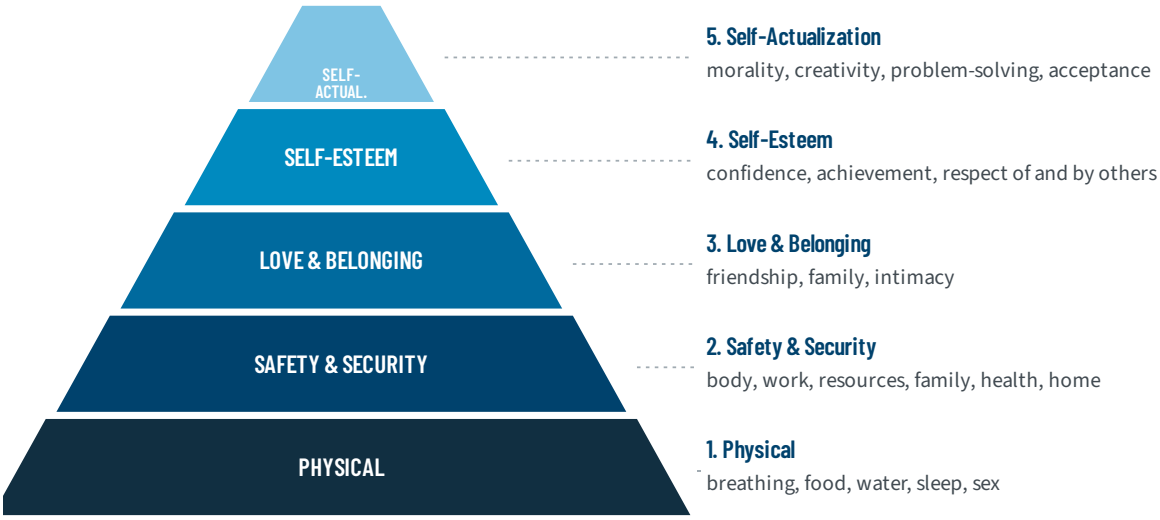


People are the same. The part we show others is our conscious mind, our **behavior.** The larger, more powerful part stays out of sight in our unconscious mind: our **Feelings, Thoughts, Needs and Core Beliefs.** The conscious and unconscious mind work together to make us who we are.

When we acknowledge our thoughts, feelings, needs and core beliefs, we can manage them instead of being managed by them. We acknowledge them and bring them to the surface. In a later assignment, we discuss core beliefs. Here, we start by understanding our needs.

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Psychologist Abraham Maslow described human needs as a pyramid with five levels.



The higher needs (self-esteem and self-actualization) only come into focus when the lower needs (physical, safety and belonging) are met. When a lower need stops being met, our attention goes back to it. We don't slide back down for good, but the unmet need keeps us from moving forward.

Example. A successful working parent, living at the self-esteem level, goes through a divorce and loses custody of her children. She now spends much of her energy trying to rebuild those relationships (belonging needs). She may miss work (safety and security needs) and have trouble sleeping (physical needs). Still, she keeps valuing her work, and as the divorce settles, her work will likely improve again (self-esteem needs).

The five levels

Adapted from Breakthrough Parenting® by Jayne A. Major, PhD

Level 1: Physical needs. At the bottom are our basic needs: food, water, air, sleep and sex. These must be met before we can think about anything else. When they are not met, we feel an extreme, very real fear: the fear of losing our existence.

Level 2: Safety and security needs. Shelter from cold, heat, wind and rain, and freedom from fear of physical, emotional or mental harm. We need structure, order and personal boundaries. Routines and rituals help us feel safe.

Level 3: Love and belonging needs. We need affection and a sense of belonging, both psychologically and physically. The groups we belong to help define who we are.

Level 4: Self-esteem needs. We need to achieve, to be productive and to master skills. Recognition from others for what we accomplish builds self-worth, self-love and self-confidence.

Level 5: Self-actualization. The need to reach our full potential and connect it to the wider world. When we take full responsibility for our beliefs, needs, thoughts, emotions and actions, we become centered and balanced, and able to show the highest form of intelligence: **empathy.**

What questions does the hierarchy raise for you about your own feelings, thoughts and needs?

ROLE PLAY: WHAT ARE THEIR NEEDS?

Use the Hierarchy of Needs to identify the needs of the **child.**

1. A 6-year-old wants his mom's attention while she is on the phone. He whines and fusses and finally throws a fit.
2. A 3-year-old throws a huge tantrum in a crowded department store on a busy Saturday afternoon.
3. Your 8-year-old says, "You can't make me go to bed!" in front of the new partner you are trying to impress.
4. Two 4-year-olds are fighting over the same toy. One hits the other on the head.
5. A 3-year-old is chasing the dog and pulls its ear. The dog nips the child, and the child starts to cry.

MISTAKEN GOALS

> *Alfred Adler believed that all behavior has a goal, and that people are driven to find belonging and a sense of connection in the groups they live in.*

Alfred Adler had a great influence on modern psychology, child guidance and education. In his day, most parents and teachers thought hitting children was acceptable discipline. To change those attitudes, Adler used a warm, witty style. He found that gentle humor opened people to new ideas far better than heavy-handed lectures.

Adler believed in "democratizing psychology," sharing its insights with anyone willing to listen, stay open and change for the better. He believed a more harmonious world would come only by taking these ideas to everyone.

When a child does not feel they belong, they may pursue a **mistaken goal**: a misguided way of trying to belong. The chart below shows the four mistaken goals, how a parent tends to feel and react, and what the child really needs. Use it to think through a situation before you respond.

Child's goal	Parent feels	Parent's first reaction	Child responds	Child's belief	What the child needs / what the parent can do
Undue attention *to keep others busy or get special attention*	Annoyed, irritated, worried, guilty	Reminding, coaxing, rescuing	Stops for a while, then starts again; stops with one-on-one attention	*"I belong only when I'm noticed or getting special attention."*	**Notice me. Involve me.** Acknowledge the child's needs without giving special attention. Reflective listening; reframing; clear boundaries.
Power *to be the boss*	Angry, challenged, threatened, defeated	Fighting or giving in; "I will win," "I am right," "I'll make you"	Behavior gets worse; defiant or passive compliance; pleased when the parent is upset	*"I belong only when I'm the boss, in control, or proving no one can control me."*	**Let me help. Give me choices.** Step out of the conflict and calm down. Be firm, clear and kind. Redirect; set limits. "I can't make you do what you don't want to do."
Revenge *to get even*	Hurt, disappointed, disbelieving, disgusted	Retaliating, getting even, taking it personally; "How could you do this to me?"	Retaliates, hurts others, damages property; escalates or manipulates	*"I don't think I belong, so I'll hurt others as I feel hurt. I can't be liked or loved."*	**Hurt me? I am hurting.** Deal with hurt feelings. Reflective listening; apologize; avoid punishing; encourage strengths.
Assumed inadequacy *to give up and be left alone*	Despair, hopeless, helpless, inadequate	Giving up, rescuing, showing lack of faith	Retreats further; passive; no improvement or response; avoids trying	*"I don't believe I belong, so I'll convince others not to expect anything of me. I'm helpless."*	**Don't give up on me. Help me learn to help myself.** Encourage independence; show faith; build on strengths; work together.

Mistaken Goals chart, adapted from Alfred Adler and Rudolf Dreikurs

> **Tip:** your own feeling is the best clue to the child's goal. If you feel *annoyed,* the goal is probably attention. If you feel *challenged or threatened,* it is probably power. If you feel *hurt,* it is probably revenge. If you feel *hopeless,* the child has probably given up.

Think of a recent situation with your child. Which mistaken goal might have been behind the behavior? What does your child need from you?

GETTING STARTED ON YOUR TIMELINE

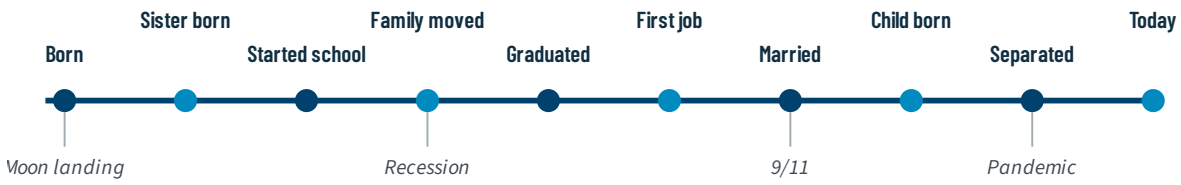
Your **Timeline & Analysis** is due in **Week 4.** Start it this week.

TRY IT

Activity: Plot Your Timeline

Make a timeline of your life from birth to today. Include events, moves, relationships, losses, celebrations and accomplishments. Leave room for outside or historical events that were important to you.

1. Start a simple digital document. Use a straight line to indicate your life. Start with your birth.
2. Look at the events and people that have shaped your life. Notice the times of **change.** How did those changes affect you?
3. Ask yourself: What does my timeline tell me about what I value? Am I still carrying grief or pain? What does the story of my life mean to me? How does my past affect my relationships today?



Example only: your life events above the line, historical events below. Use your own method.

Use this space for your first notes.

JOURNAL ENTRY 1

Your Needs

Use the iceberg and the Hierarchy of Needs to answer these questions.

1. Where are you on the Hierarchy of Needs right now?

2. What small changes are you making to meet your current needs?

3. How will you measure your progress?

This week: Complete Journal Entry 1 and your role play notes. Start your Timeline. Complete the Week 2 online assignment before Study Hall, and attend class and Study Hall.

WEEK 3

Resolving Conflict

03

ONLINE LESSON: THE BEAUTY OF CONFLICT

THIS WEEK

- ☐ **Watch:** *The Beauty of Conflict*, Clair Canfield (TEDx). Plan extra time; it is worth watching twice.
- ☐ **Read:** this section, Resolving Conflict
- ☐ **Journal Entry 2:** Your Conflict Plan
- ☐ **Keep working on:** your Timeline & Analysis (due Week 4)
- ☐ **Due Before Study Hall:** Week 3 online assignment

> *"Conflict is transforming."*
>
> — Dr. Mollie M. Hughes, *Parenting Dignity: Raising the Human Child*

No matter how good a parent you are, or how good your kids are, conflict happens. Voices get raised, and arguing can turn into a real power struggle. It happens in almost every family. Conflict itself is not the problem. It is a sign that something matters to both people. The problem is how we handle it.

There are ways to work through conflict without yelling, and without letting things get out of hand or turn violent.

THE THREE KEYS AND VOCAB

This week's TEDx talk, *The Beauty of Conflict* by Clair Canfield, explores how conflict can transform our lives and relationships. He offers three key principles for changing how we see conflict:

1. **Recognize what the conflict is really about.** Are we addressing the same problem?
2. **Recognize when you're stuck.** This is about accountability. Are you holding on to an unreasonable idea or feeling?
3. **Speak responsibly,** using **VOCAB.**

VOCAB

- **V: Vulnerability.** Remove your armor in the conflict. Instead of being defensive or trying to justify your actions, learn to truly listen.
- **O: Ownership.** Which parts of the conflict are yours? Are you being stubborn? Could you look at it a different way?
- **C: Communication.** Try to understand the submerged part of the iceberg (see Week 2). Shift your communication from statements of finality to Reflective Listening and open clarifying statements and questions.
- **A: Acceptance.** Embrace reality and uncertainty. Let go of what you want out of the conflict and settle on what you can accept, for example, for the benefit of your children.
- **B: Boundaries.** Build a foundation of trust by setting ground rules for acceptable behavior.

Which letter of VOCAB is hardest for you in conflict with your child or co-parent? Explain.

WHOSE PROBLEM IS IT?

Before you try to solve a conflict, ask one question: **whose problem is it?**

- If **I** am the one who is angry, it is **my** problem to calm down and admit that something is bothering me.
- If the **other person** is upset, the problem is **theirs.** I don't have to react to their emotions, only to the issue.
- If **we are both** upset, we both cool down and each admit our own part of the problem.

Avoid blame. Look for your own part in the conflict, and try to see the other person's point of view.

10 STEPS TO RESOLVING CONFLICT

The steps fall into three stages: **thinking, talking and listening, and solving.** You don't have to memorize them. Come back to this page when a conflict comes up.

