

A young boy with brown hair, wearing an orange t-shirt and blue jeans, is kneeling in a grassy field. He is looking down at something in his hands. To his right, a baby with light hair, wearing a light blue dress with a floral pattern and purple shoes, is sitting on the grass and looking up at the boy. The background is a lush green field with some yellow flowers. The text is overlaid on the image.

THE WORTHWHILE ENDEAVOR OF BECOMING A MORE MINDFUL PARENT

*EVERYDAY PARENTING
CONCEPTS FROM A MINDFUL
PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE TO
HELP GUIDE, GROUND,
CENTER, SUPPORT AND
REFOCUS YOUR HEART AND
MIND ON WHAT REALLY
MATTERS ~ YOUR
RELATIONSHIP
WITH THE LITTLE PERSON IN
YOUR CARE.*

CONNECTED
ATTACHED
POSITIVE
STRENGTHS-BASED
PEACEFUL
NON-VIOLENT
GENTLE
UNCONDITIONAL
COMPASSIONATE
RESPECTFUL

CAMILLE LONG

The Worthwhile Endeavor of Becoming A More Mindful Parent

By Camille Long

The Worthwhile Endeavor of Becoming A More Mindful Parent © 2016 Camille Long

All Rights Reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the author, except for use as brief quotations as permitted by copyright law. To request permission, contact the publisher at the following address:

Camille Long

Tel: 1-807-620-9021

Email: camille.f.long@gmail.com

Self-Published in Canada by Camille Long

Second Edition, Electronic Book, 2016

ISBN: 978-0-9950005-0-6

Dedication

- For my husband Aaron, my partner in love and life: Thank you for your constant encouragement and support, and for being a wonderfully connected and caring father who picks up whenever and wherever I leave off.
- For my son Ezekiel, who demonstrates daily the extent of human emotion even more vast than I'll ever be able to experience or understand – the unhindered ecstasy of pure joy and the sorrow of deep sadness – you colour my life with such depth.
- For my daughter Raijah, truly my ray of sunshine, whose hugs are tighter and snugglier than the most comfy hug imaginable, and whose cheeky grin instantaneously lightens my heart.
- For the many people in my life who have supported me throughout my parenting journey: Samantha, this book would not exist without your contribution to my life. Thank you for walking alongside me every single step of the way in the search for wholeness, truth, and life on our parenting journeys. April, you are such an encouragement and support to me, always there to listen without judgment, and full of care. Maggie, how thankful I am to have your positive presence in my life. My sisters, Sharon and Kenda, and my brother, Jeff – I know I can always count on you, and I love you. To Sandra, Kiran, Anna L., and Anna T., you have been nothing but supportive and encouraging to me – I love you all. To my mother-in-law, thank you for believing in me, grounding me, and guiding me. To my mother – you gave me life, and you have continually demonstrated the depth of a mother's love in your responsiveness to me.

Contents

Introduction

CONCEPT 1 – The Child as a Whole, Competent and Able Being

Parenting From Conception ~ Readiness ~ Enjoy Now ~ I Am Capable

CONCEPT 2 – Emotions

Crying in Your Loving Arms ~ Crying is Communicating ~ Avoiding Stuck Feelings ~ Help Me! ~ Modeling Empathy ~ Time-in To Calm Down ~ How Can I Help You Feel Loved Today? ~ Children With Special Needs ~ Time Out For Parents

CONCEPT 3 – Connecting Moments

Moments of Connection ~ Breastfeeding and Bottle ~ Supporting Children Through New Experiences ~ Potty Learning

CONCEPT 4 – Authoritative Parenting and Loving Limits

Authoritative Parenting... The Third Way ~ Setting Loving Limits ~ Take Kids Seriously ~ Communicating Nonviolently – Prevention ~ Acknowledgment ~ Choice ~ Intrinsic Vs. Extrinsic Motivators

CONCEPT 5 – Environment

Stimulation ~ Less is So Much More ~ Getting Outside ~ Home Is The Safest Place

CONCEPT 6 – Play

Free, Unstructured, Child-directed Play ~ Respecting Play Choices ~ Creativity, Curiosity and Wonder ~ Independent Play ~ Play With Me! ~ Welcoming Conflict ~ Siblings ~ The Healing Power of Play

CONCEPT 7 – Thinking Long-Term

Long-term Goals ~ Connect First ~ Dependence ~ Giving Opportunities ~ Labels ~ “Good Job”

CONCEPT 8 – Parents Have Needs Too

Hurt People ~ Be Kind To Yourself ~ Parenting Is Hard Work... Parenting Respectfully, Even More So ~ Your Village ~ Self Care

Recommended Reading

Preface

I am passionate about peaceful, nonviolent, respectful, and gentle parenting and relating to others. I have two little people in my care whom I love deeply, and have done my best to raise them respectfully with my long-term goals in mind. My most notable influences are Magda Gerber's Resources for Infant Educators (RIE), Dr. Thomas Gordon's Parent Effectiveness Training (P.E.T.), Dr. Marshall B. Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication, and Dr. Gordon Neufeld and Dr. Gabor Mate's Hold Onto Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers.

I believe that the parenting journey has just as much (if not more) to do with the parenting of the parent, as it does with the parenting of the little people in our care. I hope to share with you and support you in finding the healing and contentment that a mindful and reflective relationship with your little person can bring. I find great satisfaction in helping others learn to relate to their little people and loved ones through genuine and honest relationship.

Camille Long

Respectful Parenting Mentor

B.A. (Sociology/Criminal Justice, 2009), RSW Candidate

Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada

Tel: 1-807-620-9021

Email: camille.f.long@gmail.com

Disclaimer

The information provided in this book is based on the research, experience, and opinion of the author, and is not intended as medical or legal advice. The owner of this book accepts no liability. Readers are solely responsible for their own safety and the safety of the little people in their care, and are encouraged to use their best judgement and intuition in using or adapting any of the information provided in this book.

Introduction

Connected.
Gentle.
Positive.
Peaceful.
Strengths-based.
Attached.
Nonviolent.
Unconditional.
Compassionate.
Mindful.
Respectful.

These are all great words. They encompass qualities that every parent desires for their relationship with the little person in their care. *The Worthwhile Endeavor of Becoming A More Mindful Parent* refers to all of these approaches to parenting - bits and pieces of vital information that can help build, strengthen and maintain a healthy and life-long relationship with your little person.

I long to see little people treated as valued members of our society, and treated as equal citizens worthy of respect and unconditional love. I long to support parents as they seek to find healing of their own childhood wounds through counseling, personal reflection and choices made to commit to finding new and healthy ways of parenting and relating to themselves, little people and others. I long to see families strongly connected through mutual respect, and conflicts solved through nonviolent communication. I long to see communities connecting together to support parents of young people and to lift them up as special members of society worthy and deserving of consideration and care. And I long to see the world changed through individuals raised in families who communicate unconditional love and respect to each other, through nonviolent communication and purposeful connection.

I can admit I went a bit crazy with the parenting books when my first little person was born. Over the course of less than four years I accumulated a small library for myself, which has also come in handy for several of my friends! As a new mom, seeking to raise my little people in this confusing and sometimes scary world in a respectful and mindful way, I felt ill-equipped...

Sometimes I still feel ill-equipped, even with all that book-knowledge and now a few parenting years behind me. Who am I to write a book about Mindful and Respectful Parenting anyways? I sometimes still ask myself the same question because I still fail from time to time – every day actually. And yet I feel compelled to continue to spread this Good News – to advocate for babies, little people, parents of young people, and families. I now know that obtaining my Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Criminal Justice was not wasted effort or time, but rather the first steps on my unfinished journey to finding truth in mindful and respectful relating, and my passion to share it with others.

I've volunteered with social programs within the Canadian Criminal Justice System and completed my practicum with a community parole office, working with individuals on parole. I served as a 911 call-taker and dispatcher with two local Canadian police departments over the span of almost five years. Most recently I've worked as a Crisis Response Service Worker with the Canadian Mental Health Association since 2012. In each of these capacities it has been my longing to see lives made whole, people and families reconciled, healed, and reconnected. And yet it wasn't until the birth of my first baby that I finally realized that to have the impact that I've been seeking, for this world as a whole to be restored to the sustainable and peaceful place it was created to be, it is **parents** of babies and young people that need the attention – the information, connection to services and care, access to counseling services to address past hurts, and so on. Additionally, it is **couples who plan to have a baby** that first need to be reached, for it is at the moment of conception that a little person's life takes form. It is from that moment, that little person's life will be impacted for better or for worse.

And so, out of this longing, I give to you a resource. *The Worthwhile Endeavor of Becoming A More Mindful Parent* is meant to be a door into the refreshing and glorious parenting paradigm of Mindful, Gentle, and Respectful Parenting Practices. On each page you will find a common parenting concept with a short and to-the-point outline of that concept from the Mindful Parent's Perspective. You will also see a picture (or visualization, for those who learn best that way) with some statements to specifically use in certain situations, or brief explanations of what might be happening for that little person in that moment.

For those already practicing Mindful and Respectful Parenting, these pages will serve as a gentle reminder, to ground or center your mind on what is most important – your relationship with the little person in your care – and to

encourage you to keep working towards your long-term goals, without reaching for potentially devastating short-term fixes.

For those of you who are seeking for a better way of doing things, a way that lines up with what “feels right” inside you, who wish to escape the methods of control and manipulation that permeate the ruling parenting culture of our day – Welcome. *The Worthwhile Endeavor of Becoming A More Mindful Parent* is a pursuit... a journey – one that is well worth your time and effort. Nonviolent communicating does not just happen overnight. It is a process that requires constant conscious effort, thought, encouragement, commitment, self-restraint, patience, and practice. I applaud you for picking up this resource. May the things you read resonate in your heart, body, mind and soul to be true. For you, I have added a Recommended Reading section at the back of this book. I have not been paid to endorse any of them. I found each one of them invaluable in my pursuit of Mindful and Respectful Parenting, and I’m sure you will too.

Thank you.

CONCEPT 1

The Child as a Whole, Competent and Able Being

In Western society children are generally viewed as inferior to adults, needing to be controlled.

When do we decide that children no longer need to be controlled?

How do we decide at what age a person no longer requires controlling?

Is it our right to decide these things?

Is it possible that all people are equally deserving of respectful relationship, no matter their age?

Non-power methods of parenting are more effective and enjoyable in the long-term than methods in which adults assert power over children, just as in any other relationship we have (i.e. husband and wife, between friends, etc.).

Relationships in which mutual agreements are made to determine acceptable behaviours are much more pleasant, fulfilling, and long-lasting than those in which there is an imbalance of power (i.e. traditional Western parent-child relationships, employees and employers, teachers and students, etc).

Children and teens don't rebel against parents; but rather against parents' use of power over them in an effort to control them.

In our society, even the word "child" can carry with it an oppressive weight of inferiority. It is for this reason that many of the references to "children" in this book have been replaced with the words "little people."

Parenting from Conception

When a little person is conceived an amazing thing happens – suddenly your life is no longer just about you! Your body, time, thoughts, emotions – every facet of your being is touched by the idea and reality of two cells that managed to meet and merge inside your body. At conception, your journey of parenthood has begun.

All humans are created equal – that is, no matter the age, human beings are worthy of being treated with dignity and respect. This treatment begins in the womb, and continues on in the birthing experience of both the mother and the baby. So often the baby's experience is not even considered in the Western birthing room. Doctors prescribe medications to women, and routinely conduct interventions that can have an enormous impact on both the labouring mother and the infant being born. Babies need to be considered in our decisions about birth because their first moments coming from womb to world matter.

Women should be informed about the options available to them in labour, and the associated risks, as they prepare for birth. When women are able to make informed decisions and give informed consent during their birthing experiences, it is far less likely that they will be left feeling dissatisfied or regretful about the decisions they make during labour. A feeling of being in control will contribute to a more satisfying birthing experience.



Readiness

Little People are born ready. The newborn infant roots for milk at her mother's breast because that is what she must do. When she's ready to sit, walk, and jump – she will! And she doesn't need the help of props or toys to get there! In fact, many of those can even have negative consequences on a small developing body.

With trust in a little person's abilities to do what they are ready to do when they are ready, a parent can observe and see what interests him. When needed, parents can offer help in order to develop a secure and confident sense of self within the little one. This further develops a deeper appreciation, understanding and respect for the person as a competent, whole, and separate being. When given time, babies will communicate their needs rather clearly. It is up to the parent to learn their ways of communicating, listen sensitively, and respond faithfully.

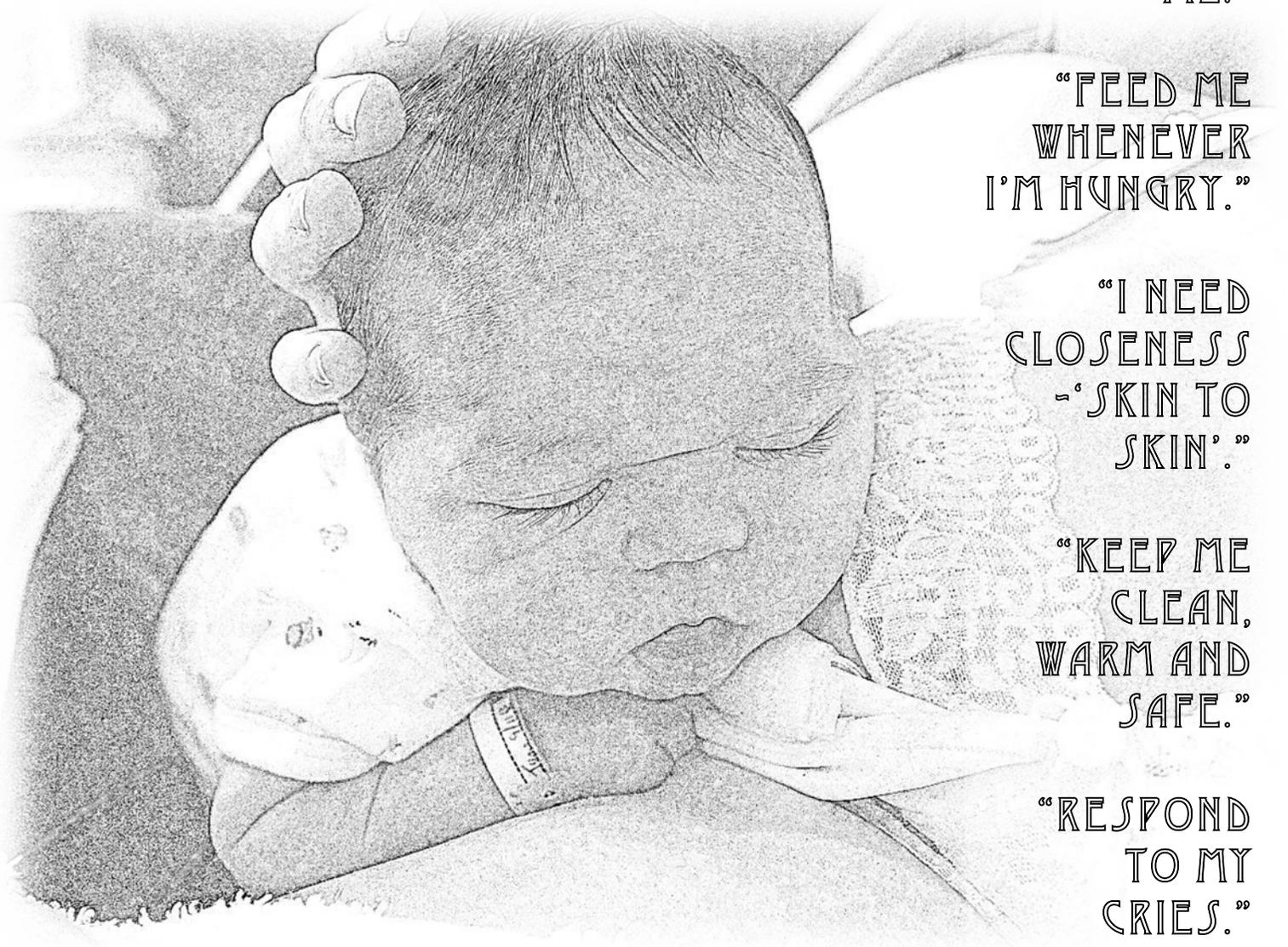
“TALK AND
SING TO
ME.”

