

Nurturing Presence



Insights to facilitate harmony in parenting and life

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Hello. It's lovely to meet you. Thank you for choosing to read *Nurturing Presence*, a collection of brief yet transformational insights to facilitate harmony in parenting and life. In these pages you have the opportunity to discover how approaching the role of parent in the moment or even from the metaphor of a camera can actually help you parent the way you *want* to parent. It may sound silly, and possibly that's the point – to lighten up and play with our ideas a little so instead of being serious adults, we have a bit of fun.

Many years ago I bought a picture of a woman walking peacefully down a country road lined with trees. The sun was shining, her dress was flowing, and the caption read, *"The peace within becomes the harmony without."* (I later found out that quote is from Joel S. Goldsmith.) Since that purchase, this picture has graced the walls of every home I have lived in and it has also worked on my approach towards parenting and life.

Parenting has its challenges, and the exercises in this book arise from my experiences in working through negativity, emotional anguish, intense anger, residual effects of childhood abuse, and the repercussions of violent relationships.

While parenting may not be easy, I find it gets easier when I approach parenthood from the perspective that the challenges we face are actually opportunities in disguise – which offer the possibility to move through frustration and doubt into lasting peace, joy, and love.

Although peace can be a byproduct of circumstances being just right (kids cooperating on command, marriage going perfectly, plenty of money, just the right schools, the dog not jumping up on me when I walk out the door); I have observed that *peace is an aspect of ourselves we often overlook – always present at the base of our being, waiting to be discovered and lived from.*

That's why I like to say... **Start with peace, and the rest will follow.** I am not asking you to take my word for it, though. I offer these thoughts and exercises for you to play with and use in your life to increase the awareness of the peace that is always present within and around you so that you can create harmony on the outside – in your personal life, family, and the world. The only requirement is willingness...

Enjoy this brief compilation of helpful tips you can read, experience, apply to your life – and even post in prominent places around your home for you to refer to in moments of stress or indecision. You hold the key to family harmony, from the inside out. As a mom of four and a parent educator dedicated to respectful parenting, I am happy to assist you along the way. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Much Love,
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Peace is Ever Present

This is the basis for everything that follows. We can seek peace in outside circumstances and they can bring it temporarily.

If our loved ones treat us respectfully it is easy to feel peace and contentment. If we have plenty of money, we can feel confident. It is when aspects of life feel less than peaceful that we question how peace can actually be inside of us – or possible in our lives.

Have you ever meditated, looked at a sunrise, or simply experienced stillness while sitting on the couch while relaxing? We all experience peace from time to time. Although we often relate that to what we are focusing on, we can deepen our focus and notice that peace actually comes from the inside and is always present – waiting to be discovered. Peace is the basis for living our lives fully.



Notice your breath and feel how it feels coming in and out. As you bring all of your attention into your breath, go deeper and notice how your body feels. Continue to keep your focus on how your breath feels entering, exiting, and even the small space in between the inhale and exhale.

Bring your attention deeper into the inside of your body and feel the life energy that is present in your fingertips, hands, arms, shoulders, neck, and head. Follow this slowly and gradually for your whole body from your fingertips, to your head and down to the tips of your toes. Notice the simple peace present inside of your experience.

