

## Talking Points & Resources

Hello Pathways Connect Group Participants,

### **Preliminary note: There is no wrong way**

To run your Pathways Connect Gathering, the steps below are to help guide you. However, we encourage you to embrace the flow of your gathering and allow for your meeting to take on its own momentum in whatever direction it might go.

### **Step 1: Select topics**

Prior to your group gathering, find and select one or more of the magazine articles that you found interesting and want to share. Pick topics that make you passionate, as these are the easiest to talk about and spark discussion.

### **Step 2: The Gathering**

Welcome everyone present in the group and ask each person to introduce themselves and share a little about themselves. Be sure to share about yourself as well.

### **Step 3: Introduce the topic**

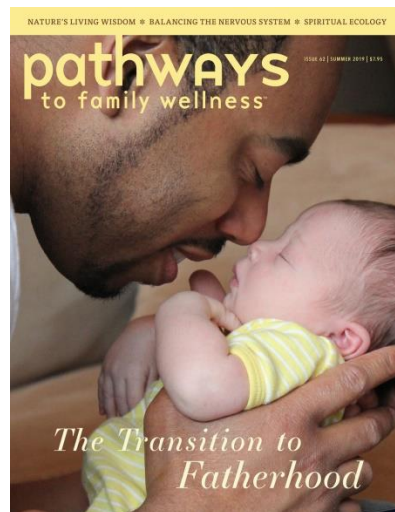
Share with the group your topic and why you chose it, why it interests you, and the importance you see in it. Summarize the article (some article summaries are provided below). You can read the entire article or article summary out loud to your group and share your thoughts at this time.

### **Step 4: Encourage conversation**

We provide questions after each summary section that will help people to engage. Make use of these questions or devise your own.

### **Step 5: Make the chiropractic connection**

At the end of each article summary are notes about how this topic relates to chiropractic. If you utilize these meetings to educate parents on the importance of chiropractic care you will be benefitting your office growth and the health of your community.



## PW #62 Introduction

### TAKING THE STEP • STAYING THE COURSE • LIVING THE JOURNEY

Welcome to the Summer 2019 issue!

Happy Summer!

Hopefully your family has been enjoying the outdoors together, enjoying time and freedom as you celebrate this, the warmest of the seasons. As always, our summer issue offers insights and inspiration on topics that apply directly to your lives as parents. The voices of experts and peers alike offer companionship and wisdom as you evolve in your parenting role.

Our first section, Taking the Step, has seven articles focused on the transition to parenthood: the experiences of pregnancy, birth, and early parenting that are so transformational. This issue offers a focus on the experiences of fathers in parenting. Of particular interest is *The Transition to Fatherhood* on page 28. This issue's study guide contains questions for discussion on this sometimes overlooked experience.

The next section, Staying the Course, contains seven articles that encourage you to explore concepts relating to parenting and will leave you feeling more confident in making and living the parenting choices that are best for your family. Your discussion guide offers questions for exploring several of these articles. *Don't Fix a Tantrum*, by Natalie Christensen, offers insights and practical suggestions that can be immediately applied to everyday life.

Living the Journey, the final section, offers four articles that address the broader topics that are in the background of our parenting experiences. Discussing these ideas together with other parents provides an opportunity to stretch and try on new ideas. *Stealing Time*, by Ginny Yurich, offers an opportunity to explore what we want our family's definition of childhood to look like.

There are endless choices to make as parents, and each feels essential. Our goal is to offer options to explore and to nourish both your curiosity and confidence as parents. The community that you create within your Pathways gathering group will take it from there.

As always, your study guide contains questions for consideration and connections to chiropractic care to stimulate conversation and offer insight.

We wish you peace and confidence in your parenting journey. While the choices are yours to make, know that you are not alone. Your Pathways community is here with you.

**PW #62 Talking Points, Group Questions, and the Chiropractic Connection****TAKING THE STEP*****Nature's Living Wisdom*** by Kristina Dryza

“Seasonal, circadian, lunar, and tidal patterns don’t just form the background to our lives—they are our lives.” These words, when examined, introduce the idea that the very template that we are often seeking to create stability and dependability in our lives is one that we are already living in, if we just allow ourselves to notice it. Natural transitions, such as the sun rising and setting, can help to set our own bodies’ clocks, and experiencing the seasons offers both mind and body a chance to readjust our internal rhythm.