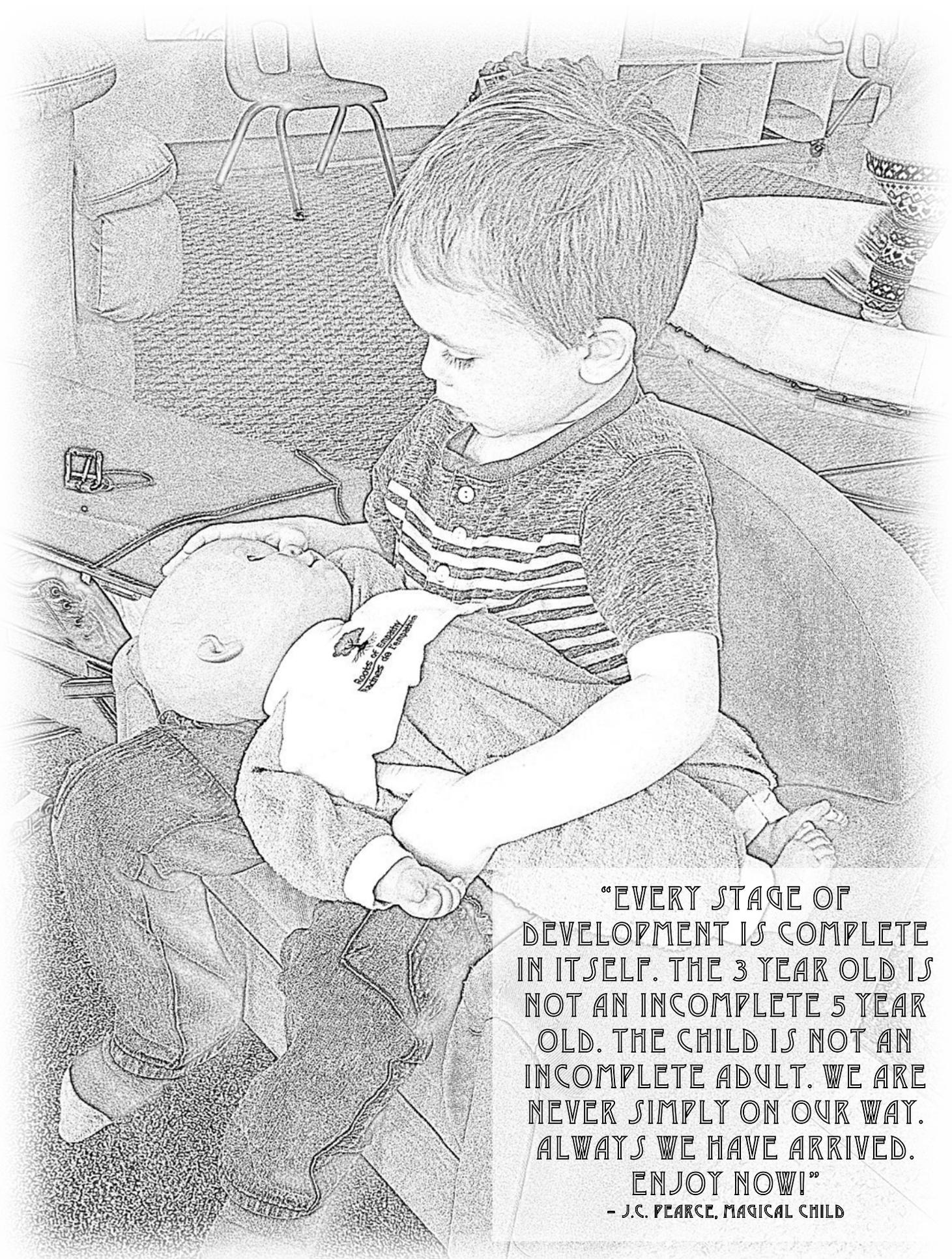
“FEED ME
WHENEVER
I'M HUNGRY.”

“I NEED
CLOSENESS
-‘SKIN TO
SKIN’.”

“KEEP ME
CLEAN,
WARM AND
SAFE.”

“RESPOND
TO MY
CRIES.”





“EVERY STAGE OF
DEVELOPMENT IS COMPLETE
IN ITSELF. THE 3 YEAR OLD IS
NOT AN INCOMPLETE 5 YEAR
OLD. THE CHILD IS NOT AN
INCOMPLETE ADULT. WE ARE
NEVER SIMPLY ON OUR WAY.
ALWAYS WE HAVE ARRIVED.
ENJOY NOW!”

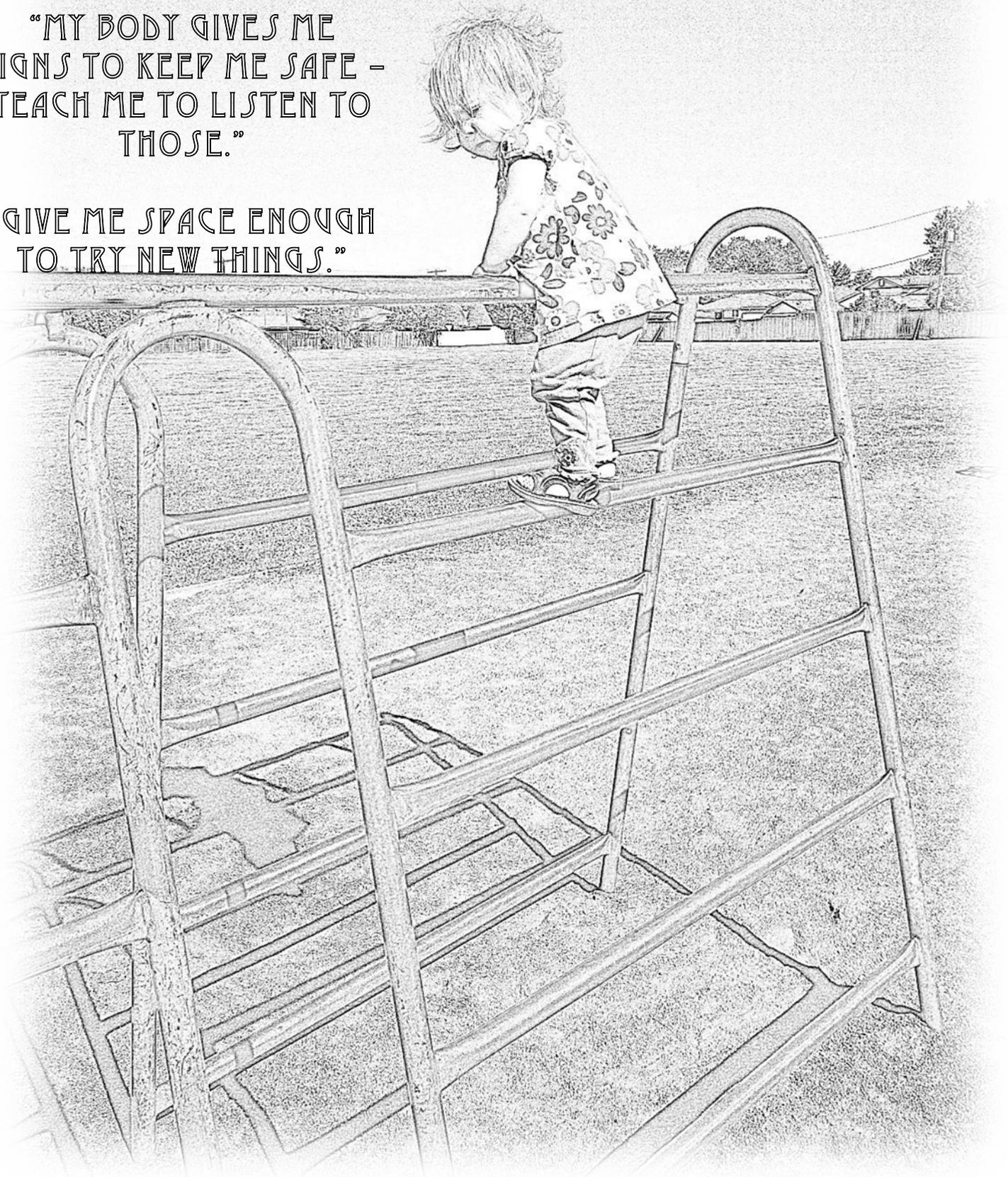
- J.C. PEARCE, MAGICAL CHILD

"I AM CAPABLE!"

"I AM STRONG!"

"MY BODY GIVES ME
SIGNS TO KEEP ME SAFE -
TEACH ME TO LISTEN TO
THOSE."

"GIVE ME SPACE ENOUGH
TO TRY NEW THINGS."



CONCEPT 2

Emotions

November 23, 2015

The worst part about my morning led to the best part... For a three-minute lapse in brain function I got a \$15 parking ticket. As soon as I realized my parking meter had lapsed, I ran back to the car, but it was too late. I got into my car and started driving, at first feeling angry, and then so sad that I wanted to cry.

So I did.

From the back seat my two-year-old angel Raijah pipes up, "Mama sad?"

I looked back with a tear on my cheek and said, "Yes."

Then she gave me the sweetest, most genuine empathetic look and said,

"It's OK to be sad mommy. It's OK to cry. Don't worry."

I felt much better after that.

Crying in Your Loving Arms

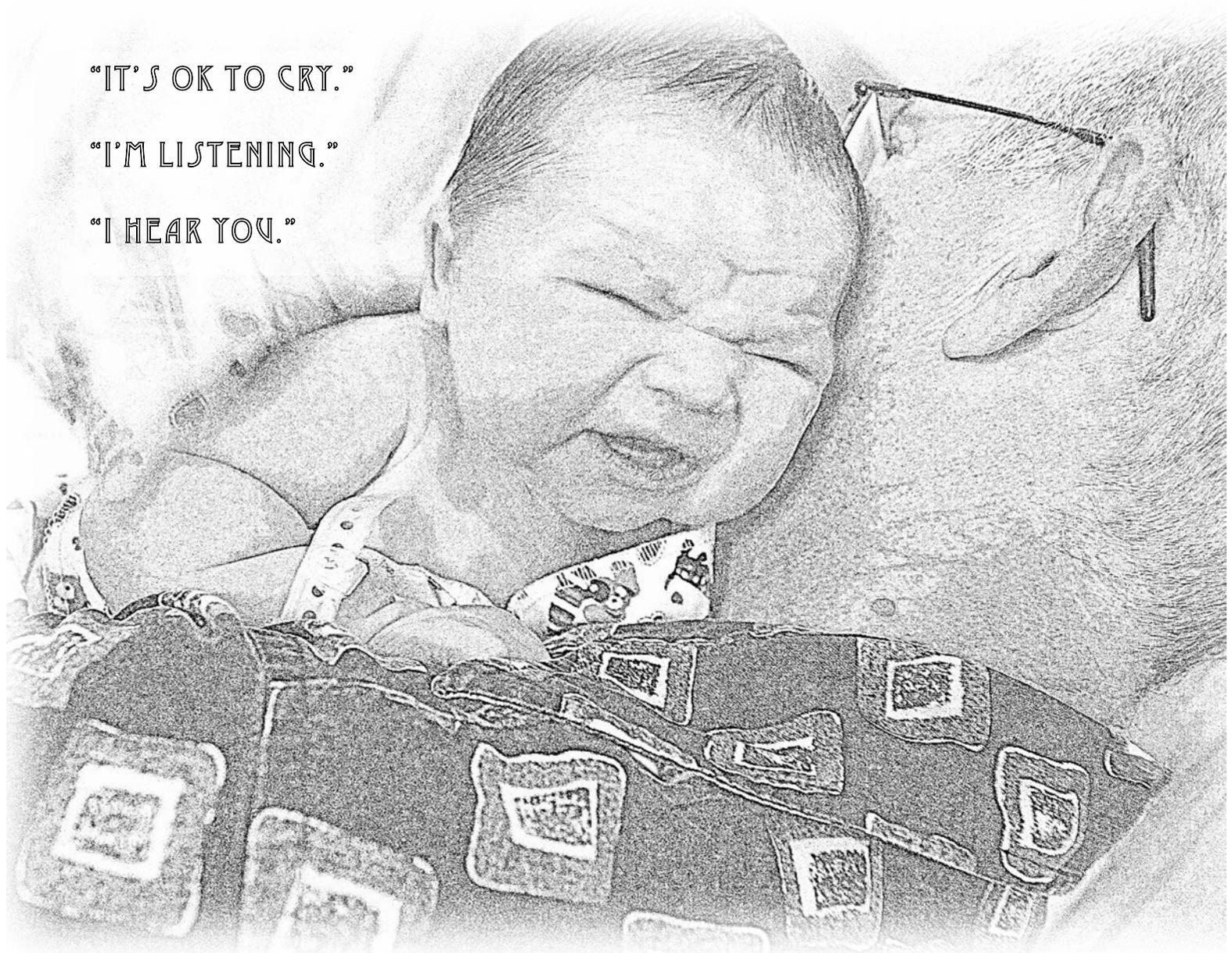
It's hard to be comfortable when a baby is crying. It's only natural to want to find the source and make the little person happy. But what about when all needs are met? The baby's fed and is clean and comfortable – yet the tears continue!

Just like adults, babies sometimes just aren't happy. Why not be the safe container for your little one's tears – accepting them with empathy, and allowing those difficult feelings to be expressed in the safety of your loving arms? These are incredible opportunities for connection and validation.

“IT'S OK TO CRY.”

“I'M LISTENING.”

“I HEAR YOU.”



“CRYING IS THE HEALING, NOT THE HURTING.” - PAM LEO, CONNECTION PARENTING

Crying is Communicating

The way we communicate with others is one of the most important factors in determining the health of our relationships. Communication happens in many ways – through words both spoken and unspoken, vocal tone, body language, facial expressions, eye contact or lack thereof, etc.

For infants, the youngest members of our society, the main effective mode of communication is crying. Often we forget that for a baby, crying is simply communicating a need. Instead of trying to discern the message by sensitively observing what our little person is trying to say or show us, so often we try anything and everything to just stop the crying! We shush, jiggle, rock, play music, drive, plug mouths with pacifiers... We grow anxious, weary, annoyed, frustrated, blame ourselves, blame others!

“WAIT AND OBSERVE.”

- MAGDA GERBER

By waiting and watching it can become obvious fairly quickly what the infant wants or needs. This pause will show your baby respect as another person who is trying to communicate with you – just as you would wait until you understood a friend's request for help before responding, without interrupting them. It also gives you a chance to collect yourself, breathe, and slow down. Babies' needs are so varied. By first observing and then responding, you will see your baby in a new light. You will get to know him so much more intimately as a human who is capable of communicating his needs to you. You will quickly learn that your baby is not merely a helpless infant, or a manipulative toddler, but rather a fully competent, yet dependent human being, needing to be heard and responded to.



Avoiding Stuck Feelings

It can be tough to accept the emotions of others at times. Heck, most of us have a hard enough time acknowledging and allowing our own emotions. When it comes to little people, the topic of emotions isn't discussed all that much... at least in a positive way. We hear about the "terrible two's," then we hear about how it should actually be called the "terrible three's"... We hear about the "colicky babies" and we hear about the "good babies" who don't give their mamas any grief.

And yet for healthy emotional, mental, and physical development, the experience and expression of a wide range of emotions is necessary in childhood! When a little person's strong emotions are not lovingly accepted and validated, they can then be repressed, and that person can become stuck on an issue, unable to properly process and move beyond it in understanding and acceptance.

To help young people understand loving limits, a parent must accept her tears and difficult emotions, all the while helping to provide a safe outlet for any energy that she may need to expel (i.e. jumping up and down instead of hitting someone).

