

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

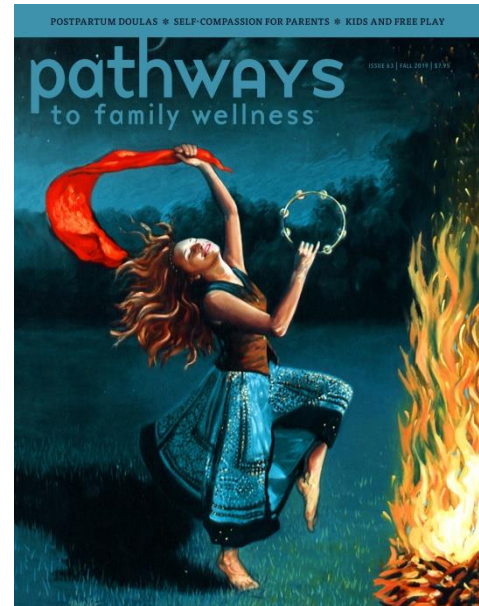
Share with the group your topic and why you chose it, why it interests you, and the importance you see in it. Summarize the article (some article summaries are provided below). You can read the entire article or article summary out loud to your group and share your thoughts at this time.

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 #63 Introduction**TAKING THE STEP • STAYING THE COURSE • LIVING THE JOURNEY**

Welcome to the Fall 2019 issue!

Seasonal changes provide opportunities to redirect our activities--perhaps more time outside to enjoy the cooler weather, crunching leaves and picking apples. We hope you've had the opportunity to lean into the changes that fall brings. As always, this 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 three 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 *Parents as Advocates* on page 18. This issue's study guide contains questions for discussion on this overlooked skill.

The next section, Staying the Course, contains five 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. *Being Wrong and Being Smart*, by Isaac Morehouse, offers insights that might help tamp down some of the pressure people feel to be the "perfect parent".

Living the Journey, the final section, offers five articles that address 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. *Understanding and Assessing Labor Progress*, by Rachel Reed, offers an opportunity to truly understand how labor works and all that it needs to progress smoothly.

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 #63 Talking Points, Group Questions, and the Chiropractic Connection**TAKING THE STEP*****Self-Compassion for Parents by Susan Pollack***

In this article, the author describes common parenting experiences in today's modern culture: feeling inadequate, unprepared, and judged. She describes parents as putting undue pressure on themselves, leaving them anxious and depressed. Parents tend to focus on measurable tasks for both themselves and their children: grades, awards, and trophies for the children, which somehow interpret into evidence of success for parents as well. Pollack questions what has become of joy and exuberance as objectives, and proposes simply being as a parenting strategy. She suggests paring away the constant treadmill of events and practices in search of proof of "success". She offers that we are successful as the imperfect "messes" that we are, and that rather than re-creating ourselves, we weave mindfulness into who we already are.

She describes mindfulness as, "Awareness of the present moment, with kindness and acceptance." The practical suggestion she offers is the, "Parenting Pause". This is taking the opportunity to rest and reflect and *do nothing* about—well, pretty much anything our minds are working through: Interactions with our partner, with our child, or within our family as a unit. By short-circuiting our ingrained patterns and showing ourselves patience and kindness, we may be able to see new alternatives.

Questions for consideration:

- Do you feel pressure as a parent to perform to certain standards?
- Where do you think this pressure comes from?
- Do you have a mindfulness practice in your life?
- Can you see times when the "parenting pause" could make a difference for you and your family?

Chiropractic connection:

Chiropractors view families and individuals as whole people, rather than separate body parts or even individuals. The process of all our systems coming together contributes to the ability of the body to create wellness. Constant stress and pressure play a part in wellness. Similarly, if one or more individuals within a family are stressed and pressured, the effects will ripple out to the family as a unit. Chiropractic is essential in creating a balanced system so when there is stress, the body can manage it without throwing off homeostasis.

***Parents as Informed Advocates* by Jackie Kelleher**

In this article, the author uses personal experience to illustrate the role that advocacy and active decision-making can play in our parenting experiences. The author states, “Life as a parent consists of seemingly benign bits of decision-making which, strung together, strongly impact the people our children will become.”

Kelleher describes two approaches to these deciding moments. The first is *active decision making*, which she defines as collecting information, identifying options, and actively living the choice that is best for this particular individual and situation. While providing perhaps boundless opportunities, active decision making is not always the common or popular choice. Less common choices open us to questioning by both ourselves and others. The alternative approach described, *reactionary parenting*, is more one of, “...going with the flow, accepting the choices dictated by the societal norm.” While limiting options, this approach offers greater social acceptance and less responsibility for outcomes, which can be defined as the result of systems in place (for example the school district).

The author goes on to explain that advocacy is a skill that is not a part of our learning process as we grow into adulthood or parenthood. There is an absence of “advocacy educators” in our lives. She describes four components necessary to advocacy: Confidence, access to information, skill in relating to others, and options. Kelleher explains that many of these can be attained through the experience of building community through parenting groups.

Questions for consideration:

- Is there a person or experience in your life that served as an advocacy mentor or catalyst?
- Are there choices you would make differently if you had the skills and support?
- How do you react to the suggestion that advocacy skills can be attained and honed through your gathering group?

