

STRENGTH-BASED COMMUNICATION IN FAMILIES

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RAISING CHILDREN...IS VASTLY MORE THAN
FIXING WHAT IS WRONG WITH THEM. IT IS
ABOUT IDENTIFYING AND NURTURING THEIR
STRONGEST QUALITIES, WHAT THEY OWN AND
ARE BEST AT, AND HELPING THEM FIND
NICHES IN WHICH THEY CAN BEST LIVE OUT
THESE STRENGTHS

Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000

HUMANS ARE MESSY. OUR JOB IS TO HELP
YOUTH UNDERSTAND HOW TO BE THE
BEST KIND OF MESSY HUMAN THEY CAN
BE.

PARENTS MATTER

- Genetics
- Structural (e.g. where they live, SES, ..)
- Social capital (opportunities and networks)
- Expectations
- Social modelling
- Parenting approach



WISSENSCHAFT AND KENNTNIS

- *Wissenschaft* from *wissen*, “to know about something”
- *Kenntnis* from *kenen*, “to know by experience.”

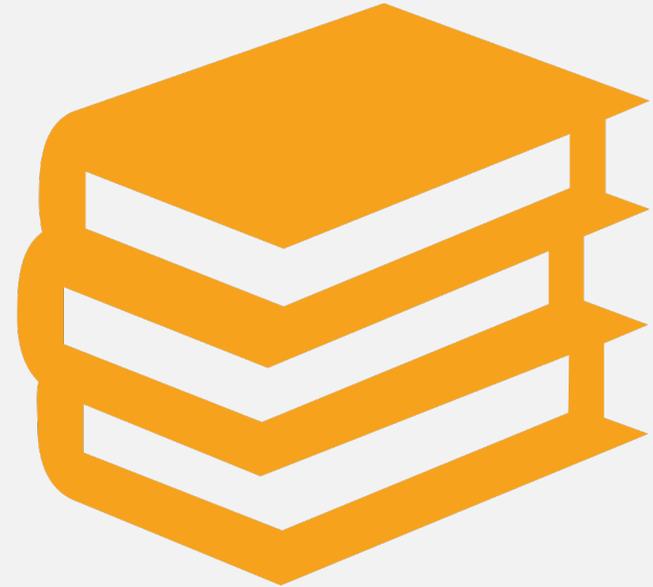
“There is a fundamental belief running through all European pedagogy that both are valuable, and that the two ways of knowing must be balanced.”

Not so much here..

Grok

understand (something) intuitively or by empathy.

