
Q&A Call #4, Special topic: Parenting with Seth & Mara

Seth (00:02):

Okay, so this is the fourth Q and A call for SBSM 18, and this is a special topic call on parenting. So we only got 10 questions on parenting, which can fill up an hour pretty easily. So we'll see if we get there. If we do have time at the end, it's possible we'll be able to get to some additional questions, but we will definitely give our full attention to these 10 that we got. So Mara, I believe the first one was for you, is that correct?

Mara (00:37):

Yes. So the first question is, "I'm a 2017 alumni. I am teaching art therapy, which includes neuroplasticity. I use condensed SBSM lessons to relax the nervous system. What are the most valuable lessons to teach kids in a simple format? For a basic foundation, I'm using orientation sprinkled with forms of containment." So without knowing the age of the kids, I would advise to be as concrete as possible. So really specific, grounded adjusting as appropriate for the age of the kids. It's also not clear if you're teaching in groups or individually, but I would try to connect to the art of the day. So maybe you warm up by noticing colors, textures, touching different materials, smelling if it's safe to do so, listening to the noises made by interacting with different materials that you might use in the arts. Just trying to use as many senses as possible. The other idea I had was grounding. So again, adjusting for the age of the kids. You could do like when you're sitting, what parts of you are in contact with the surfaces under you when you're standing? Is it more or fewer points of contact? That kind of really specific question to guide their attention. And you can also play games. So if you have enough space, you could put dot stickers on the floor and pretend that you're trying to avoid lava or dinosaurs or something like that as you hop from dot to dot.

(02:28)

And then another thought is if they're making art and they're sitting, involved or standing, whatever position they're in, can you check in periodically? Are you comfortable? Kids are first to eighth grade, so can you just check in? Do they know if they're comfortable? Do you need to shift your position a little bit? And then the final idea I had was really to lean into following your impulse. So with making art, that might be choosing the colors that you want, choosing the brush strokes, choosing the materials, choosing when you're done and how messy it is,

how needed it is. So lots of choice points that I think give a feeling of power. So those were some ideas. I hope they're helpful.

Seth (03:26):

Thanks, Mara. I just see, in the chat, Darla says the kids are between first and eighth grade. Wow, that's a big range. Small group, three kids. So yeah, only three kids and a wide variety of ages, so that's really interesting. So yeah, you'll be able to pick and choose, I think from those, the eighth graders may have outgrown the silly play stuff, but maybe they can tap into that childlike part of themselves for the benefit of the first graders. But yeah, lots of good ideas there to play with. And I think, just like Mara said, play in general, I think there's so many ways that we can explore embodiment through play, being animals or being a superhero, or whatever it is. There's all sorts of ways to explore what would your posture be if you were this, what sound would you make if you were this?

(04:27)

And these are all ways of getting into our body in different ways. So yeah, lots of stuff to play with there. Thank you, Mara. Okay, so this one is indirectly about parenting. It's actually about parenting ourselves, but everything that I'm going to talk about in the answer can also apply to how we will ideally parent our kids. So, "Parenting oneself can hurt so much. How can it not hurt so much? Consistent presence through the kidney adrenal lessons was an approach I could come closer to, but there's a lack of trust in myself. I can't defend myself or I can't save myself. And there's a feeling that I betray my younger self too. It feels like something like backstabbing. And in that despair, I feel an interdependency. That seems like an addiction. So I feel a lot of urgency, see, for, I really just, I need this connection, I need this guidance, how to approach this.

(05:37)

It feels so absolute. I hope it makes sense, what I mean." Yes, I think I understand what you mean, and I am, please know that everything you're describing is coming from a place of survival physiology. That's why it feels so urgent. And like you say, a despair that feels like despair for a dependency, it feels like almost an addiction. So that is the nature of survival, stress and attachment wounding, when those things go together. So it sounds like you really didn't have anyone there for you in an appropriate, attuned, attentive way as you were growing up. And so it's like, how do I build this for myself when I have no model? It can be pretty tough to figure out. I really understand what you're saying, where it feels like you betray

yourself. There's so many ways that can happen. Just speaking about my own experience, as someone who experienced quite a bit of abuse growing up, and I had in adulthood ended up with this very sort of fractured, young, in Freudian terms, of the "Id'sh" part of myself, I just want gratification.

(07:02)

I just want soothing all the time. And so that expressed itself through various addictions, and it's like every time I would go to whatever the addiction was that was coupled with that, it's almost like, yeah, it's like my childlike self wants this, but it's not what it really wants. What it really wants is connection. What it really wants is attunement. What it really wants is that ability to feel safe, but because I didn't get that model, it's easier to go to this thing or that thing which is soothing. And so as I learned more about this and learned to be in relationship with myself in the ways it sounds like you're wanting to discover, it's not like it was just a switch that flicked. I'd be in awareness like, yep, I'm learning how to connect to myself and parent myself in this sort of compassionate way and feel into the difficult feelings that are in there.

