

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

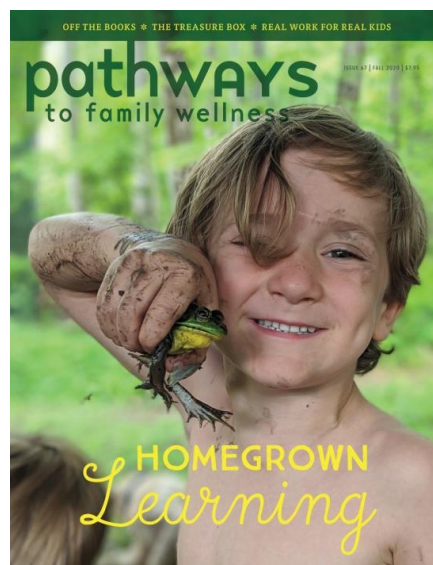
Share with the group your topic and why you chose it, why it interests you, and the importance you see in it. Summarize the article (some article summaries are provided below). You can read the entire article or article summary out loud to your group and share your thoughts at this time.

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 #67 Introduction

Welcome to the Fall 2020 issue!

There is no greater gift we can offer you than the gift you already possess—the gift of your child’s love and connection. For it is the gift that children will use to learn for themselves how to venture forth as adults. The desire to separate and mature into self-directed human beings is germinated like a seed in the womb of family connection. Children grow up, but not all children mature. The difference can be traced back to early childhood, and the experiences of connection that were present.

In this issue, we have many resources to expand on a new appreciation for the heretofore hidden ingredients that propel children’s development. The ingredients are self-given and innate. But they are not necessarily going to unfurl unless they are given the water and sunlight of our conscious awareness. Discovering the basics of these ingredients can mean the difference between years of struggle or delight in the coming months and years.

Taking a step back, this issue is composed of three sections: Taking the Step. Staying the Course. And Living the Journey. In Taking the Step, we learn through anecdotes and insightful educational summaries, what the keys are to children’s well-being. These keys are applicable from the earliest moments of life all the way through the teenage years. Our hope is that this section will launch you on a path of renewed appreciation, and more than anything else, hope.

Next in Staying the Course, we get more into the nitty gritty of decisions regarding children’s educational options. Here there are resources, book reviews, and testimony of other parents’ experiences who’ve navigated the paths of alternative child education. We tell the story of one teenager’s journey whose life was lived beyond the walls of traditional education, and from her own words and perspective, we learn how fulfilling it can truly be.

In Living the Journey we address the importance of the beginning chapters of life, and the importance of chiropractic care and the human gift of a nourishing this “outer womb” experience. From this discussion, we naturally flow into the wider picture of the future of society. With healing brought to the beginnings of life, the outer society will naturally cultivate new possibilities. And so we touch upon the sacred beauty of a future that our hearts know is possible.

To summarize this issue in a single sentence, we say: There is no greater gift than the warmth bestowed from a loving heart, and there is no greater warmth than the love parents may have for their children. With that, I hope you can find the fountain of your own encouragement and strength. And I hope that no matter what the world mirrors to you, you can mirror back the resounding knowledge that you are big enough and strong enough to rise above it. For then your children will learn to see their own opened pathway forward and will blossom into the adults of their generation, with a gift of their own.

PW #67 Talking Points, Group Questions, and the Chiropractic Connection

TAKING THE STEP

Real Work for Real Kids

By Lauren McClain

Children love work. Not for the money, or because it's particularly fun, but because it lessens the perceived gap between their worlds and the worlds of their parents and caregivers. Children want to be more than themselves, and they want to be free to discover what that more is. So Lauren McClain writes, "When we choose and are in charge of our own work, the work satisfies and enlivens us. When we are assigned work... and are expected to perform to another's standards, work becomes drudgery."

Real work (for real kids) may be juxtaposed against what many kids experience in most school institutions, wherein they are often assigned work for which they have little interest in doing. There's a creativity in children that most adults (even teenagers) have forgotten due to long hours of institutional education. For this reason, McClain writes, "Homeschoolers have the opportunity to avoid creative collapse and **work aversion** by carefully choosing what school looks like at home." [emphasis added]

Lauren advocates for what she calls a "Projected-based curriculum," and project-based homeschooling. She offers numerous examples of what this looks like in practice as well as practical tips to make it become a living reality for you. There are so many benefits to this way of learning that Lauren emphasizes throughout her article. It takes only a few ounces of uncomfortable effort to break the molds of our previous conceptions of what "schooling" is "supposed" to be, but once we do, we start to experience the excitement for what's possible. And the excitement, it doesn't dissipate—it builds.