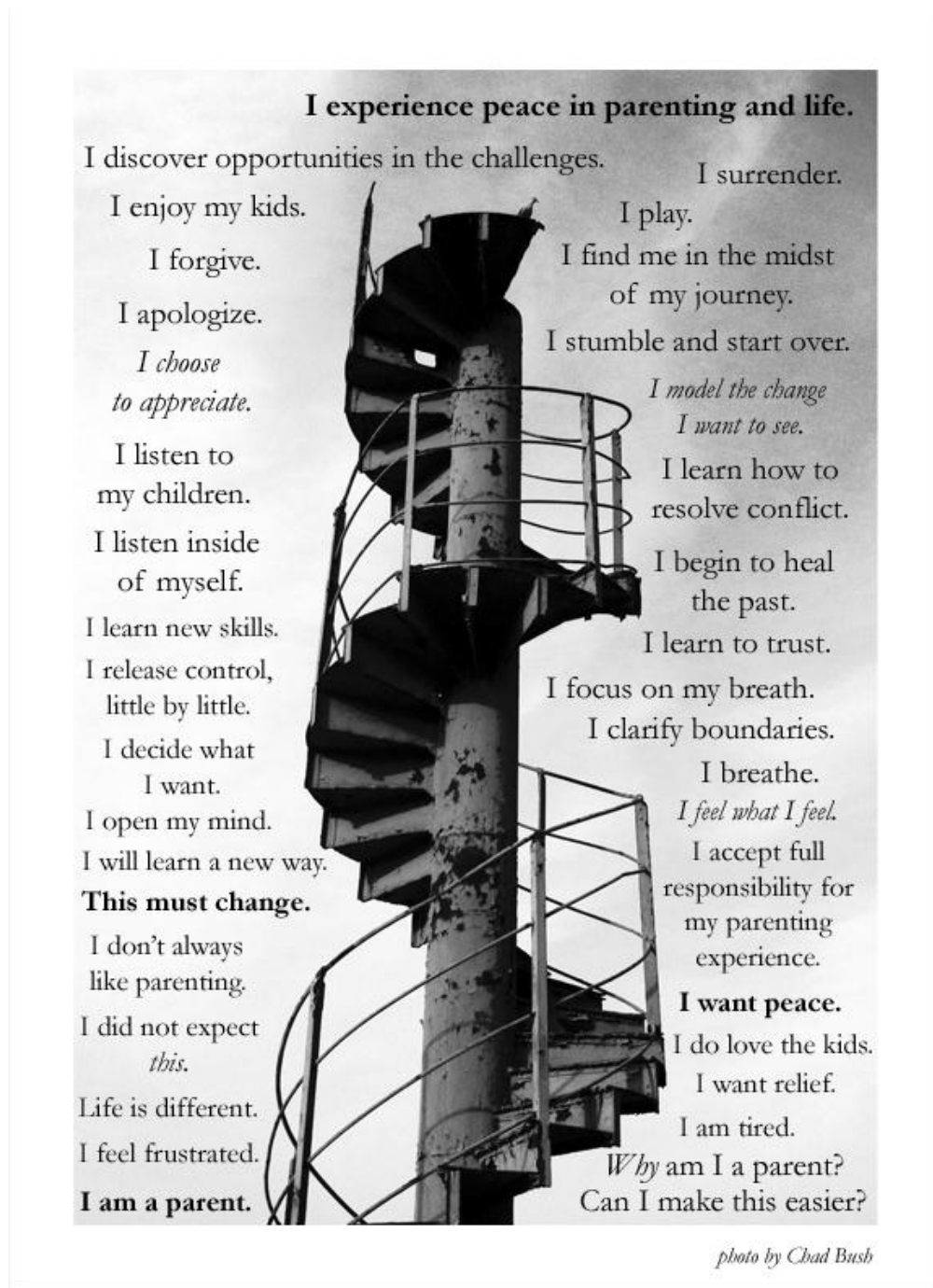
Now, be aware of any tendency to dismiss this experience as too simple. Life can be complicated and when we choose to start with peace, the complexities turn into intricacies and experiences worthy of exploration. Allow yourself to tune into and live from the present moment peace at the base of your being as often as possible.

A simple shift in awareness is all that is required to begin experiencing the truth of who you are. Practice this often until you no longer need to practice and realize the other ideas you have about yourself are impermanent. Peace, on the other hand, is always present – a back drop to your life. ☺

**“The peace within becomes the harmony without.”
–Joel S. Goldsmith**

The Spiral Staircase of Parenting

Parenting is like a walk up a spiral staircase. We start at the bottom with our new role as parent – not knowing exactly what to expect, what we want, or where we are going. Each step is valuable and a central pillar holds it all together. Consider the central pillar in your parenting experience. What is always constant? When in question, bring your awareness to your breath and the present moment.



Whole Body Camera

Cameras have come a long way since many of us were children. Digital cameras snap shots with ease and instantly show the image on a tiny screen so you can retake, enjoy, and take some more! What happens if you don't have your camera though? Surely there's a time you've forgotten it...

Make use of the whole body camera - one that you always have with you.

As a parent one of the greatest tools you have is full body awareness. And you're using it already so it's worth using in a way that truly serves you and your child.

You might have noticed that you can recall the moments your child does not act the way you would prefer - all too well. You probably even remember the feeling that accompanies the not so desirable situation. Is it as easy to recall the moments where they are playing happily, sharing, feeling confident, cooperating, and respecting themselves and others? If not, this will help in many ways.



Start by intending to bring your awareness to the times your child is simply playing quietly, happy with him or herself, doing what pleases him and you, cooperating, and sharing. Depending on your child's age you may have additional ideas to insert here – such as times of self-sufficiency or maturity with an older child or teenager.