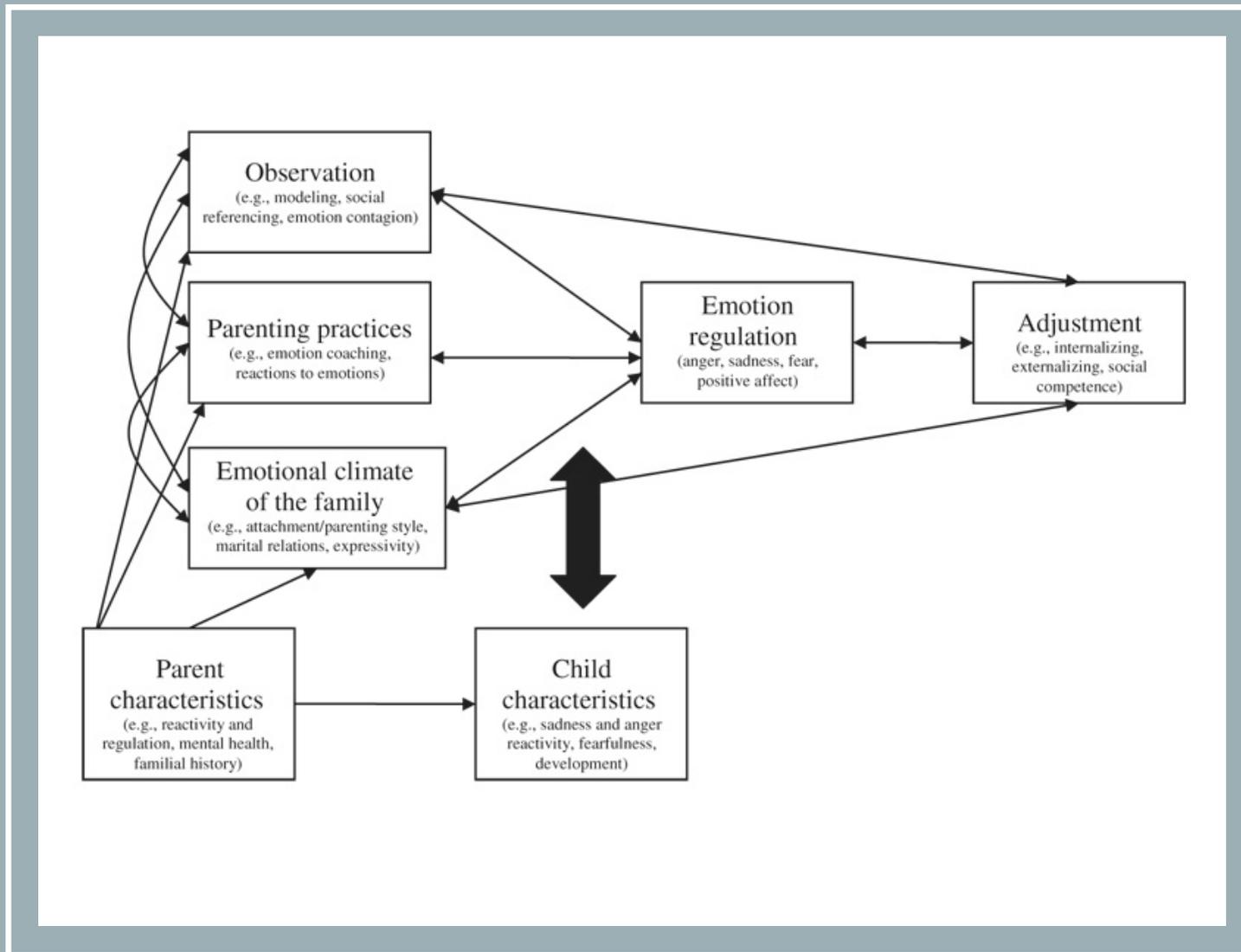
From the Merriam-Webster Dictionary: *Grok* may be the only English word that derives from Martian. Yes, we do mean the language of the planet Mars. *Grok* was introduced in Robert A. Heinlein's 1961 science fiction novel *Stranger in a Strange Land*. Was the word of the day on May 12, 2017



Sax, L. (2016). *Boys adrift: The five factors driving the growing epidemic of unmotivated boys and underachieving young men*. Basic Books.

STRENGTH-BASED PARENTING IN EMOTIONAL HEALTH

TRIPARITE MODEL OF FAMILY INFLUENCE



Steinberg, L., & Darling, N. (2017). Parenting style as context: An integrative model. In *Interpersonal Development* (pp. 161-170). Routledge.

MINDFUL PARENTING MODEL

DUNCAN, L. G., COATSWORTH, J. D., & GREENBERG, M. T. (2009). A MODEL OF MINDFUL PARENTING: IMPLICATIONS FOR PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS AND PREVENTION RESEARCH. *CLINICAL CHILD AND FAMILY PSYCHOLOGY REVIEW*, 12(3), 255-270.

Dimension	Parenting behavior	Effects
Listening with full attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correctly discern child's behavioral cues • Accurately perceive child's verbal communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced use and influence of cognitive constructions and expectations
Nonjudgmental acceptance of self and child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy balance between child-oriented, parent-oriented, and relationship-oriented goals • Sense of parenting self-efficacy • Appreciation for child's traits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in self-directed concerns • Fewer unrealistic expectations of child's attributes
Emotional awareness of self and child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsiveness to child's needs and emotions • Greater accuracy in responsibility attributions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less dismissing of child's emotions • Less discipline that results from parent's strong negative emotion (e.g., anger, disappointment, shame)
Self-regulation in the parenting relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotion regulation in the parenting context • Parenting in accordance with goals and values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less overreactive/"automatic" discipline • Less dependence on child's emotions
Compassion for self and child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive affection in the parent-child relationship • More forgiving view of own parenting efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less negative affect displayed in the parent-child relationship • Less self-blame when parenting goals are not achieved

PILLARS OF STRENGTH-BASED PARENTING

Clarity	Have clear parenting intentions
Strive	Strive for alignment between language and action
Model	Model healthy emotion language and regulation
Enhance	Enhance self-awareness and model this process

UNDERSTAND AND BUILD ON FAMILY STRENGTHS

Open,
effective communication

Expressions of affection
and warmth

Comfort in talking with
each other

Respect

Sense of connectedness
and belonging

Problem solving skills

Support and
encouragement

Cooperation and loyalty

Commitment to helping
each other

SETTING PARENTING INTENTIONS

What core life principles and values do you want to teach your child? Write down three to five examples.