THINK Steps 1–3	TALK & LISTEN Steps 4–6	SOLVE Steps 7–10
1 Name and gauge your emotions	4 Speak and act responsibly	7 Accept compromise
2 Whose problem is it?	5 Listen reflectively	8 Give everyone a voice
3 Know when someone is stuck	6 Admit when you're wrong	9 Set boundaries
		10 Make an agreement

The Thinking Steps

Step 1. Name your emotions and gauge their intensity. Anger is a secondary emotion. Learn to recognize what is underneath it. Several emotions are often present at once, especially in conflict.

Step 2. Whose problem is it? (See above.) Avoid blame and own your part.

Step 3. Know when someone is stuck. Acknowledge when the other person, or you, are stuck and unwilling to compromise. Take a break and regroup. Try later.

The Talking and Listening Steps

Step 4. Speak and act Responsibly. Tell the other person, in a reasonable tone, what you are angry or hurt about. Protect your Dignity and theirs by using VOCAB. Hostile words or behavior will ruin your chances of a good outcome.

Step 5. Listen reflectively. Repeat what the other person said in your own words, so you both know you truly understand their point of view.

Step 6. Admit when you are wrong. Acknowledge your part. Most problems are not all one person's fault. Owning your part helps you stay objective and earns the other person's cooperation.

The Solving Steps

Step 7. Accept compromise. Share ideas without judging them. Be creative. Don't point out the flaws in anyone else's ideas.

Step 8. Give everyone a voice. Listen, then decide together which ideas will help. Let young people explore their options without interruption or advice.

Step 9. Set Boundaries. Everyone has their say, but not everyone gets their say. Be clear about the expectations both parties agreed to.

Step 10. Make an agreement. Make a plan with input from all sides. What happens if expectations are not met? Consequences should be part of the Lesson, not a form of punishment.

PRACTICE: THE THREE KEYS AND 10 STEPS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT

Think about a current conflict with your child or co-parent. How will you apply the Three Keys and the 10 Steps?

JOURNAL ENTRY 2

Your Conflict Plan

Using the skills you are learning, design a plan for handling a real conflict in your family. Choose one specific incident from your current case with a co-parent or a child.

The conflict. What happened, and who is involved?

Thinking steps (1–3). What were you feeling underneath the anger? How intense was it? Whose problem is it?

Talking and listening steps (4–6). When and where will you talk? What will you say, and how will you show you are listening? What is your part?

Solving steps (7–10). What solutions could you brainstorm together? What agreement would you like to reach, and how will you check on it?

This week: Complete Journal Entry 2. Finish your Timeline & Analysis for Week 4. Complete the Week 3 online assignment before Study Hall, and attend class and Study Hall.

WEEK 4

Your Story

04

ONLINE LESSON: FOUR PILLARS OF MEANING

THIS WEEK

- [ ] **Watch:** *There's More to Life Than Being Happy*, Emily Esfahani Smith (TED): the four pillars of meaning
- [ ] **Read:** this section, Your Story
- [ ] **Journal Entry 3:** Your Birth Story (first draft)
- [ ] **Due this week:** Timeline & Analysis
- [ ] **Due Before Study Hall:** Week 4 online assignment

> *"You are the hero of your own story."*
>
> — Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*

This week's talk names four pillars of a meaningful life: **belonging, purpose, transcendence and storytelling.** The stories we tell about ourselves shape how we see our past, how we act today and what we believe is possible. This week you finish your Timeline and begin the second part of your History of the Heart: your **Birth Story.**

YOUR TIMELINE & ANALYSIS (DUE THIS WEEK)

Look back at the timeline you started in Week 2. Then write an analysis of what you see.

TRY IT

Writing your analysis

- What stands out when you look at the events and people who shaped your life?
- When were the big **changes**? How did they affect you?
- What does your timeline tell you about what you **value**?
- Are you still carrying grief or pain from any part of it?
- Which of the **four pillars** (belonging, purpose, transcendence, storytelling) do you see in your life so far?
- How does your past affect your relationships and your parenting today?

Draft your analysis here, then turn it in with your timeline as your facilitator directs.

WRITING A BIRTH STORY

Every culture has birth stories, or creation stories, that explain how the earth, people and animals came to be: the Greek myths, the Native American stories of Coyote, and the monkey tales of Asia are all examples.

Your Birth Story is your **personal creation story.** It tells how your family prepared for your arrival and welcomed you into their lives. A birth story carries elements that help show a person's character. It establishes their **worth, capability, dignity and place in the community.** This can be very difficult for some people. Be honest. Tell the story the way you want to be seen. Hopefully, this is a story your children will read someday to know more about you, and themselves.

Build your birth story from these four elements:

Atmosphere. Describe the world at the time of your birth in detail. Include historical events, physical details such as the time of day (a sunrise, perhaps) and the events leading up to and including the birth. Hard parts, such as a difficult delivery or an emergency, can be turned into strengths. A child can be told they overcame great obstacles to live, or that they were a courageous fighter from the start. Linking children to positive strengths builds their confidence, self-worth and sense of capability.

Attention. The people who prepared for and looked forward to a birth have a lasting effect on how a child feels about being *wanted.* List everyone involved: family, nurses, doctors, even a cab driver or a passerby who said something kind or helped bring the child into the world. This creates a welcoming circle of family and community.

Symbols. A rainbow, a candle, a sunrise, a flock of birds flying over. Anything that can stand for the celebration of a new life is worth recording. Symbols are powerful images of our relationship to the world and give clues to our character and values. Look up the full meaning of any symbol you use, and emphasize its best qualities.

Prophecy. What did your parents and family hope for when you were born? What is the memory, carried down through the family stories about you, that reflects the way you think about yourself?

> **The birth story is a prophecy of hope.**

JOURNAL ENTRY 3

Your Birth Story (First Draft)

Tell your birth story. Use the four elements (atmosphere, attention, symbols and prophecy). If you don't know every detail, ask family members, or tell the story you would want a child of yours to hear. Your final Birth Story is due in **Week 6.**

Atmosphere

Attention

Symbols

Prophecy

This week: Turn in your Timeline & Analysis. Begin your Birth Story (Journal Entry 3); the final version is due in Week 6. Complete the Week 4 online assignment before Study Hall, and attend class and Study Hall.

WEEK 5

Core Beliefs and Self-Care

05

ONLINE LESSON: EMOTIONAL COURAGE

THIS WEEK

- ☐ **Watch:** *The Gift and Power of Emotional Courage*, Susan David (TED)
- ☐ **Read:** this section, Core Beliefs and Self-Care
- ☐ **Journal Entry 4:** Dignity
- ☐ **Keep working on:** your Birth Story (due Week 6)
- ☐ **Due Before Study Hall:** Week 5 online assignment

There is a connection between the way we care for ourselves (our **needs**) and the way we think and feel. When our own needs are not being met, we are less likely to notice other people's needs. This week we look at our **core beliefs,** our **rights,** and how we handle **stress.**

CORE BELIEFS

How we think is who we are. Core beliefs are the deep values we hold about ourselves, other people and the world. They shape how we treat ourselves and others.

TRY IT

Discuss in Study Hall

Explore all of your major beliefs: about yourself, about people, about values and so on.

1. What is a core belief? Define it in your own words.
2. What are your core beliefs?
3. How do your core beliefs affect your everyday decisions: how you act, how you respond to others, how you vote, how you worship, how you accept or reject new ideas?
4. Is it possible to improve or redirect your core beliefs?

IN STUDY HALL ACTIVITY: WHAT ARE WE BORN WITH?

Define each word below as if you were explaining it to someone from another country. Then check whether you think a person is **born with** it or must **earn** it.

Word	What it means (in your words)	Born with	Must earn
Worthwhile		☐	☐
Loveable		☐	☐
Capable		☐	☐
Respected		☐	☐

WE HAVE RIGHTS

What if the word **worthwhile** meant you were *born with the right to* **value**? It would mean every human being is valuable simply because they were born human. No one has the right to take that away.

What if **loveable** meant you were *born with the right to be* **accepted**? Every human being is accepted, even when they make mistakes, simply because they were born human. No one has the right to take that away.

What if **capable** meant you were *born with the right to make age-appropriate* **choices**? Every human being, even the very young, can make choices and has the right to experience the consequences. No one has the right to take that away.

And what if **respected** meant you were *born with the right to an equal* **voice** in a conversation, whatever your age, gender, race, culture or experience? Every human being has the right to share their opinion, even when they are wrong. No one has the right to take that away.

These are the **Four Principles of Dignity.** If we held on to our own dignity, and the dignity of others, during conflict, we could honor our value and theirs, accept mistakes as lessons, allow for wrong choices and their consequences, and give voice to our feelings, thoughts and needs.

DIGNITY = VALUE + ACCEPTANCE + VOICE + CHOICE

THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF DIGNITY

A human rights framework rests on one core belief: **the most important outcome of any conflict is to preserve the dignity of yourself and the other person.**

	The right	In my own words
Worthwhile	the right to **VALUE**	You can never take my value away. If I give it up, I can claim it back.
Loveable	the right to be **ACCEPTED**, to make mistakes and to learn from them	I can be forgiven and make amends for my poor choices.
Capable	the right to make age-appropriate **CHOICES** and to experience their **CONSEQUENCES**	Not making a choice *is* a choice. I am responsible for my part of an argument or a poor choice.
Respected	the right to an equal **VOICE**, clear **BOUNDARIES** and a **BALANCE OF POWER**, even in disagreement	Your opinion is not more important than mine.

All children (all people) have the right

Need	Right
Physical needs	to be alive
Safety and security needs	to be protected
Love and belonging needs	to be accepted
Self-esteem needs	to be acknowledged
Self-actualization needs	to be fulfilled

STRESS

Stress is the set of physical, mental and emotional reactions we have to the difficulties of daily life: **stressors.** How stressed we feel depends on how we interpret our feelings and thoughts, based on our **core beliefs.** Stress is part of life. You can learn to manage it by recognizing your stress signals, practicing relaxation and dealing calmly with difficult situations. You can even learn to see stress as a challenge rather than a threat.

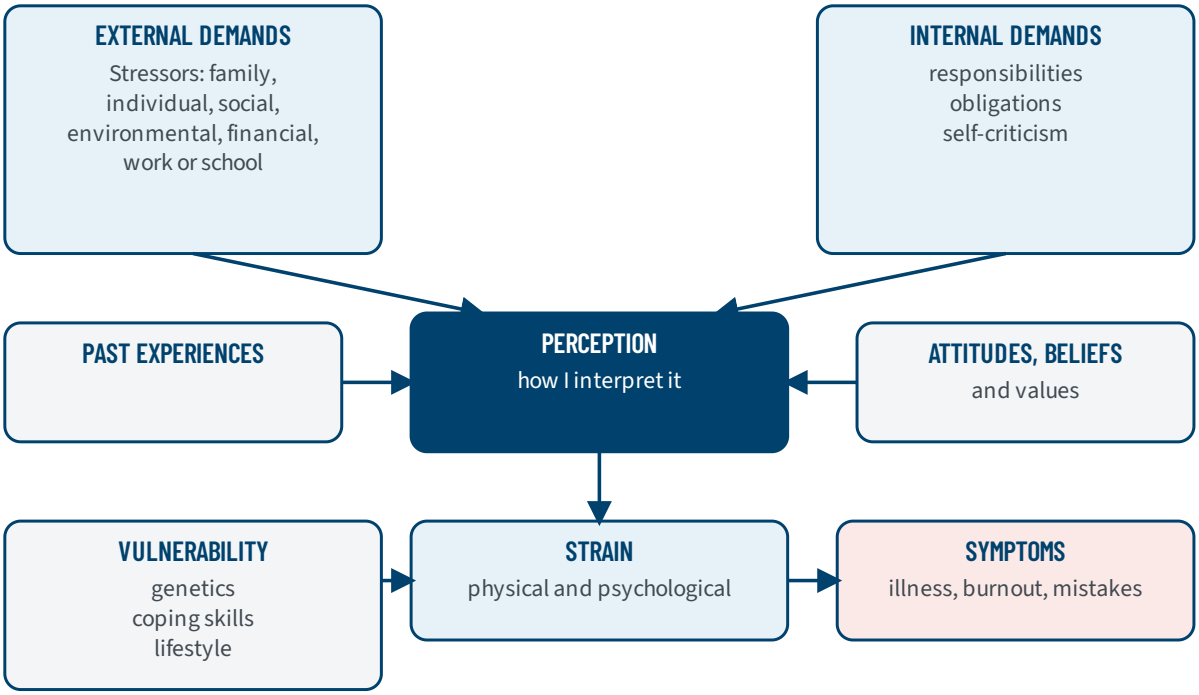
What are your physical, mental and emotional stress signals?

