

How to Raise Emotionally Healthy Children



A webinar
with
Lisa Firestone,
Ph.D.



THE GLENDON
ASSOCIATION



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Three Parts to the Webinar:

Part 1: How We Influence Our Kids

Part 2: Identifying Patterns in Ourselves

Part 3: Changing to Become Better Parents



Part I: How We Influence Our Kids

Does our past influence
our parenting?

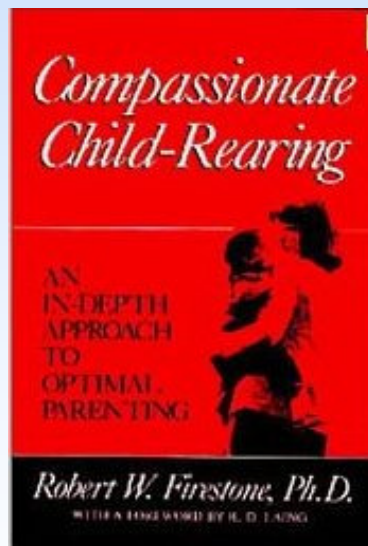




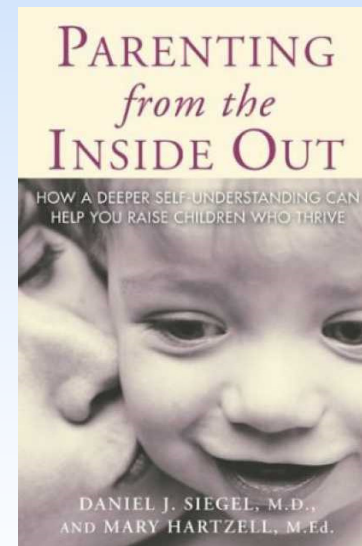
How We Influence Our Kids

Two Programs:

Compassionate Child Rearing
Robert W. Firestone, Ph.D.



Parenting from the Inside Out
Daniel Siegel, M.D.





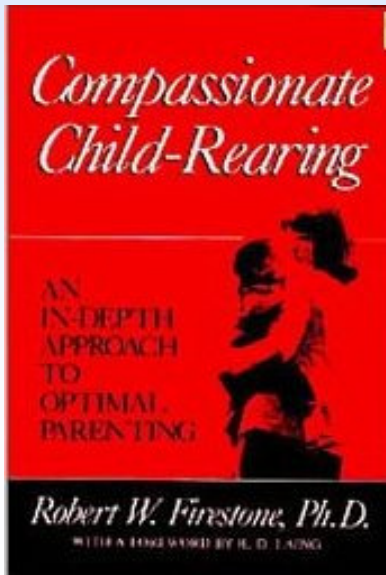
Compassionate Child Rearing

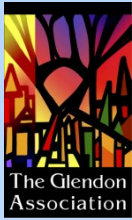
by Robert W. Firestone, Ph.D.



Focus on:

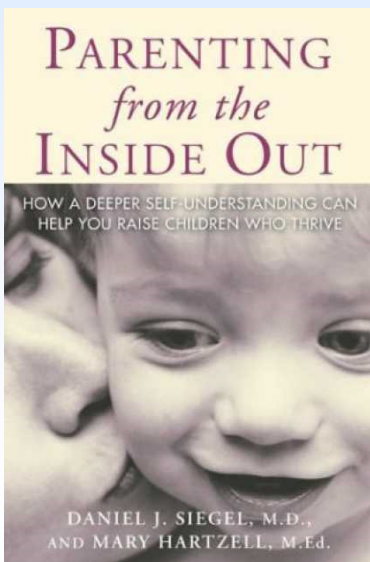
- Interaction between you and your child
- Becoming aware of how you were parented
- Making a coherent life narrative about your past
- Regaining feeling for yourself; then you can extend feeling to your children
- Changing attitudes and behaviors toward your children





Parenting from the Inside Out

Daniel Siegel, M.D.