Some parents declare intentions in the morning before everyone gets busy doing what needs to be done. This may be during prayer or meditation, or in a journal that they write in regularly. The point is to provide direction for your mind at the start of your day by saying clearly to yourself that you are paying attention to the times when your child is content. Remind yourself of your intentions during the day as necessary. If you are predominantly experiencing your children as oppositional or unhappy right now, try this exercise when they are sleeping. 😊

As you notice your child, stop what you are doing and take a “picture”, but don't take just a visual picture. If you are more apt to feel than visually observe, this exercise will be especially meaningful.

Take in the experience with all of your senses – your whole body camera.

This picture is more elaborate and influential than the standard digital camera can capture. Choose to soak up every detail of your child's in-the-moment well being.

How does she look? What is she wearing? How does she hold her body when she feels that way? How do you feel as you watch him? What things does he say or do? Is there any particular scent in

the air? What do you hear – giggles or silence? If appropriate, touch your child gently or notice how it feels when he hugs you. Listen to the tone of her voice or sound of her breathing.

Notice how you feel as you observe and appreciate your child. If helpful, close your eyes to focus intently on the feeling you have in your body. Breathe deeply a few times, hold onto the feeling, allow it to penetrate your whole body, and imagine the “picture” being taken with all of your senses as it is stored for later access.

Practice

Begin using all of your senses to take as many whole body “pictures” of your child as possible. These experiences will help you gain valuable perspective of your children, their abilities, personalities, interests, as well as your own tendencies. You are likely to notice how much you really appreciate your kids and you can bring that experience of unconditional love into more difficult situations.

The Power of Awareness

The whole body camera introduces you to the power of awareness – the basis for what you are thinking, feeling, sensing, experiencing – and how you focus your attention in any moment. Awareness is not something another can give you, although we are influenced by the thoughts and opinions of others as we grow.

Just take a moment to think about what you believe and you will realize much of it came from somewhere outside of yourself – possibly religion, parents, friends, family, or a spouse. Awareness helps us sort out how we think, feel, act and relate to life so we can discard what doesn’t work and keep what does.

Through bringing your attention to various aspects of your experience, like the joy and peace of children who are content with life in the moment, we can begin to see that how we choose to focus our attention greatly influences our life experience and our ability to parent in a manner consistent with our values.

We are all aspects of the whole body camera experience. We are taking pictures – *storing memories that add to our ideas about life and the past*, choosing the view or angle from which to snap the shot – *operating from various perspectives, mental positions, or beliefs*, and considering the desired result of the shot – *thinking about the future*. Another important aspect to taking quality pictures is adjusting the lens for clarity. This may include wiping dust off of the lens, turning the dial to focus more clearly on the image you want, and checking any features of the camera to make sure you understand all of its functions.

Focused awareness allows you to use your senses to understand yourself and your family, clarify the ideas you have about the past and perspectives you hold about life or parenting so you can clearly influence the future – for you, your children, your family, and the world.

Aspects of Awareness

We are born aware of ourselves and our surroundings in many ways. As we grow, our awareness transforms based on our experiences. This is important to consider as a parent and in the context of the parent-child relationship.

Awareness fosters understanding and the ability to choose clearly. Inner awareness speaks to our inward experience of life – **spiritual, body, mind, and emotions**. Outer awareness describes our experience of life with others, things, our community, and the world. Aspects of outer awareness include **expression, communication, and interaction**. All aspects are working together in each present moment and are not different forms of awareness, but threads of the same whole.

There may be times when you feel you are more aware or honest in one aspect than another; this is natural. Some people are more skilled at art, while others may be compassionate listeners. Allow yourself to center in the present moment and know that you are exactly where you need to be.



As we become more aware in all of these aspects we can share the awareness with our children. Kids are naturally aware beings. It is generally the culmination of mental ideas and life experience that detracts us from inherent awareness. We do not need to teach awareness to our kids although modeling it will help them maintain the awareness they already have and dispel any societal distractions that do not focus on its importance.

Living from awareness helps parents and kids see the big picture so we can enjoy life, realize what stops us from doing that sometimes, and choose what we want for our lives. We can stop believing lies and start living truth.

Spiritual awareness relates to our essence, that which is connected to all of life, and simply recognizes “I am alive.”

Regardless of your particular belief system, this aspect is the basis of your life - where you came from and will return to upon death and that which is most similar and neutral to everyone and everything else.

Some feel this essence is one energy or life force that is split into multiple forms – such as you, me, and the trees. Some may feel this essence relates to religion, starts as a blank slate, or has a particular

basic nature. Some may refer to it as awareness or the part of us that is not attached to the ways of the world. We all have a base of spiritual awareness, even if we do not label it that way.

The body offers sensations and information in each moment.