(07:59)

And yet I'll still go to the addiction. I wasn't fully out of it. And every time I would go to the addictive behavior, whatever it was, it would feel like I was betraying that kid, that inner kid that's like, no, I'm not supposed to do that. I'm supposed to do this other thing. But this wiring is so strong. So that's my experience of that, going to maladaptive patterns that were formed out of this need for attention and care. And it can take a long time to break those, but the way that we do that is in how we pay attention to ourselves and how we relate to ourselves. It requires a lot of self-forgiveness and a lot of patience. So if you think about if your kid comes to you, I mean in this case it doesn't sound like you have children, but for everyone here as a parent who does, if your child were to come to you in tears, all upset, I mean would hope that the instinctive response would be to really get it on their level, be there for them.

(09:01)

Of course, this could be hard if we have trauma, but this is how we want to respond as parents, not like there's a huge problem like, oh, honey, honey, what's wrong? What's wrong? No, no, just, oh, I see you're upset. Okay, let's talk about it. What's going on? Yeah, come here. Yeah, I'm with you. Okay, and just calmly, responsibly, patiently providing that presence. So how can you do that for yourself? One, self-forgiveness for every time that you feel like you betrayed yourself, because this stuff didn't start with you. This happened because of your attachment wounds, most likely that happened with your parents, I'm guessing. So it's like if you feel like

you've betrayed yourself, please know that that didn't come from you originally. That comes from the maladaptive patterns that were formed because of the trauma you experienced. So you really need to forgive yourself, and that may just be mental at first, but at least say the words like, yeah, it's okay.

(10:03)

It's okay. I forgive myself. Yep, I see what I'm doing here, but it's okay. Yep. This didn't start with me. This started with these original wounds and even naming that for yourself. So you're starting to make the association that this isn't really your fault. Lots of patients think about the kind of care and presence and attunement a baby needs. How can you turn that towards yourself? Maybe that's with touch. Maybe there's a way that you can just, like you said, the kidney adrenal lessons, feel like it worked for you in this, great, keep doing that, and how can you bring the principles of that into yourself in other ways, right? So what are the principles of the kidney adrenal lessons? They're about allowing these things, these organs to soften, settle, be juicy, supple, so that kind of quality can be conveyed to other parts of the body.

(11:06)

Maybe you feel sick in your stomach because of something and it's just, oh, and so how can you just pause, give yourself this, touch this, attention, this care, and really what it comes down to, how can I do this? How do I approach it? It's like that with care, patience, forgiveness, and lots and lots of practice. Like I said, it took me years, years of work, even after I was pretty much regulated, to fully get out of various maladaptive patterns and addictions that had formed because of my trauma, even though I was basically regulated, these behaviors and ways of talking to ourselves, being mean to ourselves internally, those things take a long time to change. Even after the nervous system shifts, the mental wiring can still be there and can still show up. So it takes discipline and patience and practice, practice, practice. So I hope that's helpful. I wish there was a magic solution that just - do this one thing and it'd be fine, but really it's about effort, and really making the decision to show up for yourself, again and again.

Mara (12:27):

Thanks, Seth. So the next question and two others later on are all about cesarean birth. So I'm going to give some context, with this first of those three questions, but we're still going to intersperse my questions with Seth questions, so we'll take them one at a time. So the question is that "The next call is about parenting. So I think this might interest many moms or dads. I had a C-section, so obviously my system didn't complete the procedure of giving birth.

Is this program going to help with that?" Okay, so just for context, I have two children and both were born via cesarean, so I'm not an OB GYN or anything like that, but I have lived experience as a mom, and thinking about it from the point of view, of being the mom and also thinking about how my kids have developed - they are both teenagers now.

(13:31)

So just first off, there are so many paths to a cesarean birth. It could be an emergency, it could be planned even if it's called an emergency. It might be that you had a couple hours notice that you were going to go down that path. So there's a lot of variability about how you end up with a cesarean birth. And some people experience it as traumatic, just like a car accident might be experienced as traumatic by some people and not traumatic by other people. A relatively minor fender bender like Irene talks about in the biology of stress. So it's not really in the event, it's really how the system absorbs and processes and moves through the experience, or in this case gets stuck, okay? There could be sadness or grief that comes up, especially because many of us have envisioned an ideal birth. And so there's a set of expectations about what that process, what that experience is going to be like.

(14:46)

I remember writing a birth plan or birth preferences and going over that with the doula and the midwives and the medical team, and then stuff happens, which you don't always have control over. So one thing to attend to is are those emotions surfacing? Is there grieving to do? And you'll know because your body will give you some of these signals, and just to allow space for that, I think there's an expectation when you have a baby that it's going to be all joyous in the early moments, and that's certainly present, but there can also be really complex feelings, especially when the birth doesn't go as expected, to name those emotions as they arise. And then depending on the need, the reason that the cesarean birth happened, there could be an interruption in time with the baby. So something that interrupts the earliest attachment to the child.