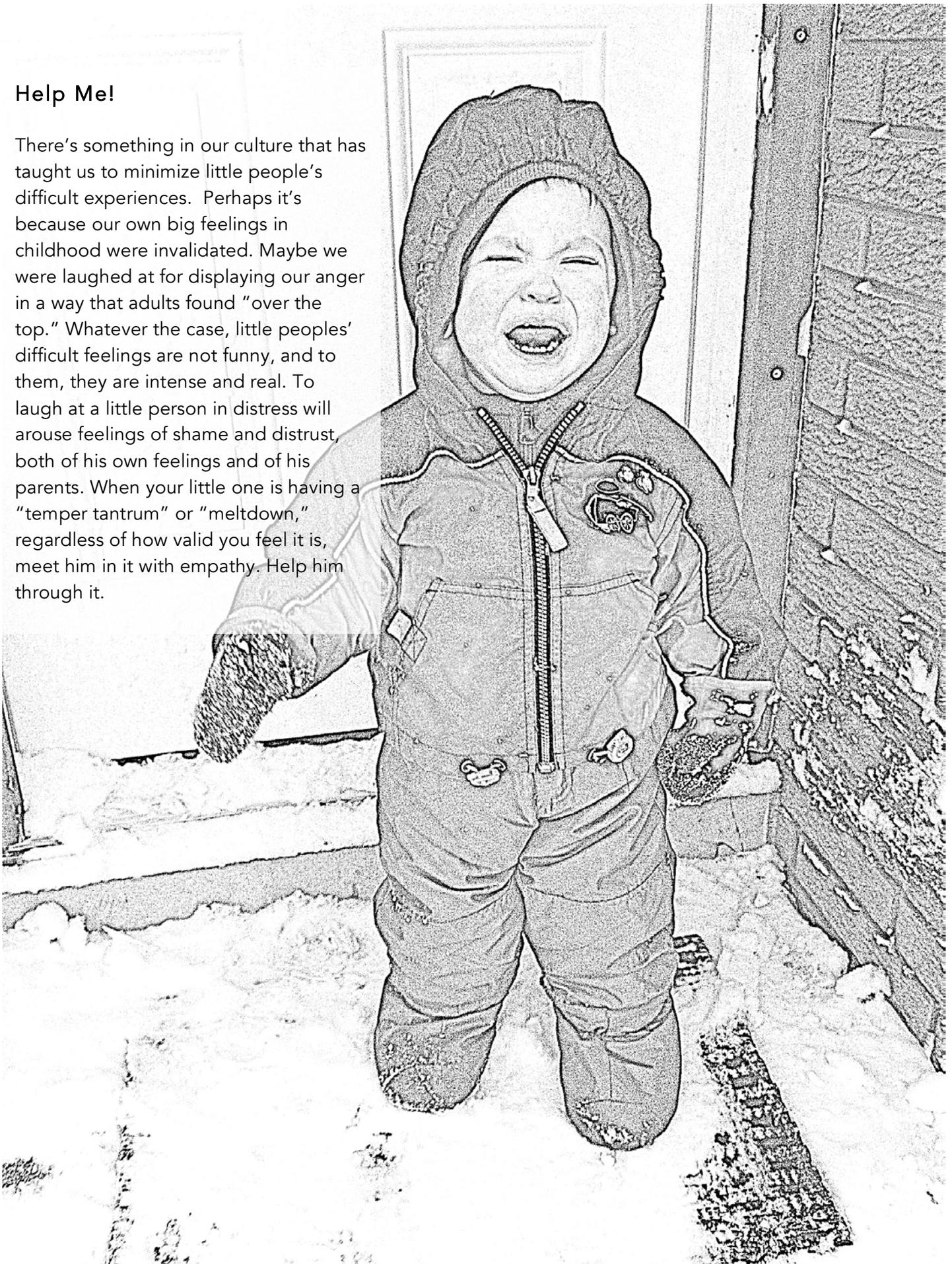
"When the 'bitter' tears of futility are shed, the brain has accepted the irreversibility of a frustrating situation, and the body relaxes. For us as parents it is hard to accept, that we cause sorrow for our children, but they can handle the situation much better if they are allowed to cry in our arms instead of bravely swallowing their tears down and pretending to be happy to avoid sad or angry reactions from Mom or Dad."

– Dagmar Neubronner,
<http://neufeldinstitute.com/blog/>



Help Me!

There's something in our culture that has taught us to minimize little people's difficult experiences. Perhaps it's because our own big feelings in childhood were invalidated. Maybe we were laughed at for displaying our anger in a way that adults found "over the top." Whatever the case, little peoples' difficult feelings are not funny, and to them, they are intense and real. To laugh at a little person in distress will arouse feelings of shame and distrust, both of his own feelings and of his parents. When your little one is having a "temper tantrum" or "meltdown," regardless of how valid you feel it is, meet him in it with empathy. Help him through it.



Modeling Empathy

It's amazing how intertwined the relationship between the way we communicate acceptance and unconditional love to our little people in their difficult emotional experiences and how we live our lives becomes. All of the sudden, instead of finding a fixed set of rules or parenting strategies to follow, it becomes clear that Gentle Parenting Practices are much more than that.

Gentle, Respectful, Positive Parenting is an attitude and a way of living that must encompass a person's entire life, involving not only the parent-offspring relationship, but also every other relationship. Modeling or teaching empathy by a daily lived out example is by far the most effective way to ensure that your little person will one day express empathy to others.

"I'VE GOT YOU."

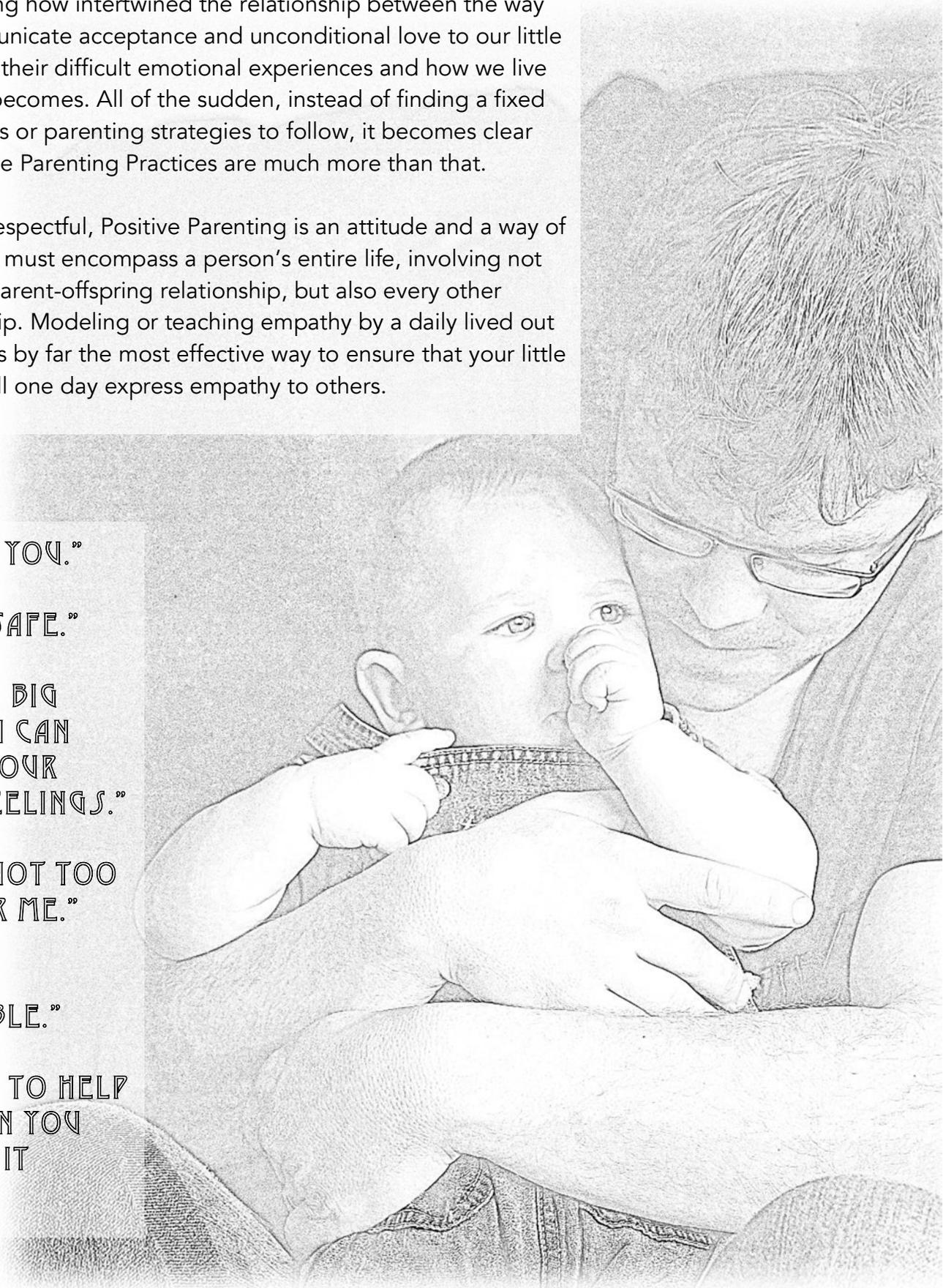
"YOU'RE SAFE."

"THAT'S A BIG
FEELING. I CAN
HANDLE YOUR
TOUGH FEELINGS."

"YOU'RE NOT TOO
MUCH FOR ME."

"YOU ARE
ACCEPTABLE."

"I'M HERE TO HELP
YOU, WHEN YOU
CAN'T DO IT
ALONE."



“LOVE ME MOST WHEN I SEEM
THE LEAST LOVEABLE.”

Time-In to Calm Down

The last thing a little person needs is to be isolated in a time-out when feeling overwhelmed by big feelings. Instead, when a parent can sit and spend time-in with him to help facilitate healthy calming skills, a safe place is created. That parent immediately communicates to him that she can handle the tough emotions that seem to be so big for him. Parents need to rise above the intense anger or frustration that their little one is exhibiting, and accept it without judgment, while directing him to express it in healthy ways (i.e. hit a pillow instead of a person). Once he has experienced the fullness of his emotion, he will come to rest in the arms of the parent whom he may have just whole-heartedly resisted, and yet sat there listening and expressing empathy, validation, and understanding when he needed it most.

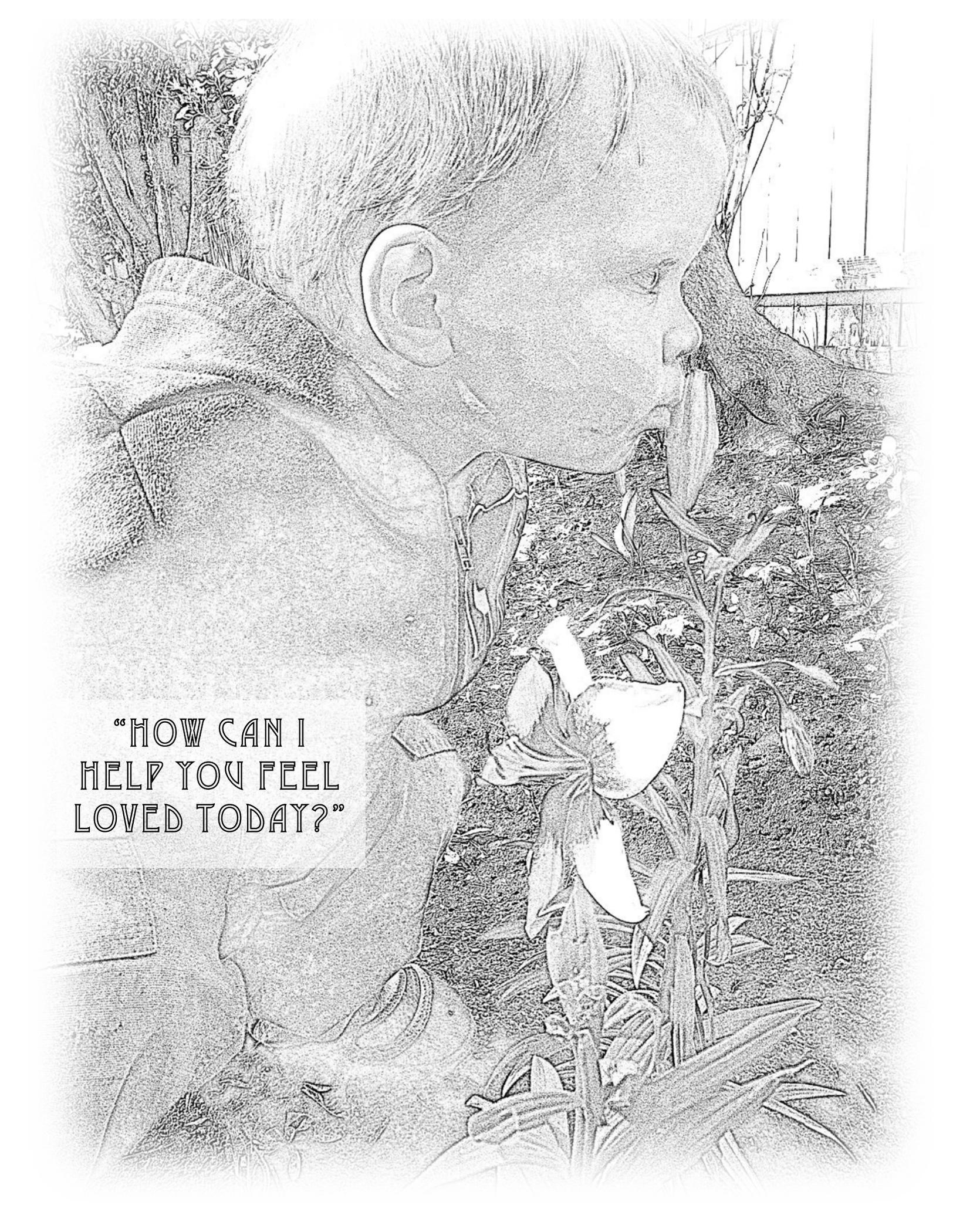
Just because a time-out may seem to “work” (in the short-term) doesn’t mean that it should be used. If an individual feels isolated he may become more compliant, but at what cost? The feelings remain – but are repressed, and added to the mix are other feelings like shame, guilt, insecurity, and anger. Time-outs ultimately teach kids to watch out for themselves rather than develop empathy and problem solving skills. They also learn to see your love as conditional.

If you sense your little one could benefit from some time alone to calm down, be sure to let them know that they can come out whenever they are ready, and that they are loved – that you are not simply putting them away or punishing them, but that you recognize that they need space, and are able to offer it to them. Always follow-up afterwards.

“MY FEELINGS ARE
REAL TO ME.”

“I NEED YOU TO LISTEN
TO ME.”

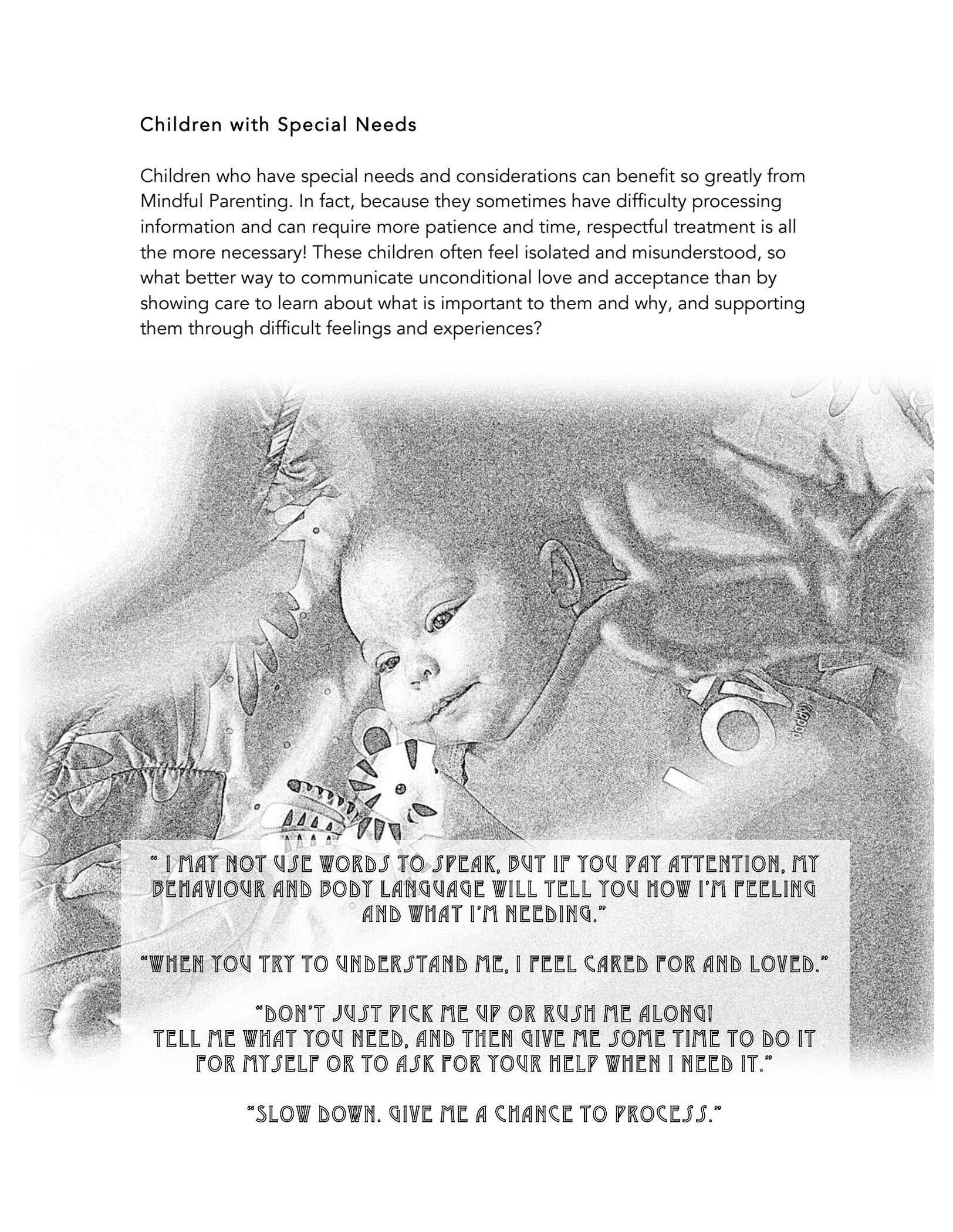




“HOW CAN I
HELP YOU FEEL
LOVED TODAY?”