Overall body awareness offers the opportunity to tune into the breath, sensations, capabilities, beneficial and non-beneficial movements, growth, sensitivities, and other pertinent information. This can be as simple as noticing how the breath feels coming in and out of the body or as in depth as intending to feel a tick crawling on the skin before it bites.

Emotional awareness allows one to relate to feelings and emotions from the neutral base awareness.

We become aware of the sensations and reactions so we can acknowledge and honor them first with the breath for release and transformation, learn from the signals, respond consciously, make necessary changes in our lives, and heal past pain.

Mental awareness is becoming clear about aspects of the mind, thoughts, beliefs, patterns, and mental conditioning.

We start out relatively clear of mental activity and gather ideas about ourselves, others, and life as we grow. These ideas can lead to judgments that hinder or help us along our life path. Awareness helps us see mental conditioning for what it is – potentially pointing to truth about our experience, but not permanently true in the ultimate sense because it can and does change.

All that we are and who we think we are is outwardly shared with others and the world through our choice of expression.

Non verbal and verbal, words, sign language, body language, writing, art, and actions are examples. Outer awareness allows us to determine whether our inner experience and outward expression match, along with developing clarity and skills to bring about harmony in our communication with others.

Present moment awareness is the culmination of awareness we experience in any given moment.

As we become rooted in the present moment we are aware in all aspects. This does not mean we are perfect nor have it all down; it does mean we are willing to see the truth of the situation with clarity so we can move forward with certainty.

The Photographer

As the one taking the “pictures” in life with various perspectives and influences, you are also the one behind the camera. The camera itself holds all of the beliefs, thoughts, and emotions. Through the lens and functionality of the camera you experience life.

Aside from the camera's specific attributes and features there is a clear, neutral awareness *watching* your life experience happen. You only have to step back from the camera a little bit to experience it and through this inner awareness you have the power to positively influence any area of your life.

Practice

Begin watching your thoughts and emotions. Pretend you're the photographer and you're backing up from the camera – or that you are at a movie and you are the director watching the film.

You have a vested interest in what's going on *and* you can see the picture more clearly with some space between you and the scene. Set your intention to do this at the start of the day, during times you feel stressed, or simply want to experience yourself or your situation from a broader perspective.

Notice how the space between you and what you are experiencing allows you to observe without harsh judgment, change course as necessary, learn about yourself, and help you clarify what areas of parenting and life deserve attention. This space is always present; it is only a matter of tuning into it.

Pretend you are the photographer of your life, choosing the perspectives from which you take all of the pictures. How do you want to view your life? If you see something from a perspective you do not like, flip it around and look for a positive opposite. "My child is so irritating" turns into "My child has needs and is learning to express in various ways. I am learning to be patient as I listen and communicate." In truth, you have the power to change how you perceive life in any moment. With practice, it gets easier.

Right Here, Right Now

It is important to remember that your power and ability to direct your life and guide your children is in the moment. The past is no longer, the future is not here yet. This doesn't mean those two aspects of time do not apply to what you are experiencing. There is validity in considering past experience when you are deciding what to do with yourself or your child. Responsibilities in the future do require your attention.

If you notice you are frustrated or distracted, **focus your attention in the present** and move forward from there. This is the most fundamental perspective to experience.

Practice

Focus your attention on your breath. Notice how it feels to inhale and exhale, the expansion of your lungs, chest, and abdomen – and the contraction as the breath exits your body. As you put all of your focus on the experience of breathing you will notice that there is a small space in between the inhale and exhale.

Breath, like life, is in a continual cycle of expand, contract, space. So as you move about in life you may also feel like you are expanding (growing, on the go, doing things), contracting (quiet activities, relaxing, introspective), or spacious (still, content). In the present all of these aspects are alive and at the base is the breath.

Take this a bit deeper and feel the inside of your body. As you breathe notice the energy or life inside of you. You may initially think of blood pumping through your veins or impulses in the nervous system. Go deeper and simply feel the life that is present inside of you. This is also the space of the present – not attached to any particular state of mind or thought we are having – but independently alive and full of energy. *Notice the peace present.*

Bring your attention to present moment awareness – your inherent nature – as you read and as often as possible in everyday life.

Making the Most of Your Camera

Intend to store and easily recall the pictures you take.

Unlike a camera you hold in your hand, awareness is with you all of the time. You don't have to mentally try to memorize the experiences, although it may feel like that at first. Just simply intend to soak up the aspects of parenting and life that are particularly meaningful to you with the side benefit of accessing them later in a very visceral way.