Questions for consideration:

- What's one project you would like your kids to start on their own?
- What's the main challenge with letting kids define their own project or work goals?
- If your child was introduced to project-based activities that build their creativity, do you think this would diminish their desire for electronics?
- What are some possible ways/ideas to help prevent parents from assuming the role of project manager and instead allow the child to take the lead role in their own work?
- What's your own relationship to "work" and do you see any connection this has to the way you were brought up in school?

Chiropractic Connection:

Sitting may be helpful to think things through, but many projects require active movement. Schools today have only become worse with respect to too many hours sitting in chairs.

Movement is life! And chiropractors recognize this important principle. Many hours of sitting can result in engrained habits of thinking. Sometimes, the chiropractic adjustment, in addition to removing subluxations, can open up the potential for new ways of experiencing life. It's evident in the way that people, coming in for a chiropractic adjustment, may leave feeling and experiencing life in a different, more positive way. Children can benefit from chiropractic care, especially if they've been stuck in seats or in front of computers for large amounts of time. Chiropractic can break the seated posture-spell on our emotions and outlook, which can encourage more movement in life.

TAKING THE STEP*Believing You're Mom Enough*

By Sara Easterly

This article summarizes one of the key ingredients which this issue of *Pathways* is designed to relay. The article itself is a letter of gratitude one mom sent to the “Neufeld Institute,” after having encountered lessons and perspectives that radically shifted her relationships with her kids and herself. At the end of the article, she summarizes her transformation: “For me, it comes down to parenting with confidence—believing that I’m big enough, mom enough, and my children’s answer.”

Her story starts out not unlike many of us, bogged down in the fears and worries that come along with parenting, especially when we are exposed to the public eye. For Sara, one story really stood out, when she was on a plane and for the last 10 minutes of descent, her 3 year-old couldn’t stop crying. By the end of the flight, one elderly lady turned around on her and pointed saying, “You have a real screamer there!”

Sara says, “If it hadn’t been for one woman who later whispered, ‘I thought she did great!’ I’m not sure how long it would have taken for me to pull my mind out of the shameful place it was headed.”

Parents are vulnerable, and the horror is that our societies (especially the media news outlets) do everything imaginable to break this already thin and tender sheet of parental confidence. We are left, Sara says, “searching outside ourselves for the answers, never fully trusting ourselves in knowing what’s in our children’s best interests.”

What this issue of *Pathways* is meant to do is unabashedly reverse this diabolical trend. Sara quotes Dr. Gordon Neufeld, who says, “What children need is for **us** to resume our rightful role in their lives, to believe that **we** are their best bet.” [emphasis added]

“And it’s so very true,” Sara concludes. “Parents aren’t in need of the right answer. Parents *are* the answer.” Our hope in *Pathways* is for all of us to discover what this great insight truly means for ourselves.

Questions for consideration:

- What’s the most embarrassing or distressing parenting experience you’ve had “in public” if you’d be open to sharing?
- Was there ever a time where you thought, “I wish I didn’t assert myself so confidently the parent, and deferred instead to someone else’s judgement?”
- What are some highlighted differences that come to mind between parenting with confidence and parenting with ‘strictness’?

Chiropractic Connection:

Confidence in oneself as being the answer you've been looking for as a parent is one hue of a spectrum of colors that fall in the pallet of what chiropractic calls "honoring and trusting innate intelligence." Like a muscle, the more we tune into our own intelligence and respect the body's ability to heal and be well, the better we get at discerning answers from within. Chiropractic is a model of health built upon the principles expounded by this author Sara Easterly, when she describes her journey from timidity to full-out confidence in herself as a parent. Nothing was given to her, but the knowledge that she already possessed the key ingredients for success. Once this knowledge is acquired, the ways in which we support ourselves, and our bodies, becomes clear, and they are in so many ways more effective and safer than traditional models of care.

TAKING THE STEP***Feature article****The Keys to Well-Being in Child Development*

By Gordon Neufeld, Ph.D.

Here's a quick bullet point list of some of the essential ideas found in this article:

Well-being is the degree to which human potential is fully realized.

To realize our human potential means:

- 1) To learn how to become separate human beings,
- 2) To acquire an ability to adapt to circumstances beyond our control,
- 3) To become truly social and capable of seeking togetherness.

In other words, it means to mature.

What are the keys for a child to mature?

- 1) A child requires proximity or togetherness with the primary care-giver in order to spark this primary "venturing forth" energy that leads to independence.
- 2) A child requires experiences of futility, or the experience of facing conditions beyond their control, and the emotions that come with it (tears, upset, and a resulting transformation in adaptability).
- 3) A child requires "integration," the catalyst for which is inner conflict and the ability to hold multiple feelings at once; to have "on-the-other-hand" or "part-of-me-feels-this" experiences.