(16:04)

So for me, each of my children had different reasons that they needed extra care, but one I was with almost all the time, except at night, I had to go somewhere else after a few days, but I was there like 18 hours a day, and I would just go away for maybe six or eight hours to sleep, and then come back and be there with the other. We were separated for 36 hours, so that was partly because of, actually it wasn't because of the cesarean, but the cesarean happened and then there was a medical reason that we were separated. So just be mindful that any kind of

disruption to the earliest bonding with your child could also be impactful on the child and on you, for the biological imperative to be connected to your baby. And then as I mentioned, depending on the nature of the birth, there could be a medical, short-term or long-term, medical complication for the child.

(17:15)

So it could be quite complex. That wasn't part of this question in particular, but just setting the scene. And then for me, one of the things that I did that was super helpful was to focus on that attachment. And so I was able to breastfeed both of my children for quite a long time, two years for the first and three years for the second. And when I had conversations with professionals about why I didn't experience trauma about the cesarean birth, I think a lot of it was that I felt this deep connection through that process of being able to spend the intimate time breastfeeding each of those babies through their journey. Circling back to the specific question about my system didn't complete the procedure of giving birth, I think there's different ways to see that, right? No, the baby didn't come through the vaginal canal, so I think that's quite literally what the person asking this question meant. But you did give birth, there is a baby. That's why I'm using the language cesarean birth, which I think is more humanizing than cesarean section, which is very medicalized. So teasing apart the physical part from the you did grow a baby, you birthed a baby, I think is also helpful in terms of how we talk to ourselves about this. And I think I'll get a little more into the completion part in the other two questions. So I'm going to leave it there, unless Seth, you want to add anything?

Seth (19:14):

No, I'll leave these ones to you. You're much more qualified than I in addressing these specific ones, and it sounds like you're, yeah, I had one thought, and it sounds like you're going to get to it, so yeah, I'll just move on. Thanks, Mara. "Hello. I have gained more regulation, and I have a lower tolerance of abuse from my family. Currently I am in no contact,, no contact after trying to healthfully relate to my family, with no success. I spend time with my boyfriend's parents and weirdly, I feel guilty that I'm enjoying being around them, who treat me with attuned kindness. I do miss my mom. Can I grow so much regulation that I can tolerate being around my toxic family and just accept them? Or is the healthy choice to continue no contact? Why do I feel guilt?" Okay, so there's many parts to this question.

(20:14)

So I'll do it in sections. Can I grow so much regulation that I can tolerate being around my toxic

family and just accept them? It depends on what we're talking about. So if there is overt abuse that is still happening and continues to happen, excuse me, continues to happen, verbal, emotional, physical abuse, then I would say probably not so much. It's possible, I guess, that you could grow enough regulation that you can accept them, but why would you want to? I mean, I think the fact that you already have a lower tolerance for abuse, that just increases. The more regulated we get, the less we're willing to put up with bullshit, basically. So the other scenario is that okay, maybe they're not actively abusive, they're just really dysregulated and stressed and caught in their own shit. That's my situation. In that case, I'll say, yes you can, because that's what I experienced and what other people I've talked to have experienced.

(21:23)

So my mom is gone, but my dad is still around and he was very overtly abusive when I was a kid. However, he softened a lot, plus I'm way bigger and stronger than him now. So there's that, and he's still never abusive towards me. Now in his language, in his actions, et cetera, he still is an extremely anxious person that can lash out in anger at other people. Like going out to dinner isn't always a blast, et cetera. So he has toxic behavior. They're not directed at me though. So did I develop enough regulation? I can be around him, yes, absolutely. For about three days. So that's it.

(22:19)

And I can genuinely be okay with that. It's all right, and three days is my max. That's enough. So yeah, it may involve boundaries around your time. It may involve bringing in various support systems. For my example, my sister, for a long time, wouldn't go visit my dad without bringing her close friend who was her support person, essentially to have a safe person with her. So there's all sorts of ways that it can work where you can maintain the family connection, but again, that's different if it's overt abuse being directed at you. In those cases, I would say, why would you do that? And the answer that lots of people will give comes back to your thing here. Why do I feel guilt? Because family first, man, nothing more important than family. Why? I don't get it. This is something that we just have been drilled into us in our culture, in many cultures, like families, everything.

