



BRAIN FIRST PARENTING

MOVING FORWARD BY CIRCLING BACK

The 4 Essential Steps to the Circling Back Process

Purpose

To discuss with your child what happened, from a brain-based, empathetic lens so that their thinking brain stays online, you can instill your values, and they can grow in their lagging skills.

Before You Begin

- Check-in with yourself: are you regulated and feeling grounded? Remember, when we are dysregulated and reactive, this is contagious (meaning it will result in our child becoming dysregulated) and our thinking brain is more apt to be off-line.
- Observe your child's current state of regulation: do they appear to be regulated? Are they "settled" and able to tune in and connect with you?
- When and Where: Is the place you plan to have this discussion free of distractions? Do you have enough time to take the conversation at your child's pace?

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Steps to Circling Back

1) Lead with Empathy

- Focus on the fact that your child would have done better if they could have
- This is a place to focus on connection, not correction
- Don't assume, blame or focus on the behavior itself
- Articulate that you recognize they were experiencing pain, discomfort, or some type of overwhelm in the moment they "acted out" while being mindful of not talking too much.
- Provide reassurance, letting them know they are not in trouble. You are there to support them and understand what was happening for them in the challenging episode.
- Be patient and give them the necessary time to process. Get comfortable with silence.

Examples:

"I've noticed that something about getting ready for school isn't working for you and I'm just so sorry to see that it is such a struggle every day..."

"I was so sorry to see what a tough night last night was for you..."

"I was really concerned about you earlier today. I could tell you were having a really hard time..."

"I noticed how difficult yesterday was for you and I'm just so sorry you had to go through it..."

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2) Invite them to tell you more

Be patient and give your child the time they need to reflect, formulate their thoughts, and articulate. It may be that they do not have the skills to tell you more. That's ok. It is still good to invite them to do so, showing you are concerned about their perspective.

Examples:

"Are you able to tell me what was going on for you when that happened?"

"Is there any way I can help you when you're having a rough time like that?"

3) Share your concern

- Be sure you're clear about concerns ahead of time to avoid talking too much.
- Be specific in your comments.
- Focus your comments on their impact on others, safety, health, learning.
- Articulate your concern and worry for them.
- Stay in a mindset of wanting to grow their skills and build connection vs shaming and punishment.
- Be mindful of not lecturing.

Examples:

"I'm worried that..."

"It's hard for me because..."

"It makes me sad/hurts my feelings when..."

4) Brainstorm Accommodations

What can be proactively put in place to help your child next time this situation (or a similar situation) presents itself? If your child is able to participate and give ideas, wonderful! If not, you have the information and skills to brainstorm on your own.

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