When you feel stressed, how do you act?

What stresses kids? What stresses adults? Are there similarities?

THE STRESS MODEL

The model below shows how complex stress is, and why we need to manage the stressors in our lives to stay healthy and happy.



TRY IT

Study Hall and class discussion

- What are some ways to acknowledge your thoughts, feelings and needs to relieve stress?
- How does acknowledging your rights, and the rights of others, relieve stress?

RECOGNIZING DEPRESSION

Stress that goes on too long can turn into depression. Symptoms can include:

- a persistent low or "empty" mood
- loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities
- less energy, fatigue, feeling "slowed down"
- trouble sleeping, waking early, or oversleeping
- changes in appetite or weight
- trouble concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- feelings of guilt, worthlessness or helplessness
- irritability
- frequent crying
- aches and pains that don't respond to treatment
- thoughts of death or suicide

GETTING HELP

These symptoms are not "just life." If several of them last more than two weeks, or they get in the way of work or family life, talk to your doctor. Depression is treatable, and most people, even those with severe depression, get better with treatment.

If you are in crisis or thinking about suicide, call or text **988** (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, U.S.) any time, day or night. In an emergency, call **911.**

MANAGING STRESS

There are two ways to calm stress:

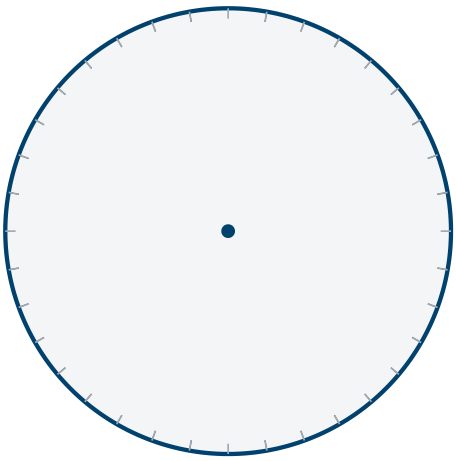
1. **Calm the body.** Physical activities that relax the body, or that use up the energy stress creates.
2. **Calm the mind.** Changing our thinking by reducing unrealistic beliefs and stressful images, and taking time for relaxing images, meditation or prayer.

List the ways you calm your **body** and calm your **mind.** If you don't do this often, take suggestions from others. What are you willing to try?

THE BALANCE WHEEL OF LIFE

Think about how you spend your **time and energy** in three areas. Estimate what percent of your time goes to each. The three should add up to 100%.

- **Work:** paid work, creative work, community work, home maintenance
- **Self:** physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual care
- **Relationships:** family, relatives, friends, colleagues, neighbors



WORK

SELF

RELATIONSHIPS

Draw lines from the center to divide your time

Work % _____ **Self %** _____ **Relationships %** _____

1. Why am I doing what I'm doing?

2. Does it bring me satisfaction?

3. What would I change if I had one year to live?

JOURNAL ENTRY 4

Dignity

1. How does the right to dignity change the way I think about my co-parent?

2. Does my co-parent deserve to be treated with dignity, no matter what they have done? Explain your answer.

This week: Complete Journal Entry 4 and try one new way to calm your body or mind. Report back on what worked. Finish your Birth Story for Week 6. Complete the Week 5 online assignment before Study Hall, and attend class and Study Hall.

WEEK 6

Clarifying Questions and Statements

06

ONLINE LESSON: COMMUNICATION, PART I

THIS WEEK

- ☐ **Watch:** *10 Ways to Have a Better Conversation*, Celeste Headlee (TED)
- ☐ **Read:** this section, Clarifying Questions and Statements
- ☐ **Journal Entry 5:** Practice Clarifying
- ☐ **Due this week:** Birth Story
- ☐ **Due Before Study Hall:** Week 6 online assignment

> *"When we listen with curiosity, we don't listen with the intent to reply. We listen for what's behind the words."*
>
> — Roy T. Bennett, author and philosopher

Communication is about how messages are **sent** and how they are **received.** So far you have learned to think about *what* message you want to send. Now it is time to think about *how* it is sent, and how well you listen. One of the biggest steps toward better communication is learning to use **clarifying questions and statements.**

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

A clarifying question or statement is a **request for more information.** It asks about the details of a problem. It does *not* try to solve the problem. Its job is to help the person with the problem understand it more clearly.

Clarifying questions are **open**: they have no right or wrong answer. They often begin like this:

"Do you mean that you (feel | think) ... ?"
"I was wondering if you really meant to say that ... ?"
"What do you think they were thinking when they said (or did) that to you?"
"What could that possibly mean, I wonder?"

A question can also become a **clarifying statement:**

"What you're saying doesn't quite make sense to me yet."
"I need more information ..."
"I'm having trouble with the difference between the two stories ..."

Watch your tone. A clarifying question asked with a reproachful or accusing attitude stops being a question. Avoid questions that start with **"Why,"** and avoid the accusing **"you"**:

- **Accusing:** "Why did you do that?"
- **Clarifying:** "Tell me what happened and what you were thinking."

REFLECTIVE LISTENING

Clarifying works best alongside **reflective listening:** first try to understand what the person is saying and feeling, then say it back so they know you understood. Reflective listening does not ask questions or tell the other person what they should feel.

"So you feel ..."
"It sounds like you ..."
"You're wondering if ..."

Example. Your child says, "I hate broccoli!"

- *Reflective:* "I can tell you don't like broccoli."
- *Clarifying question:* "I was wondering, how has it been cooked when you've had it before?"
- *Clarifying statement:* "Tell me more about what makes broccoli so unpleasant for you."

Don't try to fix it. Listen and stay in the moment.

PRACTICE: CLARIFYING

Go around your Study Hall group and respond to each statement with a reflective statement and a clarifying question or statement.

1. "I hate my boss!"
2. "My sister is impossible!"
3. "I can't do my homework!"
4. "I feel like giving up on everything."
5. "When I see people act like that, I just want to smack them."

Notes:

GETTING HELP

A note on statements 4 and 5. Sometimes what a person says sounds like they might hurt themselves or someone else. When that happens, listening is not enough. Ask directly whether they are safe, stay with them, and get help. Call or text **988** (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) for thoughts of self-harm, or **911** if anyone is in immediate danger.

TRY IT

Study Hall practice: make up your own statements like the ones above. Practice responding with reflective and clarifying statements, then role-play them with the group.

WHEN SOMEONE IS RESCUING OR ATTACKING

Two kinds of talk make clarifying especially important. You will learn more about them in the Week 10 discussion on the victim cycle.

The rescuer is always ready to help, even at the cost of their own needs. "Let me do that for you." When you are dealing with rescuer thinking, hold the person accountable with a clarifying question or statement: *"I wonder what Johnny would learn if he did his homework himself."*

The aggressor is demanding and talks over others. They see every conversation as win or lose. "You don't know what you're talking about. You're just a kid!" When dealing with an aggressive person, start by letting them vent. Use reflective listening to show you are trying to understand their view. They need their opinions validated.

JOURNAL ENTRY 5

Practice Clarifying

For each statement, write three responses: a **reflective** statement (empathy), a **clarifying question** and a **clarifying statement.** Avoid "why" and the accusing "you."

1. "I'm sick of how the court always takes her side!"

2. "When I get an email from him, I want to scream!"

3. "I just want to give up."

4. A statement you have heard from your child or co-parent:

This week: Turn in your Birth Story. Complete Journal Entry 5. Complete the Week 6 online assignment before Study Hall, and attend class and Study Hall.

WEEK 7

Talking with Kids at Every Age

07

ONLINE LESSON: COMMUNICATING WITH KIDS

THIS WEEK

- ☐ **Watch:** *Teenagers Talk Marriage, Divorce, and Fatherhood*
- ☐ **Read:** this section, Talking with Kids at Every Age
- ☐ **Journal Entry 6:** Communicating Values
- ☐ **Due Before Study Hall:** Week 7 online assignment

> *"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose."*
>
> — Dr. Seuss, *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*

Children understand the world differently at each age. What a 3-year-old needs to hear about a family change is very different from what a 15-year-old needs. This week we look at the **milestones** of each stage of development, at the **rights** every child has, and at how to talk with children about hard things.

CHARTING MILESTONES

Adapted from Myths and Realities: Building Independent Living Skills in Adolescents, *Washington State Division of Children and Family Services, Foster Parent Training Unit (1996). Ages are approximate; every child develops at their own pace.*

Milestones at a glance

Stage	Age	The child's main task
Infancy	Birth to 15 months	Learn to trust others and feel secure
Toddler	15 months to 3 years	Explore, and discover a separate self
Preschool	3 to 6 years	Tell fantasy from reality; start solving problems
Middle years	7 to 12 years	Master skills; test values and beliefs
Early adolescence	About 9 to 13	Adjust to rapid growth; form a new self-image
Mid-adolescence	About 12 to 16	Explore ideas and identity; gain independence
Late adolescence	About 15 to 19	Settle into an identity; plan for the future

Infancy (birth to 15 months): from helpless to mobile

Tasks: to learn to trust others and feel secure in the world; to begin learning "what I need to do to get my needs met."

- Babies learn that their messages ("I need food," "I need comfort") are answered consistently, and they come to recognize their main caregiver. This is the foundation of a trusting outlook on the world.
- In this stage of total dependence, the baby learns whether the world is safe and satisfying, or a place of pain, frustration and uncertainty. The baby's main need is to attach to a special person who will provide care.
- Babies make a series of discoveries: turning over, grasping and holding, crawling and climbing, making sounds and babbling.

Toddlers (15 months to 3 years): exploration

Tasks: to discover and establish an OK, separate self by exploring the world; to begin separating thinking from feeling by experiencing choices, limits and their own solutions to simple problems.

- Toddlers explore a wider world, gradually separate from their caregivers, and learn to communicate with words, sounds and signs.
- Striving for self-control, they become focused on getting what they want, whatever limits parents set for their safety.
- They explore endlessly to see how things fit together and come apart, and work out how to operate "on their own," away from home base.
- If their curiosity is crushed, they can lose it. If they explore with no limits at all, they may lose all caution, or decide that everything is risky and retreat.
- Toddlers get their first lessons in coping with not getting everything they want.
- They begin to discover what pleases or displeases their parents, and sense that they can bring joy.
- Giving and taking, and waiting for what they want, begin here. **Control becomes a key issue.**

Preschool (3 to 6 years): expanding horizons

Tasks: to tell reality from fantasy; to become comfortable with their own sexual identity; to connect and separate feelings, thoughts and actions; to solve problems by starting and creating solutions.

- Through fantasy and imagination (often talking to themselves more than to others), children learn to tell fantasy from reality and to see cause and effect.
- Many want to help adults with adult tasks.
- They spend longer on games and activities and show creativity and initiative.
- They become more concerned with rewards and punishments.
- They move from playing side by side to role-playing with friends.
- Curiosity extends to their bodies, seen in games such as "house" and "doctor."
- They are becoming more self-reliant but still depend on approval, love and praise.
- A person's later ability to take sensible risks in new situations can be traced back to this stage.

Middle years (7 to 12): mastery and independence outside the home

Tasks: to develop a sense of accomplishment in areas of natural ability; to learn and apply skills and grow in competence; to develop and test the values and beliefs that guide their behavior.

- Children gradually move from being self-centered to thinking about others.
- Being accepted and included by peers is crucial.
- They seek competence by mastering physical and social skills their friends value.
- They aim for **sameness**: the group's hairstyles, clothes, toys, slang and rules. Values important to themselves and the group take shape.
- They collect "treasures" and guard them closely, and practice telling and keeping secrets (the ritual matters more than the secret).
- They may tease the opposite sex.
- They look up to heroes and want to do great things, and often exaggerate their adventures or mishaps.
- The friendships and teamwork of this stage lay the foundation for relationships later in life.

The three phases of adolescence

Doctors and social scientists describe adolescence in three phases.

Early adolescence (about 9–11 for girls, 11–13 for boys)

A time of rapid brain and body growth, the first signs of puberty and a focus on self.

- **Personal:** self-centered; forming a new self-image; very self-conscious about body changes and appearance; daydreams; acts on impulse; may feel safe in dangerous situations.
- **Social:** friends become important, mostly of the same sex; competitive; enthusiastic about clubs and groups for short periods; idolizes popular heroes; develops crushes; home and school are still the center of life.
- **Thinking and values:** thinks logically; tries out ideas and possibilities; begins to seek meaning in life; religion may become important.
- **With parents:** less interested in talking with parents; pulls away by criticizing them; wants privacy and finds parents intrusive; sensitive to parents' reactions to their changing body; **still needs direction and protection.**

Mid-adolescence (about 12–15 for girls, 14–16 for boys)

A time of exploration, turmoil, rebellion and conformity to peers.