(23:20)

It's like why? It is just a program. That's all it is. The answer to that question, there really is no good answer. It's like, why is family so important? Because blood's thicker than water. What the hell does that mean? It's just a program. Now a family can be incredibly important. I don't have experience of this, but if you have a family system where there's kindness, attunement,

care, connection, genuine interest, harmony, that's amazing. And that is really important, I think, because it's so powerful to have connections at this blood level that you don't have with anybody else, and you have the shared history of growing up and that can be really powerful. But if your family system made your life hell and you're still trying to recover 30 years later, why is it so important? This is a serious inquiry, that I wrote a whole article about it, which you can go check out, and Susan, if you want to link that in the chat, it's called "Sometimes it's okay to break up with your family", I believe, or "Sometimes you have to break up with your family."

(24:30)

So I think that's why you feel guilt. It's just a program, it's really strong programming that says you must be connected with your family. And so I'll just really encourage you to continue to challenge that. If it really doesn't feel good to you, is the healthy choice to continue no contact? Well, yeah, that depends. It sounds like maybe now it is, and also know that it can change. So I didn't see my family for five years basically. I think maybe I saw my mom once, didn't see my dad at all during that period of five years, and that was really important for me. It was part of developing the resilience to be able to do it from a more regulated, healthy place. Anything else here? You say you do miss your mom, which I understand, maybe, perhaps there's a boundaried way you can still maintain a connection. Email is pretty easy, and if you get an angry email back, well, you can just delete it. So maybe a very boundaried form of communication to stay in touch with your mom is something you could consider.

(25:40)

Yeah, check out that article. Our families are very powerful, and sometimes it's just necessary if we want to heal that we have to get some space from them. And if they're actively abusive and don't want to change, that just may need to be the way it is for life. There's one more piece here which has to do with the guilt thing. One thing that can happen when we are in a trauma bond of any kind, especially with our family, it can be very powerful when we start to change it. They're not going to like that if they're not working on themselves. That is threatening to them because that trauma bond serves as a kind of sewer that you can just sort of keep dumping your shit in and you don't have to resolve it. You just keep playing it out and reenacting it and it's like you don't have to confront it.

(26:38)

Then as long as you stay with me in partnership in this trauma bond, then we can just keep on passing this shit back and forth and nothing has to get resolved, which is a lot harder and more painful to do. So they will generally resist it big time if you want to change and get healthy and

they don't. So that could also be part of the guilt you're feeling is sort of like a psychic pressure from your family system to come back to the trauma bond, come back to the dysfunction so that we can feel better. But that's not your job. So I will leave that one there unless you have anything to add there, Mara?

Mara (27:15):

No.

Seth (27:16):

Alrighty.

Mara (27:18):

Okay, this is the next one on. It's more about freeze and there's a tie-in to cesarean birth. "My son, who is 11 years old, sometimes - not often - goes into freeze at home. We stay with him, try to give him what he needs. When freeze lifts, he starts yawning, orienting, and often initiates some form of play. He says his needs in freeze are fully met. So the first question is, is it bad that he gets strong freeze reactions? Are there ways working with prevention so he doesn't get there, or more specific for the situation in freeze? He was born through a not-acute cesarean section. Is that important to work with? And how?" My first thought on this is that the person who wrote this is naming it freeze, but sometimes kids need downtime and time to veg out or daydream, and it may look like freeze and not be freeze. So I just wanted to allow for that possibility. Maybe it really is freeze, but maybe it's not. But for this parent, it sounds like they have a clear sense of what freeze looks like for their 11-year-old son.

(28:46)

They also said it's not often and that when he comes out of it, especially because they're right there with him, that they're connected, and that's great because they're staying present so he never feels alone, which could deepen the freeze if it really is freeze. So in terms of what to do, one idea is to track over time the duration, the pattern of when does this happen, how long does it last, and is it changing? Is it getting more frequent, less frequent? And then to really go back in time before it happened, can you notice any patterns in the hours or minutes before this happens about what might bring it on? And I think that's the place to think of doing something different, or inviting him to go for a walk, or inviting him to play, or do something active to interrupt going into this state, if that's possible. So you might need to observe for a

few of these episodes to know what might work and when in the ramp up, because once he's in that state, it sounds like you just stay with him and wait it out.

(30:16)

And it could be connected to the cesarean birth or it may not have anything to do with that. I don't think we know. If you wanted to play, fully explore that. This is connected to, again, the first question around cesarean birth, with the incomplete pushing, or the incomplete release through the birth canal. So for this 11-year-old, you could invite him either to lie on his back with his feet up against the wall in a, it's almost like the position as if you're sitting in a chair. So your hips and your knees are both at 90 degree angles and the feet are on the wall, and you could just invite him to push gently against the wall to send his head away from the wall. If you're doing it with him, you could lie next to him, your feet against the wall too. Or you could put your feet against each other. Push hands, in tai chi and other martial arts. You could put your feet against each other and just sort of push to feel what it's like to be in that position and push. And I would titrate this so that you're not pushing as hard as you can, but just push a little bit. And then with play, he may be rocketing off the wall at some point, but don't start that way. Start very simply and gently. So those are a few ideas on this one.