The author goes on to explain that work and life schedules often take us away from these opportunities to live in the moment and balance ourselves rather than seeking our balance externally. She offers simple practices that can offer balance, which she wisely describes as an ever-shifting verb, rather than a destination. Tuning into silence and stillness, noticing the cycles of the sun and moon, and experiencing nature without distraction are all tools she offers for reconnection and balance within ourselves.

**Questions for Consideration:**

- Is the concept of balance as a verb rather than a destination new to you? What reaction do you have when hearing it described in this way? Do you find it soothing? Disheartening?
- In what ways have your efforts at balance been impacted by parenting?
- Do you incorporate a practice of noticing nature’s rhythms such as watching sunrise and sunset or experiencing the seasons outside into your life? Does the idea appeal?
- Can you think of ways to apply the author’s suggestions of merging with existing rhythms rather than creating new ones to parenting practices? Can you think of ways in which you’re already doing that?

**Chiropractic Connection:**

Just like the Earth, our bodies contain systems and cycles that themselves are designed perfectly for meeting our needs. A lifetime of disassociation from our bodies, screens, and medical intervention all interfere with our ability to tune into and trust our bodies as the competent, brilliant systems that we are. Chiropractic care enhances the body’s own ability to allow the brain and body to function in harmony. Keeping ourselves physically in balance will, in turn, foster our ability to take in and adapt to all that life brings our way.

**TAKING THE STEP***Obstetrical Kindness* by Vivian Keeler, D.C.**Article Summary**

The author, who is a chiropractor in Miami, begins her writing by describing the birthing climate in her community. She describes the very high cesarean rate, repeated stories of traumatic birth, and obstetrical violence. Having set the backdrop, she offers a story of hope.

Dr. Keeler paints for us a picture of how birth can be experienced when the attendants bring to the birthing room kindness and belief in the mothers and their births, including hospital births. She describes a recent experience as a doula in which the doctor was a present, caring attendant rather than a managing expert in charge. This created an atmosphere of calm quiet and support, offering this one family a loving, gentle start. While her story is about one family, her message offers the concept of obstetrical kindness as a goal for all birthing families.

**Questions for Consideration:**

- What are your expectations of a clinical birth attendant? Competence and safety, yes, but do you also expect them to serve as sources of emotional support?
- What is birth like in your community? Are birth stories such as these common, or did you find the concept of obstetrical kindness unfamiliar?
- The author describes traumatic birth and obstetrical violence within her community. How do you think birth has come to be this way? What policies or practices might be contributing to birth as it is commonly experienced?
- In what ways can you as consumers have an impact upon birth in your community?

**Chiropractic Connection:**

Pregnancy and labor are recognized by chiropractors as healthy, normal physiological events. Like the obstetrician described in Dr. Keeler's story, chiropractors believe in women and in the transformative power of birth. More and more, pregnant women are seeking chiropractic care and the Webster Technique to ensure that their bodies are aligned in preparation for birth. Through conversation with chiropractors and other parents in the chiropractic community, parents can unlearn the fear and medicalization of birth, and begin to trust the wisdom of the mother's body, the baby, and the birth process itself.

**TAKING THE STEP**

*The Transition to Fatherhood* by Jay Warren, D.C.

**Article Summary:**

In this article, Dr. Warren describes the evolving roles of fathers in our culture and the challenges many experience while adapting to this new role. He begins by describing the role of American fathers in generations past: passing out cigars, provider and protector, and later, disciplinarian. Some fathers also served as teachers and mentors, but it was not considered a priority in the same way that it was for mothers. Today, American fathers are also expected—and often aspire—to be hands-on parents providing labor support, night feeds, and sharing all-around responsibilities. New expectations are being woven into the fatherhood experience, leaving some feeling lost and their partners feeling unsupported.

Dr. Warren shares interactions with mothers describing their partners as ineffectual and unsupportive, as well as fathers feeling inadequate and frustrated. Not an ideal start for a family. Then he offers us a pathway for success: community. As with new moms' groups, the author delineates the benefits of groups centered specifically around fathers. He describes a comfort that isn't possible in mixed groups. That comfort facilitates a willingness to be vulnerable and share fears and despair that can be honored and normalized by the group. He adds that this can happen outside of a formal group, that it is the experience of being validated by peers that makes the difference.

In addition, the author offers suggestions for parents to plan and navigate their transition as a couple to include clear and specific sharing of tasks and responsibilities. Taken together with peer support, Dr. Warren offers powerful suggestions for easing the transition experiences of new families.