Children with Special Needs

Children who have special needs and considerations can benefit so greatly from Mindful Parenting. In fact, because they sometimes have difficulty processing information and can require more patience and time, respectful treatment is all the more necessary! These children often feel isolated and misunderstood, so what better way to communicate unconditional love and acceptance than by showing care to learn about what is important to them and why, and supporting them through difficult feelings and experiences?

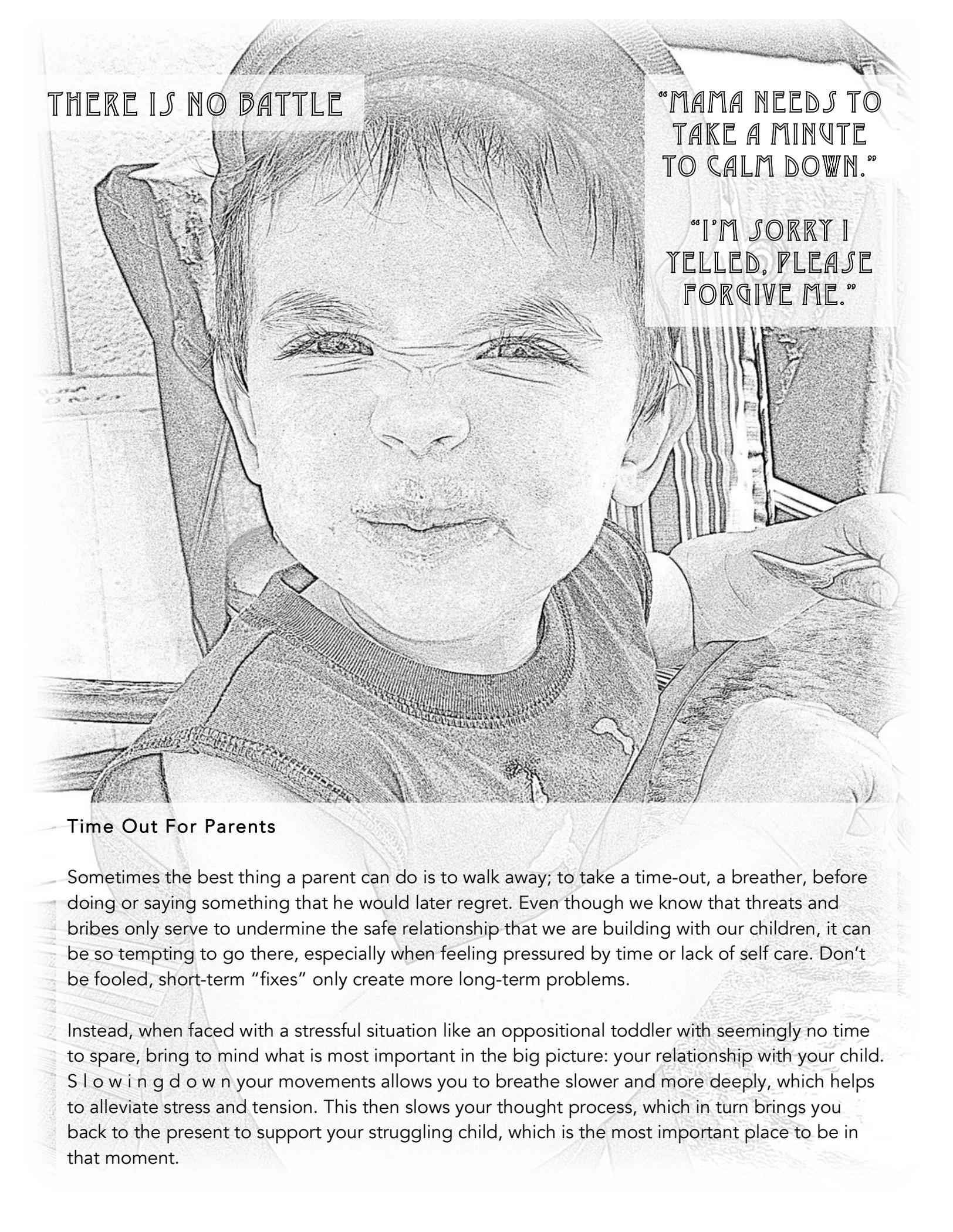


“ I MAY NOT USE WORDS TO SPEAK, BUT IF YOU PAY ATTENTION, MY BEHAVIOUR AND BODY LANGUAGE WILL TELL YOU HOW I’M FEELING AND WHAT I’M NEEDING.”

“WHEN YOU TRY TO UNDERSTAND ME, I FEEL CARED FOR AND LOVED.”

“DON’T JUST PICK ME UP OR RUSH ME ALONG!
TELL ME WHAT YOU NEED, AND THEN GIVE ME SOME TIME TO DO IT
FOR MYSELF OR TO ASK FOR YOUR HELP WHEN I NEED IT.”

“SLOW DOWN. GIVE ME A CHANCE TO PROCESS.”



THERE IS NO BATTLE

“MAMA NEEDS TO
TAKE A MINUTE
TO CALM DOWN.”

“I’M SORRY I
YELLED, PLEASE
FORGIVE ME.”

Time Out For Parents

Sometimes the best thing a parent can do is to walk away; to take a time-out, a breather, before doing or saying something that he would later regret. Even though we know that threats and bribes only serve to undermine the safe relationship that we are building with our children, it can be so tempting to go there, especially when feeling pressured by time or lack of self care. Don’t be fooled, short-term “fixes” only create more long-term problems.

Instead, when faced with a stressful situation like an oppositional toddler with seemingly no time to spare, bring to mind what is most important in the big picture: your relationship with your child. S l o w i n g d o w n your movements allows you to breathe slower and more deeply, which helps to alleviate stress and tension. This then slows your thought process, which in turn brings you back to the present to support your struggling child, which is the most important place to be in that moment.

CONCEPT 3

Connecting Moments

April 18, 2013 – 0300 hours

Ezekiel wakes up crying... I go to his room, "What's wrong Ezekiel? What do you want?"

Ezekiel softly replies, "I want to cuddle you."

Crying ceases, cuddles take over...



Moments of Connection

So much of the time with your little one is spent changing diapers and clothes, feeding, moving to a different room or driving in the car. These moments can become rather mundane times that just have to get done, and are often rushed through to get onto the next event.

Slowing down, practicing presence, and including baby in these “together times” can really help to build your relationship. Telling your baby, for example, that you are going to lift up her bum to put on a clean diaper before actually doing it, can prepare her for what is going to happen to her. It communicates respect to her, as you await her subtle, yet very real, *response of readiness*. As an added perk, talking with your baby can also serve to widen her vocabulary and her understanding of cause and effect. The same goes for offering food during mealtimes, washing her in the bath, offering cuddles or to carry her, and so on.

Breastfeeding and Bottle

Do what you need to do! Feed your baby! Don't worry about what others think! Whether you feed your baby with your breast or with a bottle is a personal choice, and all that really matters is that your child is being nurtured both physically and emotionally as you spend this special time together. Put the phone away. Turn the TV off. Look into each other's eyes and savour the moment.



Supporting Little People Through New Experiences

When supporting a little person through a new experience like a trip to the doctor or the dentist it can sometimes feel like you're walking a fine line. Western society tells us to "suck it up," and that it's "no big deal," so we feel an urge to push them towards independence and can feel embarrassed at the strong display of emotions that can follow. To respectfully support individuals through such an event though, looks very different. Parents can encourage little people to talk about their fears, accept their tears in a close embrace, without brushing them off by saying "it's ok." Rather than rush through the process, parents can coach their little one through the procedure by telling them what is going to happen to them, before it's actually done. While more time and patience is required, the result is a less anxious person who feels supported and accepted.



"HOLD MY HAND AND
STAY CLOSE BY."

"SLOW DOWN SO
THAT I CAN PROCESS
WHAT YOU'RE
TELLING ME."

"WHEN YOU TELL ME
THAT 'IT'S OK TO CRY'
I DON'T FEEL AS
EMBARRASSED."

"I FEEL SAFER WHEN
YOU TELL ME WHAT IS
GOING TO HAPPEN
BEFORE IT ACTUALLY
DOES."

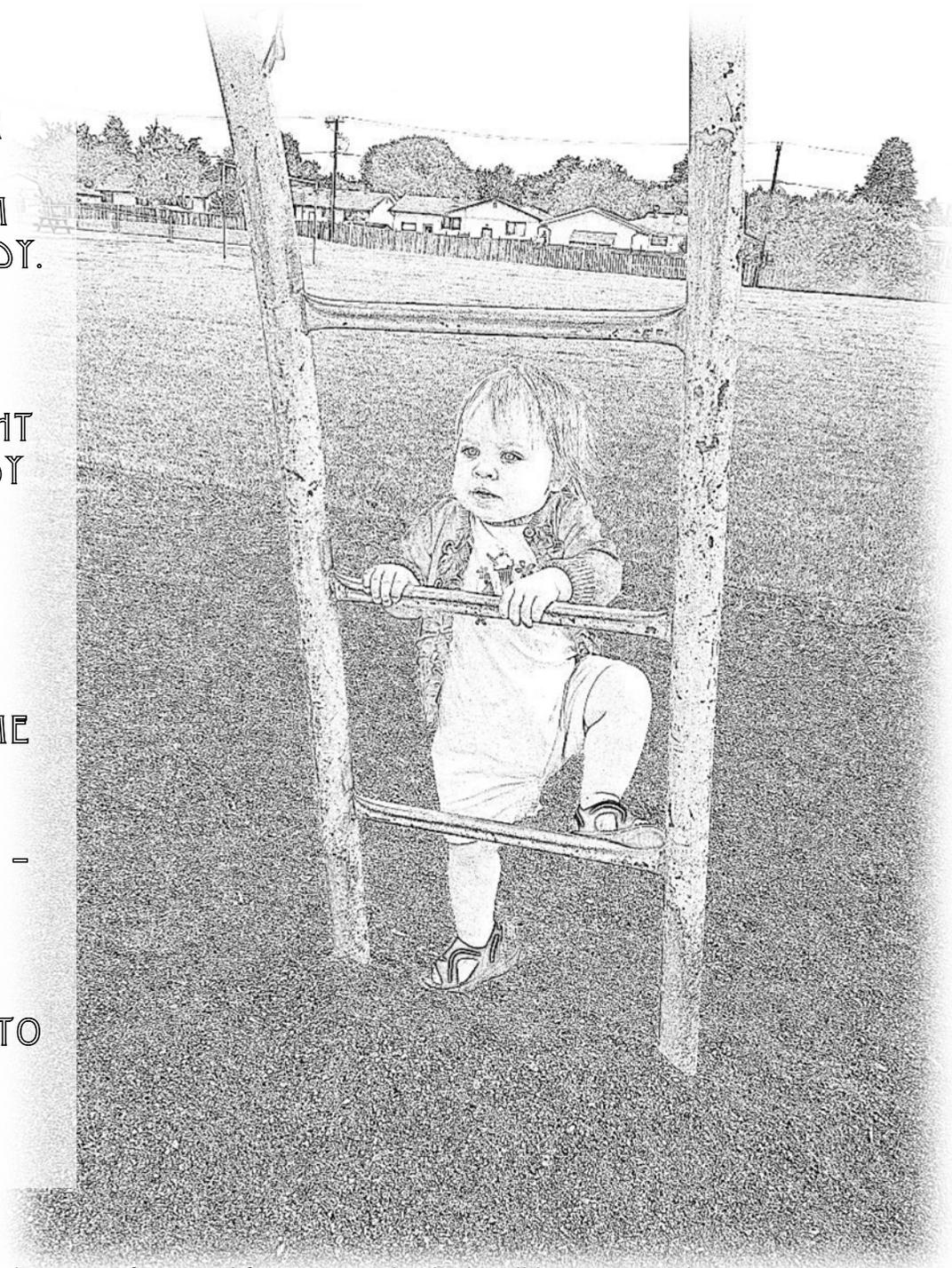
"I FEEL LOVED WHEN
YOU ACCEPT MY
TEARS."

“JUST BECAUSE I’M INTERESTED, DOES NOT MEAN THAT I’M EMOTIONALLY READY. DON’T PUSH ME.”

“I CAN’T HOLD MY BLADDER OVERNIGHT BY CHOICE. MY BODY WILL LEARN TO DO THIS WHEN I’M PHYSICALLY READY TO.”

“DON’T COMPARE ME TO OTHER KIDS.”

“GIVE ME A CHOICE – SOME DAYS I’M UP FOR THE POTTY CHALLENGE, SOME DAYS I JUST WANT TO FEEL SAFE WITH A DIAPER ON.”



Potty Learning

Naturally, between the ages of two and four most individuals will learn to use the potty because they become more aware of their body’s need to eliminate and the ability to control this, and less comfortable with a diaper being next to their body. Some little people take longer than others – they may be busy mastering other skills, and that’s OK! Allow your little one to lead the process, even if it means letting her run around without pants on when she’s home, and even if it takes longer than you’d like. By partnering with your little person’s intrinsic desire to learn and be autonomous, rather than relying on incentives, you will avoid power struggles, and foster a strong sense of self-confidence when your little one accomplishes this normal human bodily function at a time that she decides!

CONCEPT 4

Authoritative Parenting and Loving Limits

*It's OK to say "No" to your little person.
Actually, it's imperative that you do sometimes.
Yes, limit your "no's", but certainly don't be afraid of the word.*

Authoritative Parenting... The Third Way

Parents often swing between the two extremes of being too strict (a.k.a. Authoritarian Parenting) and too permissive (a.k.a. Permissiveness). Those who don't understand what Respectful Parenting is, often assume that it is permissive as well. In reality, Respectful Parenting is anything but lenient. It is rather, a third way of doing things, known as Authoritative. Authoritative Parents recognize that both parents and little people have desires and needs, and that a balance is required, but not at the cost of one or the other. In this democratic approach, parents elicit ideas from and problem solve in collaboration with their little ones. Little peoples' ideas are valued and prove an added resource that allow for more cohesion within a family unit. No longer is it "Do as I say," or "Do whatever you want," but rather, "let's find a way to make this work for all us?"

"YOU WANT TO
PAINT, BUT I'M
WORRIED THE HOUSE
WILL GET MESSY
LIKE LAST TIME. HOW
CAN WE SOLVE THIS
PROBLEM?"

GREAT IDEA!

WE COULD PUT A
PLASTIC SHEET ON
THE FLOOR.

CAN I HAVE YOUR
AGREEMENT TO KEEP
THE PAINT IN THIS
AREA?

SOUNDS GOOD. LET
ME KNOW WHEN YOU
ARE DONE AND I CAN
HELP YOU GET
CLEANED UP!"



Setting Loving Limits

To protect your little one, other little people, yourself, and even your marriage, loving limits are an essential tool for any relationship, and especially the parent-offspring relationship. The fact is that little one's crave limits. Without clear and confident boundaries set early on, individuals can feel insecure and push your buttons or seem to "test" you until that need gets met.

Loving limits create a safety net around little people that allow trust and freedom in play, within those limits, allowing you the parent, more freedom in the long-run. While establishing a limit can initially take some time, the investment pays off later in both mutual trust and respect, as well as a little person's ability to maintain safe independent play. Settling and maintaining limits requires a parent's willingness to take the time to practice presence, to connect, and meet with a little person's difficult emotional reaction empathetically, all the while maintaining the limit.