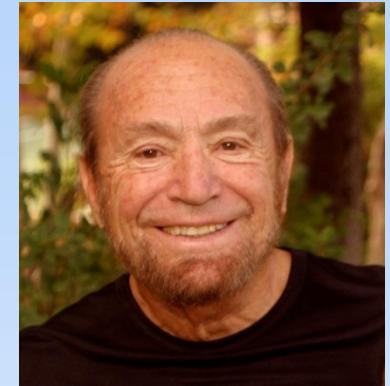


Focus on:

- Interaction between you and your child
- Learning about yourself: feelings, thoughts and attachment patterns
- Understanding the brain and attachment theory
- Being mindful in your interactions with your children

Separation Theory

Robert W. Firestone, Ph.D.



- ❖ The concept of the **Fantasy Bond**
- ❖ The concept of the **Critical Inner Voice**





The Fantasy Bond

- You Extend the Fantasy Bond to Your Children
- You treat your children the way you were treated
- The voice is like the coach telling you what to do as a parent





Definition of the Voice

The critical inner voice refers to a well-integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward our selves and others. The “voices” that make up this internalized dialogue are at the root of much of our maladaptive behavior. This internal enemy fosters inwardness, distrust, self-criticism, self-denial, addictions and a retreat from goal-directed activities. The critical inner voice effects every aspect of our lives: our self-esteem and confidence, our personal and intimate relationships, our performance and accomplishments at school and work and **especially our parenting.**





Common “Voices” in Parenting



- ❖ You don't know what you're doing.
- ❖ You're a horrible father.
- ❖ You're just like your mother.
- ❖ Everyone sees what a bad parent you are.
- ❖ Your kids are out of control.
- ❖ They're no good, because you're no good.
- ❖ They are so mean and demanding.
- ❖ You never get a moment's peace.
- ❖ Don't you wish they'd just leave you alone?
- ❖ Having kids means giving up your life.
- ❖ Only a horrible person feels critical of their kids.





The “Should” Voices in Parents (The Negative Coaching)

- ❖ You should make them listen to you.
- ❖ You should be nice to them.
- ❖ Be different from your mother.
- ❖ Let them do what they want.
- ❖ You should point out everything they do wrong.
- ❖ You shouldn't let them get away with that.
- ❖ You should make them eat healthy.
- ❖ You should make them behave.





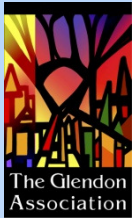
Poll #1

How many of you have had any of these thoughts?



How Voices Pass From Generation to Generation





Where do voices come from?

Patterns of Attachment in Children

Category of Attachment

- ❖ Secure
- ❖ Insecure – avoidant
- ❖ Insecure- anxious/ambivalent
- ❖ Insecure - disorganized

Parental Interactive Pattern

- ❖ Emotionally available, perceptive, responsive
- ❖ Emotionally unavailable, imperceptive, unresponsive and rejecting
- ❖ Inconsistently available, perceptive and responsive and intrusive
- ❖ Frightening, frightened, disorienting, alarming





From Parenting from the Inside Out

Attachment Categories as Children and as Adults

CHILD

Securely attached

Avoidantly attached

Ambivalently attached

Disorganized attached

ADULT

Secure (free or autonomous)

Dismissing

Preoccupied or entangled

Unresolved trauma or loss/disorganized



What causes insecure attachment?

- ❖ Unresolved trauma/loss in the life of the parents statistically predict attachment style far more than:
 - Maternal Sensitivity
 - Child Temperament
 - Social Status
 - Culture





Implicit Versus Explicit Memory

❖ Implicit Memory



❖ Explicit Memory

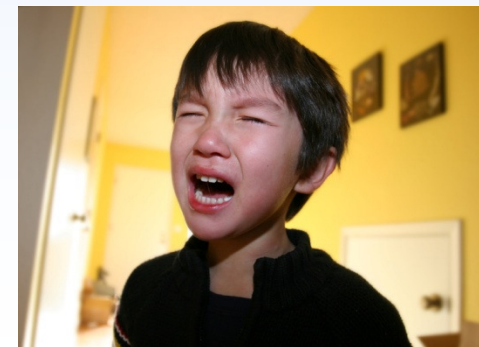
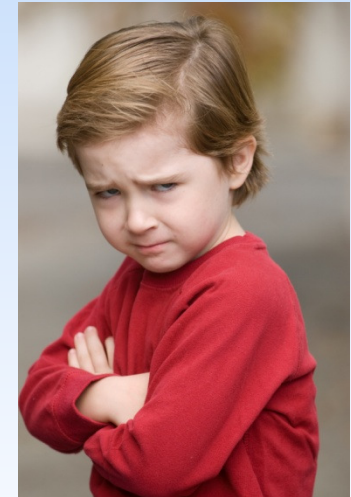
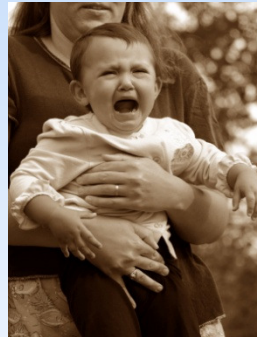


