

9 Things

A BACK-TO-BASICS GUIDE TO CALM,
COMMON-SENSE, CONNECTED PARENTING BIRTH-8

FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

“The single most universal fear of a child to experience - separation from their key caregivers.”

– Dr Vanessa Lapointe, clinical psychologist and founder of The Wishing Star Lapointe Developmental Clinic in British Columbia

KEYS TO 9 THINGS

1. Connected mothering
2. The bountiful brain in infancy
3. Go slow childhoods – Self regulation and how to build it
4. Roosters and lambs
5. The magic of movement and play
6. Beautiful boys and gorgeous girls
7. Expectations, belief systems and mind sets – positive memory pathways
8. Kindness and fairness really matters
9. The safe circle of community



Children who are securely attached to their significant primary carers/parents are more likely to:

- be able to cope well with stress
- have satisfying relationships
- have healthy self-esteem
- have good mental health
- reach their full intellectual potential
- have fewer behavioural problems
- have fewer discipline problems
- have fewer problems separating from parents when it is developmentally appropriate.

– Robin Grille, *Heart to Heart Parenting* (2008).

“... Findings from various areas of developmental psychology suggest that everything that happens to us - the music we hear, the people we love, the books we read, the kind of discipline we receive, the emotions we feel - profoundly affects the way the brain develops.”

– Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson, *The Whole-Brain Child* (2011).

“Adequate nurturing and the absence of intense early stress permits our brains to develop in a manner that is less aggressive and more emotionally stable, social and empathetic.”

– Martin Teicher, *The Neurobiology of Child Abuse*, *Scientific American*, March 2002, p75.

“Without plenty of natural movement, babies and toddlers run the risk of experiencing developmental delays in all areas of their life. Movement is not just about the physical body; it is a very sophisticated necessity for developing healthy brains, healthy minds and nurturing the socio-cultural development of every human being.

– Maggie Dent

If we meet our children’s core need to know they belong, they matter and that learning and growing is what they are supposed to do – and we treat children with kindness and fairness we could improve every child’s pathway of potential.

Remember, every choice you make around children, ask yourself Maggie’s three BIG QUESTIONS:

- 1. Was that fair?**
- 2. Was that kind?**
- 3. What has that taught my child?**

In Norman Doidge’s book, *The Brain that Changes Itself* (2007), he explores the plasticity of the brain — the process whereby the brain grows and prunes itself due to the role of experiences — and there is good news for parents and educators. **Doidge asserts that anything a baby or toddler has missed out on learning or mastering by the age of five can possibly be learned after that because anything that is done repeatedly will make the brain change.** It is much easier of course if all the necessary connections happen under five. This is why early intervention is so vitally important for children with developmental delays, especially those who are on the autism spectrum.

“Increasingly, scientists are linking stress in infancy and childhood to the soaring numbers of people suffering from anxiety and depressive disorders from adolescence onwards ... Research shows that if a child’s need for comfort is not met with emotional responsiveness and soothing, this system can over time become wired for bodily hyperarousal. This can make life a stressful and exhaustive affair.”

– Margot Sunderland, *The Science of Parenting* (2007).

REDUCING CHILDREN’S STRESS

HOW TO CALM AN OVER-LOADED NERVOUS SYSTEM

- Calm grown ups
- Routines and habits
- Silent sound signals and non verbal messages
- Movement & relaxation
- Calming music
- Practising mindfulness day-to-day
- Low vocal tones
- Absorbed play
- Quiet corner
- Thinking time
- Regular quiet times – rest times
- Calming CDs/audio visualisations and relaxations
- Kids yoga
- Laughter and lightness
- Nature time outside



WILMA WALLABY

“When we talk to our kids using a quiet voice and using manners we show our kids how to speak to others. Please use your quiet, kind voice and show respect for your kids.”



SEPARATION CAN BE BRIDGED — BUILDING BRIDGES

Help parents be with their child eg

- Parents can give small symbols to hold onto in their absence
- Talk about Mum and Dad to the child
- Use rituals like kissing the hand/bedtime rituals
- Have pictures of parent with child on the wall
- Have picture of a loving hug from Mum or Dad on a lanyard, with perfume or cologne...
- Record readable stories or messages of love on phone
- Bite out of toast and sandwich
- Notes in lunch box on mirrors or post it notes
- Deep eye contact, smiling and winking

WILMA WALLABY

"Babies, toddlers and children are wired to learn at their own pace in their own way if they are in a safe interesting environment. They are never 'not learning'."

PROBLEM-SOLVING

An important life skill involves the art of **finding solutions** ... helping children to discover other choices that they could make in response to a challenge, whether a disagreement with a friend, or a toy that has broken.

Before you fix a problem for a child, help them to explore ways to overcome it by themselves.

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Maggie Dent
quietly improving lives