Seth (32:03):

Thanks, Mara. For the woman who asked about her incomplete, potentially incomplete process, do you think it'd be useful for her at all to also explore squatting positions, and pushing down through the pelvic floor, and that kind of stuff?

Mara (32:27):

Sure, yeah. Any kind of pushing. I mean this may be a little TMI, but we're talking about birth. So if you're ever constipated and you notice how you work with yourself, I think that's another moment where you could imagine that that's an approximation to the birth process. There's something that needs to pass through a sphincter and you need to let it pass, and there's some amount of pushing, but the pushing comes from internally, and there's also a surrendering to discomfort while you're in that process.

Seth (33:19):

Interesting. Thanks, Mara. Okay, "I'm considering when to start having kids. I'm curious, are there any ways in which becoming a parent benefits our nervous system? How do we know

when we're ready from a nervous system perspective to start trying to have a baby? Do you have any advice for how to prepare for parenthood?" So I'm going to take these in reverse order that they came, because they actually lead to each other better that way. So do you have any advice for how to prepare for parenthood? Yeah, if you know that you have experienced trauma, do as much trauma resolution for yourself first as possible. So if you can get regulated before you have kids, that is the best thing you could do for them, better than a college education and a trust fund. If you could be regulated as a parent, you're going to be like, man, not that everything's going to be easy, never is with parenting, but they're going to have a golden ticket.

(34:24)

If you can show up with regulation and attunement, then their nervous system gets what it needs the most, which is that regulated modeling, the attuned attention, all that stuff. So that's the ideal. Get regulated before you have kids as much as possible. How do we know when we're ready from a nervous system perspective to start trying to have a baby? Well, are you regulated, or close? One cue might be what happens when you're around your parents? Are you able to stay regulated? Are you able to be in coherence and flow and authenticity with yourself and not reactive? That would be a pretty good cue that you're ready to have kids, because guess what? Anything unresolved with your parents, it's going to get magnified and brought up by your children. So the more you can resolve and work through first, the better, and your parents and your relationship with them and how it affects you is a pretty good barometer. And of course you can look at, do I have anxiety? We all have a little bit of it, it's normal just as a human to have a little bit of worry now and then, but do you have debilitating anxiety? Is there depression? Do you have autoimmune conditions? Is there chronic pain, chronic fatigue? Is there any big nervous system stuff still up for you that you'd want to look at that, and maybe resolve that first?

(35:52)

Is there any way in which becoming a parent benefits our nervous system? For sure, if we're ready. If we're not ready, and we still have tons of unresolved trauma, it's going to be potentially overwhelming, and very easy to go into just recycling the intergenerational trauma down the line, as what's happened through most of history. It takes a lot of capacity to raise a child just in the best of circumstances, and our society doesn't really easily provide for the best of circumstances. So it's not just your own stuff you have to consider. It's all the systems in

place that we're living with that can make it quite difficult to show up as a relatively stress-free, attuned, regulated parent.

So there's a lot to figure out there, but if one is ready, then the whole process of having a baby and raising a child is wonderful and can be powerful healing for your nervous system. Co-regulation goes both ways. So when you're hanging out, co-regulating with your baby, teaching them about, through their system that, like, oh, this is how I feel safe in the world. This is how connection happens. Oh, this is how downregulation happens. All these lovely things that the system learns through, well, you're benefiting from that too. You get all that yummy neurochemistry of the dopamine and the oxytocin and all those lovely chemicals that come with connection. So yeah, it can be really beneficial. And you may have a child, you realize, okay, yeah, I'm pretty regulated. I've worked through my stuff. I can be around my parents and I don't get triggered and reactive. Awesome, I'm ready. And you do it. And then, wow, okay, you discover there's some stuff you didn't know that was still hanging out in there, and that's fine too.

(37:48)

And from that perspective, it is beneficial, if we have the capacity to work with what gets triggered by our kids, that's a tremendous opportunity and a gift. If we don't have the capacity to work with what gets triggered by our kids, that's what we see, mostly the abuse, the dysfunction, all the rest of it. We just don't. It's so intense. I've never had any experience that brought up stuff for me more than the dynamics of parenting. Maybe there's a more intense trigger out there, but I don't know what it is. I see people agreeing, so yeah. Yeah, I hope that all is helpful, and yeah, how wonderful that you're here asking this question, like, yes, Irene and I have joked, if we had our way, we would basically have a, we'd be in charge of who gets to have kids. You have to pass the regulation test first, and let's save the planet that way. You know what I'm saying? Alright, over to you, Mara.