The maturing processes cannot be commanded or instructed or educated into us. They are spontaneous. And therefore, not inevitable. Conditions need to be right for these processes to unfold. In other words, development is not a matter of age-and-stage, but it requires keys in the form of ideal conditions to unfold.

Many adults today, while in appearance look like they are fully mature, are tragically lacking the fruits of the above process of maturation. For instance, they are still stuck trying to find and recover a primary connection, they are incapable of experiencing futility and adapting to conditions beyond their control, or they are lacking the ability to hold mixed feelings.

These keys build on each other, beginning with the connection that is required for learning to venturing forth in mind and body, as individuals.

Questions for consideration:

- Do you believe there are indeed 'keys' to children's development?
- Would you add any keys to the ones discussed above?

- How do you feel that these keys cannot be educated, but must come out spontaneously?
- What can we do as parents to provide the right conditions?
- Can you think of any adults who you would not consider mature? Do they seem to express a lacking as discussed above?
- If society appreciated that key conditions exist for optimal development and maturation, how would this change the opinion and reverence for newborn mothers and families?

Chiropractic connection:

This article discusses the keys to optimal development in children which are said to begin from the ground up, beginning with the primary connection to one's parents which garner a venturing forth energy. This ground-up maturation process cannot be commanded or prescribed from without. It can only be allowed to grow from within, by providing conducive conditions that serve its spontaneous unfolding. In other words, Nature is the primary actor behind our children's maturation, making our job one of reducing interferences or obstructions to Nature's ideal plan. This is also the philosophy of chiropractic! Subluxations, misalignments, and the three T's of Thoughts, Toxins, Traumas, can all work to disconnect and obstruct Nature's wisdom in us. For growth, maturation, and health, the spontaneous unfolding of Nature must express itself through our nervous systems. I love how the author says, "well-being is the degree to which human potential is fully realized." For we can understand how well-being is something far and above the mere "absence of disease..." Well-being, health, and therefore development, are all about the *freedom* of Nature to express her wisdom in our bodies, minds, and relationships.

Staying the Course
Busting Homeschool Myths
By Jean Miller

“Homeschooling can seem daunting with much to consider, but when we break it all down and handle each consideration one at a time, you can (and will!) move forward with confidence.”

Jean Miller discusses some myths surrounding the homeschool environment that will serve parents who are looking to reconsider the mainstream approach of education. Education, she says, is not about what you teach (or buy) but how we engage with our children.

Myth #1: Homeschooling means recreating the classroom.

It’s great news that this isn’t the case! Beyond the brick-and-mortar school which we could never recreate, we get to take back all that time children spend away from us. And there is a wide freedom afforded to homeschoolers to be unique, customized, and adventurous.

Myth #2: Homeschooling is a full time job or...

Myth #3: Homeschooling means I get to just chill at home.

Homeschooling parents are more like facilitators of learning. There’s a healthy balance to achieve. When balance is optimal, our lessons will be memorable, spark interest, bring joy, and flow with ease.

Myth #4: Being a homeschool parent means I should be ready for each lesson every day, like classroom teachers.

Just like teachers in a classroom, you will have good days and bad days. One of the great beauties of homeschooling is to be present to watch our child’s learning unfold. Another benefit is the flexibility with the schedule.

Myth #5: Homeschool kids don’t get their socialization needs met.

Jean says every homeschooling family she’s ever known has had many opportunities for socialization! In fact, she says, we have to learn how to say no to it sometimes. Many think socialization will be the biggest challenge, and in fact, the opposite is true!

Questions for consideration:

- Are these ‘myths’ ones you’ve had personally in mind about homeschooling?
- What’s the personal benefit of “brick-and-mortar” schools for you and your children?
- Does a part of you want to homeschool, instead? Can you expand on this feeling?

- If society actually portrayed a positive image of homeschoolers as pioneers for the next generation of highly adaptable adults, would that change your perspective? How much of our perspective is shaped by what other people would think?

Chiropractic Connection:

The drive for “homegrown” learning recognizes that we don’t need external instructions in order to learn. Learning is an innate quality of all humans from the first moment of life onward. By remembering this, pressure is actually relieved in both the child and the one responsible for her. Chiropractic recognizes the same innate intelligence with respect to health and well-being. Today, we’ve outsourced our learning and our health to external institutions, to the point of dependency and even loss of autonomy in life. The benefit of chiropractic is to bring us back to a state of self-directed healthcare and self-derived well-being. When we live from this place, we have the advantage of greater freedom in life. When children learn in a similar philosophical environment, so too does their learning take on new dimensions and possibilities.

LIVING THE JOURNEY*My Breastfeeding Experience*

By Taylor Johnson-Gordon

Born in a family that encouraged breastfeeding, Taylor Johnson-Gordon decided to proudly continue the trend. Her breastfeeding adventure was defined not by advice or even breastfeeding education which she says 'may have detracted from her innate ability. Rather, it was defined by the inner knowing that was afforded to her by her upbringing.