- **Personal:** strong new drives; needs to build inner confidence; intense feelings, including loneliness; big mood swings between great hope and great pain; torn between wanting freedom and wanting the security of family; tries on different identities.
- **Social:** strong interest in romantic relationships; conforms to peers; gets support and belonging from the peer group; uneven work and play habits.
- **Thinking and values:** thinks more abstractly; questions double standards; judges people by ideals; may hold romantic or unrealistic ideals.
- **With parents:** rebels against rules; needs emotional distance; looks for flaws in parents; may blame parents for unhappiness; tests limits; **still needs adult recognition, guidance and support, and chances to direct their own life.** Learns about relationships by watching how their parents relate.

The challenge of this phase is to let teens express themselves while still holding them accountable for their actions. In our society 18 is the "golden age" of freedom, but is it? Research shows the brain keeps developing into the early to mid-20s.

Late adolescence (about 15–19)

A time of settling into an identity and facing the future.

- **Personal:** less self-centered; more self-assured, with moments of self-doubt; looks inward for strength; seeks meaning and direction; feels the weight of big decisions.
- **Social:** balances giving and receiving in relationships; still wants peer approval, but less; capable of deeper intimacy; seeks adult status.
- **Thinking and values:** reasons well; likes discussing ideas; sees issues from several points of view; makes more realistic plans; more balanced between family, friends and community.
- **With parents:** sees parents as adults with their own lives; **needs support through defeats and disappointments, and belief in their abilities.**

What stage is each of your children in? What does each one most need from you right now?

A CHILD'S RIGHTS

- I have the right to love whom I choose, without guilt, pressure or rejection.
- I have the right to love as many people as I want to (such as stepparents and relatives) without guilt and without being made to feel disloyal. The more I love, the more love I have to give and to receive.
- I have the right to a regular daily and weekly routine that is not full of unpredictable changes.
- I have the right to spend time with both of my parents, whatever the adults want or feel about convenience or money. Time with my parents is my right, not my parents' right.
- I have the right to be angry, hurt and afraid, and the right to express my feelings.
- I have the right not to be the target of my parents' anger, not to be punished for my mistakes, and not to see my parents punish each other.
- I have the right to love both of my parents. They are both part of me.
- I have the right not to be blamed and not to have to choose sides.
- I have the right to remain a child, and not to make adult decisions.
- I have the right not to be my parent's adult companion, best friend or emotional comforter.
- I have the right never to have to choose which parent I live with, even when I am a teenager.

I can never choose between my parents.

1. What emotional reactions might children have when going through divorce, separation, loss or tragedy?

2. How can I help my child make healthy transitions?

3. What adult feelings and thoughts do I need to take care of so that I can meet my child's needs?

JOURNAL ENTRY 6

Communicating Values

1. What is the most important of your values?

2. How would you respond to a child who did not share that value?

3. How do you respond to people who oppose your values?

4. How do you teach tolerance and acceptance to children?

This week: Complete Journal Entry 6 and the questions on A Child's Rights. Look ahead: your PowerPoint first draft is due next week. Complete the Week 7 online assignment before Study Hall, and attend class and Study Hall.

WEEK 8

Shame, Blame and Apology

08

ONLINE LESSON: THE APOLOGY

THIS WEEK

- ☐ **Watch:** *A Perfect Apology in Three Steps*, Jahan Kalantar (TEDx)
- ☐ **Read:** this section, Shame, Blame and Apology
- ☐ **Journal Entry 7:** Apologies, Parts A and B
- ☐ **Due this week:** PowerPoint first draft
- ☐ **Due Before Study Hall:** Week 8 online assignment

Change is hard. Sometimes the need underneath a habit is buried deep in our past. We may carry strong **shame** over conflicts that were never resolved, and then **blame** others when we feel unloved, incapable, disrespected or unworthy. Shame and blame are often used to control us, and they damage our self-esteem.

This week we look at these two barriers to change, and at the tool that helps us move past them: a sincere **apology.** You will practice apologizing to someone you have hurt, and accepting an apology from someone who hurt you.

SHAME

What is shame? Shame is a deeply painful emotion caused by extreme guilty thoughts. It is triggered by disappointment, disgrace or failing to meet expectations. It often comes with strong feelings of regret, reproach or blame. We feel we deserve to be punished, and the outcome always feels negative.

The Difference Between Guilt and Shame

- **Guilt** focuses on a specific behavior ("I feel guilty for saying that to you"). It can motivate people to repair mistakes and make changes.
- **Shame** focuses on the whole self ("I am a bad person"). It leads to feelings of unworthiness, withdrawal and defensiveness.

What can you do about shame?

You can address shame and break shame-based cycles by using evidence-based psychological tools, self-compassion practices and therapeutic frameworks.

BLAME

What is blame? When the shame we feel about our own thoughts and actions is shifted onto another person, that is blame. When we want to avoid punishment, responsibility and accountability, we blame others. Blame is refusing to let go of old hurts, and making excuses for our own behavior.

The Difference Between Blame and Responsibility

- **Blame** carries a heavy negative connotation, focusing on fault and criticism.
- **Responsibility** is recognizing fault and holding oneself accountable.

What can you do about blame?

A person can shift blaming behavior by identifying their defense mechanisms, owning their emotions and being actively accountable.

APOLOGIZING

A sincere, deep apology is the antidote for a painful relationship. In a real apology, you take full responsibility for your own actions **without referring to, or blaming, the other person's actions.** A sincere apology is the true meaning of remorse.

Think of an apology as a "dying declaration": a chance to feel real remorse for the way you made someone feel, whether or not you think you were "right." **And mean every word.** If you don't, the other person, child or adult, will know. If your heart is still clouded by revenge, rejection or righteousness, they will sense it, and the apology will fall on deaf ears.

Even if you believe you did nothing wrong, or didn't deserve to be accused, this is not "giving in" to a false reality. It is the other person's reality: the way they saw your actions and the way they experienced you.

Acknowledge the event as true **in the way the other person experienced it.** Apologize for what you have been accused of, not because it happened the way you believe it did, but because that is how the other person experienced it.

Don't explain why you reacted the way you did, and don't expect an apology in return. Simple statements work best:

"If I were you, I might have felt the same way."
"If I could do it over, I would be more understanding of your feelings."

An apology is the medicine that heals old wounds. It opens the door to cooperation, trust, effective communication and better outcomes. Try it. You will be amazed.

Three steps and five steps

This week's talk teaches a three-step apology. The journal's five-step apology (Journal Entry 7, Part A) covers the same ground in more depth:

Three-step apology (the talk)	Five-step apology (this journal)
I'm sorry (for what I did)	1. I recognize and accept that I have offended you. 2. I apologize, even if I am uncertain how you will accept it.
because (what it meant to you)	3. I imagine you felt … and were thinking …
and (what I'll do differently)	4. I will earn your trust by agreeing to … 5. I will keep this agreement and respect your boundaries.

Remember: the "because" describes what the offense meant to *them.* It is never an excuse for why you did it.

ACCEPTING AN APOLOGY

Take another person's apology at face value. Be grateful they had the courage to apologize. Don't question their sincerity. If you don't think they heard your side, explain it once more, then let it go as a personal issue. If you still doubt their sincerity, address the issue of **trust,** not the apology.

Give people the benefit of the doubt. You can still limit what you do with someone who doesn't repay money on time, who lies to you, or who doesn't meet expectations:

> "I appreciate that you trust me enough to ask for money, but right now I have no assurance you will pay it back when you say you will."

Avoid demonizing a person as if **they**, rather than their actions, are unforgivable, especially if you share children with them. Let the actions go with the apology, and set clear boundaries for the future. Build trust by lowering your expectations or being very clear about agreements.

"I can never forgive (a person) for lying to me about …" Remember: **a lie is about a relationship.** If you get an apology, thank the person, then choose whether or not to rebuild trust. You don't have to remove the person from your life. You simply redefine the relationship.

TRY IT

Reflect. Make a list of what you feel is “unforgivable.” Then look for the core belief underneath each item that keeps you from forgiving the action or the person. Use what you have learned about human rights and the Four Principles of Dignity.

DIGNITY = VALUE + ACCEPTANCE + VOICE + CHOICE

YOUR FINAL PRESENTATION

Your PowerPoint **first draft is due this week.** The final draft is due in Week 11, and presentations take place in Weeks 11 and 12.

TRY IT

What to present

1. Pick an activity you do with your child or children that connects, serves or adds value to your community (for example, cooking, gardening, sports or music).
2. Use it as a **metaphor for democratic parenting.**
3. Show how you use democratic parenting skills to teach and learn with your kids, using **at least five topics** from the talks and this journal. Choose from: the principles of dignity, belonging, vulnerability, the three keys to conflict, developmental stages, effective communication, emotional courage, problem-solving, critical thinking, the stages of empathy, the iceberg, the Hierarchy of Needs.
4. Explain **how** this activity connects you and your children to the greater human community.

Slides: Title · Introduction · Body (5–8 slides) · Conclusion

Design tips: use bullet points, not full sentences or paragraphs. Use photos of you and your children doing the activity, and the results. Have fun with this!

Plan your presentation here.

My activity:

The five (or more) topics I will use, and how:

How it connects us to the greater community:

JOURNAL ENTRY 7

Apologies

Part A: Apologize in five parts

Write one or two clear statements for each part. Write from your heart. Dig deep; this is about accountability for something difficult.

1. I recognize and accept that I have offended you by … There is no excuse for my behavior.

2. I apologize, even if I am uncertain how you will accept it.

3. I imagine you felt … and were thinking …

4. In the future, I will do my best to earn your trust by agreeing to …

5. It may take time to rebuild your trust in me, so I will do my best to keep this agreement and repair our relationship by respecting your boundaries.

Part B: Accept an apology in five parts

1. I accept your apology for the following offense (be specific):

2. When this happened, I was uncertain of your intentions.

3. I was feeling … and thinking …

4. I am willing to build trust with you by accepting the agreement to change your behavior or attitude.

5. This may take time, so I want you to respect my boundaries until we can redefine our relationship.

This week: Turn in your PowerPoint first draft. Complete Journal Entry 7, Parts A and B. Notice how shame and blame affect your results. Complete the Week 8 online assignment before Study Hall, and attend class and Study Hall.

WEEK 9

Discipline, Not Punishment

09

ONLINE LESSON: PARENTING APPROACHES

THIS WEEK

- ☐ **Watch:** *Parenting Styles*, Scout O'Donnell (TEDx)
- ☐ **Read:** this section, Discipline, Not Punishment
- ☐ **Journal Entry 8:** How Does Punishment Affect Trust?
- ☐ **Due Before Study Hall:** Week 9 online assignment

How we were parented shapes how we parent. This week we compare **punishment** and **discipline,** learn to use **natural and logical consequences,** look at the **four parenting approaches,** and see how all of this builds, or breaks, **trust.**

PUNISHMENT VERSUS DISCIPLINE

Punishment is pain, loss or suffering (real or perceived) imposed on someone as payment for a wrong. There is no teaching relationship between the person punishing and the person punished. It is the use of power by the strong over the weak, and it can lead to abuse. *"I must have power over my child."* Parents often justify punishment because they were unfairly punished as children and feel they turned out better for it. They don't connect it to the long-term damage to relationships, or to their own victim and aggressor thinking.

Discipline is teaching a lesson from a mistake or misbehavior. It is the day-to-day work of teaching a child to solve problems and cope with life. The goal of discipline is **self-discipline,** or self-regulation. When our children are away from us, we want them to carry a set of rules inside them to guide how they treat themselves and others. We want to move the outside rules and boundaries *inside* the child. In every situation, parents who discipline ask: **"What is the lesson?"**

Compare the chart below with how you parent and the results you are seeing.

	Discipline	Punishment
Parent's goal	teaching, training, building self-control	justice, payback, getting obedience
Focus	the future and the ongoing relationship	the past, a single event
Parent's attitude	loving, sharing control, feeling in charge	angry, afraid of losing control
Results	growth, self-control	conformity or rebellion
Child feels	secure, loveable, capable; respects self and others	fearful, guilty, hostile to authority; low self-esteem

ROLE PLAY: FROM PUNISHMENT TO DISCIPLINE

In each case the parent chose to punish. What lesson were they trying to teach? How would you change the punishment into discipline?

