

## Talking Points & Resources

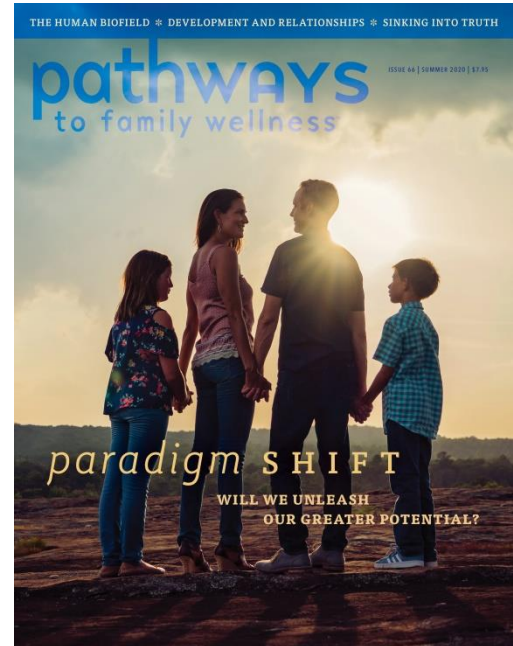
Hello Pathways Connect Group Participants,

### **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 #66 Introduction**

Welcome to the Summer 2020 issue!

We've made it to summer! Opportunities to use our bodies and interact with the Earth abound. As we take this chance to recharge after a trying winter and spring, this issue of *Pathways* offerings are intended to both support and spark introspection through new practices and concepts.

Taking the Step offers six articles selected to introduce concepts that may be unfamiliar. *The Stories We Tell Ourselves* by Rebecca Thompson Hitt introduces the idea that our thoughts are actually not facts. Understanding that our mind fills in gaps through story telling will help us to explore further and improve our parenting interactions. In *Better Solutions: Ten Crucial Lessons From Trying to Heal My Children From Autism, Anxiety, and ADHD* by Jennifer Giustra-Koseky, we benefit from the experiences of a person who is both a related professional and mother. Her lessons apply to many of the situations that we all face as parents.

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 two of these articles. *Development Starts With Relationships* by Mary Beth Crawford, offers insight into the art of exploring the experiences behind our children's behaviors, rather than purely trying to reshape them. In *Sleeping Babies Need Mom Beside Them* by James McKenna, parents receive confirmation of the wisdom that they already possess but sometimes requires reinforcement: that our babies do best when beside us.

Living the Journey, the final section, offers six 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. *Simple Life—Birth in a Log Cabin* by Stephanie Sorensen, allows us to imagine life completely self-supporting as a possibility and perhaps even an ideal. *Conscious Parenting in an Unconscious Culture* by Beth Berry, provides an opportunity to reflect on the pressures we sometimes put upon ourselves to be ideal parents and offers societal and personal accommodations necessary to foster change in that direction.

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 #66 Talking Points, Group Questions, and the Chiropractic Connection****TAKING THE STEP***The Stories We Tell Ourselves*

By Rebecca Thompson Hitt

In this valuable piece, the author offers insight into a practice that impacts all of our relationships and experiences. She explains that in every situation, we tell ourselves a story about what is happening. These stories are sometimes helpful and other times not. We make up stories to fill in the details of situations that are outside of our knowledge or understanding. While we all use this strategy, it can have considerable impact upon our relationships, to include those with our children.

The author provides two examples of situations in which the stories a parent had used to fill in the gaps were unproductive. One of these involved an infant. In that case, working with the author, a therapist, the parent was able to reach a healthier understanding of the baby's behavior, and the situation improved. In the other, the child was a teen and the parent was able to use tools to improve communication between them.

We all tell ourselves stories about our experiences. It's a natural, normal and healthy part of how our minds make sense of the world. It's only when we cling to our detrimental stories that the otherwise helpful tool becomes a problem. The ability to question our own stories and understand that they aren't necessarily the full picture is a skill that we can all build.

Questions for consideration:

- Can you think of stories that people in your life cling to that you know for certain are inaccurate? Have you ever challenged these? How did they react?
- Are you aware of any stories you've made to explain your child's behavior? Things like, "He's manipulating me by wanting to nurse all night."
- How do you react when someone offers a different story to your situation in a shared situation?

Chiropractic Connection:

Invariably, people who achieve success with chiropractic care learn to appreciate a different story about their body. Sometimes, we feel our bodies betray us, let us down, or become ill-equipped to handle life's challenges. When we suffer diseases, these negative stories about ourselves become infectious. The nervous system is miraculous when it's given the space to open up and work according to its innate potential. Understood from this perspective, chiropractic offers a story to guide us to greater levels of health, and this story is an important factor in sustaining our well-being.

*Better Solutions: Ten Crucial Lessons From Trying to Heal My Children From  
Autism, Anxiety, and ADHD*

By Jennifer Giustra-Koseky, L.P.C.

Despite the title, this article addresses the author's personal experience at a minimum and instead focuses on valuable lessons that she extrapolated from her experiences. These lessons can be applied to any situation and are not in any way limited to families with challenges similar to hers or even to children. They are life lessons.