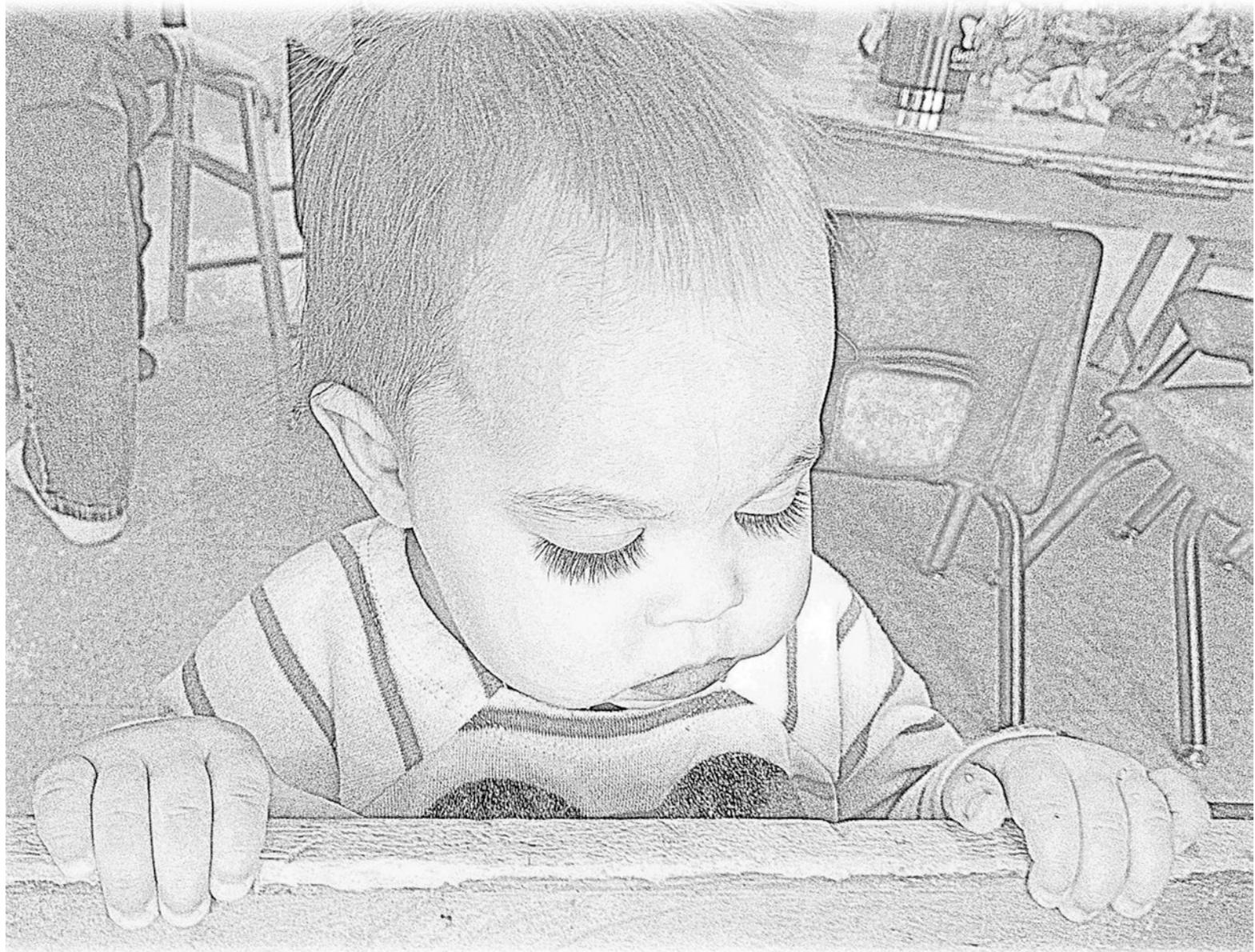
When enforcing a limit, focus on the behaviour rather than the little person, to avoid shaming and identifying himself as a "bad" person. All emotions are acceptable; it is the way that they are expressed that sometimes needs an adult's guidance.



"YOU REALLY WANT TO ROLL OFF THE COUCH, BUT DADDY SAID 'NO.'"

"YOU LOOK ANGRY, BUT I WON'T LET YOU HIT. PEOPLE ARE NOT FOR HITTING."

"YOU LOOK LIKE YOU NEED MY HELP TO STOP."



“TO ‘TAKE KIDS SERIOUSLY’ IS TO SEE THEM AS PEOPLE WITH DISTINCTIVE POINTS OF VIEW. TO ‘TALK LESS, ASK MORE’ IS A WAY TO LEARN ABOUT HOW THEY SEE THINGS. AND ONCE WE DO SO, ONCE WE REALIZE WHAT WE’RE DEMANDING MAY SEEM A LOT LESS REASONABLE FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE, WE MAY NEED TO ‘RETHINK OUR REQUESTS’ RATHER THAN JUST TRYING TO ENFORCE THEM.”

- ALFIE KOHN, UNCONDITIONAL PARENTING

Communicating Nonviolently – Prevention

When your little person does something that interferes with your needs, you have a problem! Dr. Thomas Gordon, author of Parent Effectiveness Training, suggests using a three-part message called an I-Message to communicate your needs to him, rather than just demanding that he do what you say. This type of nonviolent communication fosters empathy and positive communication skills. An I-Message requires that you first state the behaviour that is bothering you (without judgment, so just say what you see), followed by the feelings that you become aware of within yourself, and finally the effect that it is having on you. This can be followed by a simple request.

"WHEN YOU LEAVE
THE TABLE WITHOUT
WASHING YOUR
HANDS AFTER EATING
YOUR PANCAKES
(OBSERVATION),

I WORRY THAT THE
FURNITURE WILL GET
STICKY (FEELING),

AND THEN I'LL HAVE
TO CLEAN IT UP
(EFFECT ON ME).

PLEASE USE THIS
CLOTH TO WIPE YOUR
HANDS WHEN YOU'RE
ALL DONE
(REQUEST)."



Acknowledgement

Sometimes we project our worries onto our little ones, doling out admonitions like “be gentle!” or “be careful” as a means of prevention. When necessary, it can be more helpful to mention the danger in the environment that you are afraid of; an important piece of information that the individual can use to determine how to behave such as, “Those monkey bars are slippery (observation). I’m worried you may slip if you don’t get a firm grip (feeling and effect). Try to grasp it firmly before you swing (request, if needed).”

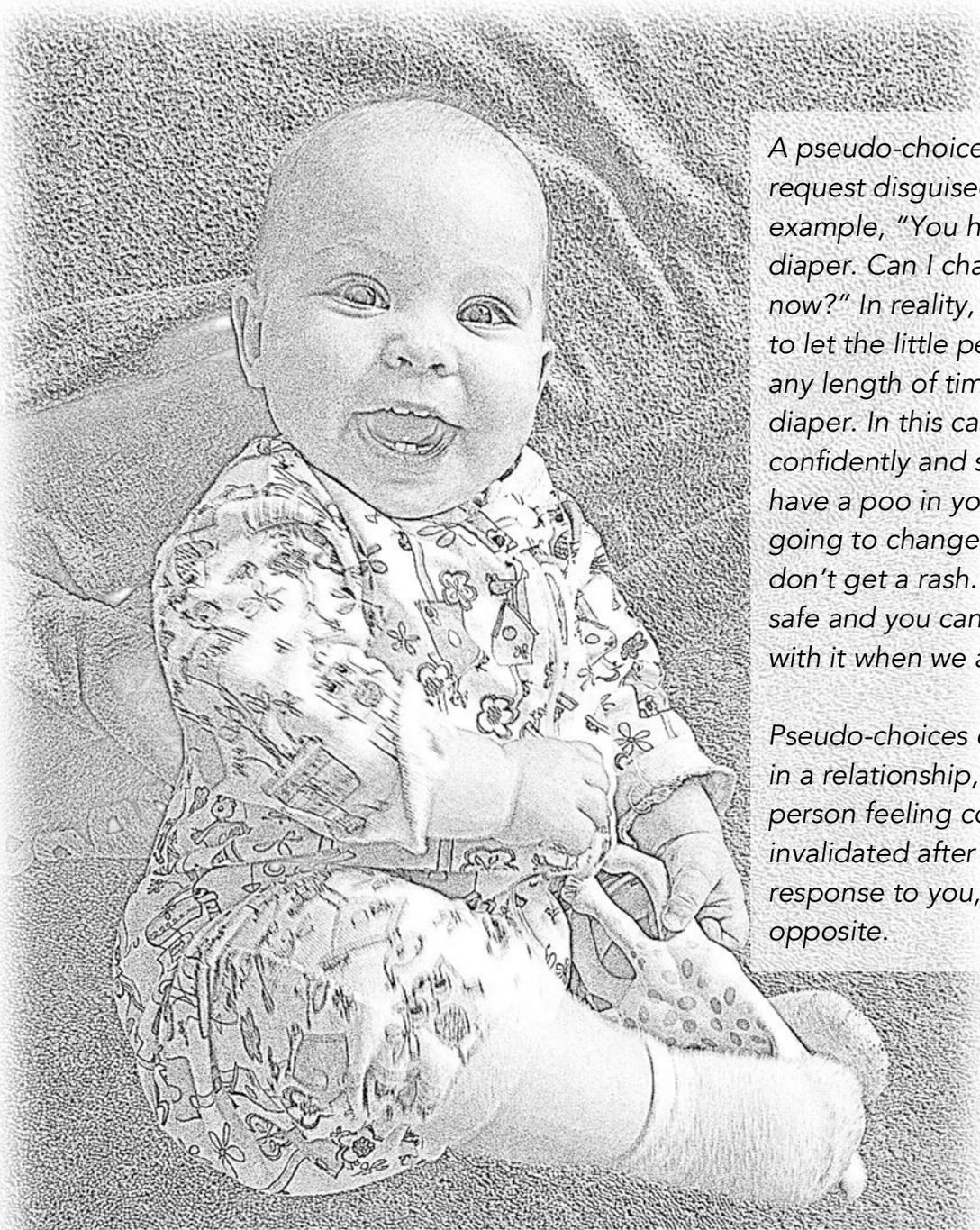
Although prevention is an important goal, constant warnings can sometimes convey a lack of trust or confidence in a person’s abilities. It can be helpful to pay attention to how often you actually say these things. If you notice yourself saying “be careful” a lot, see if you can try to hold back from sending unnecessary preventative warnings, and extend some trust in your little one’s play and abilities by moving in close and just observing. You may be surprised how many times your fears have been unwarranted. Not only that, once your little person’s accomplishes something tricky or difficult without having had your warning, their sense of pride and self confidence shines through. After that you can send a positive I-Message, or acknowledgment, which will further build him up and instill trust and in turn, a sense of self-responsibility and pride!



"WHEN I SAW YOU
TICKLE YOUR
SISTER GENTLY
(OBSERVATION)

I WAS SO HAPPY
(FEELING)

BECAUSE I COULD
SEE THAT SHE
LIKED THAT!
(EFFECT)."



A pseudo-choice is a demand or request disguised as a choice. For example, "You have a poo in your diaper. Can I change your diaper now?" In reality, a parent isn't going to let the little person run around for any length of time with a soiled diaper. In this case, instead of asking, confidently and simply state, "You have a poo in your diaper. I am going to change it now so that you don't get a rash. I'll keep your toy safe and you can continue playing with it when we are done."

Pseudo-choices can lead to distrust in a relationship, and can leave a person feeling controlled or invalidated after having stated their response to you, and you doing the opposite.

Choice

Little people enjoy having a say in what happens to them, just like you do. Something as simple as being allowed to choose between wearing the red hat or the blue hat can often defuse a difficult transition to get out of the house without a tantrum. In so many ways, little people are limited to doing what is required of them or going wherever we need to go. On the other extreme, parents who lean towards permissiveness may give too many choices or allow the little one to call all the shots, which can be too much power for a young person to possess. A healthy balance is needed, and young people still need to know that the parent is a confident leader.

Intrinsic Vs. Extrinsic Motivators

The key to being a respectful parent is keeping your end-goal (your little person as an emotionally healthy adult) in mind whenever possible – practicing mindfulness. This is especially important when it comes to *working with* your little person to solve a problem or to help them to work through a conflict nonviolently. While traditional parenting models focus on addressing and extinguishing “behavioural problems,” Gentle Parenting Approaches focus on the needs that the individual is trying to meet with their behaviour. Inflicting pain or pleasure on a little person with the use of punishments, rewards, bribes and threats (*extrinsic* motivators and reinforcers) will often result in short-term improved behaviour, as these methods appeal to a person’s desire to take care of *themselves*. Note that the change in behaviour has nothing to do with how the other person has been affected. It also reinforces oppression as a means of ruling over others.

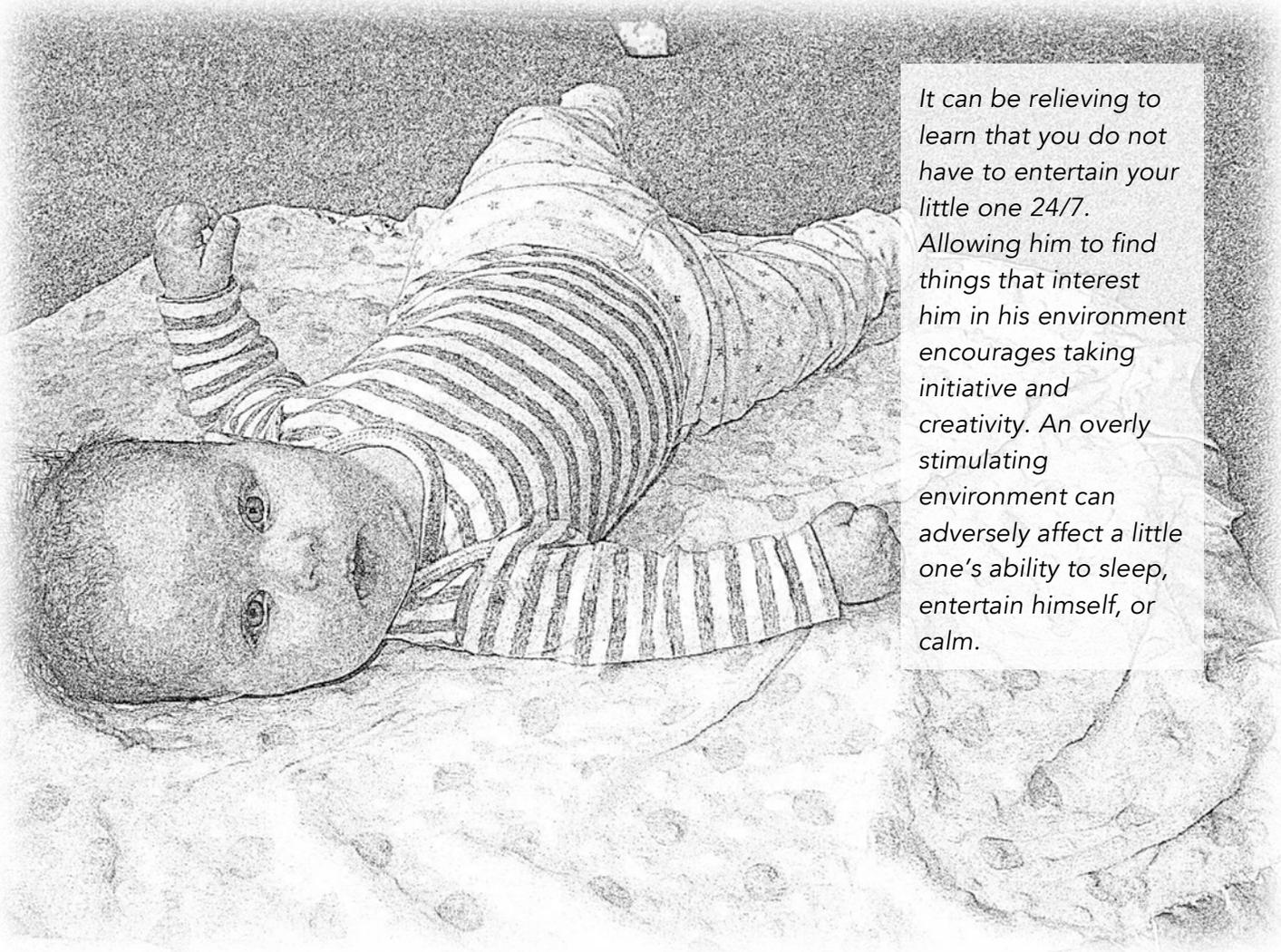


Conversely, Respectful Approaches may not have a short-term solution to the immediate behavioural manifestation of the need the little person is experiencing, aside from what can be explained and modeled to the child. However, by taking the time to understand and meet the need (at the root of the behaviour), you build a bridge of mutual respect between the little one and yourself, and set up healthy patterns of relating and problem solving to continue to build on and use throughout the course of his lifetime. The focus is not placed on “What happens to me if I do this?” but rather, the individual can learn to see and understand what happens to others as a result of her choices and actions.

