

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 #65 Introduction

Welcome to the Spring 2020 issue!

It pleases us to offer you a collection of writings that focus around practices and concepts that serve to soothe. Helpful at even the best of times, the offerings in this issue of Pathways will connect you with a more still, centered self to bring to your family. Connecting with your Pathways and discussing the writings highlighted below will take you far in challenging times.

Each season offers us unique opportunities to engage with the world in different ways. Take the time to engage with the elements of spring unfolding all around you. Allow their sounds to move to the forefront; the world's problems will wait while you and your children listen to the rain and return of the birds, enjoy the sun on your faces, and dig in the clean, nourishing soil as you begin your garden.

In the first section, Taking the Step, you'll find two articles that speak directly to the tools everybody possesses that help us specifically through times of stress in ourselves and others. *The Secret Power of Your Stable Nervous System* by Sarah Rudell Beach and *Thank Eustress* by Laura Grace Weldon are the place for you to begin to feel more settled and secure in times of stress.

Staying the Course contains six 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. *Informed Choice and the Politics of Pregnancy and Birth Care*, by Lex Londino, walks us through one of the most important concepts in birth today. Choosing birth attendants who view us as individuals and partners in our care will play directly into positive physical and emotional outcomes. Your birth, your way.

Living the Journey, the final section, offers eight articles that address the wider support communities that are vital to new families. Discussing these ideas together with other parents provides an opportunity to stretch and try on new ideas. *Self-Care Isn't Selfish*, by Jeni Howe, reminds us that taking care of ourselves is not indulgent or privileged, it is a necessary aspect of thriving as individuals and within our roles as parents and partners. *Creating Daily*, by Leo Babauta, invites us to unlock patterns and engage as a family.

Parenting itself can feel overwhelming at times, and parenting during unprecedented times can make it feel unmanageable at best. Our goal is to offer options to explore and nourish both your centering 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, confidence, and wellness 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 #65 Talking Points, Group Questions, and the Chiropractic Connection*The Secret Power of Your Stable Nervous System*

By Sarah Rudell Beach

In this writing, the author suggests that the essential ingredient that we as parents can offer a stressed child—or any other person—is our own stable nervous system.

In her own words, “Your nervous system is the intervention.” She explains that we as mammals regulate our nervous systems in the presence of stable others. She offers that it is vital for us to visit our breath, stillness, and other self-calming approaches for this very reason. Calming ourselves will calm those around us.

After citing personal examples of this power that we all possess, she concedes that she herself does not always succeed in this approach. She does, however, view it as a practice. As she improves her skills, she can offer more to the young people around her.

Questions for discussion:

- Have you experienced times when you’ve been able to meet another person’s heightened emotional state with a calm response? Either a child or another adult? How did that person react to you?
- Are there times when you find yourself meeting your child’s stress levels? Do you see a difference in how things play out?
- What activities/practices help you to ground yourself in stressful moments? What strategies have you attempted and found unhelpful?
- Can you identify a strategy that you’d like to cultivate for these occasions?

Chiropractic Connection:

With regular chiropractic care, the body achieves a more ideal nervous system state of functioning. Ideal function is often inhibited by subluxations or misalignments in the spine. A stable nervous system effortlessly employs a healthy and vital response to life’s stresses. Children are keen at modeling themselves after their parents during times of stress. A lot of our responses to daily stress are habituated beneath our conscious awareness. Chiropractic takes into account the physical structure and its effect on the nervous system. With adjustments to balance structure, we can achieve profound results on the whole system which enter our mental and emotional processing.

Thank Eustress

By Laura Grace Weldon

In this well-timed article, the author introduces both a word and a concept that may be new to many of us. Eustress is a combination of two concepts “eu”, a Greek prefix meaning healthy, and one that we are familiar with—stress. The concept of healthy stress may be a challenge to integrate, and the author offers clarification. She cites challenges like taking on a new role and stressing muscles in order for them to become stronger. Immediately the connection becomes possible: not all stress is negative.

Weldon continues to illustrate her point, citing a study in which participants were told to interpret physical symptoms of stress as helpful, and the conclusion that people who did this experienced measurable physical health benefits.