Mara (38:50):

Thanks. Okay. "My 7-year-old pathologically demanding, avoidant son is in severe distress and needs near constant caregiving. We un-school and co-sleep. He has physically violent meltdowns when he doesn't get his way. Due to increasing distress, we've started allowing unlimited supervised screens, which is in all waking hours. He'll choose screens over anything else. He has early developmental and intergenerational trauma. Could screens help him regulate over time? What else can I do to help him recover more regulation?" So this is clearly

a very challenging situation, so I just want to acknowledge that and sort of really recognize that you're doing the best you can at this moment with this child. And I want to emphasize that human connection and relationship are really what help with regulation over time, and you have to meet your child where he is. So I'm going to ask these questions. So is there a way to join him in the activity? So if he's watching something, can you watch with him? Could you even put your hand on his back and imagine his kidneys and adrenals dropping while you're watching together, as yours drop? So that's that. If he's playing a game, can you ask him about it? Could you play with him? Is there a way to introduce turn taking?

(40:41)

So he's participating, but with you. So you're trying to join his world so he feels seen and connected. If you can, I don't know exactly what he's doing on the screen, but if you could put books on the screen and you could also have the same book in a paper form. Maybe there's carryover from one to the other, maybe it's at seven, maybe it's a picture book and there's some interactivity on the screen, but there's something exciting to look at in the actual physical picture book. For example, I don't know if at seven he'd be in Minecraft or Roblox, or any of those things, but if he's building something in a virtual world, could you translate that to building in the physical world? So really anything that is happening on the screen very likely has a physical concrete. Going back to the very first question I answered, can you make it concrete? Can you have the materials around that connect to what he's interested in, even if it's outside the screen, and maybe he won't be interested for a while, but you're just sort of - that's in the environment, so he might notice one day.

(42:13)

Then another thought is to start to work on boundaries yourself. It sounds like there's not a boundary around screens, and that's probably not the place to start, but could you start with privacy for using the bathroom, or time for yourself to shower, or to go exercise where somebody else is doing the caretaking, and that he has to start to recognize that other people have needs. And those needs come with a boundary around space, around time, around my access to that person, to that caregiver. And then you might start to introduce boundaries to him around other aspects of life that could look like, we only eat in the kitchen, or we have to sit at the table to eat. It could be certain things happen at certain times of day, using timers. If he's responsive to sounds that go off, that can be helpful, because it's not you saying it's time to stop, it's the timer saying it's time to stop.

(43:28)

So you might say five more minutes and then we're going to go brush our teeth, and the timer beeps and it's time to brush your teeth, so he can start to predict. And then I would also, if you're not already using visual charts of sort of, this is going to happen, then this is going to happen. So you can put those right up on the wall for the routines, so that he starts to predict and know what's going to happen when, and that may provide some containment and some regulation. So I hope that some of these ideas are helpful. I know that this can be a really challenging set of behaviors to deal with. And then the other thing, going back to the question Seth just answered, is to really try to get some time daily to regulate, and if you can have someone that you can just talk to and vent about how difficult it is, because it's difficult every day, if you're in this situation as the caregiver. Over to you, Seth.

Seth (44:44):

Thanks very much, Mara. I appreciate it. Okay. "I was totally unaware of my childhood trauma until I was about 30, and then a psychosis hit me. My children at that time were half a year old and three and a half years old. The psychosis was a sort of start of my healing journey, actually a slow one. Now my kids are 17 and 20. I'm worried about the impact my dysregulated nervous system and illness has had on them, my psychosis, depression, fatigue, et cetera. I've broken many cycles and have been holding myself together, but I know my unhealthy inside has impacted them. What can I do to help them now?" All right, so, great question, and something that a lot of us parents who were traumatized and dysregulated raising our kids are going to have to face. I have, a lot of people have, this is a really common thing, and I wish more parents were asking this question of what can I do now? The biggest thing you can do is work on yourself, hands down. The more you get regulated, yourself, the more that is going to ripple out to them. Hands down, it's the biggest thing you can do. That happens in all sorts of ways. It happens relationally because they will witness you responding differently, from a place of regulation or growing regulation.

(46:16)

It happens in this weird kind of invisible way, which I don't fully understand. I think it's probably connected to just our nature as electrical quantum beings. But as I got more regulated, my dad got softer and softer and more vulnerable in sharing his emotions and I never really see him or talk to him, hardly ever. We would communicate by email, usually still. And yet when I would visit, who's this man who's talking about his feelings? And I'm not saying I did that, but there's something going on there, where something shifts in the field, the

relational field, in this really magical way, and I'm not the only one saying this. There's lots of alumni who have talked about this as well. So it changes the system, the more regulated you get, and that will have a very good impact. There's other practical things you can do.