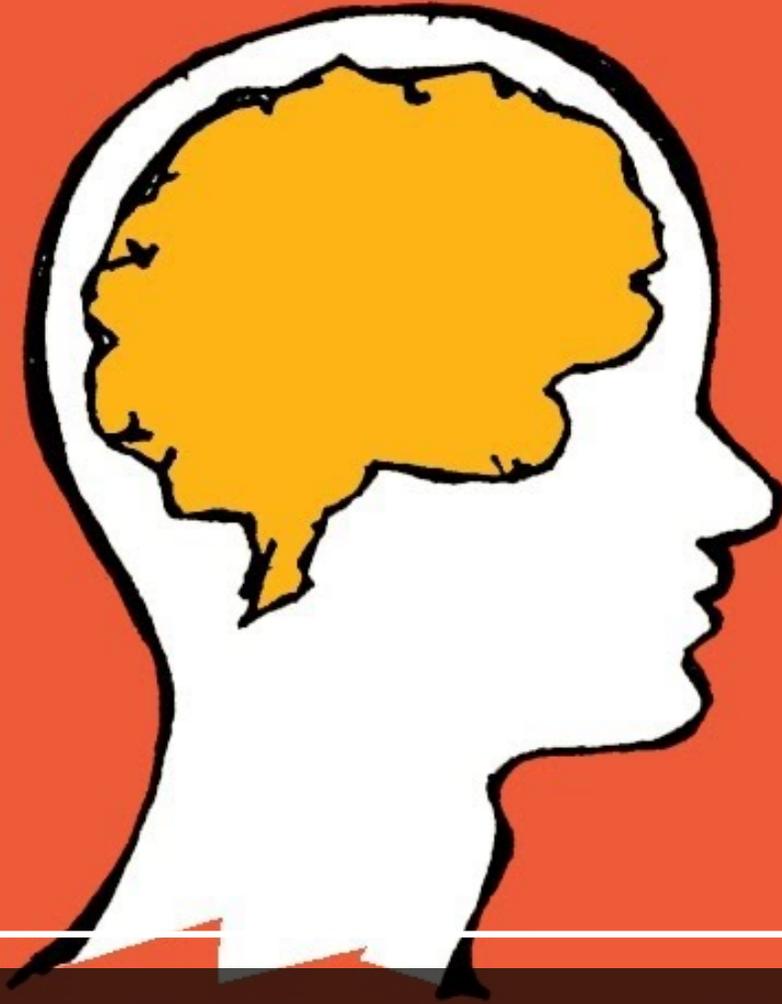
Which two of these are most important to you in this period of your and your child's life?

Take a minute to think about how you model these two principles in your daily life with your child (e.g. if you value respect, how do you demonstrate respect to them?). Write down your thoughts on this.

Think about what you do that may not be totally in alignment with your core parenting intentions. Write down 1-2 examples here for your own reflection.



FIXED



GROWTH

WHAT IS YOUR MINDSET ACTIVITY

MINDSETS

MINDSET



Fixed Mindset

Your situation

Growth mindset

My child is stuck, oversensitive, and/or failing

Interpreting your child's current state

My child is learning how to deal with the gift and challenge of sensing and feeling emotions intensely

My child cuts herself because she cannot cope with feelings. She is weak.

What her acting out (self-injury) behavior means

My child cuts herself to temporarily feel better and regroup. While it won't work well in the long run, I know she is working hard to deal with feelings she does not yet know how to deal with differently. I trust she will sometime.

We have been doing this for so long and she does not seem to be changing at all. I am giving up hope.

When progress feels slow or non-existent

My child is moving at a pace that works for him. I do wish he was moving more quickly, but I know that I do not have control over that; this is his life. I need to focus on balancing realistic support of him with my own need to not feel trapped in his life choices so much.

I am trapped in this and cannot get out. I will never feel good again.

When parental stress becomes overwhelming

My child's situation or way of dealing with hard situations is wearing on me. It is time for me to figure out how to make more space and time for me to attend to taking care of myself. This will help me and will model what positive self-care looks like for my child. We'll be okay.