1. A 2-year-old pulls the dog's tail. His mother puts him in his crib for an hour. What can she do instead to protect the dog and teach the child to be gentle with animals?
2. A 17-year-old leaves her father's car in the driveway with a flat tire and not enough gas for him to get to work. He makes her stay home from the school dance the next night. How can he teach her to be responsible for the car and still let her go to the dance?
3. An 11-year-old brings home three C's, a D and an F on his report card. His parents take away his screen time and make him drop out of soccer for a month. How can they teach him to manage his study time without taking away soccer?

NATURAL AND LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

Children need to be responsible for their own behavior. Natural and logical consequences hold them accountable.

1. **Natural consequences** let the child experience the reality of their behavior. (Forget your coat, and you feel cold.)
2. **Logical consequences** let the child experience how the world responds to their behavior. (Break a neighbor's window, and you help pay to fix it.)
3. **Illogical consequences** have nothing to do with the behavior. (Take driving privileges away for not doing homework.)

Principles of logical consequences

What is the lesson you want to teach?

- Be firm and kind. Use a friendly tone of voice.
- Be consistent, and make the consequence relate logically to the misbehavior.
- Separate the deed from the doer.
- Encourage independence.
- Avoid pity.
- Don't worry about how others view your methods of discipline.
- Encourage the child to own their own problems.
- Talk less and act more.
- Refuse to fight, and refuse to give in.
- Keep an open attitude.

Free write: natural and logical consequences

Write examples of how you use natural and logical consequences. Share them with the group.

THE FOUR PARENTING APPROACHES

Researcher Diana Baumrind described parenting approaches that are still widely used today. This week's talk describes four. The approach this course teaches, **democratic parenting,** is the one researchers call *authoritative*: warm and caring, with clear, high expectations.

> **Authoritarian (autocratic).** *Parent's goal: "I must control my child." Limits without freedom.*
> Strict discipline with little room for discussion; punishment is common. Communication runs one way, from parent to child, and rules are rarely explained. Less nurturing; high expectations with little flexibility.
> *Typical tools:* lecturing, showing disappointment, rewarding obedience, conditional love, punishment, no rule is negotiable.

> **Permissive (indulgent).** *Parent's goal: "I must please my child." Freedom without limits.*
> Children mostly do what they want, with little guidance; the parent is more friend than parent. Few rules or none. Communication is open, but children decide for themselves. Warm and nurturing, with few expectations.
> *Typical tools:* pampering, pleasing, giving in or giving up, few boundaries; may fall back on punishment; negotiates rules that should not be negotiable.

> **Uninvolved.** *Parent's goal: none clearly set.*
> Children get a lot of freedom and the parent mostly stays out of the way. Some parents choose this; others are overwhelmed by work, emotional distress, conflict, grief, illness or addiction, or are unsure what to do. Little communication, nurturing, bonding or expectation; can become neglect.
> *Typical pattern:* unable to cope with everyday child-rearing issues, or unaware there are any.

> **Democratic (authoritative).** *Parent's goal: "I must lead my child." Freedom within limits.*
> Reasonable and nurturing, with high, clear expectations. Rules are clear and the reasons are explained. Communication is frequent and fits the child's level of understanding. Children may help set goals. Children raised this way tend to be self-disciplined and think for themselves. This approach is considered the most beneficial for children.
> *Typical tools:* effective communication, compassion and empathy, a focus on teaching and learning, agreements and apologies, trust and conflict-resolution skills, unconditional love with reasonable, age-appropriate boundaries.

Which approach did your parents use with you and your siblings? What was the outcome, for you personally, in your work and in your relationships?

GROWING INTO TRUST

Trust is taking a risk with a predictable outcome.

Building trust begins when we are very young. It is the first thing we feel toward our caregivers as they hold us and meet our survival needs. Trust grows over time as we explore the world.

At first, we completely trust the people who come when we cry: the people who rock us and cuddle us and tell us we are the sunshine of their lives, even when we scream and keep them up all night.

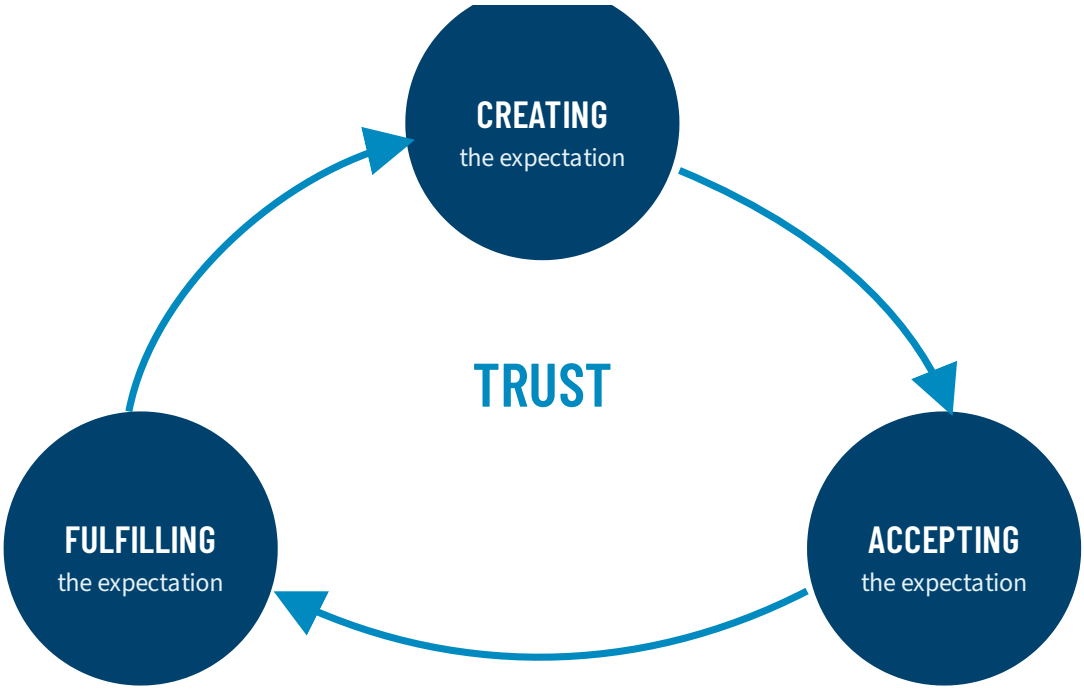
Later we learn to trust *ourselves* as we struggle to walk and talk. We try and we fall. We babble, then we learn to speak. We waddle, then we learn to run.

If you think children aren't watching everything their caregivers do, think again. They hear, see, smell, touch and experience everything around them. Research on early childhood tells us that children are watching and listening all the time.

But trust is easily broken by a slap or a loud "No!" Children react to the fear in a father's voice or the disappointment in a mother's face. Over time, how they learn to trust becomes how they cope with the world, especially when it feels unfair or frightening.

How we learn to trust gives us permission to take risks. When we trust ourselves, we are willing to take risks, practice and master skills. Just as important, trust is understanding what is expected of us, accepting that expectation as realistic, and then fulfilling it as best we can.

THE TRUST CYCLE



Trust is built by creating an expectation, accepting it and fulfilling it, over and over. Each time the cycle is completed, trust grows. Each time it is broken, trust shrinks.

JOURNAL ENTRY 8

How Does Punishment Affect Trust?

1. When a child hears adults arguing, how does it affect them?

2. How do children learn to trust themselves if their parents do everything for them?

3. Do teenagers need more rules than toddlers, or fewer? What makes you think so?

4. Do teenagers deserve to be punished if they test the rules? How can we help them learn without punishment?

This week: Complete Journal Entry 8 and your free write on consequences. Complete the Week 9 online assignment before Study Hall, and attend class and Study Hall.

WEEK 10

Thoughts, Beliefs and the Victim Cycle

10

ONLINE LESSON: PERCEPTION

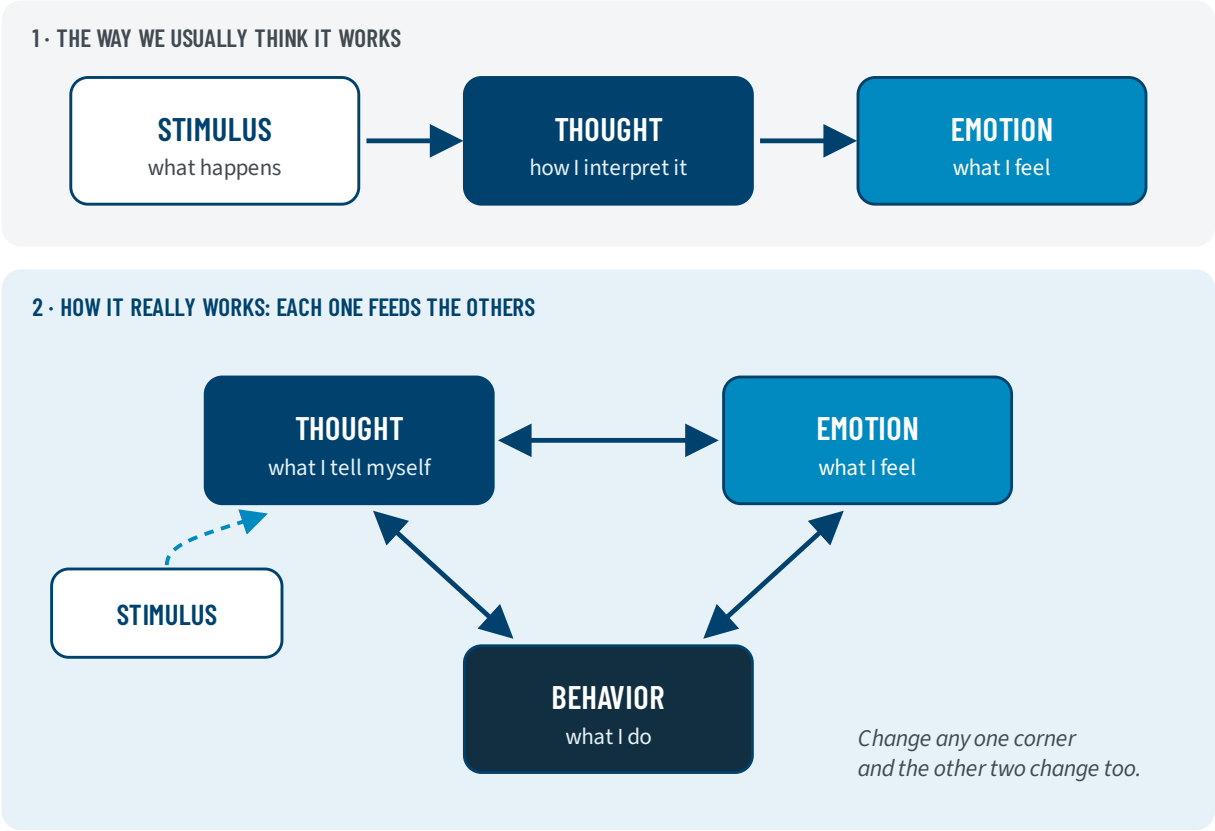
THIS WEEK

- ☐ **Watch:** *"Good" and "Bad" Are Incomplete Stories We Tell Ourselves*, Heather Lanier (TED)
- ☐ **Read:** this section, Thoughts, Beliefs and the Victim Cycle
- ☐ **Journal Entry 9:** Your Thinking Style
- ☐ **Due Before Study Hall:** Week 10 online assignment

This week's talk is about perception: the stories we tell ourselves about what happens to us. This section shows how our **thoughts** create our feelings, how our **beliefs** filter everything we experience, and how one common belief, that we are victims, keeps us stuck.

HOW THOUGHTS SHAPE FEELINGS

The central idea of **cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)** is that our emotions come from the way we *think* about people, ideas and events. It is not the event itself that causes our emotional response. It is how we **interpret** the event.



The CBT models are credited to Dr. Aaron Temkin Beck, the father of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

You first saw this diagram in Week 1, as the key concept of the course: **perception.**

Example. A woman is turned down for a job. If she believes she was passed over because of her gender or race, she may feel depressed or indignant, and her sense of unfairness may stop her from applying for similar jobs. If instead she believes there were more qualified candidates, she may feel frustrated, and that frustration may inspire her to get more training and keep competing. **The outcome depends on how she interprets what happened.**

Part of the work of CBT is understanding how thoughts, feelings and behaviors connect, and how our beliefs were shaped by other people and events, including those from early childhood.

