

- **Start with a good sense of connection. Children of ALL AGES (particularly infants) need eye contact, smiles, appropriate touch and play. The eye contact and appropriate touch assists people in building a neuro-network (brain connections) that makes them more able to be a caring and kind person and biologically increases their ability to regulate their emotions in healthy and appropriate ways.**
- **Children understand communication much earlier than many people realize. From a very young age, they pick up on moods, facial expressions, body language and “vibes” of others. Because children are ego-centric developmentally, they may believe your stress, or anger or sadness is caused by them, rather than other issues.**
- **Human beings have a variety of temperaments and personalities. When in new, stressful, challenging or traumatic situations, some people move toward the threat – sometimes boldly and fearlessly and do not express their fear and trepidation much outwardly. These individuals are sometimes self-starters, sometimes the fix-it person or the protector of others. We often associate these individuals as having a “fight” response, meaning their body prepares them to take action by moving TOWARD the threat. Fight response individuals may also become verbally or physically combative in those same situations. A flight response moves away from the threat and flight response people physically get activated and frequently do not like to be around emotionally intense situations. They often will be physically active the more challenging the situation is, but they don’t stick around where the intensity is. The last style is the “freeze” response. During this type of response, people freeze and delay taking action toward a threat. This delay is often due to a physical response that makes it difficult or temporarily impossible for a person to physically or verbally respond to a threat or intense situation. If a parent’s tone of voice is loud, intense or just naturally resonant, the child may great difficulty in performing. What motivates one child (even in the same family) can demotivate another child.**
- **Because children may learn more easily by non-personal examples, at first, you may wish to utilize appropriate and healthy stories (fiction and non-fiction) which teach The Heroic Journey (a list of movies, stories, fables and true life examples are available for free at www.theomnibuscenter.org). They will need help making the connections, so DISCUSS the elements of the story. Depending on the child’s age, you may ask these types of questions:**
 - **Who was the story about (the initiate or hero)?**
 - **Who helped the hero most on his/her journey?**
 - **How did that helper (the mentor or ally) help the hero?**
 - **Where their others who made it difficult for the hero?**
 - **How did they do that?**
 - **How did the hero respond to them?**
 - **How did the hero’s journey begin (The Call)?**
 - **Did the hero willing start the journey (Accepting the Call)?**
 - **OR did the hero refuse or delay the journey (Refusing the Call)?**
 - **If the hero refused the call, how or why did s/he refuse the journey?**
 - **What made the hero finally accept the journey or challenge?**
 - **What were the hardest things the hero had to do?**
 - **How did the hero get through it?**
 - **How did the hero change from the beginning of the story to the end of the story?**
 - **How do you think others were changed in good ways by what the hero went through?**
 - **How are you like the hero? The helpers?**

- The power of movies and stories of resilience is not just in the story, but helping children to integrate the lessons from the stories. Discussing the story after the telling creates a bond and trust in the conversation and hearing the child's opinion. When you see the child is using faulty logic or judgment, ask questions. "What if ___ happened, what could you do then?" is better than "That is stupid, that wouldn't work because..." (Lecture ensues). Give them the gift of thinking it through with you being on the sidelines to assist.

This way, a child begins to trust their ability to think and feel cared for at the same time. Children have to be taught critical thinking – or teaching the **PROCESS** of thinking through a problem or dilemma. When they are not taught the process of healthy reasoning they do not learn to think for themselves and are at greater risk of simply following others who do not have their best interest at heart. The ability to think is not developed through lectures or commands, even well-intended ones. Once a lecture tone is heard, the child learns, not what the parent is saying, but how to tune it out.

There are dozens of teachable moments in the course of the average family's week. They often occur when watching a TV show or movie together. When the focus isn't on the child, but on a character in the show, the child may be more comfortable in conversing. The "Columbo" approach (from the television show) was to play confused, "I wonder why that person did that. What do you think?" "What do you think the character should have done to make it better?"

- Since children learn best by example, what are you teaching your children when you go through life's challenges? What is your pattern of responding? Children mimic a parent's resilience level. If a child is *not capable* of responding *your* way, they may experience a sense of helplessness and not even try, particularly if a parent is critical or lecturing.
- When a child is scared and feeling incapable of their actual abilities, tend first to their feelings and then to give appropriate encouragement and other assistance, without lecturing. Normalize the experience of fear. Help them take small calculated risks. Explain to your child that fear is normal and people learn how to take action, even when they are feeling fear. Give them examples of how you may have felt fear in your childhood or teen years. Some individuals are naturally more adventurous than others, so your child may not have *your* temperament. What worked for you and if you have more than one child, you may need to help them with fear in different ways. Some need more gentle encouragement and others need you to be tougher. This is a common issue when parents and/or other siblings are highly successful.