

WHEN EVERY CHILD NEEDS YOU: Strengthening Parent-Child & Sibling Relationships

The goal isn't perfect parenting. The goal is creating relationships where children feel safe enough to be known, supported, challenged, and respected.

The parent-child relationship is one of the most powerful contexts for a child's emotional development, regulation, resilience, and sense of belonging. In families navigating disability, mental health needs, developmental differences, trauma, or other, relationships can become especially complex as parents work to meet competing needs while ensuring that every child feels seen and valued. Drawing from neuroscience and attachment theory, this training explores how connection, curiosity, empathy, boundaries, accountability, and repair can strengthen relationships across the entire family system. Attention will be given to sibling relationships and the often-unspoken experiences of siblings who may feel responsible, overlooked, worried, resentful, protective, or unsure of where they fit. Participants will leave with practical strategies for responding to challenging behavior without shame, creating individual connection with each child, supporting healthy sibling relationships, and building a family culture where every child can experience both belonging and individuality.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

1. Identify how relational safety influence children's emotional regulation and behavior.
2. Recognize the emotions and needs that may exist beneath challenging behavior.
3. Describe ways parents can balance connection + boundaries + accountability without relying on shame.
4. Identify the unique experiences and potential needs of siblings in families where one child requires additional support.
5. Apply practical strategies for creating individual connection and strengthening sibling relationships.
6. Use repair as a tool for rebuilding trust after conflict, disconnection, or mistakes.
7. Develop one realistic action step to strengthen connection within their own family.

CURIOSITY

What is happening beneath the behavior?

Behavior may communicate:

- "I'm overwhelmed."
- "I need connection."
- "This feels unfair."
- "I don't know how to handle this."
- "Do I matter too?"
- "I need help."

CONNECTION

Can I help my child feel understood before I try to change the behavior?

Try: "I'm wondering if something is really hard right now."

"Tell me what's going on."

"I'm here. We can figure this out together."

BOUNDARY

Understanding a feeling does not mean allowing unsafe or hurtful behavior.

"You can be angry. You cannot hit."

"It's okay to disagree with me. It is not okay to hurt someone."

REPAIR

Relationships don't require perfection. They require repair.

When things go wrong, follow these steps:

1. Name what happened.
2. Take responsibility for your part.
3. Listen to your child's experience.
4. Reconnect.
5. Try again.

WHEN ONE CHILD NEEDS MORE: MORE NEEDS $\neq$ MORE WORTH

A child may need more:

- attention
- appointments
- supervision
- advocacy
- accommodations
- emotional support

That does not mean they are more or less important.

Fair doesn't always mean equal.

Instead of asking: "Am I giving my children the same thing?"

Try asking: **"Does each child know that they matter? And does each child have what they need?"**

REMEMBER THE SIBLINGS

A sibling can **love** their brother or sister and still feel: **Worried • Jealous • Protective • Angry • Guilty • Embarrassed • Lonely • Resentful • Proud • Overlooked**

Two things can be true at the same time.

“You can love your sibling AND wish things were different.”

“You can understand why your sibling needs help AND feel frustrated.”

“You can want to help AND need a break.”

Give siblings permission to have complicated feelings without making them responsible for managing the family’s emotions.

Siblings need:

- Individual time with parents
- Permission to have their own identity
- Space to express difficult feelings
- Opportunities to simply be siblings
- Freedom from adult responsibilities
- Recognition for who they are—not only what they do

5 QUESTIONS TO TRY THIS WEEK

- 1. What might my child’s behavior be communicating?**
- 2. What does my child need from me right now - connection, regulation, a boundary, or all three?**
- 3. Does each of my children have time with me that isn’t about problems, appointments, school, or siblings?**
- 4. Am I asking one child to carry a responsibility that belongs to me?**
- 5. Is there a relationship in my family that could benefit from repair?**

ONE SMALL STEP

This week, I will intentionally create connection with: _____

I will connect by: _____

One thing I want my child to know is: _____

KEY TAKEAWAY

Children don’t need perfect parents.

They need parents who are willing to:

NOTICE → CONNECT → UNDERSTAND → SET BOUNDARIES → REPAIR → TRY AGAIN

RESOURCES

Books & Authors

Dan Siegel, M.D. & Tina Payne Bryson

- *The Whole-Brain Child*
- *No-Drama Discipline*
- *The Power of Showing Up*

These resources can support discussion around children's developing brains, regulation, connection, and the importance of being present and emotionally attuned.

Dr. Becky Kennedy

- *Good Inside: A Guide to Becoming the Parent You Want to Be*
- Good Inside parenting resources and podcast

Dr. Becky's current framework emphasizes understanding behavior, holding boundaries, repair, and resetting rather than pursuing parenting perfection.

Dan Hughes, Ph.D.

- *Building the Bonds of Attachment*
- P.A.C.E. resources

Hughes' PACE framework—Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, and Empathy—offers a practical relational stance for responding to children, particularly when behavior is difficult or emotionally charged.

Brené Brown

- *The Gifts of Imperfection*
- *Daring Greatly*
- *Atlas of the Heart*

Brown's work can help families explore vulnerability, shame, empathy, courage, accountability, and belonging.

Additional Parent Resource

Good Inside offers resources specifically addressing sibling dynamics, including the idea that sibling conflict can be an opportunity to develop relationship and conflict-resolution skills rather than simply something parents need to eliminate.