(47:11)

So one, they're old enough now, they're adults basically enough that you can communicate to them. So I don't know if you have or not, but if you haven't, tell them everything you just told me. Communicate to them. Look, I want to really acknowledge that I was not in the best place when you were growing up. I was dysregulated and traumatized and had all this stuff, and I know it impacted you and I'm sorry. And I want you to know I'm doing work to get better and become healthier. And just saying that can be pretty powerful. They may brush it off, they may be defensive, they may get pissed, they may be grateful. I don't know. You don't know what the reaction will be. It doesn't really matter so much - they'll hear it. And if they can just hear you telling them that you acknowledge their experience, that can be very powerful for them.

(48:04)

The other thing is if they do have dysregulation, and that's showing up in ways that's causing problems for them, it may be that they want to do some work themselves. Now, I do not recommend you send them a bunch of videos from Irene or blog posts or say, check this out, check this out. That generally doesn't work too well, but you can talk about the work you're doing if you have that kind of relationship, just casually like, oh yeah, I'm doing this really cool course, or I'm learning this stuff, and leave it at that. And if they show interest, great. They may want to go the psychology route. They may want to get lots of body work. They may want to go off to Bali and do a breath work retreat, whatever. Support them in whatever their healing intentions are. If you can financially, that would be fantastic.

(49:02)

That's a material way in which you can show up for them. I often say to parents who know they were dysregulated raising their kids, forget about the college fund, start a therapy fund, because that's going to be much more useful down the road. And it's the case with my own child right now who's an adult. So it's like the more you can show up for them practically and provide practical ways of support, the better, and communication, like I said. And if they do eventually come to you with their anger, their grief, their confusion, that's when you've really got to dig deep and just be there for them. Do not defend yourself or try to explain, just hear them and make space for their feelings. Should they volunteer 'em? Maybe don't go looking for

that, though. Again, it's got to be on their terms. They're like, let them show up with it. And again, the more regulated you are, the more likely that'll happen. Alright.

Mara (50:12):

I was just looking up... There's a new book coming out. It's called, it's out since February, "Validation: How the Skillset That Revolutionized Psychology Will Transform Your Relationships, Increase Your Influence, and Change Your Life". So that last comment that Seth made is really to validate their experience. That may have been hard for you. I can see that. And then the other aspect is if you have been open once or along this journey over the last 16, 17 years, I think there's a lot of value in that. Or even if you start being open now and they're open to hearing about your journey, not in detail, but I'm feeling better because, or I'm able to be more active, or I have more endurance, or whatever aspect of growth and development that you can share. It's modeling that growth and development is possible. So I think that's really rich for kids and young adults.

(51:31)

Okay, so this question is the third one about cesarean, and this one is specifically, "I was born with an emergency cesarean section and have this impulse of trying to move forward in my life, but also a sensation that my nervous system doesn't have an imprint on how to do it, and I easily get stuck. I remember Seth had mentioned that you can do birth pushing exercises. Can you explain a bit more how?" So my entrée to this work is more through Feldenkrais, and then I added the somatic experiencing. So I'm going to build this up a little bit as if it were a Feldenkrais lesson, and this is sort of leaning into what I talked about for the 11-year-old. Same position. You're going to put your back on the floor, lie down on your back and bend your knees, bend your hips, so your thighs are vertical and your shins are horizontal and your feet are flat against the wall.

(52:43)

And first just rest in that position. Just notice, what's it feel like to have my back supported, to have these feet in contact with the wall. And just notice the pressure, if you're already pushing, or if you can just sort of hold your feet there, with sort of just enough pressure that they stay on the wall, and that you may need to experiment with bare feet or socks or slippers or whatever, and then push a tiny, tiny bit, but not enough to move your back. So you're just pushing. And you might feel your knees straighten a tiny bit, but you don't go anywhere. And then rest. And sort of notice what, with every one of these experiments, you're going to do

something, and then notice the impact on your body, on your physiology. The next one may be to push with your feet, but to move an inch. So you think of your head going an inch away from the wall, and then rest. And you may need to take a longer rest, like stand up, walk around, or stretch out your legs. You can stretch this over as much time as you need. And then you can use, Irene does in many of the neurosensory exercises, you can use your imagination. So what would it be like to imagine pushing harder and see if that brings up emotions, and just give yourself the space and time that you need with that.

(54:31)

And then when you do go back to actually pushing after you've imagined pushing, you might push based on an impulse, sort of push as hard or as far as feels like the right amount for right now. So nobody's telling you, right, if you think of a baby coming out, they've never been born before. So there's no map for doing that. So how that works is maybe you come out in bits at a time, so sort of replicate that process of it being episodic. And then maybe you want to push more or less the next time. And this could be something that is one session or it could be over many days or weeks, right? There's no recipe, but you might, if you're doing it every day or a few times a week for a period of time, you may notice at one point you're like, oh, I feel complete with this pushing.