Think and say out loud "I intend to remember in as much feeling and detail as possible." We have the ability to direct our mind and conscious capacity in many ways to help us in everyday life; this is one part of that process.



Recall the experiences to grow in appreciation of your role as a parent and your child for being in your life.

Spend time alone or even just in the privacy of your own mind simply appreciating who you are, your child is, your partner, your parents, and anyone or anything else in your life.

Don't do it as a means to an end, do it to experience the feeling of appreciation rather than stress and then see what happens.

Inner acceptance is the doorway to resolving any resistance or conflict inside of you or with another.

When we fight reality, we create stress inside of ourselves. We can start with acceptance and then take steps to make appropriate changes.

Choose to accept what is occurring in your life before you take action. Focus on your breath, acknowledge any feelings present, and say to yourself “This is happening. I choose to accept it and move forward from here.”

Focus your attention on what you want to focus on in any moment.

You are an aware being. Sometimes it is easy to think our lives or children rule us; they don't unless we let them and we can do this without realizing it. Try the following exercise to test this out.

Bring your attention to your breath and notice how it feels coming in and out of your body. Now call any of your attention that you left outside of yourself back to you. You don't have to do anything specific here, just think the thought “I am calling all of my attention inside of myself.”

Next imagine little cords or strings between you and whatever else you may be thinking about – your kids, work, bills, and the house – whatever. Intentionally pull those strings of attachment or attention into your own body. *Notice how you feel.* All of you is inside of you. ☺

Now you can choose to focus your awareness in specific ways – such as inside of your breath, body, emotions or listening to your child. Notice the peace present while you choose where you put your attention.

Develop a new relationship with anger and guide effectively through attention to your breath, exploring what incites the anger, and what you can do next to respond consciously.

Sometimes when parents get angry they lash out – with words or worse. This happens with children, partners, and others. We can change this with awareness.

When times feel less than peaceful and happy, pay attention to what you feel irritated about. Listen within and explore a change you can make that will prevent frustration in the future (hint, when you notice what you don't want, shift your focus to what you do want). Also, recall experiences that feel better to help you remember that not all moments are this tough. You will be able to influence the situation with more calm and ease - which helps your child do the same!

Share joy with kids.

How many times have you been caught up in your own stuff, too busy to enjoy the simplest pleasures in life with your kids? Even if your children are teenagers you can enter into their world and share their interests from a place of non-judgmental appreciation.

Practice this in moment-by-moment increments, noticing judgments and setting them aside as you marvel in the opportunity to share life with your loved ones.

Relax and meditate.

Parenting is full of potential pressures. We can learn to diffuse the pressure, see it for what it really is, and relax into parenting with practice.

Using all of your senses, tune into your breath and gradually relax your body. Notice how your body feels, any areas of tension, and feel your breath reach to all of the cells as it gives life and cleanses. Sink a little deeper into this moment.

Meditation has many meanings and essentially allows us to experience the present moment free of judgment with full awareness. Some people add in positive statements or words to focus on, such as certainty, trust, or love.

Experiment with different forms or simply follow the examples in this guide. Meditation doesn't *bring* the peace – the focus of our attention simply *acknowledges* its ever presence.

Share relaxation with children.

Kids are often on the go – it's their nature to explore and learn about life! That's awesome (even if we feel frustrated because we're not sure we can always keep up.) Relaxation is a valuable skill for children and adults.

Many kids are able to relax on their own. For these children it can be helpful to relax with them and bring awareness to the value of relaxing. You don't have to pretend you're giving a lesson in school; just make it a point to enjoy relaxing with them.

Other children may have trouble slowing down and can benefit from guided relaxation. For example, a story before bed with closed eyes as you lead them on a relaxing adventure or progressive relaxation of the body from head to toe provide opportunities to experience the benefits.

Visualize for better parenting.

How often do you think about your child not cooperating or struggling in life, especially with heightened or frustrated emotion? If it's not that often, this may be easy for you. If it's more often than you like, visualization will help.

At first you may want to schedule time to relax and visualize, such as in the morning when you wake up or at night before bedtime. Don't feel like you have to be rigid about it – just do it at some point during the day.

Start by closing your eyes, bringing your attention to the rhythm of your breath, and noticing how your body feels. Get comfortable and bring to mind one of the whole body camera pictures you have taken recently as you appreciated your child. Enjoy the experience and really feel it all over again.

Now bring to mind a frustrating situation for a few moments. Breathe and re-focus on a similar type of situation that resolved itself or could be resolved through another approach. Feel the resolution taking place along with the appreciation you have for your child.

Breathe deeply and intend to save the experience to recall later. If you are faced with such a situation recall the visualization. This also works for tough situations with partners or others.