Even more fascinating, the author explains that oxytocin, known as a love hormone, is also a stress hormone. That it is a part of the stress response, motivating us to seek support. She shares the observation that, “Even people who are dealing with a great deal of stress have no increase in mortality if they also reach out to help others.” We experience stress, yes; certainly at some times more than others. Reaching out, engaging—these are mitigating strategies available to all of us.

Questions for discussion:

- Do you find your present social support system to be one that will serve you if you reach out in times of stress? If so, what elements contribute to that? If not, what elements would you add?
- Have you ever considered oxytocin as a stress hormone? Does this concept click for you?
- What other elements of Eustress, or healthy stress, can you identify in your past or present experience?

Chiropractic connection:

“Eustress” is an attitude which creates a fulfilling response to stress. Chiropractic can help us step into a “eustress” attitude in multiple ways. In pregnancy and birth care, chiropractic supports the normal physiology and innate intelligence of the mother. This can alleviate physical discomfort as well as prepare a mom for an easier, safer birth. It has been reported by many mothers that chiropractic was essential in helping them achieve their desired birth goals. They were able to head into birth with the knowledge that their body was well-equipped to do what nature designed it to do. When chiropractic frees up the nervous system, a “eustress” attitude can be taken in somatically. When the body and mind are both aligned to the principles of innate intelligence, challenges are invariably met with a newfound freedom and confidence.

Birth Trauma: A Cultural Blind Spot

By Matthew Appleton

In this article, the author encourages us to consider the experience of the baby in the birth experience. He explains to us that, “We all hold experience in our bodies.” Babies, who have not been indoctrinated into our social niceties, express their experiences and feelings without hesitation. They use their bodies and voices to communicate their birth trauma to us. Appleton explains to us that babies, “...need us to respond to the experience they are holding in their bodies, which is left over from their birth or womb life.”

The author goes on to explain the difference between what he describes as two distinctive types of crying: needs crying and memory crying. As the name implies, needs crying is expression of basic physical needs, such as hunger or discomfort. Memory crying he relates to physical expressions of an earlier experience, expressed by repetitive body movements. He explains that babies need to receive empathetic acknowledgment, taking the time to identify the distinction in communication style. As parents we then need to listen to what the baby is telling us, rather than using the approach we use to meet needs. As with humans of any age, babies sometimes need to feel heard and acknowledged before being able to move forward.

Appleton takes us further, explaining that being honored and respected as infants interpret how we relate to ourselves and others as we develop into the adults we are to become. He suggests that while the experience is not easy for us as adults, it is easier than not trying to do so.

Questions for discussion:

- Do the concepts described seem familiar to you? Have you as parents experienced a distinction of cries?
- Does the concept illustrated here connect with your beliefs or understanding of birth, newborns, and how our early experiences shape us?
- How does this concept make you feel as a parent? Empowered? Stressed? Some of each?
- Can you relate any of this to your own experience as an adult? Do you have any self-identity that you feel might trace back to your earliest times?

Chiropractic connection:

Newborn children cannot speak a cultural language, but they can certainly tell their story using the language of bodily and vocal expressions. Chiropractors who are trained to check infants for delicate misalignments know this language well. Most are well aware of the possibility of birth trauma. Just like anyone else, a newborn child needs to communicate her story in order to process it. Many parents who make use of chiropractic care love to see their child melt into the caring hands of their chiropractor, to see the source of their stress met on both a physical and emotional level. For a child whose language is rooted in this somatic world, chiropractic can be the place where his or her story is heard for the first time.

Informed Choice and the Politics of Pregnancy and Birth Care

By Lex Londino

In this article, the author outlines distinctions in the vital aspect of birth and overall medical care traditionally known as informed consent. Lex Londino introduces the reader to the descriptive concepts of informed choice and informed compliance. She describes informed choice as being an essential ingredient of the midwifery model of care, and informed compliance as being more commonly experienced when birthing through the medical model.

In the midwifery model of birth, Londino explains, incorporates as priorities shared decision-making, full disclosure of information, and self-determination in the birthing person. In the medical model, she identifies common experiences of power imbalance and biased recommendations made by practitioners. She states that information is given, but that choices are not always respected. Words like control and compliance are more often connected with medically-oriented birth.