WHOA introduces these ideas to parents to help you focus on the **outcome** of your behavior. If your behavior is producing results you don't want, then changing how you *think* about the situation will change how you react, and that will change the outcome.

Think about it: When is a lie NOT about a lie?

BELIEFS AND VICTIM THINKING

> *"Take your life in your own hands, and what happens? A terrible thing: no one to blame."*
>
> — Erica Jong

Who do you know that takes full responsibility for all their feelings and behavior? What would your life look like if you stopped blaming others for what you feel and for what happens to you? What if you decided that your life was yours, and you could consciously create it the way you want?

Our beliefs have a powerful effect on our health, our minds and our success. Students who believe they can do well in school tend to do better; people who believe they can succeed tend to keep trying. In other words, *they can because they think they can.* Even with serious illness, a positive belief, optimism or spiritual faith helps patients mainly by improving their quality of life, their emotional well-being and their ability to cope with treatment.

Beliefs are assumptions. Sometimes they are prejudices, judgments, ideas, opinions or attitudes, and everything we experience is filtered through them. Beliefs are not facts. They are opinions with expectations attached. We use them to make sense of reality. Most beliefs are inherited from family and society. We also absorb them from the media, school, religion, science and other institutions.

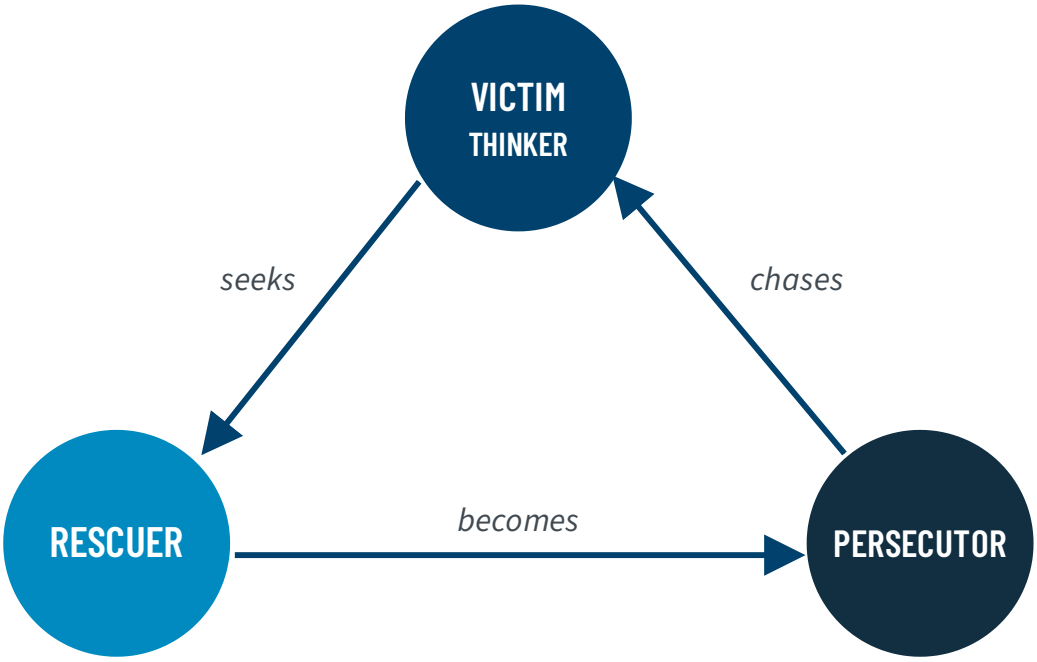
A belief system gives us a set of core values: a "set of rules" for how we take in and store information. People say "That's just the way I am" or "That's reality" when they want to justify their beliefs or actions.

One of the most common beliefs in our society is that people think and act like **victims.** (Victim Thinking is different from being the victim of a crime.) **Victim Thinkers** feel helpless, hopeless and powerless. They say "Poor me" and "Isn't it awful." They come to believe they cannot decide what is best for themselves, and they look to others to tell them what is right.

This belief in powerlessness lets all of us play the self-pity game. Then we don't have to take responsibility for our actions or be accountable to anyone. We can blame others and keep making excuses for not taking charge of our lives.

The great thing about education is this: once we understand that **we** are the ones who make ourselves happy or miserable, we are in charge of the outcomes. A person must take charge of their choices and deal with their mistakes. Remember: **you are not a mistake.**

THE VICTIM CYCLE



Victim Thinkers don't take responsibility for their poor choices.

Rescuers "save" victim thinkers from their choices by not letting them solve their own problems or face the consequences. Eventually the rescuer gets tired when the victim thinker won't change. Rescuers don't always act rationally.

Persecutors: the rescuer becomes a persecutor when they try to *force* the victim thinker to become responsible. Persecutors can't admit their own anger and frustration, and they are in danger of becoming victim thinkers themselves.

Exiting the cycle

- **Victim Thinkers** exit when they learn to solve their own problems and accept the consequences of their choices.
- **Rescuers** exit when they offer information and knowledge instead of solutions to someone else's problems.
- When victim thinkers get encouragement and support, they never need to be rescued. When rescuers become **teachers,** they never need to become persecutors or victim thinkers.

RESCUER AND AGGRESSOR THINKING

The rescuer

Rescuer thinkers are always willing to help others, even if it means sacrificing their own needs. One of their core beliefs is that they must be liked and appreciated. "I'll help!" and "Let me do that for you" are favorite phrases. Rescuers are very good at seeing when others need help, but often don't ask for help themselves.

Rescuers avoid confrontation by downplaying their own needs so they don't "rock the boat." Because they don't take care of themselves, they often overcommit and can't say no. They risk falling into victim thinking, and can turn into aggressors if they feel rejected.

Rescuers often say things like:

"It's my responsibility to take care of my children."
"I take care of other people's problems."
"I know this is your project, but let me add it to my list to take the burden off you."

Rescuer thinkers often see themselves as having been victimized, so they want to "save" others from pain or hardship. They feel powerful only when they are someone's savior. They don't like to empower others, and they sometimes sabotage those who do.

When dealing with rescuer thinking, hold the person accountable with clarifying questions and statements: *"I wonder what Johnny would learn if he did his homework himself."*

The persecutor

Persecutor thinking takes over when they feel the victim thinker is taking advantage of them, or when they are tired of always coming up with ways to get the victim thinker to take responsibility.

When dealing with persecutor thinking, try a clarifying question: *"I wonder what would happen if you encouraged them rather than judging or shaming them?"*

SHIFT TO EMPOWERMENT

- **No one else is to blame for what you feel.** How you interpret events in your life is always a choice.
- **Use affirmations.** Statements such as “You deserve to be loved” focus your thinking. Say them out loud in front of a mirror.
- **Practice every day.** Set aside time for your affirmations. When hurtful or angry thoughts start to take over your day, replace them with an affirmation.
- **Visualize what you want.** (a) Imagine how to get what you want; (b) believe it is achievable; (c) open yourself to every opportunity; (d) celebrate even small successes.
- **Practice an attitude of gratitude.** Notice the opportunities that come your way each day, and find a way to appreciate them.
- **Keep a journal.** Write down what you notice. Was today more productive, or did stress bog it down?
- **Notice your thoughts shifting** from fear-based to love-based thinking. Whatever we focus our energy on tends to grow.
- **Connect it to dignity.** Relate what is being said and done to the Four Principles of Dignity (see Getting Started).

JOURNAL ENTRY 9

Your Thinking Style

Use the Victim Cycle to answer these questions.

1. How do I manage my own style of thinking?

2. Give examples from your own life of being stuck in victim, rescuer or persecutor thinking.

3. Choose one of those examples. How could you reframe it, the way this week's talk suggests ("good or bad, hard to say")?

This week: Complete Journal Entry 9. Keep working on your PowerPoint; the final draft is due next week, when presentations begin. Complete the Week 10 online assignment before Study Hall, and attend class and Study Hall.

WEEK 11

Empathy and Dignity

11

ONLINE LESSON: FORGET FORGIVENESS

THIS WEEK

- ☐ **Watch:** *Forget Forgiveness and Harness Hate*, Olivia Porter (TEDx)
- ☐ **Read:** this section, Empathy and Dignity
- ☐ **Journal Entry 10:** Parenting Dignity
- ☐ **Due this week:** PowerPoint final draft; presentations begin
- ☐ **Due Before Study Hall:** Week 11 online assignment

This week's talk takes a very different look at forgiveness: separating the **person** from the **action,** and letting what we dislike show us what we value. That work depends on **empathy,** the ability to understand and share another person's feelings. This week we look at how empathy develops, and how it connects to human rights and dignity.

EMPATHY AND THE BRAIN

The capacity for empathy depends largely on the **orbitofrontal cortex,** the part of the brain just behind the eyes. This area links the emotional signals coming from the limbic system (the alarm center you learned about in Week 1) with higher thinking such as problem-solving and language. Healthy brain function depends on both sides of the brain communicating with each other.

Huge numbers of connections between brain cells form during the first year of life. These connections develop faster when parents nurture their children and let them practice and master skills under a watchful eye.

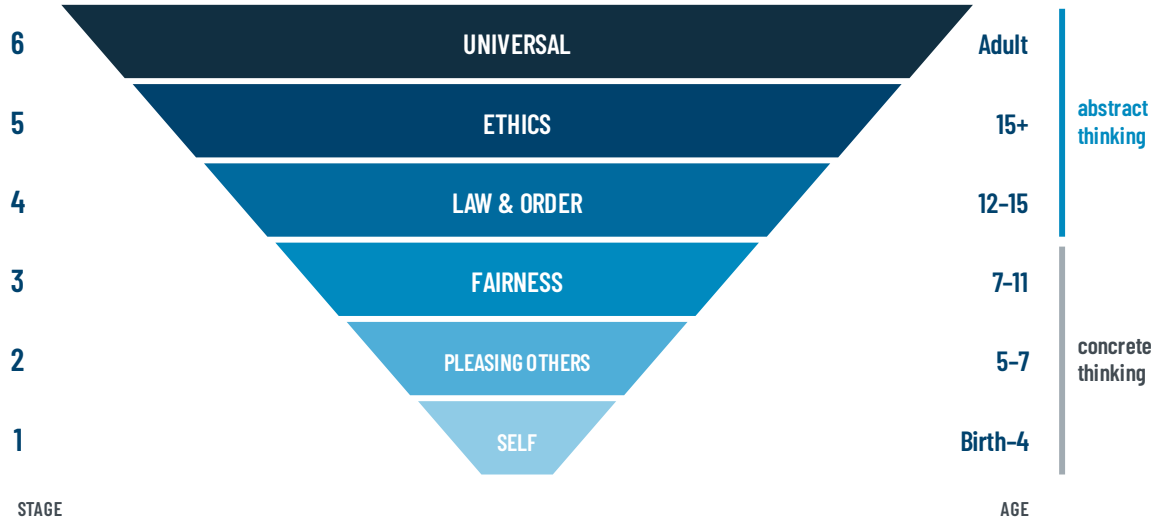
When children are mistreated during these early stages, they can have difficulty for the rest of their lives connecting their own sense of self to the feelings of others. They may struggle to show empathy and emotional connection naturally. Brain-imaging research shows differences in how this part of the brain works in children who have been abused or neglected.

This week we look at empathy from both a physical and an emotional point of view: the choices people make when their physical and emotional needs have not been met, from birth to adulthood.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMPATHY

The model below, from *Breakthrough Parenting*® and inspired by the work of Jean Piaget, follows the stages of human development in terms of how we grow emotionally toward empathy, or love. The stages are love of **self,** love of **others,** love of **fairness,** love of **law and order,** love of **ethics** and love of the **universal.**

Each stage is essential to developing compassion and reaching our full potential. It is important to recognize which stage we are in, and to help ourselves move through them toward universal love. If we can't do this, we can't teach our children to do it.



> *"The ability to love others develops gradually. Human beings go through six distinct stages as they develop their ability to love and to think morally and ethically ... identify which stage best describes where you yourself are functioning as a person."*
>
> — Jayne A. Major, PhD, *Breakthrough Parenting*

	Developmental stage	Principle of dignity	When we get stuck: misguided thinking
Stage 1	Positive self-esteem	Value	Sociopathic
Stage 2	People pleasing	Voice	Co-dependent
Stage 3	Fairness	Acceptance	Seeking acceptance
Stage 4	Law and order	Choice and accountability	Moralist
Stage 5	Ethics and dignity	Dignity in society	Rigid moralist
Stage 6	Love of humankind	Universal dignity	Nihilist

Discuss this chart in Study Hall.