Chiropractic connection:

Chiropractors foster independent thought and decision making in parents, and their offices often serve as a safe-haven to discuss various alternative topics. Parents find support and mentorship through their chiropractic community in regards to birth settings, natural family living, and so much more. The social support provided in these situations helps parents to feel empowered to make the choices that are best for their own families.

STAYING THE COURSE***Progress and Motion by Maria Pyanov***

This article is written from the perspective of a mother of five, the youngest of which was born with congenital differences that have required treatment and ongoing therapies. As a result, the author is able to explain how the practices used by specialists with her daughter interpret into the experiences of every child and parent.

She offers basic explanations of proprioception and the vestibular system. Proprioception is knowing your body, without having to look at the body part. The vestibular system relates to our experience of balance and knowing where our body is in space. People who have challenges with this system are more likely to bump into others and trip. Children with vestibular challenges have an even greater drive to move their bodies than their peers.

In the pages that follow, she offers information on age-appropriate amounts of “big movement” and activities that offer developmentally appropriate experiences. The amounts of time are longer than most children experience, especially school-aged children.

Pyanov also offers parenting mentoring, encouraging us as parents to foster activities that will have a lasting effect on our children’s development, even when the risk-taking involved might test our comfort level. Her point is that not allowing our children to take these physical risks creates inherent risk at a quieter, less-apparent level.

Questions for consideration:

- Do you have any previous understanding of the vestibular system?
- How can you protect big movement time in your child’s life with the competing pull from school and technology?
- How do you feel watching your child taking physical risks?
- Does the information offered in any way affect your willingness to allow for greater physical exploration?

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.

Shed those Shoes! By Rae Pica

“Among other things, bare feet are important to the development of the nervous system and the brain!” These words summarize the basic premise of this article, which is that bare feet are best for both children and adults. Ms. Pica further explains that shoes can negatively affect walking, development of the foot, balance, and proprioception. While some people may worry about potential negatives, to include germs and risk of stepping on something, the author quickly explains why these risks are minimal in comparison with the benefits of going shoeless.

Questions for consideration:

- Do you and your kids wear shoes at home (inside or outside)?
- When do you feel is an appropriate time to take off your shoes and go barefoot? Is this decision effected by societal expectations?
- Have you experienced a difference with your kids early walking when they wear shoes vs. when they don't?
- What is a compromise parents can make when their kids need to wear shoes (for example to school), but don't want to?

Chiropractic connection:

Chiropractors advocate for bare foot connection with the earth as they know this is imperative in your child's developing nervous system and brain. The foot is filled with nerves, and allowing it to feel the ground stimulates these neurological pathways. In addition, when you wear shoes it puts stress on the body's spine and joints, and so allowing for plenty of time without that stress is crucial. By getting adjusted regularly, your chiropractor can bring your body back to balance and may discuss with you how to limit this stress in the first place.

***Being Wrong and Being Smart* by Isaac Morehouse**

The basic premise of this article is one that interprets directly into a challenge in today's parenting experience. The author uses the metaphor of a person who gets every answer correct while playing Trivial Pursuit. At first they're impressive, then something seems fishy—what's involved in getting everything right? Memorization? Cheating? Regardless of the reason, the game is no longer fun for the group and if it continues to be fun for that person, it says something about them, too.

As it relates to real-life experiences, the author's point is that "...intelligence is more important than knowing stuff. Maybe it's about the ability to learn. Maybe it's about change and progress." That moving forward inherently includes the unknown and making mistakes, so it's not something to avoid.

Questions for consideration:

- Do you know parents who seem "perfect"? Do you see them as role models?
- Why do you think the author links the words *wrong* and *smart*?
- How does it feel to consider mistakes and unknowns as a normal part of parenting life?

Chiropractic Connection:

Family-based chiropractors encourage parents to try new things and take risks. Through years of establishing care with many generations of families, they understand that growth comes with challenge. Chiropractors can be a source of encouragement and support in the experiences of taking risks and making change.

LIVING THE JOURNEY***Understanding and Assessing Labor Progress by Rachel Reed***

This article offers the reader a thorough understanding of the labor and birth process on a deeper level that is usually offered. She provides insights into how our bodies work and the ideal approaches for enhancing the existing process and innate physiological support rather than bumping up against them. The author provides us with understandable descriptions of the hormones of labor, such as oxytocin and cortisol. An understanding of these is crucial to enhancing and supporting labor progress. Simple concepts such as, “we want to create more of these hormones and avoid creating those,” are invaluable to mothers and their support teams.

Throughout the article, Ms. Reed provides a detailed explanation of both the physiological process experienced by the mother as well as behaviors we might observe and strategies for support. An understanding of the basics has the potential to impact how we all see and experience birth.

Questions for consideration:

- What was your understanding of labor going into your own birth experience? What were your sources of information?
- Did the people supporting you, including clinical personnel, express observations of your labor and offer suggestions like the ones in the article? Were options other than medical management offered to you?
- If you had the opportunity to birth again, would you make any changes to your approach? Why or why not?

Chiropractic Connection:

Chiropractors understand the tremendous impact the birth experience has on mother and baby, both physically and emotionally. While adjusting pregnant patients, a part of what these doctors offer is a trust in the body and understanding the innate ability of the woman to give birth. Chiropractors also provide networking resources to help expecting parents to align themselves with the best possible practitioners to meet their birthing objectives.