

# Principles of Parenting with Connection and Correction

## 1. The Two Hands of Parenting

'Hand One' provides connection with warmth and nurture. It gives the child appropriate autonomy matched to his developmental and emotional age. 'Hand Two' provides structure, supervision and boundaries. A child needs both; connection and correction.

## 2. Connection Before Correction and No Correction without Understanding

The parent needs to reflect on the behaviour they are experiencing from the child, gain some understanding of what might be underneath this behaviour, and connect to this internal experience. This will reduce and regulate the shame the child is experiencing. Correction will be tempered with empathy and will be more easily accepted by the child.

## 3. Avoid Lectures and Delay Problem Solving

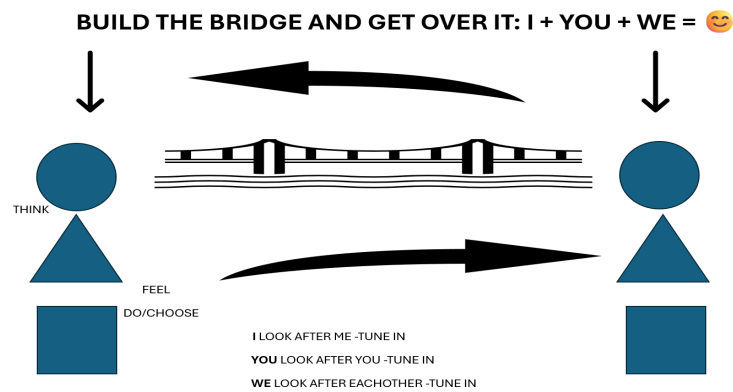
Lectures increase shame and defensive responding, therefore they have little impact upon a child's behaviour. Making sense of behaviour is more like telling a story. Children can become much more open and engaged to understanding themselves through this story. This can lead to some useful problem solving later, so that correction becomes part of developing pro-social abilities rather than learning to avoid punishment.

## 4. Avoid Punishing with the Relationship, and the Adult takes Responsibility for Relationship Repair

The relationship is unconditional and therefore should not be withdrawn to encourage the child to improve his behaviour. This would give a message of conditionality instead. Sometimes the parents need to withdraw to take care of themselves. The child is helped to understand that this is about the parents looking after themselves and it is not about coercing the child to behave differently. In the same way, relationship repair is the adults' responsibility, again, giving the child, a powerful sense of being important to the parents.

## 5. Provide a Parenting Cycle of Attunement–Rupture–Re-attunement

Children need to experience attunement. There will be inevitable breaks to this attunement, which lead to ruptures in the relationship. The relationship repair ensures that the relationship is back on track and that the child is again experiencing attunement.



## Putting it all Together: Seven Steps for Parenting the Insecure Child

Parenting a child with connection and correction can be understood by breaking it down into seven steps. By keeping these steps in mind, it is easier to stay open and engaged with the child rather than becoming defensive within parenting. This, in turn, helps to make an emotional connection with the child while also providing some behavioural management. When a parent connects before correcting, the child will experience unconditional love and acceptance alongside the safety, which empathic boundaries and discipline can provide.

**Step one. Notice what is happening.** Do I need to step in? What immediate steps do I need to do to ensure everyone's safety?

**Step two. Pause** for a moment and think: "What is the impact on me? Am I regulated? Can I stay open and engaged? Am I becoming defensive? If I'm becoming defensive, do I need a break or can I get back to being open and engaged? Can I be compassionate to myself?" Obviously during behaviour, the parent may not have much time to do this, but just taking a moment to notice this can help the parent to stay regulated. It may also be helpful to notice reactions, which can be reflected upon later with more time and with a trusted other.

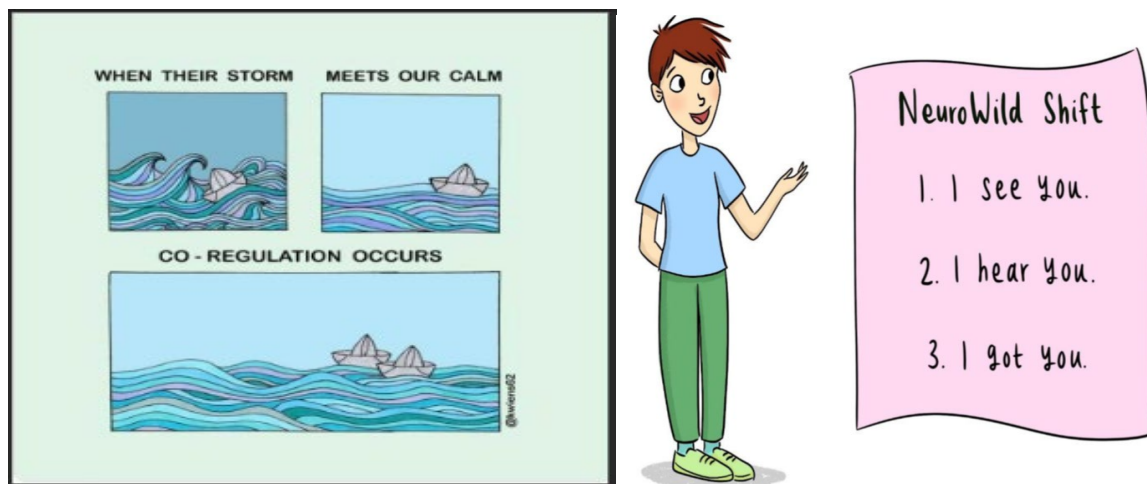
**Step three.** Do I need to help **regulate** the child? Is the child open for some reflection? What part of the child's brain is activated now? Do I need to provide sensory regulation? Do I need to emotionally regulate? Or can I help him to reflect.

**Step four. Curiosity and understanding.** Reflect with the child or, if this is not possible, on his behalf. Make sense of what's going on. What is my best guess of what the child's internal emotional experience is at this moment, remembering that internal experience is neither right nor wrong, it just is. I'm not going to judge it.

**Step five. Demonstrate acceptance and empathy** to connect with the child around the best guess of what his emotional experience is. How can I help him to know that I get it?

**Step six. The correction.** Do I need to do anything further? Do I need to provide a consequence? Do we need to do some problem solving?

**Step Seven. Repair the relationship.** Let the child know he is loved unconditionally. It may have felt tough, but the relationship is stronger. Together we have got through it. In more traditional parenting the parent is likely to jump from step one to step six, with steps two to five getting lost on the way. Connection before correction is the longer route to parenting as the parent works through all seven steps. It is this longer route that will allow trauma to be healed and the child to be able to experience safety within parenting.



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