

INTEGER NETWORK SOUTH AFRICA

# LET'S TALK PARENTING

## PANDEMIC PARENTING

RAISING YOUNG ONES IN AN EVER-CHANGING WORLD



### PREPARED BY

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# AT INTEGER NETWORK WE BELIEVE THAT OUR THREE VALUES – AUTHENTICITY, CONNECTION, AND WHOLENESS – CREATE A GREAT FRAMEWORK FOR PARENTING.

## WHY? SIMPLY BECAUSE PARENTING IS MORE ABOUT THE PARENT THAN ABOUT THE CHILD...



The “uncomfortable” reality is, that all your choices as parent, your example and your well-being have a profound effect on your child’s development as a person. Why don’t you take a moment and think about your own story growing up – can you see how all of it – the good and the bad – played a part in who you are today? Now before you run away or panic about how doomed your children are – there’s hope! This journey of parenting that you and your child are on together, can lead to the greatest discoveries and even greater freedom for you and for them... the only question is – are you willing to do the work? Now I know what you’re thinking, and I understand that having children under the age of 6 means that you are already feeling overwhelmed. Here’s more good news – the work we suggest, nudging you in the direction of doing some inner work, will make the outer work (of parenting) more effective, more joyful and more rewarding – in the long run.

Let’s take a closer look at our three values and how it fits into parenting:

### **AUTHENTICITY**

AUTHENTICITY (according to Brene Brown’s definition) is the daily practice of letting go of who you think you’re supposed to be and embracing who you actually are.

Don’t you think your life will be a bit easier if you don’t have to live up to the high expectation of being the perfect parent? What if you can relax and be yourself and start enjoying being with your child – who can now maybe also relax because he/she does not have to be the perfect child anymore...? What if we can let our hair down and admit when we’re tired and need a break and ask for help... maybe our house can become a place where grace is available for everybody and we can start figuring out how to make this work, together...?

Now what about this voice inside who “warns” us about not embracing who we actually are, as if that would be a big mistake – maybe it is time to sit with that thought and work on welcoming who you have been created to be – the unique, one-of-a-kind human being who are now responsible to love another unique, one-of-a-kind human being authentically! When it comes to CONNECTION, we believe that the most important person you need to be connected with is yourself! When you are in touch with your emotions and able to acknowledge them, you can become more aware of what you really need – because an unmet need is most of the time where emotions come from. This will put you in a better position to connect with your child and his/her emotions and together you will be better able to figure out the real needs behind their behaviour or reaction in any given situation. It becomes a journey of self-awareness that you and your child will benefit from together.

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## CONNECTION

If we look at how connected babies are in the womb, how utterly dependant they are in their first year of life and how adamant they become to keep your attention during those tricky second and third years, the truth of this statement is undeniable. I believe children come into this world like this to help us make connection the foundation of our parenting relationship... if we can only remember that beyond the baby years and beyond the physical necessities of feeding and caring, there is always the invitation to connect with the little person inside.

So how do I connect with my little ones? Ross Campbell, author of the book, "How to really love your child" streamlined it to three basic connection tools:

- Physical contact
- Eye contact
- Focused attention



“Children come to us with a need for love, connection and belonging.”  
– Rebecca Eanes

Here’s a few simple and practical ideas to get you started:

Changing your baby’s diaper while making eye contact and loving on him/her with words and tickles and songs can affirm in that child’s understanding that I’m welcome and loved, just as I am (stinky diaper and all...)

Playing peekaboo is a great way to establish and maintain eye contact – even from across a room or around the dinner table.

Carrying the baby (or toddler) around in the garden while talking to them about all the wonderful things there are to see, looking him in the eye and being completely present in that moment, can become a wonderful ritual with a lot of other benefits for their overall development and well-being.

Taking ten minutes amongst the hustle and bustle of daily life to spend time with your toddler - doing whatever he/she prefers to do at that moment – can be the gamechanger toward independent play and a more content child.

