

REFLECTION

Making your past a coherent narrative.

PRESENT MOMENT

It's important to notice if you're reacting from the past or present.

What's happening in front of you, might not be what you're actually responding to.

How are you feeling in the moment and where are your emotions coming from?

What could be influencing the way you perceive the situation?

PAST EMOTIONS

The next time you have a feeling that feels directed or toward your child, note it.

Where does this emotion come from?

Does this feeling belong to this situation with my child in the present?

Am I seeing the situation from their viewpoint?

Is there something stopping me from being able to?

Look for patterns in your responses.

Look back to when you first got this feeling, tracing it back to your childhood.

If you were made to feel bad or in the wrong or even responsible for your parents' bad mood. You'll try to repair your feeling of being wrong by making someone else feel wrong and the victim will be your child.

MESSAGE FROM YOUR MEMORIES

Close your eyes and remember your very earliest memory. It may just be an image or a feeling, or it may have a story.

What is the predominant emotion in your memory?

What relevance can you trace from the memory to who you are now?

How does the memory influence how you parent?

LOOK BACK WITH COMPASSION

What behavior in your child gets the strongest negative response from you?

What happened to you as a child when you demonstrated the same behavior?

EMOTIONAL COMFORT LEVEL

How comfortable are you with your emotions?

This is a good way to begin looking at your usual reactions to emotions, both yourself and your child. One at a time, think about fear, love, anger, excitement, guilt, sadness and joy.

Which emotions do you feel more comfortable with?

Which ones make you feel less comfortable?

Which are easier for you to cope within yourself?

How about when they're directed towards you or when you witness them at other people?

SAFETY

Think about your physical, emotional and relational experiences.

In what ways did your parents help you feel safe?

In what ways did you not feel safe?

Did you feel protected by your parents?

In what ways did they do a good job of protecting you?

Did you ever feel scared of your parents?
Were your parents ever the source of your fear?

How do you wish your parents responded differently?
What would have been ideal for you to feel safe?

Was there anyone you could turn to in your family or outside as a place of safety?

When you think about your child feeling scared by your own behavior, how does that make you feel?

When do you find yourself reacting in ways you don't want to?

How do you think your child would want you to respond when they come to you upset? What could you change?

How did repair happen when you were growing up?
How do you repair now as a parent?

STRESS

When you experienced distress as a child, who was there for you?
What specific memories do you have of a parent showing up for you?

If you did receive this type of attunement when you were upset, what aspects of it would you want to give to your own kids?

If this was missing from your childhood, how did you learn to cope with that absence?

Did you simply remain upset until you just cried it out?
Did you learn to deny your feelings and ignore their importance?

How do you handle your own difficult moments now, as an adult?
Do you have someone to support you as you deal with challenging experiences?
Do you have a hard time returning to regulation after you've left it?

How present are you for your kids when they're hurting?

Do you provide them with your calm?

Do you leave them to deal with their emotions alone?

Do you get so caught up in their emotions that you escalate instead of co-regulate?

SECURITY

How secure did you feel as a child?

Did your parents make you feel safe, seen, and soothed?

Where could they have done better?

Did they help you develop the ability to find security within yourself, without having to rely on others? Or were you left to do that on your own?

What can you do now to do a better job of showing up for yourself?

How could you provide yourself with more security?

What about your kids? Have they developed the security that comes from feeling safe, seen and soothed when they need it?

How do you feel about how well you've responded to their needs quickly, sensitively and predictably?

Are you finding ways to help them build skills for developing their own security, even when you're not around?

How are you a secure base?

What's one thing you can do right now to help your child feel more secure than they already do?

SEE YOURSELF

One of our deepest needs as humans is connection to be seen and therefore known. Being understood by another allows us to know ourselves and to live authentically out of our internal experience.

If you grew up where attention was focused on external and surface-level experiences, what you did and how you behaved or achieved. You may have had fun as a family, but your inner world was ignored.

When you haven't been seen, the wiring that allows you to tune in to other's and acquire that type of insight doesn't develop as fully and you eventually stop seeing yourself.

To what degree did you feel truly seen by your parents?

Do you currently have relationships in which you have meaningful conversations, where you discuss matters having to do with your memories, fears, desires and other facets of your inner life?

What about with your kids? Do you interact with them in ways that introduce them to and honor their inner worlds? Do you model what it means to pay attention to your own body and emotions?

How often do they feel truly seen by you?

Do they feel like you've embraced them for who they truly are, even if it's different from you or your desires for them?

Does your child ever feel ashamed for having and expressing their emotions?

Do they believe that you'll show up and be there for them, even when they're feeling distressed or behaving at their worst?

What is one step you could take right now, to do a better job of truly seeing your child and responding to what they need?