**Questions for Consideration:**

- Changes in expectations of parents of both genders have changed significantly in recent decades, following hundreds—even thousands—of years of clearly defined, distinct roles. With this in mind, how do you think the transition is going? Is it even possible to view something so personal through an anthropological lens?
- Are there groups just for fathers in your community? If not, why do you think that may be?
- If you could describe a perfect shared parenting scenario, what would it include? What would it not include? Is anyone living that scenario? What gets in the way? What can you do to move closer to it?

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**Chiropractic Connection:**

ICPA chiropractors specialize in the care of pregnant and new families. In their ongoing interactions with parents, chiropractors offer mentorship and serve as encouraging listeners to new and experienced fathers alike. Friendships evolve in family-centered waiting rooms, where informal support groups spontaneously develop. ICPA members often offer groups for new families, showing even further commitment to strengthening families and communities.

**STAYING THE COURSE***Don't Fix a Tantrum* by Natalie Christensen**Article Summary:**

This article offers strategies and skills for emotional literacy. The author offers a template for techniques that can be employed with our children, and are also valuable tools for ourselves. Ms. Christensen begins by explaining the need for employing and teaching emotional literacy. She describes our culture as one that not only ignores emotions but negates them, treating them as a weakness. In reality, emotional wellness is a vital ingredient in all relationships: with ourselves, other people, and our work lives. She argues that to help our children to live the fullest lives possible, it is our responsibility to teach emotional literacy.

This task may seem overwhelming. Fortunately, the author offers three important aspects to consider. These are the same whether within ourselves or while interacting with our children experiencing strong feelings. The first step with our children is to model. We accomplish this by sharing our feelings around challenges or things that upset us. Rather than remaining silent to spare them or modeling insincere or dramatic reactions, we show our children that we have feelings and that it is appropriate to share them. We do this by acknowledging that we are indeed sad, or angry, or anxious, sharing the reasons why as is appropriate for the situation and child's age. This simple acknowledgment is easy for the child to understand and sets an example of desirable behavior, rather than denying feelings followed by an explosive outburst.

The author's next step can be challenging: don't fix. Whether within ourselves as adults or in a situation where our child is upset, she explains that the first step is to feel our feelings. Some unhurried quiet moments within ourselves or in open-ended exploration with our child may help reveal contributing circumstances and offer a fuller insight into the situation.

The final step is to connect. In this context, connecting means offering ourselves or our child space with their feelings. We show them that we are available and present for them while they are upset with quiet, supportive gestures; touch, gentle words, and patience. The author underscores that we can and should also offer this connection to ourselves when we are experiencing strong feelings.

**Questions for Consideration:**

- Are the strategies described in this article familiar to you? Is this how feelings were taught and addressed when you were growing up?
- Can you think of a situation in which you or your child had strong feelings in the past? Does it feel possible to apply these strategies to that situation? How do you think it might have changed things?
- Have you considered emotional expression as something you're teaching your child? Do you have strategies you've developed on your own to share?

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**Chiropractic Connection:**

The body has an incredible ability to adapt to stress, but when the system which governs sensory processing is overloaded or inhibited, stress can become more difficult on our lives. The impact of mindfulness and teaching our children emotional literacy is greatly enhanced when we support the child's nervous system function. By addressing underlying imbalances in the spine and nervous system we free up the higher emotional and intellectual processing of the brain. This is why people come to see a chiropractor for more than physical conditions or complaints.



**STAYING THE COURSE***Childhood Fevers* by Jeanne Ohm, D.C.**Article Summary:**

“Go through the trial.” These words accurately describe the experience of a parent whose child has a high fever. For many, the experience is stressful at best; for others, it is downright terrifying. Dr. Jeanne Ohm offers the lens of reacting to a child’s fever to describe her personal journey of learning to trust the innate ability to heal. The primary message of this article is to encourage and support parents as they endure the trial. Sick children can leave us as parents feeling vulnerable, powerless, and feeling a driving need to “Do something.” Understanding that illness and fever serve a purpose for a child’s developing body helps the parents to recognize that the “something” is already being done. Observing the child is another focus of this article. Dr. Ohm references the wisdom of Dr. Lawrence Palevsky, a holistic pediatrician. He explains that the priority should be how the child seems to be managing the illness—if they seem to be ok, then they probably are indeed ok.

