

Handouts

Supporting our Children with Aware Parenting Workshop

Understanding
children's
behaviour and
how to support
them to be loving,
compassionate,
connected and
cooperative



Why do babies and young children cry?

- Crying is the main way babies communicate.
- Older children cry, rage and tantrum to communicate too.
- Needs feelings and healing feelings
- On average, young babies cry for almost three hours a day, and around 1 in 10 babies cry for a lot longer than this.
- Crying usually reaches a peak at about 6-8 weeks of age and is most common in the evening.
- From 3 months to the end of their first year, babies on average cry for an hour a day. There are of course wide variations and some babies cry for much longer periods.

The Connection between Thoughts, Needs, Feelings and Behaviour

- Mainstream parenting approaches to behaviour
- Are children “naughty” and needing punishments to learn how to behave?
 - The Aware Parenting view – in balance or out of balance
 - Mini trauma and big trauma

How Can We Support our Children When They are Out of Balance?

- Recognising the red flag moments
- Behaviour = communication
- Looking underneath behaviour
- What are they thinking/understanding?
- What are they needing?
- What are they feeling?

The same 3 things apply to us too

What happens when children experience stress?

What is Trauma - response to threat for survival. Anything a child THINKS threatens their well-being

Physiological stress response patterns

Hyperarousal - parasympathetic nervous system response for fight/flight

Dissociation - sympathetic nervous system response for freeze

Short-term states for emergencies not for prolonged periods of time - natural healing mechanisms

Impacts on our health and wellbeing

Trauma triggers that create full physiological response, even when there is no threat currently

Affect on behaviour of hyperarousal and dissociation - agitation and aggression, or withdrawal and compulsive behaviour

Healing mechanisms - crying with loving support and laughter & play

Expression, Aggression or Suppression

Balance of attention - safety and connection to feelings at the same time

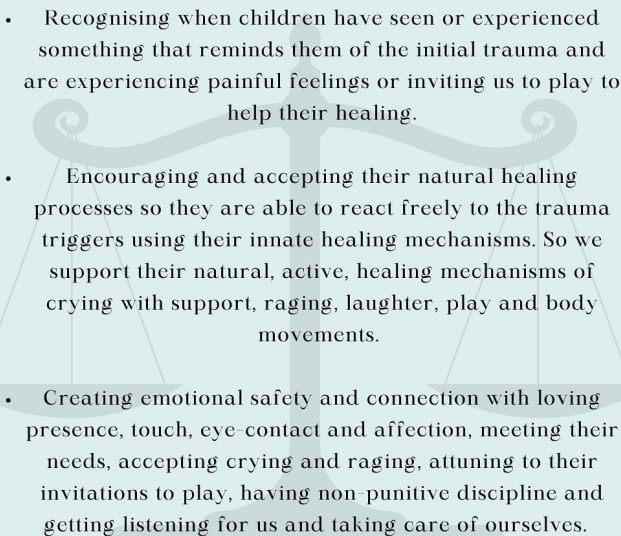
The Balance of Attention

Offering a deep sense of emotional safety in the present so they can do what they know how to do to revisit past experiences and feel and express the feelings and all the physical movements that need to go with that, in order to heal.

Helpful to reflect and notice what we need to do:

- to support them to connect with the feelings from the past, with our words or bodies
- to offer more so they get a greater sense of emotional safety,
- if our children are not moving into those feelings when we think they clearly need to, what do I need to do to play with that balance of attention so they can?

How to achieve this balance:

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- Recognising when children have seen or experienced something that reminds them of the initial trauma and are experiencing painful feelings or inviting us to play to help their healing.
 - Encouraging and accepting their natural healing processes so they are able to react freely to the trauma triggers using their innate healing mechanisms. So we support their natural, active, healing mechanisms of crying with support, raging, laughter, play and body movements.
 - Creating emotional safety and connection with loving presence, touch, eye-contact and affection, meeting their needs, accepting crying and raging, attuning to their invitations to play, having non-punitive discipline and getting listening for us and taking care of ourselves.

How to listen to feelings

Meet all their immediate needs

Respond with calm, loving presence

Give them physical closeness and attention - holding them in our arms or staying very close when they are older/mobile

Get down to their level and keep everyone safe

Remind them you are there, you are listening, and reassure them that you care

Then just listen and shine your love on them

Observe afterwards to see how relaxed, serene and connected your baby/child is after crying

No distracting, fixing, opinions, advising, minimising etc.

Using Play and Laughter to release stress

- Attachment play is a core aspect of Aware parenting
- Supports our children to release and heal from stress and trauma
- Strengthens our relationship with our children
- Creates emotional safety for children to release feelings
- Helps to solve behaviour challenges
- Brings lightness to the serious business of parenthood – we can have fun and laugh together.

Aletha Solter identifies 9 different types of attachment play- special time, symbolic play, contingency play, Nonsense, separation play, power-reversal play, regression games, body contact and cooperative

Other ways to support healing

Rewind and Repair

Loving limits

Support with Control Patterns

What we can do when we get activated?

Understand our nervous system response

Seeing triggers as valuable information

Power of the pause

Respond not React

Getting listening for us

Our Healing Journey |

How we can support ourselves

Understanding feelings and trauma

Tending to ourselves

The importance of connection and crying

Inner child processing

self-compassion

What are you celebrating in yourself and your parenting right now?

Reflection Exercises for Workshop Day 1

Feelings in your family.

What do you remember about feelings in your family growing up? Was it safe for your cry or rage? Were your feelings welcome? How did your parents express their feelings and how did that feel for you as a child?

Things to explore

How would you like things to be different for your children?

Reflections on Self-Nurturing

Day 2

1

Physical Wellbeing

Getting more sleep, exercise, prioritising nutrition instead of eating leftovers, tuning in to yourself when you need to drink or use the toilet, time in nature

2

Emotional Wellbeing

Allow yourself to ask for help, set up an LP or join a circle, journalling, have sessions with someone who resonates, self-compassion, reminder notes, reflections

3

Practical support

Take time to yourself before you feel burnt out or sick, do things that bring joy and fun, do one special thing each day for yourself, swap with other parents, ask for help

4

With your Children

Involve your children in the jobs of life with choice and fun, nurture yourselves together e.g. massages, rituals, time in nature, meditation and mindfulness

5

What might you add?

Inner child reflections process

1. Look inwards and be honest about how you are feeling
 2. Look back with curiosity about the origin, where is this familiar from? Where did you learn this? How old do you feel?
 3. What did you need, what should have happened then? No matter how unrealistic, what did you want? What would you imagine your child needing if they were in that situation?
 4. How might you get that need met now? Can you offer the younger parts of you some of that now? How can you bring that into your life now?
 5. What did you need to say or to hear then? Can you imagine receiving that now?
- Marion's Inner loving presences – can you imagine an unconditionally loving presence with you offering you loving words? Ask is there anything that you now need to to say about what happened?