The author makes the important point that, “Intersections of ideology, resources, class, education level, race, lifestyle, gender identity, and sexual orientation influence how clients make choices from a medically oriented menu of options over which they have little control to define or change.” This sentence alone illustrates how a “one size fits all” approach to birth cannot possibly meet the needs of many.

Similarly, Londino illustrates the need for people, and birthing parents in particular, to trust their intuition and understanding of their own needs. Birth must be an experience in which this is encouraged, rather than discouraged or even punished. She outlines priorities and strategies for parents and practitioners to practice ideal communication and improve experiences for all.

Questions for Consideration:

- If you’ve been a birthing parent, where would you place your experiences in communication within the context outlined above? Do you remember any words or approaches that were particularly memorable?
- What have you found to be effective in communicating with birth professionals?
- Do you feel that aspects of you as an individual, such as your ideology, resources, faith, or spirituality weighed into your birth experience? Were they identified/honored by your practitioners?

continued...

Chiropractic Connection:

The midwifery model of care and chiropractic for pregnancy have combined to help women in the 21st century achieve astoundingly successful birth outcomes. Chiropractic, which supports normal physiology, is highly recommended by many midwives, doulas, and birth practitioners and birth enthusiasts. This advice to include chiropractic care comes from thousands of individual testimonies as well as decades of clinical findings evidenced over many years of research which can be found on ICPA4kids.com. In addition to better outcomes, chiropractic and midwifery are giving women more freedom with the knowledge of physiology to support ideal bonding, breastfeeding and early development. Such a basis of care is truly at the heart of bettering our human potential, beginning with moms and their families.

The Create Daily Challenge

By Leo Babauta

Many of us have a goal of living mindfully, even for a brief pocket of time each day. Leo Babauta's Create Daily Challenge provides a framework for just that. Rather than purely consuming—reading books, watching videos, playing games—take a few minutes each day to be the person to create. You can make a video of your own, write in a journal, build a tower with stones, draw a sketch. Invite your children to do the same. The product is not the goal. This is an experience of process over product. The value is in the act of creating, which mandates that we produce rather than consume, and be in the moment, even just briefly, as we create. Take thirty days and challenge yourself to create daily.

Questions for Consideration:

- Are you a person who presently incorporates a mindfulness practice into your day? Do you aspire to be?
- Do your children create daily? Not just little ones, but older children—10, 12, or 16 years old? As we age in our present society, we tend to shift away from production and into roles of consumption. How do you see this interpreting into who we become as individuals? As a society?
- Given five minutes (or fifty), what would you choose to create? What do you need to make that happen?
- Are there things you can create together as a family if the opportunity to create on your own just isn't available?

Self-Care is Not Selfish

By Jeni Howe

In this seemingly light piece, the author touches upon a critical concept: that taking care of ourselves is not indulgent or privileged; it is a necessary aspect of thriving as individuals and within our roles as parents and partners. She uses her own early parenting experience to illustrate situations that many of us have found ourselves in, and through them we realize alongside her the risks we take when we bury ourselves in priorities.

She offers a focused suggestion that is basic and doable: connecting with other parents, whenever/wherever/however you can. Community is always a part of the answer. It's what we need, and will serve both us and our children.

Questions for Consideration:

- Do you have any experiences as a parent when you can remember recognizing that you were at a very low point, either physically or emotionally?
- Have you built yourself a community? What steps have you taken? What actions could you add to what's in place?
- Do you care for your own physical and emotional needs? What needs do you think you're meeting adequately? Which stand out as needing tending? (This question may be one people may want to explore internally.)

Creating Security in An Insecure World

By Maureen Campion

In this writing, which may be interpreted either as poetry or prose, the author implores us that despite our insecure world, despite all shifting under our feet, to love anyway.

“I want to tell my kids that they are safe at school and the mall, that nothing bad can touch them....All I can do is today.”

“I want to tell them that I will never die...All I can do is today.”

“Anxiety is exhausting, and it doesn’t do a good job of protecting us.”

These lines offer insight and consolation for challenging times.

Questions for consideration:

- Do you find yourself spending much time scouring information that only serves to feed concerns and hard feelings without serving you?
- Are you familiar with the concept of living in the moment, not focusing on the past or what is to come, but focusing on and striving to celebrate the moment that actually is? Have you had success with this approach?
- What actions or attitudes help you to create security in what has always been and what will continue to be an insecure world?