"Seeing breastfeeding as a normal, healthy, and loving act as a toddler is the very reason why I breastfeed now," Taylor tells us. And she says, "I can't understate the importance of having confidence early on and not letting the fear of what 'could' happen overwhelm you."

Taylor talks about the time she was pregnant, being advised to seek out a lactation consultant before having the baby. She respectfully did not, and describes this as a beneficial choice because, "it would have stressed me out before the journey even began!" And perhaps it would have tampered with her confidence.

"Telling a pregnant mama that breastfeeding can be extremely painful and difficult, that her milk supply will be compromised, and that she needs someone to show her how to breastfeed has the potential to do more harm than good. It can mess with her innate confidence and maternal intuition. It can bring unnecessary doubt."

While not detracting from the possible complications that can arise with breastfeeding, Taylor's breastfeeding journey is one that she hopes can inspire encouragement. To share difficult experiences can be cathartic and build community, says Taylor, "but I also think women who have had very positive experiences need to share," as well.

Questions for consideration:

- How were your breastfeeding experiences?
- Did you have a tendency to share the negative aspects more than the positive?
- Do you think women need more positive stories of breastfeeding, or would more education/instruction be better?
- How was your experience growing up with respect to breastfeeding, and do you feel it has shaped your own journey to some relatable extent?

Chiropractic connection:

Like support for normal, physiological births, awareness has grown to recognize the power chiropractic can have for newborns who may have early misalignments and tensions from birth.

The power of chiropractic in facilitating positive changes in the breastfeeding dynamic is tremendous. Many parents recognize how valuable it is, and they are sharing their stories. The gentle care of chiropractic is most appropriate for infants. It is conducive to the reflexive and physiological functions that are essential for things like breastfeeding, digestion, and the processing of environmental stresses of all kinds, including early traumas. The softest of pressure is all the baby needs to respond with excellent changes in function. Watching babies recover the breastfeeding dynamic through chiropractic support is a beautiful thing to behold.

LIVING THE JOURNEY*The Treasure Box*

By Candace Palmo

This short article is a story of a woman who, leading up to birth, was having serious doubts. “When things get tough in my life, my habit is to change my mind and walk out,” she said to her midwife Candace, the author of this article.

Candace replied, “Every woman comes to a point in her labor when she wants to give up. You will, too.” She continues, “That is a significant moment. It is a sign that you are almost there, and it is then—when you feel you have nothing left to draw from—that you are given the key to open your treasure box. Inside you will behold the wonder and depth of your capacity to reach far beyond anything you thought was possible.”

Candace, a wise, experienced midwife has a great ability to calm her mamas, precisely because she’s seen so many natural births, and how the process unfolds. In this piece, she gives the woman struggling with doubt many great points to consider, and ways to re-envision her birth.

She says, “You will enter the stream of all women who have gone before you.” She says, “Together, you and your baby will reach into the reserves of courage and strength that will amaze you.” “We rarely look into this box,” Candace confesses. “It’s too easy to quit what we are doing when we don’t want to do it anymore... One of the gifts of labor is that we don’t get to do that.”

There are few things more powerful than when a woman gives birth. The woman in the story gave birth a month later, after this conversation with her midwife Candace. Hours passed and labor intensified. “I can’t do this,” she said. “I need drugs. Can’t you just do a C-section? Do something!” Candace did her best to reassure her. “You’re eight centimeters... This is the moment to go into that treasure box.”

“We stayed close to her,” Candace describes, “whispering words of encouragement, moving with her rhythm, in awe of her power. She was mighty as she pushed her child into the world.”

Questions for consideration:

- What are some great qualities you’ve experienced in birth professionals or supporters? Anything they said or did that really made the difference?
- Did you have any fears leading up to your own birth that were difficult for you?
- Many midwives have lots of experience of birth. What are some ways we can absorb their experience, to get to a place of knowing that birth is more than possible, and not to be feared?

Chiropractic connection:

Among practitioners involved in the world of pregnancy and birth, chiropractors are some who are closest to understanding the logistical side of what Candace calls “the Treasure Box,” or that inner resource that can lift us up to amazing levels of perception and accomplishment. The nervous system is at the source of all our resources, including physiological mechanisms of hormone function as well as those states of consciousness that can surround us in awe and confidence. Everything about birth is materially related to the activity of the nervous system, just as can be said of every other physiological process of life. But at birth, mysterious levels of activity are often reached, and in the eyes of all who are blessed to behold them, these experiences are nothing short of majestic. Chiropractic and the advancement of nervous system function is the first chapter of an evolving story where our species learns to harness our greater potential in birth and the greater life.