The lessons are the following:

- My doctors weren't reading the same medical journals I was. In other words, while she did not have a medical degree, she was availing herself of valid medical information on which many doctors were uninformed.
- Big pharma writes our doctors' text books.
- Our medical community ignores the power of plant medicine and calls it pseudoscience.
- The biggest sponsors of the *American Academy of Pediatrics* are pharmaceutical companies.
- Conventional doctors tend to address only one organ at a time. In fact, our bodies and minds are complex, interwoven systems—kind of like families.
- Our genetics are not the end of our story. Challenges may run in the family, but lifestyle, diet, and other factors can turn them on or off.
- Most doctors know very little about nutrition.
- Allopathic M.D.'s do not heal autoimmune disorders. Generally they treat the symptoms with medication.
- Insurance companies do not cover important treatments and therapies.
- Healthcare today puts band aids on splinters rather than pulling them out.

Families experiencing challenges—and eventually that will include most families—can significantly impact their experiences by being mindful of and applying these principles to steps taken.

Questions for consideration:

- Do any of these points stand out to you? Which and for what reasons?
- How can it be that pharmaceutical companies are writing medical text books and sponsoring major medical organizations? Does it seem ethical?
- Do you have any personal experience in such situations? Do you agree with the author's conclusions? Are there any that you would add?

### Chiropractic Connection:

For over a century, chiropractic has been in a position to offer a new perspective on health and holistic solutions. As the profession grew in popularity, a predictable push-back occurred from established interests that wished to slander and de-credit competing models of care. Despite this longstanding antagonism against their livelihood, chiropractors have proven to be resilient care-providers, unwavering in their ability to remain balanced, insightful, and respectful. The principles of chiropractic care drive a wedge into the pharmaceutically organized methodologies of medicine by their proven ability to help people reach new levels of health. To the great relief of families looking for new solutions, chiropractic offers great hope.

**STAYING THE COURSE***Development Starts With Relationships*

By Mary Beth Crawford

In this article, the author describes her twenty-year journey as a pediatric physical therapist, eventually culminating in a relationship-based approach. In her early years, she identified within herself strong instincts that the approaches being used—many still in place today—were counter-productive. Rather than targeting behaviors to change, Crawford focuses on the reasons behind the behaviors. She presumes competence in every child, regardless of how situations present. As she explains, “Children need to be given the appropriate amount of time to initiate, connect, and trust.”

Her description of time spent with the young people she cares for is one of observing, following, and fully engaging prior to any gentle attempt toward leading. We learn that keeping children grounded in a feeling of safety is critical to development, learning, and creating positive change in their behavior. This applies both within the care-setting and home-life. While this makes perfect sense as it is the way we would all like to be treated, when we reflect upon personal or observed interactions between adults and children in any setting, we can see how this essential concept is abandoned more often than not.

Beginning at birth, infants, “...do not learn how to reach by reaching for inanimate objects. Rather, they learn how to reach through a desire to get closer to a loved one’s face.” Mary Beth Crawford does an excellent job of explaining the body and mind’s experience of engaging and reacting with the environment *through relationships*. The piece most relevant for us to harvest as parents is the priority of seeking a relational groundwork, in both our own interactions and those of other adults who interact with our children.

Questions for consideration:

- Is the primacy of relationships in motor/emotional/cognitive development a new concept for you?
- Does this concept encourage you to make any changes in your life or care-providers?
- Have you had personal experiences that support a different perspective on what’s the primary element in a child’s development?

Chiropractic connection:

The nervous system forms the basis of our social and relational development. In order to promote bonding and relationships, we must make sure the nervous system is in a state of growth. This means the nervous system needs to be free of tensions, both physical and emotional. Then ideal development follows. For parents, the most important aspect to support a child’s nervous system is emotional attachment, whereby the child sees and knows the parent

to be a fundamentally caring and consistent source of connection. Chiropractic care allows us to check for limiting tensions upon the delicate structure of the nervous system. In this way, chiropractic is a huge benefit to set the ideal conditions for a relationship-based approach to parenting and child development.

*Sleeping Babies Need Mom Beside Them*

By James J. McKenna, PhD

In this article, infant sleep expert James McKenna provides an overview of bed sharing throughout history as well as across cultures. Dr. McKenna begins by explaining the importance of sharing sleep space, to include regulation of the infant's breathing, and immediate sensitivity and availability to tend to the baby's needs such as temperature regulation, clearing nasal passages, touch, soothing, and many more.

The author explains that throughout time, babies have slept adjacent to their mothers. In recent years, policies have moved toward separation of the mother-baby dyad. He cites practices from the past, such as medicating babies with alcohol and even "overlaying", the practice of deliberately suffocating babies (generally during times of starvation) as the impetus behind policies of separation. In more modern western studies, some policies have been created based on conclusions that babies are at risk next to their parents. However, Dr. McKenna clarifies that these risks are the artifacts of poverty, smoking, and other factors that can be addressed through education and behavioral change, and that we do not need to abandon our biological blueprint for success—co-sleeping.

In other parts of the world, such as Japan, bed sharing remains the societal norm where SIDS rates remain among the lowest in the world.