VIRTUES, VALUES AND ETHICS

We talk about virtues, values and ethics as if we all mean the same thing. Let's look at each definition and see whether it fits your understanding.

Virtues are the result of striving for personal excellence or moral goodness.
Examples: compassion, courage, determination, forgiveness, honesty, love, mercy, kindness, respect, tolerance, trust, self-discipline.

Values are principles, standards or qualities we consider worthwhile or desirable: beliefs about what is right or true.
Examples: good money management, social consciousness, caring for the environment, a strong work ethic, a healthy body, a positive attitude.

Ethics are the system of virtues and values we live by.
Examples: "Do unto others …," "An eye for an eye …," "All people are created equal …," "One for all and all for one."

> Virtues make up our values, and our values define our ethical system.

Make your own lists.

My values	My virtues	My ethics

HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC PARENTING

The term **human rights** refers to the basic rights and freedoms believed to be essential for human survival, liberty and dignity. They are recognized by the global community and protected by international law. Human rights are practiced in a democracy and accepted around the world as universal. They are the birthright of every man, woman and child.

A democratic approach to parenting

Honoring a child's dignity, as well as providing for their survival needs, is a **democratic approach to parenting.** Any attack on a person's dignity violates their human rights and infringes on their liberty. A democratic, or Breakthrough, approach to parenting preserves the dignity of each person while providing clear, age-appropriate boundaries and consequences for learning and growing in a diverse society.

The four values of dignity in a human rights framework

Dignity means honoring a person for their value (worthwhile), loving them unconditionally by allowing for forgiveness and redemption (loveable), accepting them for their choices (capable), and treating them as an equal human being (respected). Damaging any one of these is an attack on that person's dignity.

Worthwhile. Every person has value because they were born a human being. Their value does not depend on age, gender, status, color, religion, citizenship or any other characteristic.

Loveable. Every person has the right to make mistakes and be forgiven, because every person is born with the right to be loved, whatever their age, gender, status, color, religion, citizenship or any other characteristic. Every person can and should be held accountable for their actions, but in a way that leads to redemption.

Capable. Every person has the right to age-appropriate choices, and the right to experience the natural and logical consequences of those choices, without criticism, judgment, intimidation or force, within the boundaries of safety and security.

Respected. Every person has the right to be treated as an equal, whatever their age, gender, status, color, religion, citizenship or any other characteristic. No one is born less than, or more than, anyone else.

> *"Human rights are 'needed' not for life but for a life of dignity ... We have human rights not to the requisites for health but to those things 'needed' for a life of dignity, for a life worthy of a human being."*
>
> — Jack Donnelly, philosopher

ROLE PLAY: PARENTING WITH DIGNITY

Discuss these three situations in Study Hall. How can you get cooperation **without punishing, bribing, rewarding or criticizing**? Role-play your results for the group.

1. **Homework.** A 7-year-old starts his homework well, but after 20 minutes he wiggles and whines that he's bored. "I don't know why I have to keep writing this sentence over and over!" "I hate homework!" "It's time for my favorite show!"
   Your task: get your child to cooperate with homework and meet his needs too. What would build up his sense of being capable?
2. **Chores.** A 14-year-old is told to clean his room. He hides his dirty clothes in the closet, pushes papers and trash under the bed, and covers a wall with posters of his favorite heavy-metal band. He is very proud of the result.
   Your task: protect his sense of being capable, worthwhile and respected, and still teach organization, safety and cleanliness. How do you do this and keep your cool?
3. **The mall.** You are shopping for clothes with a 3-year-old, a 5-year-old and an 8-year-old. The first thing they see is an ice cream shop next to a toy store.
   Your task: teach the children they are loved unconditionally without indulging them. How do you get the shopping done without demands for ice cream and toys?

JOURNAL ENTRY 10

Parenting Dignity

Parenting with dignity nurtures the development of empathy. Human rights values rest on one core belief: **the most important outcome of any conflict is to preserve the dignity of yourself and the other person.**

	The right
Worthwhile	the right to have VALUE
Loveable	the right to make mistakes and learn from them; the right to FORGIVENESS and a way to be REDEEMED
Capable	the right to make CHOICES
Respected	the right to be accepted as an EQUAL, even in disagreement; a BALANCE OF POWER

1. Think of situations where you have used dignity to help yourself or someone else "save face," so that no one was embarrassed or shamed.

2. How will you use these four values to improve your parenting?

3. This week's talk asks you to separate the person from the action. Choose one action of your co-parent (or someone else) that angers you. What does your anger tell you about what *you* value?

This week: Turn in your PowerPoint final draft; presentations begin. Complete Journal Entry 10. Complete the Week 11 online assignment before Study Hall, and attend class and Study Hall.

WEEK 12

Moving Forward

12

ONLINE LESSON: WRAP-UP

THIS WEEK

- ☐ **This week:** final presentations, your Parent Narrative and the online course survey
- ☐ **Read:** this section, Moving Forward
- ☐ **Due this week:** Parent Narrative; final presentations

Our task this week is to bring everything together. You have explored your anger, your needs, your beliefs, your story and your relationships. Now it is time to decide where you go from here.

YOUR FINAL PRESENTATION

Final presentations finish this week. Present the activity you share with your child and show how it practices democratic parenting skills and objectives (see Your Final Presentation in Week 8).

YOUR PARENT NARRATIVE (DUE THIS WEEK)

The Parent Narrative is the final part of your History of the Heart. It brings together your Timeline, your Birth Story and everything you have learned in this course.

TRY IT

Write your narrative in three parts

1. **Summary.** Tell the story of your relationship, focused on *yourself:* your decisions and their outcomes.
2. **Analysis.** Apply what you learned in the course, both online and in this journal, to your story.
3. **Application.** Describe how you will use it to reach your future co-parenting and parenting goals.

Write **your** story. Avoid focusing on your co-parent, avoid excuses and avoid blame. What were *your* choices? Explore your own **accountability.**

When your Parent Narrative is finished, **email it** to Dr. Hughes. The full assignment description is in **Course Materials.**

Outline your narrative here before you write it.

THE ONLINE COURSE SURVEY

To receive your certificate, complete the **online course survey** on the course website. Please give your honest opinion of the course. Your feedback helps us improve it for the parents who come after you.

THANK YOU

Thank you for your hard work over these 12 weeks. You are doing one of the most difficult and worthwhile things a parent can do.

Keep practicing. Keep your dignity, and protect the dignity of the people you love.

Dr. Mollie M. Hughes

Role-Play Library

Role plays help you practice the skills you are learning. It is easier to *think* about using a skill than to *do* it. Your facilitator will choose role plays for class and Study Hall throughout the course.

How to role-play

- Don't be afraid of making mistakes or being laughed at. This is a learning exercise. It builds the confidence you need to use these skills in everyday life. It also shows you how your children feel when they are put on the spot.
- Some role plays have a full script. Others ask you to improvise. Read each scene carefully and stay true to what is really happening for the child and the parent.
- Support each other: stay in the moment and play your part with energy.
- **Feedback:** "catch them being good," and add suggestions. Avoid criticism, judgment and put-downs. Ask: What worked? Does this outcome meet the needs of both the parent and the child?
- There is no single RIGHT way to do a role play, but there are ways to get better outcomes for you and your child.

SCRIPTED ROLE PLAYS

For each script:

a. Identify the parenting approach (authoritarian, permissive, uninvolved or democratic).
b. Identify the needs of the child and the needs of the parent (use the Hierarchy of Needs).
c. How would you rewrite the scene to meet the needs of both?

A 7-year-old is upset and kicks the backpack

Kid: *(runs in, drops the backpack in the middle of the floor and heads upstairs)* I hate school!

Parent: Whoa! Pick up your backpack before someone trips on it!

Kid: *(kicks it into the corner)* Okay.

Parent: *(firmly)* Put it where it belongs!

Kid: It's out of the way …

Parent: Don't talk back to me! I've had a long day and I have a headache!

Kid: You always say that!

Parent: For that, you can take your backpack and stay in your room until dinner!

Kid: You are so mean!

Parent: No TV for you tonight!

Kid: I hate you sometimes!

A 12-year-old is late and feels accused

Kid: *(hurries in)* Sorry I'm late!

Parent: Where were you?

Kid: Some friends and I went to the store and I forgot what time it was.

Parent: Mrs. Harris called. She said she saw you and your friends by the old Jefferson place. That's the opposite direction from the store.

Kid: Mrs. Harris is so nosy. She probably just thought it was me.

Parent: She also said she heard glass breaking and saw you and your friends running away from the house.

Kid: So you think I broke a window?

Parent: Well, no, I, uh, just wanted to know.

Kid: You and nosy Mrs. Harris want to know if I broke a window?!

Parent: I'm only asking because I care …

Kid: Yeah, right.

Parent: I'm sorry. Don't be mad. I just think it's important to know if you were with the kids who broke the window …

Kid: *(hesitates)* Why are you still asking me this? We didn't do anything! Okay?!

Parent: *(pause)* Okay, honey. I'm so sorry I upset you. Are you hungry?

Kid: No. I'm going upstairs.

A 17-year-old is going out with a friend

Teen: *(hurries in)* I'm ready to go. Can I have the keys?

Parent: Wait a minute. Who did you say you're going out with tonight?

Teen: Lisa's brother, Tim.

Parent: Wasn't he suspended last year for bringing a gun to school?

Teen: He didn't do that. The principal caught the kid who put the gun in his backpack.

Parent: But didn't he get arrested for hitting his father?

Teen: Lisa said that was because he finally stood up to his dad. Their dad hit him all the time.

Parent: That took courage. Do you know what happened?

Teen: His dad came at him with a belt and Tim pushed him back. His dad hit his head. Tim had to do community service, and he moved in with his aunt. He's trying really hard to fit in. I like him a lot.

Parent: Wow. I'm impressed. He's lucky to have a friend like you. I was just concerned.

Teen: I know. But trust me, I wouldn't go out with him if I thought something would go wrong.

Parent: I know that. What's your plan if something uncomfortable does happen?

Teen: I'll call you, or 911, or scream my head off!

Parent: Got it. *(hands over the keys)* Have fun.

Teen: I'll check in later so you won't worry. Okay?

Parent: Sounds good. Love you.

WRITE THE END OF THE PLAY

Use your conflict skills to come up with realistic strategies. What does each person value? List each person's needs. How can each one acknowledge the other's feelings and find ways to meet everyone's needs? Role-play the results for the group, starting where the script stops.

Parents arguing over getting their child to daycare

Leanne and Albert both work and are raising their 2-year-old daughter, Mai. They are arguing about who takes Mai to and from daycare. They have just finished dinner, and Mai is playing nearby.

Albert: What's on your mind?

Leanne: Nothing.

Albert: When you don't say anything all through dinner, I know you're mad about something.

Leanne: It's nothing.

Albert: Leanne … talk to me.

Leanne: All right! I can't keep being late for work! You have to start picking Mai up from daycare!

Albert: That's ridiculous! I have to be at work at seven. You have flex time. It's okay for you to be late …

Leanne: No, it's not! I still have to put in eight hours. By the time I get ready, take care of Mai and drop her at daycare, I don't get to work until 10 or 10:30. That means working until 6 or 6:30, so I skip lunch. But most days I leave early because she has to be picked up by six or it costs us an extra $30 every half hour! Then I work extra hours on the weekend. It's too much!

Albert: So get up earlier …

Leanne: I don't get enough sleep as it is! Mai is only two! She's up until nine or ten at night and wakes up once or twice!

Albert: What do you want me to do? I don't hear her.

Leanne: That's because you expect me to get up with her.

Albert: Isn't that what good mothers are supposed to do?

Leanne: So I'm not a good mother if I ask you to get out of bed and help once in a while? Is that what you mean?

Albert: Wait a minute! I need my sleep too! My job is much more demanding than yours!

Leanne: How dare you say that! *(Mai begins to fuss.)*

Albert: Stop yelling! You're upsetting her!

Leanne: YOU stop yelling!

Albert: *(trying to calm her)* Leanne, come on. You manage a business for a marketing firm that pays you great money.

Leanne: No stress there …

Albert: I stand all day running heavy machinery. If I'm not at 100%, people get hurt. Now that's pressure!

Leanne: You get off at three. You could easily pick Mai up, feed her and tire her out so she'd sleep earlier.