MINDSET
EXAMPLES



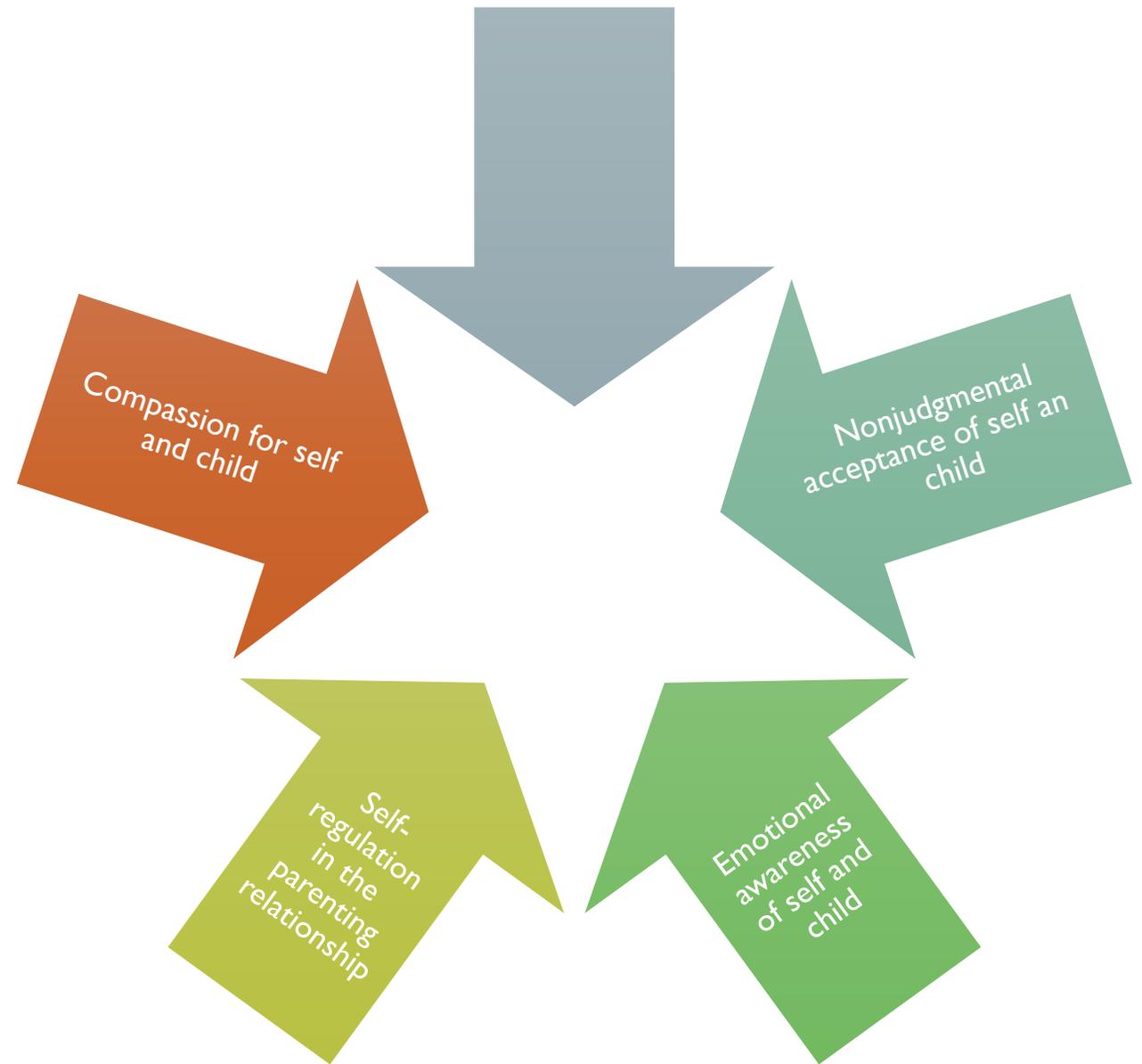
IMPORTANT STEPS TO ADOPTING A GROWTH-ORIENTED MINDSET

- **Believe up**
- **Provide authentic feedback and productive observations**
- **Recognize and support other people in a child's life**
- **Help children identify and reinforce successes**
- **Notice improvement, even if subtle**

NOTICING IMPROVEMENT

	Improvement	No change	Decline	Notes
Emotion & mood				
Constructively expressed emotion				
Showed positive emotion/mood				
Positive reaction to good news, events, social exchange or opportunities				
Clear use of new ways of coping with emotion				
Thoughts				
Clearly expressed positive thoughts about self				
Clearly expressed positive thoughts about others				
Clearly stated thoughts about goals / future				
Engagement in activities				
Participated in healthy activities				
Showed interest or engaged in new healthy activities				
Social relationships				
Showed interest in healthy relationships with friends				
Showed interest in healthy relationships with family members				
Showed interest in healthy relationships with other relationships				
Invested in new healthy relationships				