Enhance your ability to be present.

Has your child ever said “Earth to Mom or Earth to Dad?” Have you said it to yourself? Sometimes it can be easy to get wrapped up in what we have to do or what just happened.

Our children really love when we can be right here, right now with them. It benefits us also – in more ways than we can comprehend.

Open to the gifts in challenges.

Awareness helps us see that challenges help us grow. They are not always easy. We may resist, fight or cry. It’s even possible that we will throw our hands up and say we just can’t take any more. That is when anchoring into the breath and present moment can save us – and our families.

Ask yourself this question often: How am I challenged to grow through this frustration, anger, or pain? How can I see that I will be stronger, clearer, more confident, more knowledgeable, and more content with myself, a better parent, friend, or partner?



If you cannot see any benefit for yourself, talk with a friend who truly supports you. This isn’t to suggest avoiding pain or thinking inaccurately about situations that cause suffering. It is simply to look for the potential gifts in challenges – which may be an opportunity to speak your truth or clarify a boundary that you were not able to before. ☺

I Find My Way to Peace

Peace is ever present at the base of my being.

I notice my breath and feel it coming in and out of my body. As I focus on my breath, I also notice how my body feels. I allow my body to become comfortable, noticing and releasing tension.

I bring my attention deeper into the inside of my body, feeling the life energy in my hands, arms, neck, and head. I breathe intentionally and deeply. I feel my breath penetrate every cell of my body.

I notice the life inside of my head, down my neck, chest, abdomen, waist, legs, feet, and toes. I feel the sensation of stillness within and relax into this moment. Acknowledging this peace and inner space allows me to experience clarity and certainty.

I accept the reality of the situation.

If the kids are having a tough time, I have been emotionally unavailable or unwell, or whatever is happening in my home – I begin with acceptance. What is, is. The past does not predict the future – the present can influence it. I move forward from here.

I guide with the result in mind.

What do I want? If my first response is for someone to stop something or do something different, I shift my focus to what I **do** want. I express what needs to stop if necessary and then lovingly guide my child towards what is appropriate. I let go and expect.

Peace begins at home.

We are creating peace from the inside out. It looks messy sometimes, but gets easier with practice.

Children are mirrors.

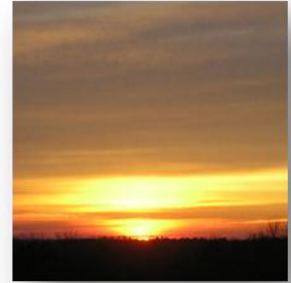
What are my children reflecting? I love them for all they show to me. I am learning to appreciate the ups and the downs.

I love and forgive.

I feel the feeling of love, allow it to grow in my heart and ripple out. I release negative emotion towards myself and others. I cry if necessary. I start over in any moment because all I have is now.

We connect.

I stroke their hair, touch them gently, give a hug or a high five, wrestle or snuggle. I look into their eyes. I listen and talk. I allow our communication to be meaningful. We find our way to peace. 😊



Peaceful Conflict Resolution

Arguments and conflict do not have to be family splitting experiences. There are definitely times when a split is beneficial – if someone is getting harmed make sure a calm space is provided to keep everyone safe. Use these steps to handle conflict inside of yourself and with everyone in the family. You will notice that the stress of conflict reduces and when it does occur, can be a gift that helps everyone experience more clarity and peace.



STOP. Breathe. Separate and provide space if necessary.

Continue focusing on your breath and provide a safe space if necessary for anyone who is in danger of harming another. You can set up a specific area for children with calming activities for them to do just for this purpose. The point is to provide a space that allows them to regain a sense of balance. As you feel your breath come in and out notice how your body feels.

DECIDE to work it out. Mediation from someone outside of the conflict may be helpful.

This is essential. You may feel upset still or possibly the kids are mad. Allow everyone to feel what they are feeling and guide everyone to work it out “Let’s work this out” or “Let’s mediate this.”

LISTEN. Continue focusing on your breath.

Take turns talking about how you feel and what you want using "I" statements. "I feel angry when you _____." "I want to get along." "How can we work this out?"

Listen to what you are hearing, notice any judgment inside yourself, and stay open. Kids can often work through situations when someone genuinely listens.

OPEN to solutions.

Offer helpful solutions that come to mind and stay silent to observe your breath as you allow space for solutions to arise.

Simultaneously let go of the need to resolve the situation immediately and expect a solution that truly works for everyone. Share ideas and talk about what everyone wants until you reach an agreement.

CONNECT in some way.