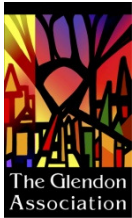


How does disorganized attachment pass from generation to generation?

❖ Implicit memory of terrifying experiences may create:

- Impulsive behaviors
- Distorted perceptions
- Rigid thoughts and impaired decision making patterns
- Difficulty tolerating a range of emotions

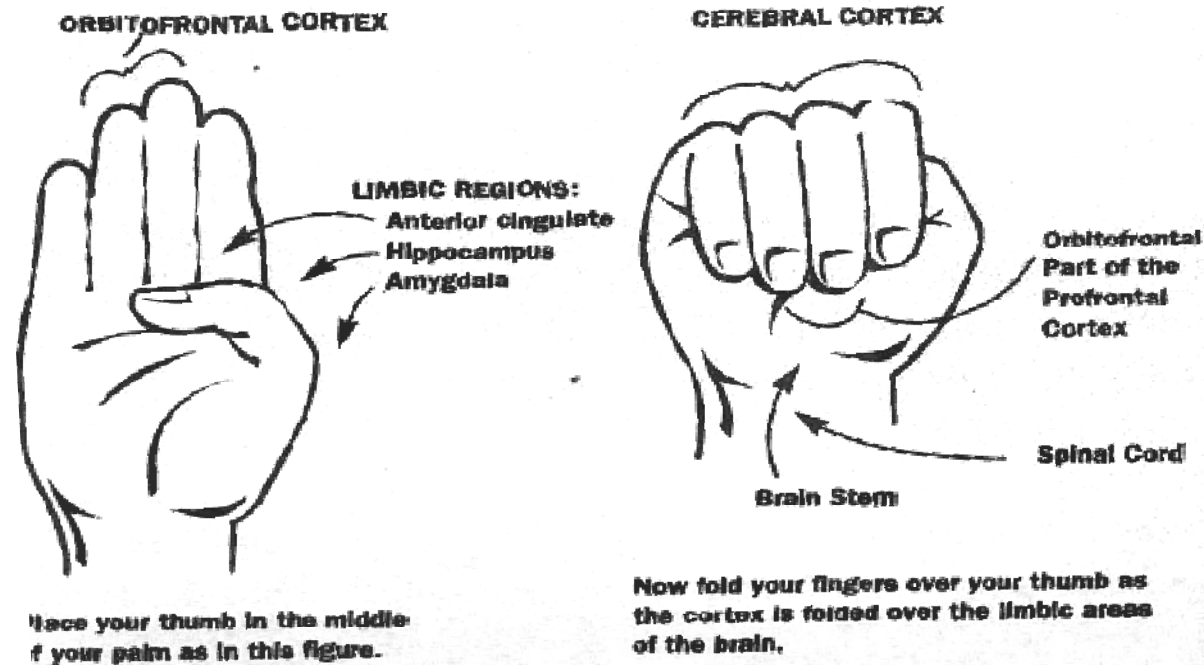




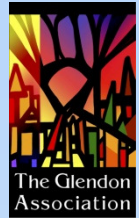
The Brain in the Palm of Your Hand



Daniel Siegel, M.D. – Interpersonal Neurobiology



9 Important Functions of the Pre-Frontal Cortex



1. Body Regulation
2. Attunement
3. Emotional Balance
4. Response Flexibility
5. Empathy
6. Self-Knowing Awareness (Insight)
7. Fear Modulation
8. Intuition
9. Morality





Division of the Mind

Parental Ambivalence

Parents both love and hate themselves and extend both reactions to their productions, i.e., their children.