MINDFUL COMMUNICATIONS



CRPSIR RESOURCES

PRACTICAL MATTERS

The Cornell Research Program
on *Self-Injury and Recovery*

Power struggles with parents and adults in authority are a normal part of adolescent development since it is during this time of life that young people are beginning to express independence and autonomy. They are thus more willing to question authority – especially their parents'. These struggles can be worsened by charged issues like self-injury. The fear and control issues that surround self-injury can create very tense situations for both the adult/parent and child. While it is virtually impossible to avoid all power struggles, adults can minimize them by staying aware of a few basic principles.

How do you know when a power struggle is happening?

A power struggle begins when your child refuses to do something you ask, follow a rule you have set, or participate in activities in which he or she is expected to join. Many times the resistance has less to do with the specific request and more to do with simply wanting to exercise control or power. It is VERY easy to take the bait as parents or other concerned adults particularly when what we believe we are asking is reasonable or has already been agreed upon. Doing what you can to not engage in a power struggle is the very best way to avoid one.

Strategy 1: Disengage early

The best way to avoid an argumentative power struggle is to simply not engage in one. The moment you realize that the struggle is starting is the moment to begin disengaging. This is not about giving in, but it is about taking the space to figure out how to deal with the resistance while you are calm and not feeling a lot of strong emotions. If your young person is

The Cornell Research Program
on *Self-Injury and Recovery*

our ability to talk and listen to your child is not only important for recovery, but a valuable skill set to further develop for all of your interactions with your child. But, now, having an honest and open talk with someone, particularly when the topic is self-injury, can be very difficult. Choose a **time and place** appropriate for the conversation. Find a quiet place without interruptions or distractions and having plenty of time for the conversation helps increase the chances your child will be open to sharing and listening.

Active listening is an important component of positive communication. Actively listening means giving full attention to the person you are communicating with, making eye contact, not doing anything else (even if it doesn't seem like it could be a distraction). After listening to what was said, you can comment or ask questions about what you just heard to make sure you clearly understood. It helps to be specific about the situation even when you are speaking. Making global statements (e.g. using words like "never" or "always"). Reflective listening helps your child feel heard and helps you understand his or her perspective. Asking questions can also keep the conversation going.

Examples of active listening:

PRACTICAL MATTERS

The Cornell Research Program
on *Self-Injury and Recovery*

Respectful curiosity

by Janis Whitlock &
Mandy Purington

The notion of "respectful curiosity"¹ is powerful for parents and others who care for someone who self-injures. Indeed, it is a wonderful parenting technique all around – particularly in times when you feel perplexed about your child's attitude or behavior. Respectful curiosity is best described as a state of awareness characterized by a genuine curiosity and willingness to know and understand **in combination with** attention to assuring that one's curiosity is satisfied in a kind and respectful way.

Since you cannot know what will feel respectful to someone, even your own child, it is wise to ask permission to ask questions or to preface your questions with a statement, something like, "I want to do everything I can to help you feel supported and respected. I also want to

A BOOK FOR PARENTS: RELEASE DATE
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healing

self-

injury

A COMPASSIONATE GUIDE FOR
PARENTS AND OTHER LOVED ONES

KEY LITERATURE

- Coatsworth, J. D., Greenberg, M.T., Nix, R. L., & Duncan, L. G. (2010). Changing parent's mindfulness, child management skills and relationship quality with their youth: Results from a randomized pilot intervention trial. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 19, 203-217.
- Duncan, L. G., Coatsworth, J. D., & Greenberg, M.T. (2009). A model of mindful parenting: Implications for parent-child relationships and prevention research. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 12, 255-270.
- Morris, A. S., Silk, J. S., Steinberg, L., Myers, S. S., & Robinson, L. R. (2007). The role of the family context in the development of emotion regulation. *Social development*, 16(2), 361-388.
- Sax, L. (2016). *Boys adrift: The five factors driving the growing epidemic of unmotivated boys and underachieving young men*. Basic Books.
- Steinberg, L., & Darling, N. (2017). Parenting style as context: An integrative model. In *Interpersonal Development* (pp. 161-170). Routledge.
- Whitlock, J. & Lloyd-Richardson, E. (in press; release date Jan. 2019). *Healing self-injury: A compassionate guide for parents and other loved ones*. Oxford University Trade Press. New York, New York.