Seal the deal. Consider a hug, handshake, or written agreement to affirm the resolution. Sometimes there is a lot of strong emotion during conflict resolution. Facilitate everyone taking 3 deep breaths together and continue on with life. Well done. 😊

Child Peace Tips

When our kids are little, we are their world. They do not have the vast experience, knowledge, or understanding that we do – yet they can lead us to joy and wonder we may have forgotten. We can bring peace to their lives – and ours – by nurturing them in various meaningful ways as they grow.

Love

Children are either extending or calling for love. The most important gift we can give children is our loving presence, no matter what is happening or how they behave. In moments of frustration, focus on your breath, tune into the feeling of appreciation and extend love to your child.



Needs

Meeting our children's needs along with our own can be a challenge. One way to start is by listing your non-negotiable daily needs on one side of a piece of paper. On the other side list your child's non-negotiable needs. In times of stress, make sure those are met and remember the first tip – your loving presence means more than things.

Rhythm

Routines can be constricting or helpful. Each day we move through a rhythm with three types of activities: expanding, contracting, and spacious stillness. Observe your family's rhythm periodically and notice where it would be helpful to add in space or other nourishing activity.

Freedom

Children need to explore themselves, relationships, and surroundings. Beware of the tendency to over-protect or under-guide and hinder natural learning. Allow them to safely explore life as you support.

Choices

Learning comes through making choices and experiencing the results. Life is full of cause and effect. Kids who are aware that they are always making choices with various types of results can learn to choose clearly. Bring awareness to the relationship between choice and outcome.

Consistency

Kids depend on us to lead the way. We can do this by being honest with ourselves and others, utilizing organization, and nourishing the family's rhythm. Consistency isn't about strictly adhering to a set of conditions. It is about nurturing what works for the whole family.

Be the Change Parent

Kids can do some amazing – and irritating – things. So can we. In the moments when we want a change, we can *be* that change in various ways. Influencing our lives and families by leading the change brings welcome surprises and harmony that you may have never thought possible.

Breathe

Always start with noticing how it feels to breathe. This simple, stable foundation of life cannot be emphasized enough. Paying attention to the breath as you bring your awareness deeper within to examine thoughts and feelings helps you model the change you want to see.

Appreciate

What are you grateful for right now? Get as specific and detailed as possible as you make appreciation a way of life. Make lists of what you appreciate, share appreciation, and find the gift in struggle.



Relationship first, discipline second

Children who feel safe with and trust those who care for them respond to and appreciate guidance without force. Choose parenting methods that do not violate the trust or body of the child so discipline takes place in the context of a safe relationship.

Trade punishment for accountability

Punishment and judgmental criticism creates a reliance on external authority. Accountability nurtures inner authority. If you notice an inclination to punish, let it go completely and replace it with teaching children how to be responsible for their actions and make choices with wisdom, understanding, and respect. Sometimes this is simple, other times it may require an open mind and creativity.

Simultaneously let go and expect

When ask your child to do (or not do) something, let go of the need to control the child or use force and at the same time expect them to cooperate when reasonable. Allow time for this to occur, think positively, practice patience, offer support, and breathe.

Think long; bring short

Clarify your long term goals for parenting and check to see if your moment to moment actions are helping you achieve those goals. Learn new skills and implement them as you parent.

Family Peace Pointers

Although these pointers are the foundation for the work of Presence Parenting, *the purpose is to guide rather than for them to be strictly adhered to as some sort of impenetrable doctrine.* Please embrace what works, explore, and ask for clarification as necessary. Each parent's experience is unique and valuable.



In each moment parents are offered an opportunity: to make the most of parenting now, in the present, through conscious awareness.

The work of Presence Parenting is compatible with all religions and also with those who do not embrace any type of religion as it is based on threads that support freedom, respect, responsibility, accountability, and love.

Children and parents originate from an indefinable source of Life which embodies Love. Each child and parent is an expression of this source of Life and Love although it may be necessary to develop the awareness that this is true.

Transformation of the way you parent is possible and probable regardless of how a parent has parented up to the present moment. The past is valuable for reflection, but does not predict the future when transformation is desired. Parents can start wherever they are because all they truly have is now.

The journey to transform parenting can be loosely defined by components which go hand in hand with each other, some of which include: awareness that something is not working and a desire for harmony, willingness to entertain new ideas and further one's understanding of him or herself and children, commitment to be with what comes up in a non-judgmental manner (feel emotions fully while acknowledging any message they are giving when applicable), inner and outer honesty, willingness and commitment to practice releasing resistance (beliefs, thoughts, and behavior patterns that are not helpful), learning and application of new parenting skills, development of self-love and love for others.