Having a little “I love you”-song or ritual (make something up using the tune of a well-known children’s song) that includes physical touch, eye contact and focused attention is a great tool when comfort and reassurance is needed.

Daily routine tasks such as getting dressed or brushing teeth are often a battlefield, but incorporating the three basic connection tools can change it into an opportunity for positive connection.

Remember that the need for connection is a constant and “new every morning”- kind of need... and it can take a lot out of you – especially because there are often a million other things you also need to do... Here is where the other half of the connecting equation comes in.





How do you connect with yourself?

Maybe a better question is, what do you need to get into place so that you can connect with yourself. This is a hard question and often we don't have the capacity to even think about it - let alone getting something done... but it is essential! If you keep pouring into the lives of the little ones (and big ones) around you, and you do not refill your cup regularly, you will become completely run down - with dire consequences for you and your family. Being kind to yourself in the way you talk to yourself, letting go of the high standards, unrealistic expectations and false responsibilities that you undoubtedly carry and then taking short breaks for me-time as regularly as possible, will be a great step in the right direction. Try really hard to think of one thing that you have always liked to do and then be creative about when, how and where you can make this a part of your normal life again. It can be something like going on a walk outside, having a cup of coffee in silence, taking a bath or going somewhere on your own. It can even be taking a nap with your toddler so that you are ready for the next part of the day.

When you only have a minute to connect with yourself in your mind, try to practise naming your emotion at that moment, figuring out what the need behind it is and think about ways to meet that need. You may end up having to accept the fact that that need cannot be met immediately (or soon) and come to terms with that. Do not underestimate the value of grieving the loss of that possibility at this point. What follows can be a process of figuring out how you can be your best self (most authentic and most real) going forward. Taking the time to reflect on your situation and who you are discovering yourself to be, is the doorway to the inner work parenting is inviting you into. Remember parenting is a marathon, not a sprint... you might need help along the way and lots of support and encouragement.

## WHOLENESS

WHOLENESS, as David Benner explains it, is not perfection - it happens when we allow and embrace the fulness of who we are, bringing the "broken" pieces together. We believe that a life lived in wholeness will create the safe environment you want to raise your child in. We believe a life where mistakes are made and restoration happens will contribute to healthy growth. We believe parenting that embraces the good, the bad and the ugly will equip your child to live in a post-pandemic world.

At Integer Network we believe that parenting is about connecting with your child from your own authentic self by embracing the fulness of who you both are, just as you were made to be.

**CHILDREN COME TO US  
WITH A NEED FOR LOVE,  
CONNECTION AND  
BELONGING. YES.  
BUT ALSO: CHILDREN COME  
TO US WITH GIFTS OF LOVE,  
CONNECTION AND  
BELONGING.  
WE ARE NOT ONLY GIVING.  
WE ARE ALSO RECEIVING.**

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## RESOURCE PAGE

Please contact us for coaching in any of the areas mentioned. Among our coaches we offer an array of services to support you on your parenting journey.

Here are also some resources specifically developed for parenting young ones that you might want to take a look at:

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/how-to-5-steps-for-brain-building-serve-and-return/>

Growing joy in early life: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) for parents with babies

Pdf: <https://education.possumsonline.com/sites/default/files/pdf/additional-resources.pdf>

videos: <https://education.possumsonline.com/act-mental-health-strategies-parents-babies>

Big Little Feelings is on a mission to create a community of happy parents and happy toddlers by providing real-life tips for real-life toddler challenges. <https://biglittlefeelings.com>

Jerrica Sanes for better quality screen time + independent play: <https://raisewildflowers.com/tv-detox>

Flourishing Homes and Families: <https://www.facebook.com/flourishinghomesandfamilies>



LET'S BE HONEST WITH EACH OTHER  
AND WITH OURSELVES.

PARENTING IS HARD.  
BUT IT IS NOT BAD.



**HARD**  
is not  
the same  
thing as  
**BAD.**



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