(55:44)

This isn't interesting to me anymore. And maybe it's resolved, or maybe there's an impulse one time to push really hard and fast, and then there's a clear sense of relief in your physiology. It is also possible you may need a refresher from time to time. I sometimes work with healthy aggression with a med ball and slamming it to the ground. And because we're always in a relationship in the world and there can be healthy aggression that needs to come out, sometimes they need a practice of getting that healthy aggression out. So you may find that if there was this early imprint of sort of feeling stuck with the birthing process, that returning to this position is one that helps you reconnect with that life force anytime you're feeling stuck. So I would work gently with yourself over a period of time, stretching it out as long as you need, but then invite yourself to go back to that position if it feels helpful in the future.

Seth (57:03):

Thanks, Mara. One thing that occurred to me while you were talking about that is that also it's possible that as you're playing with all the stuff that Mara just suggested, other emotions may also arise and just to, yeah, it's very much in the spirit of follow your impulse and just trust, but

maybe big grief will come up, or maybe rage will come out, and you'll want to hit somebody, or maybe disgust, we don't know. But just know that there can be a gamut of emotions that could possibly arise.

Okay, last one for me here. "Hi. A few weeks ago on a family trip, I had a stressful experience at a waterpark. When I went down a fast slide with my child, everything went wrong and I ended up in a fight or flight state afterwards. I call these my Mr. Bean moments, unexpected awkward reactions in new situations.

(58:00)

How can I work with not getting so stressed when these moments happen?" All right, so I'm going to start with the big picture, with answering this. It sounds like there's probably some history here, if we're going into fight flight mode because of just a silly accident or something that went slightly wrong, and it's something that, sounds like this is something that happens often enough. You've given it a name, so it's a thing. This is rooted in old stuff. So I guess I would be curious, did you get publicly humiliated at some point? Or was there a teacher or a parent that really shamed you or really was hypercritical? Because it sounds like if you get something wrong, which we all do from time to time, there is this ramped up survival response that comes online that's out of proportion of what happened. So that tells us that, yeah, there's some fuel already stoked in the fire there, and you might want to investigate what is that?

(59:10)

Where does this come from? Because then you can start to work with the source material, and that may involve all sorts of things. Once you can really discover and find out where did this come from, and start to imagine or remember that event, or events that happened before, then you can start to go into the body, discover what comes up, work in all the ways that you're learning in this program to help that stuff move and find expression, find resolution. And it's possible that you may want to work one-on-one a bit with someone. Just like when you do discover where this comes from, it's possible. Some private work would help for a little bit. There's many options you can explore, but the key is finding out, where did this come from? Where is the origin of this experience that keeps playing out. Then in terms of more in the moment, what to do, well, again, self-acceptance, really, really important.

(01:00:21)

How can you be kind to yourself, connect with your kids and what they need if they're

involved. I don't know if these Mr. Bean moments are always with your kids. Sounds like they could be in a variety of situations, but if your child is involved, then can you make them the priority? Because, remember, I said co-regulation goes both ways. So show up for them and what they need at that moment, if possible. And that's also going to start to give you some of what you need as well. Taking that may mean taking a little space, doing some kind of co-regulating activity. Just talking about what just happened, like, oh man, that was kind of scary. Are you okay? Oh, what happened for you? Yeah, I was scared too. That was really weird. Yeah, let's go. Maybe we should just go, let's go get a drink, like a root beer. Let's go get an ice cream. Or let's just go sit on this bench and look at the people for a while. Let's read a book. Just some kind of activity together that is bringing you back into co-regulation a little bit more.

(01:01:34)

If you need to take space for yourself, because you just don't have the capacity to show up for your kid in that way, then take the space to show up for yourself in that way. Now, don't leave your kid alone at the waterpark. Hopefully there's another person there to be with them. But if that's the case, and it's possible that you can take some space for yourself, then that would also be a potential thing to do. So you can connect with yourself. Allow the feelings that are there. Maybe there's some tears that want to come. Maybe there's a feeling of shame, that you need to just feel that and let it out. Maybe there's anger, but if you're with a child when this happens, the priority should probably be on them. And again, if you can show up for them with care and attention and attunement, that will also help you. It'll help your system. I think that's everything I have on that. Mara, did you have more, or is that all of 'em?

Mara (01:02:38):

I think that's it.

Seth (01:02:39):

Alrighty then. Well, thank you all very much for showing up. It sounds like there were some sound issues for me. Sorry about that. So hopefully it comes through on the recording. Okay. And yeah, thanks for being here. That was a quick and easy one. And so next week, if you remember, is a break week. So I really want to encourage you to do what you can to orient towards ease, relaxation, pleasure, just resources, enjoyment. If you feel like working on stuff in the course, that's great. Follow that impulse as well. Yeah, make it a week of following your impulses, whatever they are. And yeah, I look forward to seeing you all on the next call. Alright,

thanks Mara. Thank you, my team, Jen. Susan, thanks for being here. We'll see you all next time.

Mara (01:03:36):

Thanks. Bye.