The experiences we define as problematic or difficult with children are actually opportunities in disguise. Parenting itself is a grand series of these opportunities which result in one huge possibility: to realize one's true nature of peace, love, and joy.

A parent's greatest freedom and point of empowerment is within his or her own mind, body, and spirit. Attention to thoughts and emotions is paramount for transformation and growth to occur.

Children and parents function optimally when their basic bodily needs are honored. These needs include eating, drinking, rest/sleeping, eliminating, activity, and connection to others and the source of Life. This may seem to simple to mention, but ignoring this aspect of life contributes to many problems for children and adults alike.

Each parent's true nature is peace, joy, and love. This is the basis or foundation of the person and can be experienced through conscious relaxation, centering prayer, or meditation. Practice allows the parent to recognize and utilize inner awareness in parenting and everyday experiences to enhance life.

A child and parent's natural and desirable state is one of well being. Undesirable behavior in children (or their parents) signifies an imbalance which the person is trying to resolve to get back the balance of well being. It is first important to address one's basic physical needs: rest/sleep, eating/drinking, elimination, and connection to the parent and source of Life. Acknowledgment of the child or parent's feelings through non-judgmental listening with your whole being is key and in itself can resolve an imbalance. The acknowledgment of feelings becomes easier as one is able to accept his or her own feelings. The next step is simple guidance towards appropriate behavior.

Parents carry the innate ability to be the expert on their own children, although this ability may need nurturing to be fully realized.

Children and parents have an innate characteristic of self-preservation through self-awareness, although this function may need nurturing to be fully realized.

It is not the parent's responsibility to control their child(ren) and this can be damaging to the child and the parent-child relationship. It is the parent's responsibility and opportunity to guide and influence children in a way that respects and enhances the child's life and the world as a whole.

There are practices throughout humanity that exhibit the potential to nurture well being, encourage harmonious parenting, and reduce suffering - some of which include: empowered childbirth, circumcision choice left to child - no routine circumcision, breastfeeding, close contact during infancy and early years to encourage healthy connection between child and caregiver(s), baby wearing, elimination communication, intuitive eating, nourishing the family's rhythm, non-punitive discipline, and compassionate communication. Parents are encouraged to explore the connection creating aspects of these practices at any point. *Parents can benefit from parenting in the present with or without having used these practices in their life.*

Support for changing one's parenting does facilitate easier transformation for the parent and can include: thoughts and practice, acknowledgment of and deliberate connection with the source of Life, outside people who are truly accepting and affirm the steps the parent is taking to transform their parenting, and guidance from a trusted teacher, consultant, or other facilitator.

Parenting through present moment awareness brings harmony to all areas of life.

A little more about Amy Phoenix and Presence Parenting

Presence Parenting was born out of the knowledge that people can change, parents can transform anger and aggression, kids respond to inner change on the part of the parent, and we hold inside the keys to our own freedom in the parent-child relationship and life.

Founding Principles

- Ⓢ Parents want harmonious relationships with their children
- Ⓢ Children want harmonious relationships with their parents
- Ⓢ Families can create harmonious relationships
- Ⓢ With a commitment to introspection, they will be discovered
- Ⓢ One transformational moment at a time

Mission

- Ⓢ Be the change I wish to see in myself, my family, and the world through facilitating peaceful relationships between adults and children - one moment at a time.

I come to this work honestly. I have experienced plenty of non-peace and I gradually decided there must be another way.

Like many others, I experienced some intense suffering and wanted a way out. Although I loved my kids dearly, I didn't have the basis or skills to deal constructively with what I felt. Eventually I realized the only way out is *through*.

After too many angry outbursts at my loved ones, I started to take an honest look at my thoughts, words, and actions – and how they were affecting my life experience. I found that I was living from thoughts that simply were not true and I was very unaware of my own potential.



These realizations led to some changes in my life, including the surrender of who I thought I was in exchange for a moment-by-moment renewal of myself. The practice of meditation and awareness affirmed such a deep peace inside that it evolved from a practice into a way of life, helping me learn to meet the demands of parenting through combining awareness with practical parenting skills. As a parent educator, child meditation facilitator, and mother of four – I am happy to assist you in experiencing peace in parenting and life because *the peace within becomes the harmony without*. 😊

The basis for the work is discovering who you really are inside of the thoughts and feelings you experience – something that no person or experience can take away. If you are in the throes of doubt, anger, or simply want a different relationship with your kids – I invite you to join the [center for peace](#) – an experiential learning and realization center just for parents committed to nurturing peace in their homes and lives.