Parental Nurturance



Parental Rejection, Neglect Hostility





Prenatal Influences

Disease/Trauma

Substance Abuse/ Domestic Violence





Birth →
Trauma →



Baby →
Genetic
Structure
Temperament
Physicality
Sex





Parental Nurturance



Self-System

Unique make-up of the individual; harmonious identification and incorporation of parent's positive attitudes and traits; and the effect of experience and education on the maturing self-system.



Personal Goals

Needs



Food

Thirst

Sex

Safety

Wants



Affiliation

Achievement

Activity

Meaning



Love

Compassion
for Others

Generosity



Personal Conscience

❖ Moral Principles



❖ Ethical Behavior



❖ Integrity





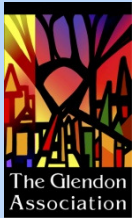
Parental Rejection, Neglect, Hostility

Other Factors: accidents, illnesses, death anxiety

Anti-Self System

The Fantasy Bond (core defense) is a self-parenting process made up of two elements: the helpless, needy child, and the self-punishing, self-nurturing parent. Either aspect may be extended to relationships. The degree of defense is proportional to the amount of damage sustained while growing up.



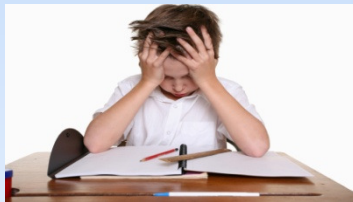


Anti-Self System

Self-Punishing Voice Process

Voice Process

1. Critical thoughts toward self



2. Micro-suicidal injunctions



3. Suicidal injunctions – suicidal ideation



Behaviors

Verbal self-attacks – a generally negative attitude toward self and others predisposing alienation.

Addictive patterns. Self-punitive thoughts after indulging.

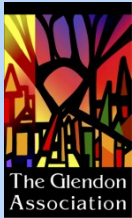
Actions that jeopardize, such as carelessness with one's body, physical attacks on the self, and actual suicide

Source

Critical parental attitudes, projections, and unreasonable expectations.

Identification with parents defenses

Parents' covert and overt aggression (identification with the aggressor).



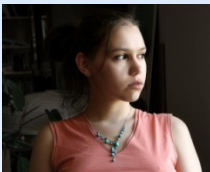
Anti-Self System

Self- Soothing Voice Process

Voice Process



1a) Aggrandizing thoughts toward self.



1b) Suspicious paranoid thoughts towards others.



2. Micro-suicidal Injunctions



3. Overtly Violent thoughts

Behaviors

Verbal build up toward self.

Alienation from others, destructive behavior towards others.

Addictive patterns.
Thoughts luring the person into indulging.

Aggressive actions, actual violence.

Source

Parental build up

Parental attitudes, child abuse, experienced victimization.

Imitation of parents' defenses.

Parental neglect, parents' overt aggression (identification with the aggressor).

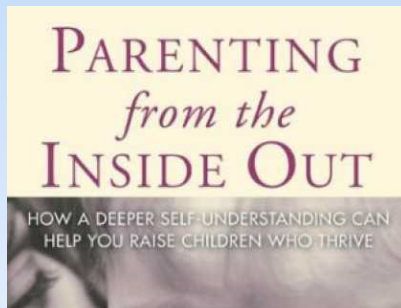


Part 2: Identifying Patterns in Ourselves





Identifying the Moments When You “Lose It” With Your Kids



What triggers you?

- Examples:

- Running late
- Inappropriate public displays
- Tantrums
- Our own stress





Identifying the Moments When You “Lose It” With Your Kids





Poll #2

Does it sometimes feel like your child is dictating to you?



Can you recall a time when your parents
“flipped their lid” with you?





Poll #3

Can you recall a time when your parents
“flipped their lid” with you?