Dr. McKenna goes on to describe the many needs that are met through bed-sharing. He explains that the composition of breast milk, taken with the proven need for frequent nursing to maintain mother's milk supply, both point to a need for mother and baby to be together throughout the night. These are just a portion of the many reasons that sleeping babies need their mothers beside them.

Questions for consideration:

- What has your experience been with bed sharing? Do you bed share? Was it what you expected to do or did it evolve differently? Do you find it helpful?
- What had you heard about bed-sharing prior to becoming a parent? How has your experience aligned with or disputed these expectations?
- Do you share your sleep practices with others, such as friends, family, or health care providers? Why or why not? Do you find them to be supportive?

Chiropractic Connection:

The ability of a baby to self-soothe has nothing to do with our "educating" them at age 0, 1, or 2 years of age. It has everything to do with his or her underlying state of regulation, which depends on nervous system health and primary relationship status. Most parents wish they



could train their babies to be x, y, or z, by some kind of technique or behavioral programming. The truth is, babies develop... and in order for development to proceed according to Nature's plan (which will result in self-reliant, resilient children), certain considerations must be met. Care-giver bonding gives the child assurance and 'restfulness' concerning their primary biological imperative, survival. Only then will the child's nervous system relax to begin to learn how to self-regulate and self-soothe in ways that are conducive to their greater development. Chiropractors who know how to help the nervous system reach a state of ease can be of immense help for families at this early stage.

## LIVING THE JOURNEY

*Simple Life—Birth in a Log Cabin*

By Stephanie Sorensen

In this article, the author shares her fascinating experience together with her husband, choosing to move her family to a log cabin and live without modern amenities in the 1980's. She describes the well thought out plan and transition. First, they would live in their modern apartment without appliances. They would operate from an outside cooler in the mid of winter, and even learn to process a whole chicken before moving the family to a log cabin in Wisconsin.

She describes their life as both magical and difficult. Her descriptions include basic experiences such as adapting to the fierce cold with intense bundling of children, chamber pots (and how she cleaned them), laundry drying for days around the house, and using a sleigh to transport her family.

She concludes with a lovely story of birthing her daughter in the cabin, at the end of which included an interaction with social workers of the child-protection agency who were sent to investigate her family after learning of her home birth. They were, of course, impressed by the families health and happiness and her 11lb nursling, and left them in the peace and comfort of their well-earned homestead.

Questions for consideration:

- Have you ever considered living “off the grid”? Are there aspects that appeal to you?
- What do you think would be particularly challenging for you? Does a story like this inspire you to try to cut some technological cords of your own?
- What do you think of the investigators sent to the author's home after applying for a social security card, purely as a result of her explaining that her baby had been born at home?

Chiropractic connection:

Nature provides the optimal conditions for health. If we honor nature's rhythms, we can learn to expand our health and vitality. Modern culture can be greatly aided by the chiropractic family lifestyle, which can help us re-learn the intrinsic ability to adapt to changing conditions. Our ability to adapt is part of our natural endowment as an intelligent species, and we maximize our adaptability by paying more attention to the underlying nervous system which makes life possible. The nervous system is keen to guide us according to the natural rhythms of life, if we only cease our inhibiting and detrimental habits and lifestyles. Our own internal rhythms orchestrated by our nervous systems long to be connected with the greater intelligence of life. Implicit in this calling is the potential to unfold the full expression of our being.

*Conscious Parenting in an Unconscious Culture*

By Beth Berry

In this article, the author sets conceptual parenting goals such as conscious parenting and the realities of the life we live in side by side. While she considers conscious parenting and all it implies to be a worthwhile goal, Beth Berry postulates that setting this goal within the confines of our present culture can be frustrating. As she explains, “To expect increased consciousness, increased emotional labor, and increased everyday investment of time and energy from perhaps the single most overworked, sleep deprived, emotionally drained, under-appreciated demographic within any culture is to perpetuate the narrative that a mother’s worth is based on her ability to endure suffering and deprivation for the sake of others.”

She goes on to explain that in order to parent in this way we must amend policies, expectations and support in order to facilitate its practice. In her words, “Conscious parenting is a beautiful concept. And, in order for it to be sustainable, feel accessible, and truly revolutionize human development, the needs and wellbeing of those being called to show up consciously must be honored right alongside the needs of those of the children we’re striving to protect and nurture.”

Questions for consideration:

- When you read about or consider a parenting style of authentic, reflective, and relaxed parenting, how do you feel? Do you find yourself experiencing conflicting reactions? Perhaps one of longing and another of self judgement?
- Do you know parents who are able to live in this way, to include yourself? What do you think makes this possible?
- What might have to change societally or within your own life in order to make this feasible for you?

Chiropractic connection:

All who want a better society and future for our children have an incentive to support the life of women in pregnancy, labor, and early parenting. *Pathways* magazine and the ICPA chiropractors who make up the leading organization for family chiropractic have always stressed the value of early family dynamics, especially support for pregnancy and labor. While a social wide change is needed, chiropractors recognize that the nucleus of change is in the innate strength and potential of the natural birth setting. From this place of pure love and triumph, individual families will come to recognize the values that underscore a truly conscious society.