CONCEPT 5

Environment

*Home should be your little person's "safe place."
You'll get the brunt of her difficult behaviour, crying, and whining
– Because you have the honour of being her "safe person,"
...If you'll accept it.*



It can be relieving to learn that you do not have to entertain your little one 24/7. Allowing him to find things that interest him in his environment encourages taking initiative and creativity. An overly stimulating environment can adversely affect a little one's ability to sleep, entertain himself, or calm.

Stimulation

A little person's environment has all sorts of stimulating qualities that most adults have learned to tune out. As a baby lies across her mother's lap breastfeeding, she's immersed in a highly stimulating environment: the bright glow and low hum of the lights, the background noise of the TV, the dog barking at the back door, the flashing lights and musical jingle on the shiny baby jungle gym on the ground below, the squeal of big brother chasing the cat, the scratchy tag on the neck of her shirt, the sweet, warm milk flowing into her mouth, the smell of her mother's skin... Life outside the womb is sharp and vivid!

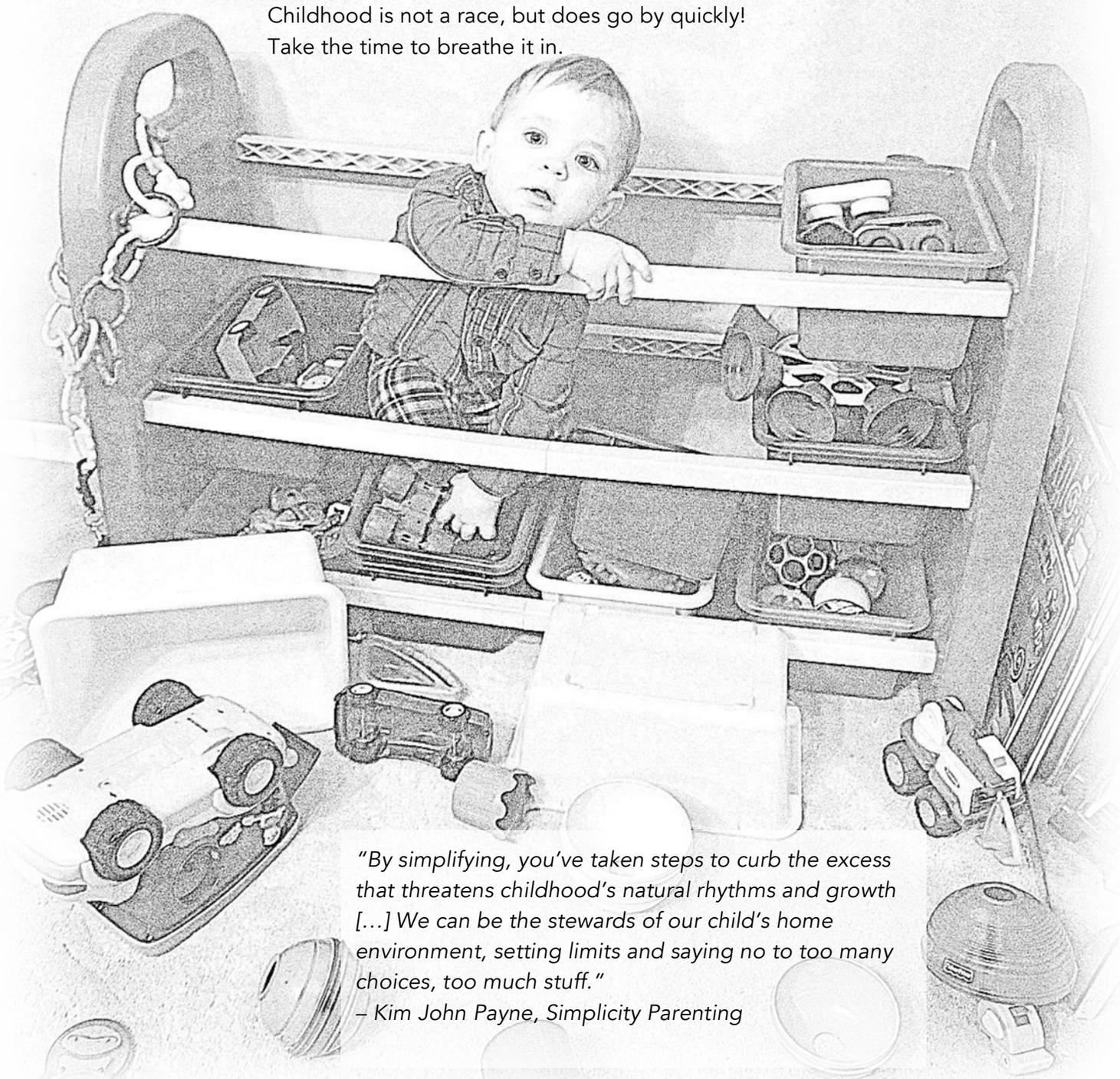
With each holiday most homes get smaller as more toys take up residence, pictures clutter wall space, and there's constant company with the TV or radio on. When considering the level of stimulation in the average Western household, little people generally have way too much input to slow down, reflect, and process daily life in an optimal way.

When simplifying your home, take into consideration the many stimulating sights, sounds, and smells that you don't regularly notice, but are nonetheless there. De-cluttering physical space and reclaiming visual and auditory space will add comfort, peace and space to your home. Both little people and parents benefit from quiet, open spaces that allow for free movement and encourage creativity.

Less is So Much More

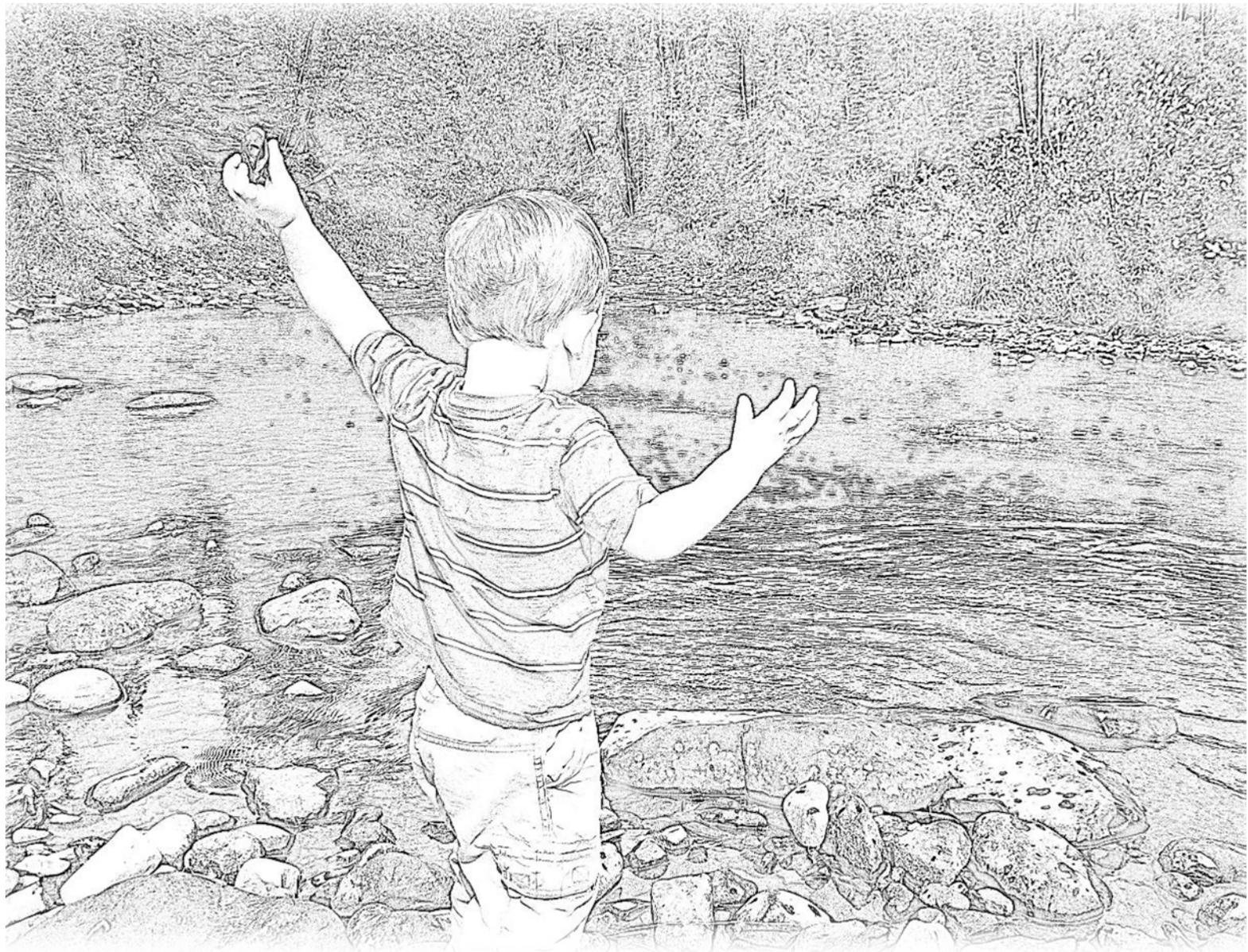
In a culture of “too much stuff” and “not enough time” it’s no wonder we are seeing record rates of depression and discontentment, not to mention the air of entitlement that seems to weigh heavily on families these days. Simplifying is a process that encompasses many aspects of life. It begins in the home with physical “stuff,” and then branches out to address the excess visual and auditory stimulation of the home. Room for free, unstructured, child-led play is prioritized, and the busy schedule that often takes precedence over presence is scaled back with conscious effort.

Childhood is not a race, but does go by quickly!
Take the time to breathe it in.



“By simplifying, you’ve taken steps to curb the excess that threatens childhood’s natural rhythms and growth [...] We can be the stewards of our child’s home environment, setting limits and saying no to too many choices, too much stuff.”

– Kim John Payne, [Simplicity Parenting](#)



“IT FEELS GOOD TO BE OUTSIDE!”

“JUST BECAUSE I LIKE TV, DOESN'T MEAN I SHOULD
WATCH IT A LOT!”

“I LEARN BEST WHEN I'M MOVING AND INTERACTING
WITH MY ENVIRONMENT!”

“LET ME GET WET AND DIRTY SOMETIMES!
IT FEELS GREAT!”

“FRESH AIR HELPS ME SLEEP BETTER AT NIGHT!”

Home is the Safest Place

When little people feel safe, they don't hide who they are or how they're feeling – they let it all out. This is why grandma can drop off your daughter and tell you what an angel she's been, yet ten minutes after grandma leaves, your daughter's throwing a huge fit! If you can, take it as a compliment! Or at the very least, understand that you and your home are your little person's safest place to share her tough feelings with. You are the most accepting, caring, and understanding adult in her life, as long as you choose to accept her intense emotions empathetically and within the boundaries of loving limits for the safety of people and property. The same can be said of the little one who can hold it altogether at school, who is praised as a model student, yet comes home as a ball of anxious or angry energy. Meet his need for calm, quiet, personal space, and move in once he's ready to let you in.



Make your home a safe place for your little person – a place where they can truly be themselves, no matter what feeling they are experiencing. Part of creating a safe place is having those loving limits in place, so that they can count on you to enforce the safety and respectful treatment of everyone in the home. When their feelings are too big for them, rise above it and show them that they are not too much for you to handle. Little people find comfort in your confidence to lead them.

“YOU’RE SAFE.”

“I’M NOT MAD.”

“YOU CAN COME
OUT OF YOUR
ROOM WHEN YOU
FEEL READY.”

CONCEPT 6

Play

October 14, 2013

This morning Ezekiel cuddled next to me and asked, "What can we do today?"

I said, "What do you want to do Ezekiel?"

His reply, "Play!"



"I'LL BE IN
THE GARDEN
IF YOU NEED
ME."

"I LOVE
WATCHING
YOU PLAY."

"I CAN SEE
YOU."

PROTECT PLAY, IT'S PRECIOUS

Free, Unstructured, Child-directed Play

Do you often find that your day is eaten up by driving around town to and from lessons, school, appointments, and gatherings? If you find yourself regularly feeling tired or stressed, you have a choice to make. You can keep running that race, or you can simply slow down or altogether stop the car.

It's time to take back your little person's childhood (and your life)! Little one's need to move, explore their environments, get messy... and they need more space and time to do it in! Remember the good old days playing street hockey or riding your bike around the block? And whatever happened to kids playing in the park for hours on end? I used to be one of those little people, and I bet you did too. It was awesome.



Respecting Play Choices

Buttons and lights are great, but research shows that for optimal growth and development, babies and little people need to move their bodies and interact intimately with their environment, not merely press buttons and watch toys do all the work of moving and creating.

Steer clear of toys marketed as “educational,” and instead, trust your little one’s imagination to naturally blossom and to guide her to learn exactly what she is ready for. Try to respect her space and interests by observing, and moving in close only after she invites you, rather than waving toys in front of her seemingly blank stare at the blades of grass as they fall through her finger tips! They feel neat! They smell funky! They look green and long!

“BE CAREFUL
WHAT YOU
TEACH. IT
MIGHT
INTERFERE
WITH WHAT
THEY ARE
LEARNING.”

- MAGDA GERBER

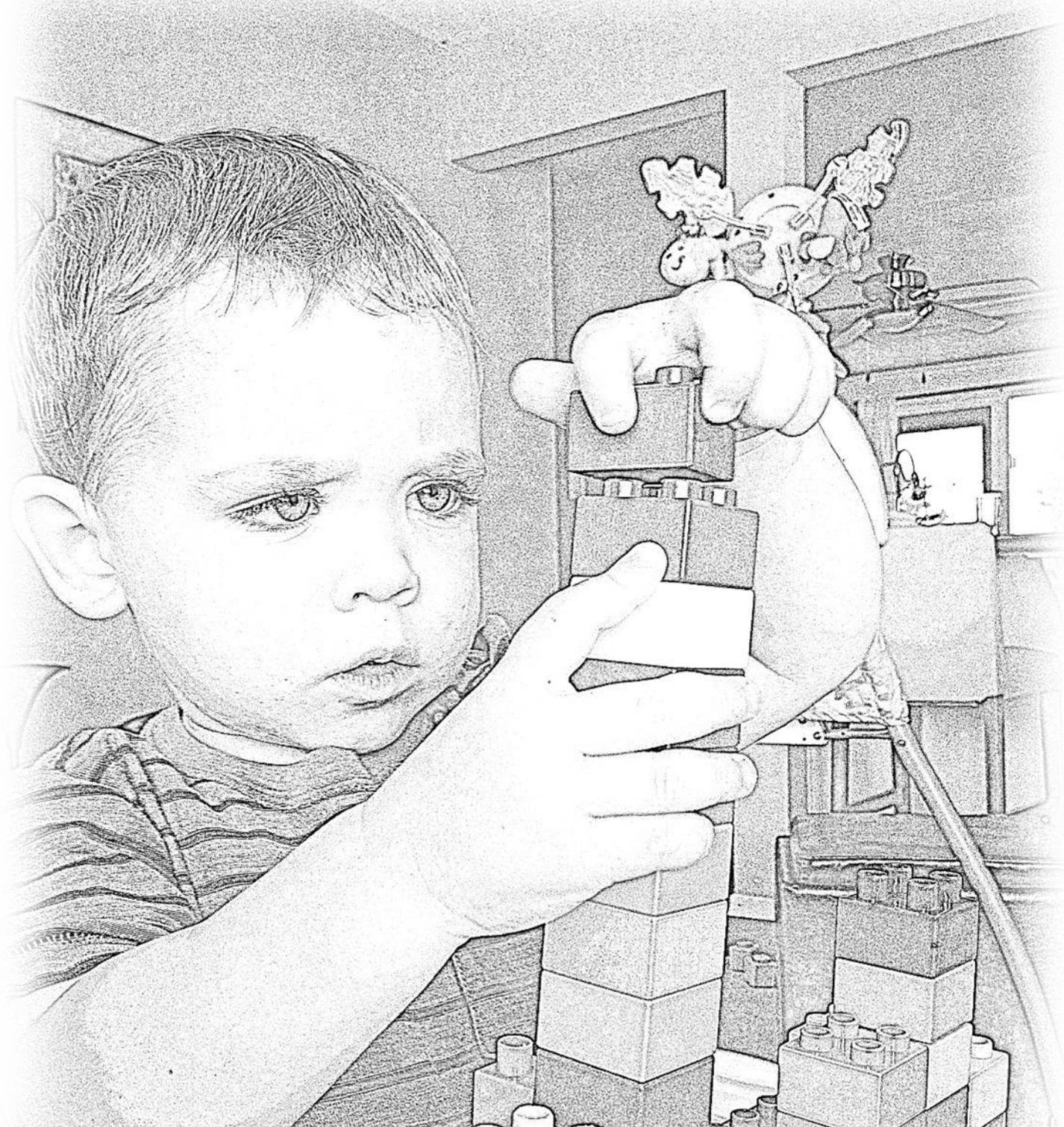
Creativity, Curiosity, and Wonder

Little people just love to explore. They love to create. They love to experiment. They are born with an innate desire to do all of these things and given some paper and crayons, will have a hay day doing just that! It isn't until a well-intentioned adult comments that they think the flower their little one drew is pretty, that judgment even enters a little one's mind when it comes to their creating.