From Parenting from the Inside Out

- Reflect on times when you have entered low-road states with your children. How have you acted at such times? How have your children responded to you when you were on the low road? Can you recognize the sensation when you are leaving the high road? **Knowing your triggers and being able to recognize when you are entering the low road are the first steps toward changing.**
- Are there particular interactions with your child that frequently bring you into a low-road state? There may be recurring themes that can enable you to understand your experiences with the low road. What interactions with your child fill you with overwhelming emotion, such as fear, anger, sadness, or shame? For some, feeling abandon or invisible brings them close to the transition to the low road. For others, feeling incompetent drives them “crazy.” **What themes act as a trigger and brings you to the edge?**





Poll #4

What situations cause difficulty between you and your child?



Exercises from The Compassionate Child Rearing Parent Education Program

- Some parents mistreat their children *emotionally*, with little or no awareness of how this hurts a child's feelings. Do you recall your parents harshly criticizing you or unjustly accusing you of something you didn't do? How did you feel at these times?
- In your original family, did you experience a lack of respect for your personal boundaries? How?
- Did your parents ever threaten to abandon you or send you away to boarding school or military school?





Exercises from The Compassionate Child Rearing Parent Education Program

- Do you feel that your parents or teachers stifled your curiosity or excitement about learning?
- Did you have a teacher, parent or relative who made a practice of ridiculing or teasing you, or who made sarcastic remarks, then told you that you were “too sensitive” if you showed that your feelings were hurt?
- Have you noticed yourself reacting to your children in ways you feel might hurt their feelings? How have you begun to change those reactions?





Poll #5

Do you recall a time when your parents:

- harshly criticized you?
- showed a lack of respect for your personal boundaries?
- threatened to abandon you or send you away?
- stifled your curiosity or excitement?
- ridiculed or teased you?



From Parenting from the Inside Out

Questions for Parental Self-Reflection

Adapted from the Adult Attachment Interview

- What was it like growing up? Who was in your family?
- How did you get along with your parents early in your childhood? How did the relationship evolve throughout your youth up until the present time?
- How did your relationship with your mother and father differ and how were they similar? Are there ways in which you try to be like, or try not to be like, each of your parents?
- Did you ever feel rejected or threatened by your parents? Were there other experiences you had that felt overwhelming or traumatizing in your life, during childhood or beyond? Do any of these experiences still feel very much **alive**? Do they continue to influence your life?



From Parenting from the Inside Out

Questions for Parental Self-Reflection

- How did your parents communicate with you when you were happy and excited? Did they join with you in your enthusiasm? When you were distressed or unhappy as a child, what would happen? Did your father or mother respond differently to you during these emotional times? How?
- Was there anyone else besides your parents in your childhood who took care of you? What was that relationship like for you? What happened to those individuals? What is it like for you when you let others take care of your child now?
- If you had difficult times during your childhood, were there positive relationships in or outside of your home that you could depend on during those times? How do you feel those connections benefited you then, and how might they help you now?



From Parenting from the Inside Out

Questions for Parental Self-Reflection

- How did your parents discipline you as a child? What impact did that have on your childhood, and how do you feel it affects your role as a parent now?
- Do you recall your earliest separations from your parents? What was it like? Did you ever have prolonged separations from your parents?
- Did anyone significant in your life die during your childhood, or later in your life? What was that life for you at the time, and how does that loss affect you now?



From Parenting from the Inside Out

Think of three words that describe your relationship with your child. Do these words resemble those that you would use to describe memories of your childhood experiences with your own parents? How do they differ?





Poll #6

How many of you are familiar with the term “helicopter parent?”

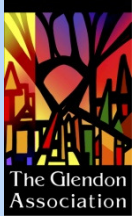


Exercises from The Compassionate Child Rearing Parent Education Program

Emotional Hunger

- Can you recall your parents being overprotective or intrusive? Did their treatment of you make you feel that you were more helpless or incompetent than you really were at that age? Describe your reactions?
- Did your parents try to get comfort from you when you were a child? Did one of them seek you out as a confidant or special companion and leave the other parent out? How did you feel?
- Did your parent or parents insist that you perform for friends and relatives? How did you feel at those times?
- Did your parent or parents brag excessively to their friends and relatives about your accomplishments (as though your achievements or talent were theirs)? How did you respond?





Poll #7

Did your parents ever:

- act overprotective or intrusive?
- try to get comfort from you when you were a child?
- insist that you perform for friends and relatives?
- brag excessively about your accomplishments?