**Questions for Consideration:**

- How were fever and illness in general seen and treated when you were growing up? Do you find your history playing into your reactions to illness as a parent?
- Do you take your child’s temperature when they feel hot? In which ways does that information serve you? Does it help you to feel more secure? How about using medication? Do you use it? Do you feel like you have more control and are helpful when you do?
- What guidance and support does your pediatrician offer around fever?
- Does the concept that illness and fever are normal and can even be of benefit to your child appeal to you?

**Chiropractic Connection:**

We are living in a society in which we have been educated to trust medication and pharmaceutical companies above the innate competency of our own bodies. In a land where there seems to be a pill for everything, we can be hard-pressed to find support as we make choices and support our children. Chiropractic adjustments balance the nervous system, offering the body optimal conditions for self-healing. As important, chiropractors understand the conflicting beliefs and confusion parents may be experiencing around illness, and offer the trust and encouragement we need to feel confident as parents.

## STAYING THE COURSE

### If Science Were Settled by Kate Tietje

#### Article Summary:

This short piece describes a mindset that is vital for us all to remember: that science is not ever settled. As the author explains, “Science was never meant to be a belief system or a passing on of established ideas. Science is a method of inquiry, of asking questions to learn new things, of rethinking everything we think we know about the world.” She offers the example of Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis, who was the first to introduce the concept that doctors themselves might be a part of the spreading of illness, and suggested that doctors wash their hands between patients. While these practices led to a dramatic decrease in death rates, the doctor was considered “crazy” and institutionalized until he died. The author’s point is that while every generation believes their own to be the most enlightened and armed with facts indisputable, there will always be “facts” disproved as we evolve in our collective knowledge.

#### Questions for Consideration:

- What scientific “facts” do you view as “settled” by our society? Is your view aligned with or different from the general population?
- How do professionals react when these “settled facts” are questioned? How about society as a whole?
- How do we as parents know which “facts” to believe? Do we take the time to research who is funding our “facts” and who may be benefitting from them?

#### Chiropractic Connection:

The chiropractic profession has been on the cutting edge of great advancements in the field of human health. In the case of nutrition, exercise, and the mind’s effect on our physical well-being, chiropractors were quick to recognize and translate these powerful findings to their patients. The reason why they could do this, and why chiropractors themselves are often the pioneers of such research endeavors, is because they prefer to refrain from adhering to notions of certainty or absolute knowledge regarding the nature or ability of the human body. Their experience tells them time and again that the body’s nervous system is more intelligent than we can ever possibly know, and that anything is possible. With this humbling recognition there’s very little resistance to cutting edge research that’s of practical benefit for those who receive care.

## LIVING THE JOURNEY

### Stealing Time by Ginny Yurich

#### Article Summary:

In this piece, author Ginny Yurich describes the disconnect between what children have always needed and benefitted from and the requirements that our society has placed upon them. She explains that children have always needed time—time to play, to explore, to rest, to use their senses and bodies, more than anything else. Ironically, our educational system and parenting priorities have evolved to create the exact opposite of these ideal opportunities for growth. Examples of this are bountiful: a focus on academics for all ages, minimal time for outdoors and movement, homework, and screens taking the place of free exploration. Our children are spending the majority of their time in structured activity, and this is not to their benefit.

For parents feeling an anxious concern creeping over them while reading her words (and for those who don't), the author offers simple suggestions for how to stop stealing time from our children. These are: schedule fewer extra curricular activities, advocate for more recess and less homework, skip homework, at least through elementary school, wait on formal education or choose play-based options, and finally, buck the system in whatever ways you deem necessary.

#### Questions for consideration:

- What is your reaction when reading this piece? Do you agree with the author's premise?
- These concepts may appeal, but how easy do you think it will be to live them?
- Not everyone has the money for private schools, and not all parents have the confidence or skills it takes to buck the system or even advocate within it. Does it help to recognize that these are ideals to strive for and also offer yourself grace within your daily parenting?
- How can you create space for time and exploratory play as your children progress into school-age and beyond? What boundaries or priorities can you set?

#### Chiropractic connection:

Chiropractors encourage play and movement in children. They understand that bodies that are active and strong are better aligned. Conversely, children (and adults) who spend all of their time looking down at their desks and then slumping on the sofa looking down at screens for the remainder of the day are doing harm to their central nervous systems. Chiropractic care can help to keep young bodies aligned to counteract the time spent in a downward curve. As important, chiropractors encourage children and their parents to get out into the world and use their bodies.