



tool one: presence



essential PARENTING *for* PEACE[®] toolkits

with Dr. Marcy Axness

Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. ~ Kahlil Gibran

What are some activities you do in which you get totally engaged...time falls away...and you're totally present?

Out-of-the-Gate Application

“I Hear You, I See You”

“My World, Your World, Our World”

THE SCIENCE: Presence, Attachment and Optimal Development

Just as an infant uses the nourishment of his mother’s milk to build his bones and organs, he uses the attachment relationship to learn about the world and prepare himself to excel in that world—connected to self and others, capable of empathy, vision, and enlightened action. Of key importance is the circuitry of the OFC.

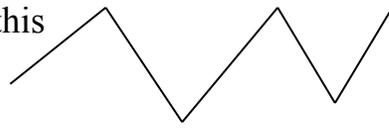
Orbito-frontal cortex (OFC): integrating & self-regulating structure — thus, it is likely involved in the epidemic of disorders (attention, sensory, oppositional, etc.)

- ❖ Integrates **emotion w/ cognition**; Common sense thinking; “response flexibility”
- ❖ Provides **social cognition: “Mindsight”** (to be able to read signals, to know people’s intentions, feelings (EQ)... the skills of being truly human...)
- ❖ **Allows for** emotional attunement, empathy: **ability to align oneself w/ another, in reciprocal communication**
- ❖ **Governs nervous system** state regulation: the “brakes and accelerator” functions (parasympathetic/sympathetic) terminate in the OFC, which **acts as a kind of clutch, to balance and integrate these functions smoothly**
- ❖ Mediates auto-noetic consciousness: **“mental time travel,” connecting the past, present and future** (autobiographical memory)

The OFC is the brain circuitry responsible for social and emotional functioning: *central to an individual’s LIFELONG SUCCESS!*

The Critical Lifelong Capacity of Self-Regulation

Babies start like this



in terms of their state-regulation...

and over time become more
through the parents' co-regulation.



THE SPIRIT: Fostering The Health of Our Own Social Brain

As parents, not only is it possible to foster further development of our own social brain's health, but doing so is perhaps the most important investment we can make in our children's lifelong success.

When you are feeling like the upper diagram (jagged and dysregulated), what helps "smooth you out" like the lower diagram?

Practices that cultivate greater capacity for presence are the best parenting investment -- they foster *self-mastery*. Jot down some that resonate for you:

Do you engage in any presence practices, such as meditation, mindfulness practice, yoga, contemplative prayer, journaling? If so, which ones? If not, which might you most be willing to try? Can you get a sense of any resistance you have felt to taking up a presence practice, and if so, just jot it down -- stream of consciousness works best here, just "feelings words" or phrases.

Your self-discipline is first & foremost what sets the tone for how big or small an issue discipline will be: Do I have mastery of something as basic as the flow of my own thoughts & feelings?

List some activities in which you tend to multi-task? Number them in order of which ones you would be most willing to shift to a uni-task activity.

Consciously working on making sense of your own early story can rewire your OFC circuitry toward greater health and resiliency.

How would you characterize your relationship with / fluency in the story of your own childhood (up until around age 7)? Can you tell a "coherent narrative" about it? Or are your memories more disjointed -- like jigsaw puzzle-pieces that aren't assembled? What are some of your key memories?

THE PRACTICE: 5 Presence Moves

1. _____

2. _____

Landmine: Discipline Attention Hygiene -- *Where are you putting your attention in terms of your child's behavior? On the positives or the negatives?*

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Do you remember times when you could "just be" with your infant? Toddler? Preschooler?

Do you know if someone was able to "just be" with YOU when you were little?

GO-TO FAILSAFE MOVE™ for TOOL 1

"Pause the World, We Want to Stay On"

HOMEWORK: Honing Your Tool

This is NOT about perfection...but about *striving*. Being a flawed parent who is curious, who pursues a deeper understanding of your own inner life changes you in positive ways -- while easing stress & upping calm confidence!

- *Choose a recurring "mundane" activity with which to practice mindfulness.*
- *Give meditation a try at least once, using the "2-Minute Habit" approach in the article linked in Extras. Do not exceed 5 minutes! (Unless you already have an established meditation practice... and you're consistent.)*
- *Choose a question about your childhood history from Siegel's list to reflect upon.*