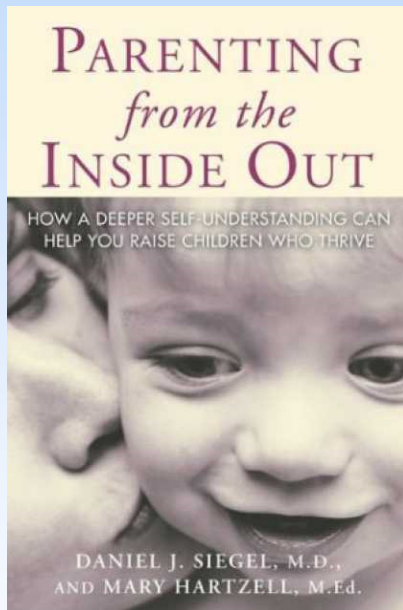
Part 3:

Changing to Become Better Parents

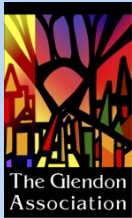




Exercises from Parenting From the Inside Out



- Write in your journal when your emotions are reactive and heating up. You may notice certain patterns of interaction with your child that trigger these emotional experiences. For now, just notice them-don't try to change your response yet, just observe.
- Think of an issue in your life that is impairing your ability to connect flexibility with your child. Focus on the past, present, and future aspects of this issue.



Exercise 9.1

The Firestone Voice Scale for Parents

Circle the frequency with which you experience the following critical inner voices:
0 = Never 1 = Rarely 2 = Once in a While 3 = Frequently 4 = Most of the Time

0 1 2 3 4

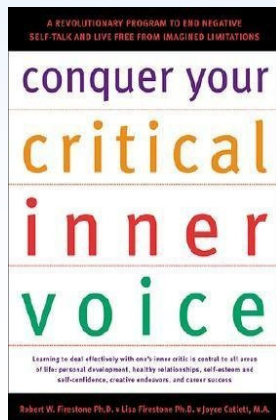
You don't know how to comfort your baby. You can't make him(her) feel better.

0 1 2 3 4

You don't know the first thing about being a parent.

0 1 2 3 4

You're so impatient with kids.





Exercise 9.1

The Firestone Voice Scale for Parents

Circle the frequency with which you experience the following critical inner voices:
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0 1 2 3 4

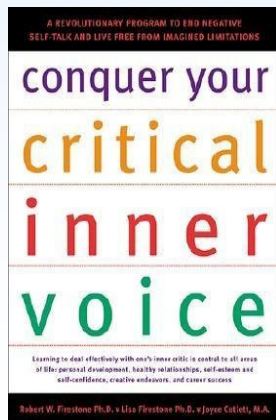
Your child is so demanding, so needy, so clingy.

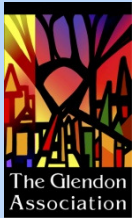
0 1 2 3 4

Your child is supposed to fit into your life, not disrupt it.

0 1 2 3 4

Your child is always crying. You must be doing something wrong.





Exercise 9.1

The Firestone Voice Scale for Parents

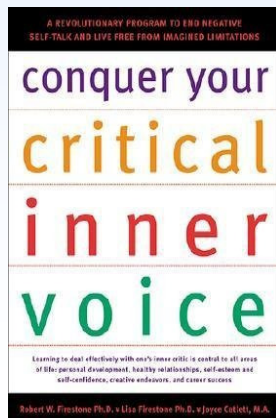
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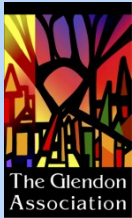
0 1 2 3 4 Your children are misbehaving in public again. See how bad they're making you look!

0 1 2 3 4 That kid is just trying to get under your skin.

0 1 2 3 4 See how unhappy your child looks. It's all your fault.

0 1 2 3 4 You gave in to that kid again. You never do what you say you're going to do.