To encourage a young person to create simply for his own enjoyment, rather than for praise or to focus on an end product, refrain from stating what you think of it at all (unless asked)! Simply state what you see! Ask questions about how he feels as he shapes the teeth like sharp triangles. Or better yet, just watch.



**“ART IS ACTION... IT’S THE PROCESS, NOT THE PRODUCT.
FOR YOUNG KIDS, ART IS DOING.” - HEATHER SHUMAKER, IT’S OK NOT TO SHARE**



Independent Play

Allow boredom, allow space, and allow mistakes. This is a gift to both your little person and yourself. Start with little breaks of unstructured time that your little one can fill without interruption from you (unless needed for safety reasons)! Fight the urge to entertain, direct, question, make rules, and just BE. Watch if you like (especially for younger individuals), or go and do something for yourself! Have a shower, get dinner made, sit and read. This time will develop into a wonderful time of growth for all involved.

“WATCH THIS
MOM!”

- IT'S IMPORTANT TO
ME!

“DID YOU SEE
THAT DAD?”

- I SURE HOPE SO!

“MOM, I CAN
JUMP LIKE
THIS!”

- I WANT YOU TO
NOTICE ME!

“HEY DAD!
CHECK OUT
THIS MOVE!”

- ARE YOU ENJOYING
ME?

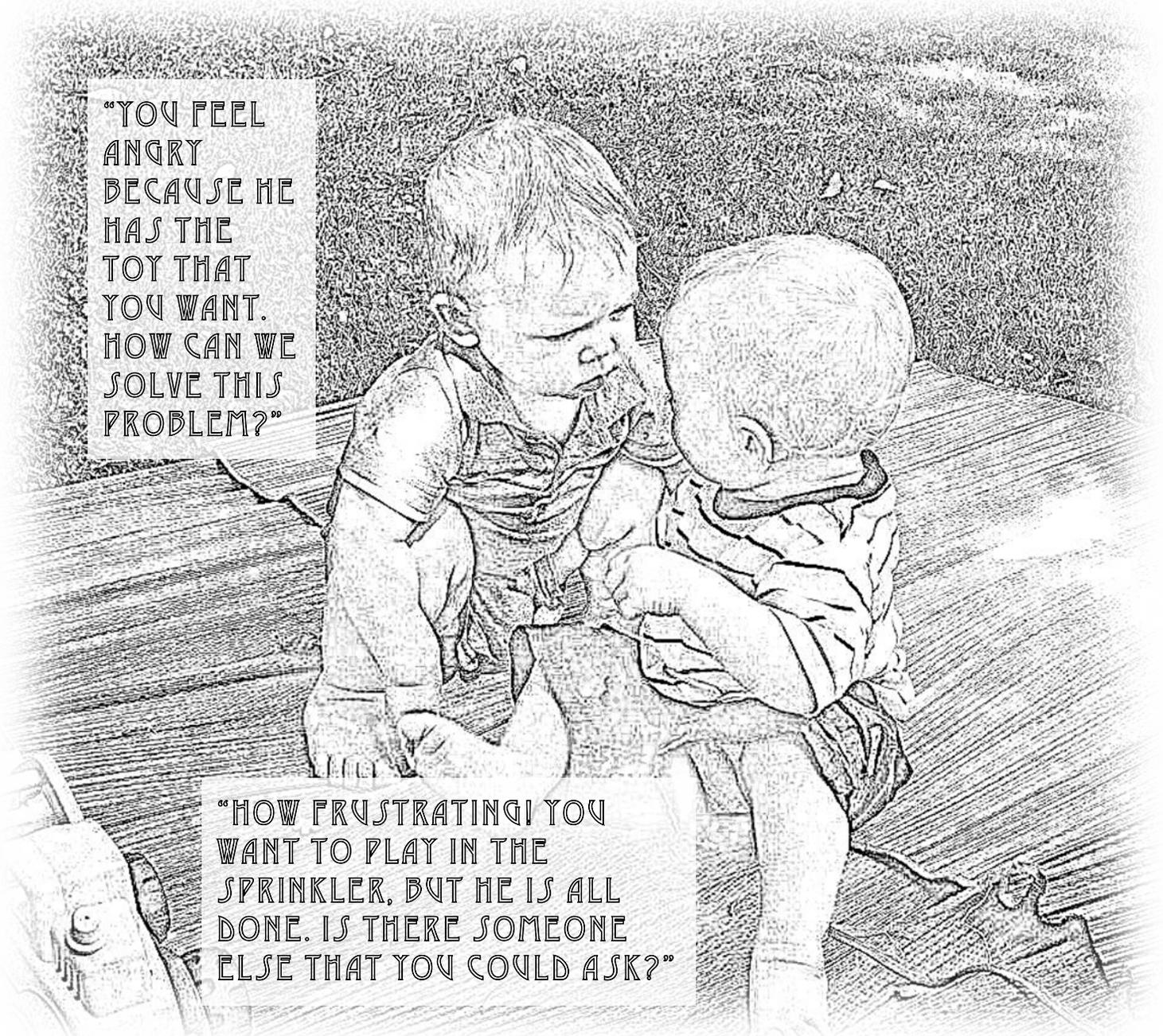


Play With Me!

If they had to choose, little people would pick 20 minutes of real quality play with a parent per day over a full day of half-hearted, half-present play with a disinterested or resentful adult. Learn to say “no” when you need to, so that the times that you do say “yes,” mean something. When you play, be present. Put your phone on silent! Let that time be special – even sacred. A little person’s plea to play with you is a request for your attention and love. To be shown that he matters! If you can’t give it when it’s asked for, let him know why, and suggest a time that you can so that he can look forward to it!

Welcoming Conflict

Hard to imagine, but I'm going to tell you that conflict isn't a bad thing. Conflict offers young people opportunities to learn and practice social skills, conflict resolution skills, problem solving skills, and to develop assertiveness and resilience! With the example and guidance of a supportive and unbiased adult, conflict can set the stage for building a little person's "feelings vocabulary," practicing nonviolent language, and developing empathy for others. After a time, young people will learn to navigate through conflict without having to rely on Dad to play referee, and in turn will feel more self-confidence and esteem. Talk about equipping them for a bright future!



"YOU FEEL ANGRY BECAUSE HE HAS THE TOY THAT YOU WANT. HOW CAN WE SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?"

"HOW FRUSTRATING! YOU WANT TO PLAY IN THE SPRINKLER, BUT HE IS ALL DONE. IS THERE SOMEONE ELSE THAT YOU COULD ASK?"



Shame destroys people from the inside out. Little people are especially vulnerable to experiencing isolation and internalizing shame when an adult judges their behaviour as “bad” and punishes them for it, rather than coming alongside to see what need the behaviour was attempting to meet, and teaching pro-social ways to meet it. A little one can easily begin to identify himself as “bad,” when he repeats behaviours that get his needs met, simply because he hasn’t been taught an alternative strategy. Everything we do is to meet a need. Try seeing the need and intent behind behaviours. Support children in finding healthy ways to meet their needs. Be preventative when it comes to safety. If you’re worried someone might get hurt, move in closer and be available to step in when needed.

Siblings

They love each other, they hate each other, they fight, and they play... Oh the joy of having more than one little person. Fight the urge to be a referee. Instead, don’t pick sides at all! Rather, get down to their level and simply state what you hear and see. If they need your help to keep them safe, by all means do so, but remain neutral. Not only does this approach help to build problem solvers, but it can help the individual “at fault” save face and make things right, rather than experience shame and resentment or anger towards her sibling, and then insecurity in her relationship with you. When a parent can avoid “taking sides” and support siblings in conflict, both little people can continue to feel secure in their relationship with you, knowing that the incident hasn’t threatened that. You remain a trusted and safe person whom they can come to when they need support again in the future. This is especially important for the individual who is “at fault.” You want your little ones to feel safe with you, even when they’ve done something wrong – especially when they’ve done something wrong.

The Healing Power of Play

They say, "Laughter is the best medicine!" And so it can be when your little one is struggling to grasp a deep concept or face something they are afraid of! Role-playing, power-reversal, being goofy, and rough-and-tumble games, coupled with some plain old hearty laughter, fosters the kind of connection that your little person needs in order to feel secure while facing ideas that are new or scary to them. These types of games serve as a free "therapy" where you and he can address specific issues that he needs help with, in a fun and safe way. By making mundane things like teeth brushing or cleaning up fun, you can avoid power struggles, reduce and release stress in the house, and encourage cooperation.

PEEK-A-BOO

HIDE AND SEEK

PRETENDING TO BE
A BABY AFTER THE
BIRTH OF A SIBLING

PRETENDING THE
CHILD IS STRONGER
AND BIGGER THAN
THE PARENT

USING A DOLL TO
ACT OUT
SITUATIONS LIKE
THE DENTIST OR
TOILETING

PLAYING ALONG
WITH A CHILD'S
DIRECTIONS

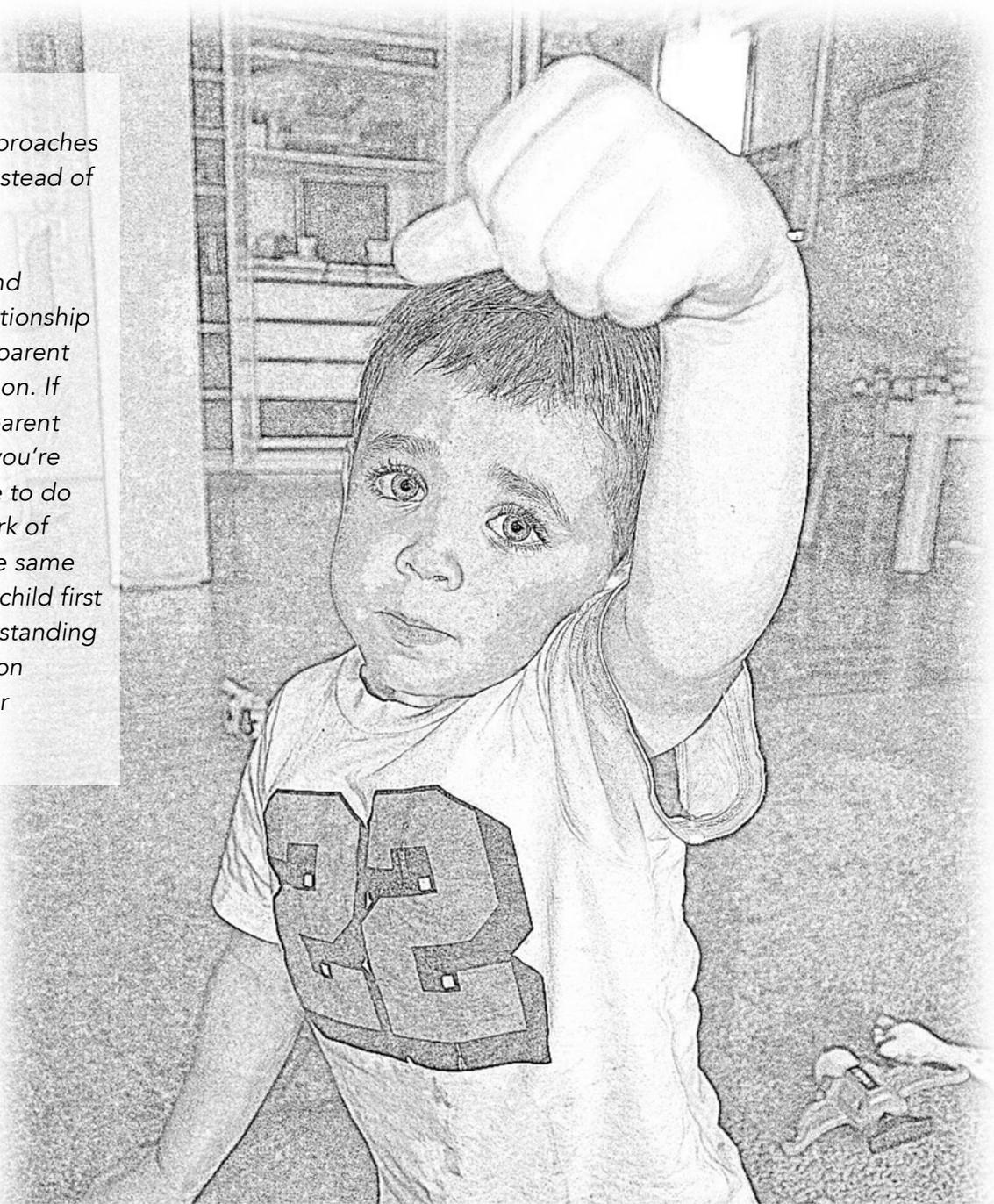


CONCEPT 7

Thinking Long-Term

*There is always a need behind difficult behaviour.
Instead of focusing on short-term behaviours, look deeper to find the root –
To support your little person to meet his emotional need.
Emotional support during childhood fosters resilience, self-esteem, and mental health.*

What Gentle Parenting Approaches emphasize, instead of control and obedience, is connection and quality of relationship between the parent and little person. If you want to parent respectfully, you're going to have to do the tough work of getting on the same page as your child first – really understanding him as a person worthy of your respect.



Long-term Goals

When people start with the question, "How can I get my kids to listen?" what they're usually really looking for is a way to make the little people in their care do whatever it is they want in that moment, rather than communicating respectfully, with the ultimate goal being to raise the individual into a responsible adult. It isn't that common (or easy!) to think about your long-term goals when faced with an opposing toddler and only five minutes to spare. Yet Respectful Parenting challenges parents to go beyond the traditional modes of controlling and manipulating little people to obey by *doing things to* them (rewards and punishment), instead of *working together with them* cooperatively, and taking the extra time needed to support the little one through the situation lovingly and patiently.

“CONNECTION BEFORE DIRECTION”

- DR. GORDON NEUFELD, PH. D., HOLD ONTO YOUR KIDS



“HELP ME, MY FEELINGS ARE TOO BIG FOR ME RIGHT NOW.”

“I CAN'T THINK CLEARLY UNTIL I GET THESE FEELINGS OUT WITH SOMEONE WHO CARES. MY WORDS WILL COME LATER.”

“MY FEELINGS ARE REAL AND VALID. THIS IS A BIG DEAL TO ME.”

Dependence

When you first hold your newborn you have no expectations for her, only hopes. You happily nurse her, change her, wash her, feed her, and sing to her, and on and on. At some point though, usually while yet a young person, we start to impose expectations about what an individual "should be" doing by herself. Indeed, Western society places pressure on parents to start this process. Suddenly it seems, an urgent push to independence ensues and little people are encouraged to do everything they possibly can for themselves. "But I can't pull my pants up!" Cries the three-year-old girl. "Yes you can, you did it yesterday," mom barks back. But what if she just feels like it's too much to handle today? What if by helping her today, you could communicate love and care to her? Do you think she'll still be asking you to help her pull her pants up when she's a young adult? No. She'll be a self-confident woman who helps her daughter when things are too hard for her. We learn kindness by being kind. We learn love, by being treated lovingly. And we learn to care for others, by feeling cared for ourselves.



"We fear that to invite dependence is to invite regression instead of development, that if we give dependence an inch, it will take a mile. What we are really encouraging with this attitude is not true dependence, only independence from us. Dependence is transferred to the peer group. In thousands of little ways we push and pull our children to grow up, hurrying them along instead of inviting them to rest. We are pushing them away from us rather than bringing them to us... Independence is a fruit of maturation: our job in raising children is to look after their dependent needs. When we do our job of meeting genuine dependence needs, nature is free to do its job of promoting maturity. "

*– Dr. Gordon Neufeld, Ph.D.,
Hold Onto Your Kids*

Giving Opportunities

Your little people want to be just like you. And though a young person is not merely a mini-adult, they certainly want to do everything an adult can do. To respect a little one's desire to do things with you and to do things like you, is to encourage and allow them to come alongside you and try. Sure, things may take longer or get a bit messy, but that can be all part of the process.