Albert: Honey, after work I'm tired. I need to unwind with the guys. I don't have time to babysit for you …

Leanne: *(exploding)* Babysit?! For me?! Mai is your daughter too!

STOP. Now write the end of the play.

A teen argues with a parent over video games

Sandy, parent of 14-year-old Jared, is paying bills and is frustrated with how much money goes to Jared's video games. Jared and his friend Ronny come in, loudly planning how they will win tonight's soccer game.

Jared: They don't have a chance! We're 4 and 0!

Ronny: I can't wait to see us crush them! *(seeing Sandy)* Oh, sorry, Mrs. Kennedy.

Jared: Don't mind her. She swears too, don't you, Mom?

Sandy: *(glaring)* You boys wipe your feet before you come in.

Ronny: Okay, Mrs. Kennedy. I'm just borrowing Jared's game console and a few games for the weekend.

Sandy: What?

Jared: Ronny's borrowing my console, and I'm borrowing his.

Sandy: That equipment costs a lot of money for you boys to be trading it around. Ronny, does your mother know about this?

Ronny: Sure. She doesn't mind as long as we're careful.

Sandy: Well, maybe the consoles, but not the games!

Jared: That doesn't make any sense, Mom …

Sandy: Your father and I worked hard to buy those games. I don't like you lending them out.

Jared: Mom, it's just Ronny, for God's sake!

Sandy: Don't swear at me!

Ronny: It's okay, man …

Jared: No, it's not! Why do you give me stuff and then take it away? You're such a jerk!

Sandy: That's it, mister! Go to your room right now!

Jared: No!

Sandy: *(flustered)* Ronny, go home!

Ronny: Okay, Mrs. Kennedy. See you at the game tonight, man.

Sandy: Oh no. No game tonight!

Jared: Mom!

Sandy: You're grounded!

Jared: I hate you so much!

Sandy: Wait till your father hears about this!

Jared: *(yelling)* At least HE listens!

STOP. How can Sandy acknowledge Jared's feelings and ease her own fears? Write the end of the play.

MORE ROLE PLAYS

Using conflict resolution skills

1. A 2-year-old sticks a peanut butter sandwich in the DVD player.
2. A 17-year-old borrows her mother's new dress for a party without asking, and stains it.
3. An 11-year-old gets in a fight at school and blames the other kid.
4. A 5-year-old gets into her mother's makeup and says her imaginary friend made her do it.
5. A parent doesn't show up for his 7-year-old son's visit. How does the other parent respond when the child says, "My dad doesn't care about me"?
6. A teacher shows a parent several bruises on their 12-year-old daughter's arm. The child won't talk about it. How does the parent respond to the teacher's assumptions?
7. A 14-year-old son is "madly" in love with a 13-year-old girl. He asks his parent about birth control. How does the parent handle this?
8. A 4-year-old comes out of his room naked during a dinner party and pees on the rug in front of the guests. How does the parent react?

Practicing empathy

How would a parent respond in each situation? Which stage of empathy is the parent stuck in (see Week 11: sociopathic, co-dependent, seeking acceptance, moralist, rigid moralist or nihilist)? How would you advise them?

1. A parent leaves a court hearing about whether their child will come home. They were given services to complete a year ago, but job conflicts and illness got in the way. They think the system is wrong and that the judge and caseworker will never understand their side.
2. A parent is preparing for mediation on a parenting plan. They plan to give in to all of the other parent's demands so the kids won't lose visits, fearing that if they ask for anything they will lose everything.
3. A parent believes spanking, restricting a child and taking their things away are harmless. Ordered to take a parenting class, the parent cites state law and scripture to justify spanking, and dismisses research linking punishment to low self-esteem.
4. A parent is outraged that their child must read and do a project on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and calls the teacher to complain.
5. A parent believes nothing they did required intervention when child protective services reports safety issues at home: piled-up dirty dishes, a strong urine smell in the rugs and piles of dirty laundry. The parent refuses to cooperate with the court-appointed special advocate (CASA) who suggests a parenting class. The CASA then recommends a mental health evaluation.

Recognizing the stages of development

Your group will choose an age group and answer these questions for each situation: What information does the child need, and how will you present options so they can hear them? What are your own beliefs and feelings about the situation? How will you plan before you talk with the child?

Ages 2 to 8

1. Your 2-year-old refuses to leave the store and resists being picked up. You feel your anger rising. What do you do?
2. Your 5-year-old is playing and won't cooperate at bedtime. What do you do?
3. A 6-year-old and an 8-year-old are fighting over the remote. How do you step in?
4. Your 3-year-old keeps telling on her 7-year-old brother, who picks on her. How do you step in?
5. Your 6-year-old lies. What is your approach?

Ages 9 to 12

1. Your 9-year-old won't clean her room. She thinks you should stay out because it's her room and her stuff. How do you get her to cooperate?
2. The neighborhood kids broke a neighbor's window playing ball. No one will confess. Your child knows who did it but won't tell. How do you handle this?
3. Your 12-year-old twins want to spend the summer with your ex, who has remarried someone you dislike (and who has a lot more money than you do). They live in another state, and your ex wants you to deliver and pick up the boys. How do you work this out with the kids?
4. You find drugs in your 11-year-old daughter's backpack. She says they aren't hers. What is your approach?

Ages 13 to 18

1. While putting away your 14-year-old daughter's laundry, you find condoms in her drawer. She has been telling you about a friend who is pregnant. How will you talk with her?
2. Your 17-year-old son says he is in love with a 14-year-old girl. He has been sneaking out of his after-school music group to be with her. Her mother calls to tell you. He threatens to run away with her. How will you address his feelings?
3. Your daughter went to the school nurse to find out whether she may have a sexually transmitted infection after an all-night party with drinking, drugs and sex. She was passed out and doesn't remember who she was with. What steps will you take when she tells you?

Using clarifying questions and statements

Work in pairs: one plays the parent, one the child. The "parent" must use clarifying questions or statements, with no lectures, put-downs or guilt trips. Avoid questions that start with "why," and be honest. Give children information and let them solve their own problems.

Example. Child: "I don't want Grandma to give me presents anymore!" Parent: "Do you mean the gift she gave you isn't what you wanted?" or "Do you mean Grandma doesn't see how grown up you are?" … "How can you let Grandma know how you feel, and still let her know you love and appreciate her?"

1. Your 14-year-old is in a convenience store with a friend who has no money, and sees the friend steal a candy bar. Later your child says, "I think Bobby is stupid." How do you respond?
2. Your 8-year-old is at the park with a friend. An older teen shows them some "neat stuff" in his car, which turns out to be a gun. Your child says, "Sam has such neat stuff in his car." How do you respond?
3. Your child lent his friend Jose five dollars, and now Jose is avoiding him. Your child says, "Jose doesn't like me anymore. He never answers my messages." How do you respond?
4. At recess, older kids pick on your 5-year-old and her friend Jack. Today they took her hat and wouldn't give it back. Your child says, "Me and Jack hate recess!" How do you respond?
5. Your 17-year-old's soccer team got into an argument with the other team that turned into a fight. Your teen and a teammate were thrown out of the game. Your teen says, "The game was horrible! I don't want to play anymore." How do you respond?

Punishment and discipline

With a partner, read each situation aloud. What are the effects of the punishment? How would you make the outcome more democratic while meeting your needs and the child's needs?

1. A 2-year-old is slapped for pulling things off a shelf.
2. A 5-year-old is scolded and told to go play while the parent is on the phone.
3. A 7-year-old is sent to his room for fighting with his 3-year-old brother.
4. A 16-month-old is yelled at for dropping her dish on the floor over and over.
5. A 3-year-old is put in time-out for running around the house when the parent wants to rest.
6. A 2-year-old is spanked for refusing to go somewhere.
7. A 6-year-old is dragged out of a store by the arm when she throws a tantrum.
8. A cell phone is yanked out of a child's hands.
9. A child is forbidden dessert for not eating their vegetables.
10. A child is sent to bed without dinner for being rude at the table.

Sensitive subjects

How do parents handle these difficult situations? The challenge is to set boundaries and solve the problem without using punishment, blame or shame.

1. A 5-year-old boy is found in the bathroom with his mother's makeup all over himself and the bathroom.
2. A 16-year-old smells like marijuana after a night out with friends.
3. A 10-year-old is frightened of a bully his own age at school.
4. An 8-year-old is caught playing with matches near a pile of newspapers.
5. A 6-year-old wants his mom's attention while she is on the phone. He whines and fusses and finally throws a fit.
6. A 3-year-old throws a huge tantrum at the mall on a busy Saturday afternoon.
7. Your 8-year-old says, "You can't make me go to bed!" in front of the new partner you are trying to impress.
8. Two 4-year-olds are fighting over a toy. One hits the other on the head and hurts him.

The language of encouragement

Work in pairs. Use your child's strengths to encourage them to build new skills. Let them be the problem solvers.

1. Your 8-year-old is gifted in music but struggling in math. Help her see how math is like music.
2. How do you build language skills in a 12-year-old who is only interested in video games?
3. How do you teach a 5-year-old to organize their toys and keep their room picked up, when all they want to do is listen to music and dance?

Addressing the problem, not the fear

Shift from fearful thinking to problem-solving. Use communication and conflict-resolution skills, and avoid acting on anger and fear.

Example. At the playground, a mother's 5-year-old starts screaming about missing her turn on the slide. People stop and stare. *The sensitive part:* the mother feels judged. *How to approach it:* the mother reflects her daughter's feeling that it's unfair, and asks what would help her feel better until it's her turn.

1. You are picking up the last of three children you drive to school. When the child comes out, they aren't dressed for the weather and haven't had breakfast.
2. Your 12-year-old daughter is 30 minutes late coming home from school. She looks like she's been crying but doesn't want to talk.
3. You're shopping with your 8-year-old son and suddenly realize he's gone. You panic and ask people if they've seen him. Then you spot him in the distance, wandering toward a video arcade.

Receptive listening and I-statements

Practice receptive listening and I-statements. Avoid statements that accuse, shame or pressure.

1. Your 15-year-old son is interested in a 14-year-old neighbor girl. His music instructor calls to say he has been sneaking out of his music group to be with her, even though music is his talent and passion. The girl's mother calls to say she thinks they are planning to run away together, and threatens to have your son arrested. *Role-play the phone call between the parents, then the conversation with your son, who has overheard.*
2. Your 16-year-old daughter's best friend confides that she and your daughter are worried they may have a sexually transmitted infection after an all-night party with drinking, drugs and sex. The friend was passed out and isn't sure what your daughter did or didn't do. *Role-play the conversation with the friend. Continue when your daughter walks in, wants to know what you've been talking about, and is furious at her friend for telling.*
3. Your 3-year-old comes to you crying while you're on the phone with an important client. Your 7-year-old keeps threatening to hit her as they argue over the remote. *Role-play the interrupted phone call, then the 7-year-old coming in to give their side of the story.*
4. Your 12-year-old twins want to spend the summer with your ex, who has remarried someone you dislike (and who has a lot more money than you). Your ex lives in another state and wants you to handle the travel. *How do you balance the need for visits with your concerns about travel?*

Parents with young children

How can you parent these children with empathy and compassion? Read each one aloud, then work together on solutions.

1. A 2-year-old keeps pulling off his diaper and running around naked, and sometimes pees on the rug.
2. A 16-month-old keeps throwing her dish on the floor, putting food on her head and smearing it around.
3. A 4-year-old wants his mom's attention while she is on the phone. He whines and fusses and finally throws a fit.
4. An 18-month-old gets into the TV equipment and breaks something you value.
5. A 3-year-old throws a huge tantrum in a busy store on a Saturday afternoon.
6. A 6-month-old won't sleep more than three hours at a time. The parent has been getting up for work every day and is exhausted.
7. A 2-year-old tells you "No!" in front of the new partner you are trying to impress.
8. Two 4-year-olds are fighting over a toy. One hits the other on the head.
9. A 3-year-old chasing the dog pulls its ear. The dog nips the child, and the child starts to cry.

Resources

IF YOU NEED HELP NOW

GETTING HELP

- **Emergency:** call **911.**
- **Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** call or text **988**, any time, day or night (U.S.). You can also chat at 988lifeline.org.
- **Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline:** call or text **1-800-422-4453.**
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** call **1-800-799-7233** or text **START** to **88788.**
- **SAMHSA National Helpline** (mental health and substance use, free and confidential): **1-800-662-4357.**

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CREDITS

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