Exercise 9.1

The Firestone Voice Scale for Parents

Circle the frequency with which you experience the following critical inner voices:

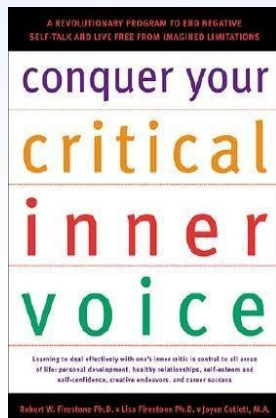
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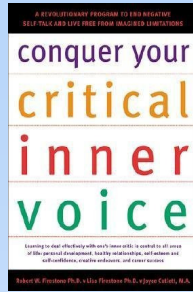
0 1 2 3 4 You're such an angry parent. You lose your temper all the time.

0 1 2 3 4 Your child has to learn that you mean what you say. Go ahead and spank him(her).

0 1 2 3 4 He(she) is too old for you to hug or hold him(her) all the time.

0 1 2 3 4 Children are born aggressive, greedy and selfish and have to be taught how to be civilized and unselfish.





Exercise 9.2 What Do You Think When You are Angry at Your Child?

Angry thoughts toward my child

Critical inner voices similar to the angry thoughts I have toward my child

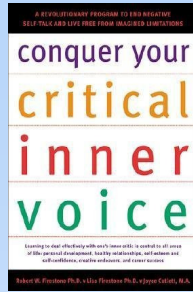
Similar angry statements that were said to me as a child

Example:

*She is so spoiled.
She asks for everything.*

*You're so self-centered.
Don't ask for too much.*

You can't always get what you want. The whole world doesn't revolve around you, you know?



Exercise 9.3 You as a parent: Your Critical Inner Voice/The Real You

My critical inner voice's point of view about me as a parent

Example:

You're so mean. You always lose your temper, and your kids will never respect you.

My realistic point of view of me as a parent

I may not be perfect, but I can control my temper and enjoy my kids. They care about me and admire me when I am at my best.



From Parenting from the Inside Out

If you have already entered the low road, self-reflection may be very difficult. If possible, remove yourself from interaction with your children. **Move your body, stretch, walk.** watch your breathing. As soon as you begin to calm, observe your internal sensations. You may find certain “self-talk” techniques useful in helping to decrease the intensity of your feelings and behaviors. “I need to calm down.” “I am on the low road and these feelings and impulses are not dependable.” Even if these strategies don’t lead to immediate recovery, they can often help to reduce the destructive impact of low roads on your children, and your sense of self.





From Parenting from the Inside Out

Consider the possibilities if changing the patterns of the past. When you are about to transition to the low road, be aware that an alternative pathway is possible. Take a breath. Count to ten. Stop and get a glass of water. **Remove yourself from the situation** by taking a time-out or “emotional break.” Now that you have created some distance, reflect on what was happening. Let yourself see the roots in the past that have led to present responses.





From Parenting from the Inside Out Initiating Repair

The goal is to make a coherent story:

- Dual focus of repair in the parent: on what you experience and what your child experiences from his/her point of view
- Getting on the same physical level as your child
- Make a non-intrusive, empathetic attempt at the repair process
- Respect your child's style
- Be neutral, not blaming or judging
- Do not interrogate
- Be open to the child's point of view and encourage him/her to express it
- Do not be defensive/ Do not invalidate your child's experience
- Listen to your child's experience before you share your own
- Reflect back the child's experience
- Explain melt downs to your child - people do temporarily "lose their minds"





Poll #8

Do you feel you can now implement these repair techniques with your children?



From Parenting from the Inside Out

Practices of Integrative Communication

- **Awareness.** Be mindful of your own feelings and bodily responses and others' nonverbal signals.
- **Attunement.** Allow your own state of mind to align with that of another.
- **Empathy.** Open your mind to sense another's experience and point of view.
- **Expression.** Communicate your internal responses with respect; make the internal external.
- **Joining.** Share openly in the give-and-take of communication, both verbally and nonverbally.
- **Clarification.** Help make sense of the experience of another.
- **Sovereignty.** Respect the dignity and separateness of each individual's mind.





From Parenting from the Inside Out

- Think of a time when you and your child had a different reaction to the same experience. Now try to see the events from your child's point of view. How did you appraise the meaning of the experience differently?
- Consider the practices of integrative communication as shown before. Observe your interactions with your child and think of how these seven elements may have been a part of your communication. Try developing these practices in your future interactions with each other. **Can your child sense feeling felt by you?**
- Think of ways that you can utilize these seven practices in communicating with your self. How can you experience an openness to your own internal states? Become aware of inner sensations, thoughts, and images that enable a deeper and centering sense of mindfulness. As you let these internal processes float into consciousness, empathize with them without judging or trying to fix yourself.