While little people are young, the strong desire to be with adults can be easily squelched when we'd rather "just get things done." Yet it's exactly this bond that we need to develop now while they are young and interested in us. When they get to the teen years, you'll have that shared foundation of spending quality time together, the trust and understanding that comes from solving problems together, and that patient care invested in them from supporting them through so many tough situations and feelings.



"LABELS ARE STATIC AND UNCONSTRUCTIVE. THEY MAKE US FEEL STUCK RATHER THAN FREE TO CHANGE, IMPROVE, RESHUFFLE THE DECK."

- JANET LANSDURY

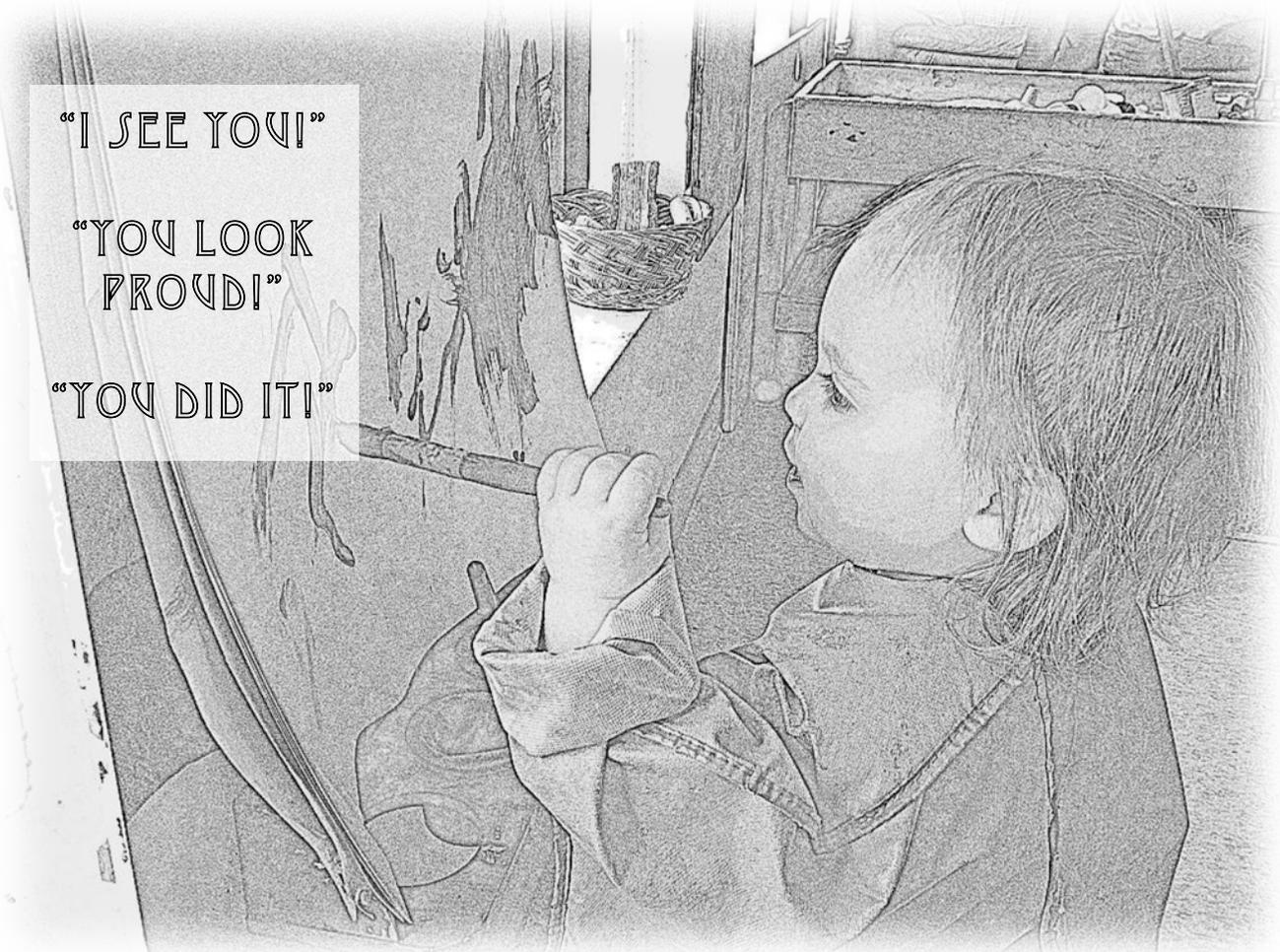


Labels

It's easy to get in the trap of labeling people. A little boy shows an affinity for playing the piano, so he becomes "the musical one." A little girl scores at least once in every single game, so she becomes known as "the sporty one." Musical, athletic, dramatic, academic, bully, trickster, clown... Both "good" and "bad" labels can have a lasting impact on an individual's sense of identity and on the opportunities that are made available to them.

The musically gifted boy has a brother who enjoys playing the piano, yet isn't encouraged to do it in the way that his brother is because it is not his "gift" – he struggles with it. And so he misses out on the chance to continue lessons for his own personal growth and enjoyment. The sporty girl has a brother who isn't a great skater, but still enjoys playing hockey. His parents don't want to invest in a hockey league because he doesn't show promise of one day playing in the NHL. The two-year-old boy who lacks coordination and fine motor skills tumbles throughout the room, knocking into towers and other little people. Over time it becomes normal for mom, with a roll of her eyes, to pick up after him and scold him for being "clumsy" or "a bully."

Individuals form their sense of self from their interactions with others, initially their parents. Find your little one's strengths and encourage them. But also find their challenges, and support them through those. Help them face adversity and learn that they can come out stronger by working through things that are difficult.



“I SEE YOU!”

“YOU LOOK
PROUD!”

“YOU DID IT!”

“Good Job”

While well meaning, the term “good job” doesn’t mean very much. It has become so commonplace that everything has become a “good job,” and an opportunity for connection and to build up your little one’s self esteem and pride is easily missed. When you see her artwork, do you find yourself immediately saying it? It can be so compulsive that you don’t even know it unless you’re listening to yourself... And once you do that, you begin to hear it everywhere!

What would be more helpful than your appraisal (judgment) of her picture, would be describing what you see, or telling her how you feel when you watch her colour. Better yet, ask her to tell you about it! Or simply smile. When she shows you her end product, she’s not looking for your praise. She’s looking for connection. She’s looking for a shared moment with you because she already feels good about something, and it came from within her. It wasn’t a job; it was a process of expressing and exploring and engaging with the world around her – and she wants to share that with you!

CONCEPT 8

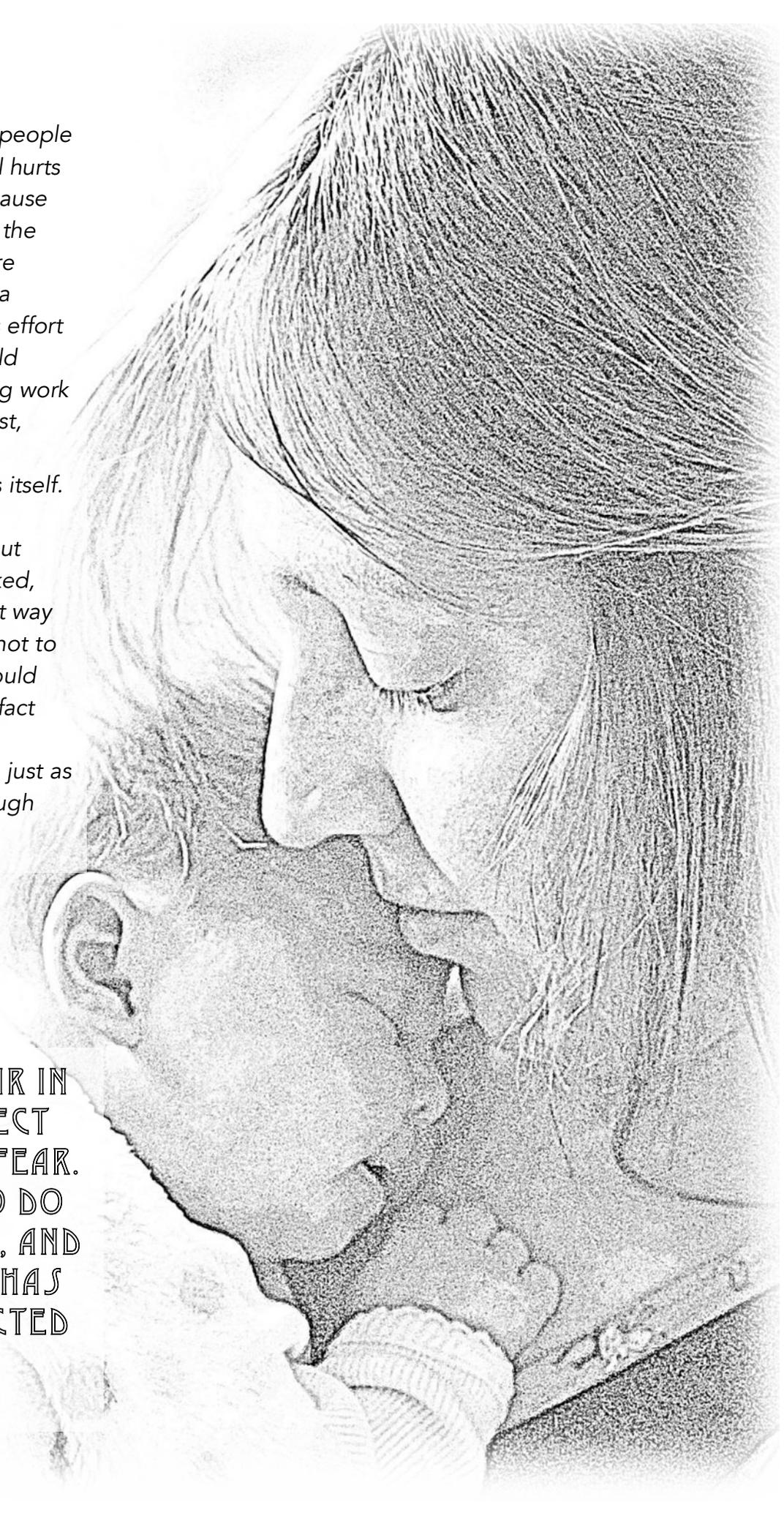
Parents Have Needs Too

It has been said that hurt people hurt people. Generational hurts get passed on simply because humans tend to parent in the ways they themselves were parented. Unless there is a committed and conscious effort to change any negative old patterns, and inner healing work is done to address the past, regardless of one's best intentions, history repeats itself.

If you think you "turned out fine" despite being spanked, yet you think that the best way to teach a young person not to hit is by hitting them, I would argue that you are not in fact fine at all. Kindness is not learned through violence, just as peace is not learned through warfare.

"THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE. BUT PERFECT LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR. FOR FEAR HAS TO DO WITH PUNISHMENT, AND WHOEVER FEARS HAS NOT BEEN PERFECTED IN LOVE."

- 1 JOHN 4:18, THE BIBLE



Be Kind To Yourself

Overcoming a difficult birth experience, unexpected surgery, or coming to terms with the loss of a baby can be a life-long quest. Immediately following a pregnancy or birth is such a fragile time in your life, and I encourage you to extend yourself kindness. Do whatever you have to in order to face the things in your pregnancy and birth experience that steal your joy. Journaling, counseling, talking to a friend, joining a support group, exercising, and creating, are only a few ideas that can help to express your pain – to get it out in a healthy way. Blaming yourself or another person will not solve anything, and will only serve to perpetuate your negative feelings, rather than facilitate your healing.



DON'T LET THE
PAIN OF
YESTERDAY
STEAL YOUR JOY
FROM TODAY!

Parenting is Hard Work... Parenting Respectfully, Even More So

Nobody can ever prepare you for what parenting is going to be like. Your friends have all done it, and secretly couldn't wait for you to do it for yourself so you'd finally "get it." Well, here you are, and you definitely get it now. Parenting is hard work! It's more than a fulltime job and there's not even a manual for it!

Do you ever feel like you're failing? Join the club! It's OK to have bad days. The fact that you feel that you could have done better, and that you want to do

better next time, goes to show that you are trying, and are still on your Mindful Parenting pursuit.



IF YOU MESS
UP, APOLOGIZE.

YOUR KIDS
NEED TO KNOW
YOU'RE HUMAN
TOO.

WE ALL MAKE
MISTAKES; IT'S
WHAT WE DO
AFTER THAT
MATTERS
MOST.

YOU CAN MAKE
THINGS RIGHT.



Your Village

Being alone with a little person for any extended amount of time can be a wonderful experience. But it can also be one of the loneliest, isolating and most difficult experiences. We weren't made to exist in isolation as individuals or family units. The old proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child" is absolutely true, especially if you are concerned about meeting all of the emotional needs of that individual, as well as your own. Parents sometimes need breaks to meet their own needs for autonomy and space. You cannot give what you do not have, and when you're a parent feeling trapped within the walls of your own home, or by a little person's behaviour or demands, you need to reach out to your village to step in and help you with that load. A village can be anyone who you can trust to care for your little one – extended family, a friend, a paid baby-sitter or a neighbour. You don't need to prove your independence or strength to anyone – take help when it's offered, and express your gratitude. You and your little person will both benefit.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD



When you become a parent, it can be easy to get lost in the role of “Mother” or “Father.” Hard as it can seem, it is crucial that parents, especially mothers (because they usually take on the majority of care-giving in the first year), continue to take time for themselves, to invest in self-care. Be it a solo walk or run while baby sleeps, a hot bubble bath while Dad plays with baby, a massage, or an outing with a good friend, these times away actually allow you to be more present when you’re home – because you have needs too. Parenting is more than a full-time gig, and can be exhausting at times. Self care requires consciously choosing to do something you enjoy for yourself. Further, it helps to foster trust within a marriage or with another trusted adult, and gives your child the opportunity to develop another adult attachment with which they can feel safe and secure.

PARENTS HAVE NEEDS TOO

Self Care

The old adage, “You can’t give what you don’t have” applies to the realm of parenting. If you want to give your little person your best, then you need to take care of yourself to be at your best. Have you showered today? Are you still in your PJ’s at 3pm pretty much every single day? How many times have you reheated that coffee? It’s important to be able to identify within yourself your own feelings and needs too. In the parent-offspring relationship there are two people, each just as important as the other, and each with needs that deserve a response. Yes, sometimes we have to delay that response for ourselves for the sake of our little one, but don’t put yourself on the backburner forever. Make time for yourself each day. You’ll be a better parent because of it.

References and Recommended Reading

- Balswick, J., Balswick, J. & Piper, B. (2003). *Relationship-empowerment parenting: building formative and fulfilling relationships with your children*. Ada, MI: Baker Books.
- Brett, T. G. (2011). *Parenting for social change*. Social Change Press.
- Faber, A., & Mazlish, E. (1998). *Siblings without rivalry: how to help your children live together so you can live too*. New York, NY: Avon Books.
- Gerber, M. (2002). *Your self-confident baby: how to encourage your child's natural abilities – from the very start*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Gordon, T. (2000). *Parent effectiveness training: the proven program for raising responsible children*. New York, NY: Harmony.
- Grille, R. (2013). *Parenting for a peaceful world*. Vox Cordis Press.
- Kohn, A. (2006). *Unconditional parenting: moving from rewards and punishments to love and reason*. New York, NY: Atria Books.
- Neufeld, G., & Mate, G. (2013). *Hold onto your kids: why parents need to matter more than peers*. Toronto, ON: Vintage Canada.
- Payne, K. J. (2010). *Simplicity parenting: using the extraordinary power of less to raise calmer, happier, and more secure kids*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.
- Pearce, J.C. (1992). *Magical Child*. New York, NY: Plume.
- Rosenberg, M. B. (2003). *Nonviolent communication: a language of life: life-changing tools for healthy relationships*. Encinitas, CA: Puddledancer Press.
- Shumaker, H. (2012). *It's OK not to share and other renegade rules for raising competent and compassionate kids*. New York, NY: Tarcher.
- Solter, A. (2001). *The aware baby*. Goleta, CA: Shining Star Press.

Recommended Websites

- <http://www.ahaparenting.com/>
- <http://www.gordontraining.com>
- <http://www.handinhandparenting.org>
- <http://www.handsfreemama.com/>
- <http://www.janetlansbury.com/>
- <http://www.parentingforsocialchange.com>
- <http://www.parenting-with-love.com/>
- <http://peacefulparent.com/>
- <http://teachertombsblog.blogspot.ca/>
- <http://vbacfacts.com/>