From Parenting from the Inside Out Knowing Minds

Compassion: The ability to feel with another; to be sympathetic, tenderhearted.

Compassion is a caring stance toward the distressful emotional experience of another person. Compassion may depend on mirror neuron systems, which evoke an emotional state in us that mirrors that of another person, enabling us to feel another person's pain.

Empathy: Understanding the internal experience of another person; the imaginative projection of one's consciousness into the feelings of another person or object; sympathetic understanding. This is a cognitively complex process that involves mental capacities to imagine the mind of another. Empathy may depend on the capacity for mind sight, mediated by the integrated right hemisphere and prefrontal regions of the brain.



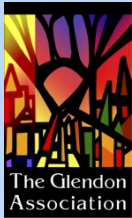


From Parenting from the Inside Out Knowing Minds

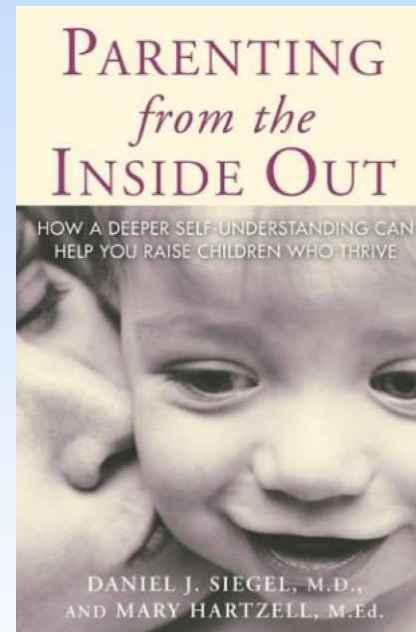
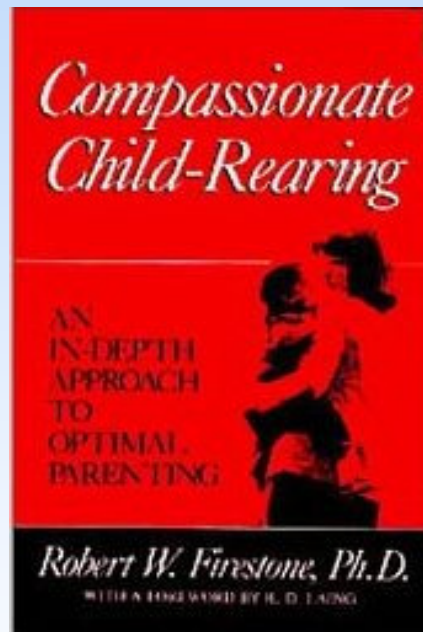
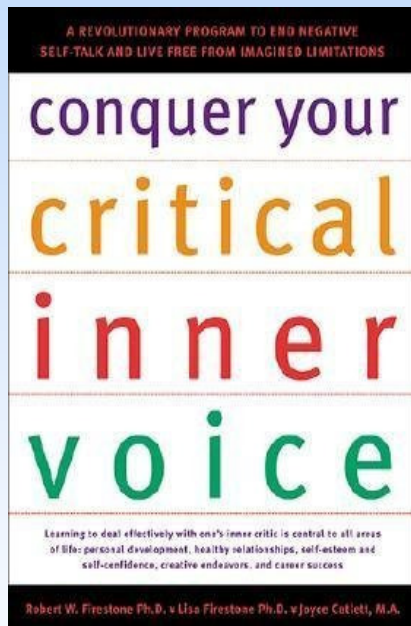
Mindsight: The capacity to “see,” or imagine, the mind of oneself or another, enabling an understanding of behavior in terms of mental processes. Other synonyms for this process are “mentalizing,” “theory of the mind,” “mind reading,” and “reflective function.”



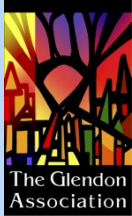
Monitor to Modify



Resources: Books



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