

Whole Brain Parenting: Practical Tips for Connection & Growth



This guide is inspired by "The Whole-Brain Child" by Dr. Daniel Siegel and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson. These strategies are a starting point to help your child develop emotional regulation, resilience, and strong connections. Use a journal to write out what you have tried and how it went so you can reflect and adjust for your individual child.

1. Connect & Redirect

- **What It Means:** When your child is upset, connect emotionally before problem-solving.
- **How to Apply:**
 - Validate their feelings: "I see you're really frustrated."
 - Offer comfort before logic.
 - Once they're calm, guide them toward problem-solving.

2. Name It To Tame It

- **What It Means:** Naming emotions helps children process them.
- **How to Apply:**
 - Encourage your child to verbalize their feelings.
 - Model emotional language: "I feel frustrated when..."
 - Prompt when necessary: "It seems like you're disappointed, that can be a hard feeling to hold."

3. Engage, Don't Enrage (Upper Brain vs. Lower Brain)

- **What It Means:** When kids are reactive, their lower brain (survival mode) is in control.
- **How to Apply:**
 - Stay calm and don't escalate.
 - Help them move from reactivity to thinking by asking curiosity-driven questions.
 - Use problem-solving after they are regulated.

4. Move It to Improve It

- **What It Means:** Physical movement helps process emotions.
- **How to Apply:**
 - If your child is stuck in distress, encourage movement (jumping jacks, a walk, stretching, swinging).
 - Make movement a part of daily emotional resets.

5. Revisit & Reflect

- **What It Means:** Revisiting emotional events in a safe way helps integrate experiences.
- **How to Apply:**
 - Talk about past struggles with curiosity, not blame.
 - Help them piece together what happened and how they handled it.

6. The Power of “Yet”

- **What It Means:** Encourages a growth mindset by shifting focus to progress.
- **How to Apply:**
 - Instead of "I can't do this," encourage "I can't do this yet."
 - Celebrate effort over outcome.

7. Upstairs Brain Builders

- **What It Means:** Strengthening the logical, thinking brain helps with decision-making and impulse control.
- **How to Apply:**
 - ☒ Encourage problem-solving: “What do you think we should do?”
 - ☒ Play strategy games and puzzles.
 - ☒ Offer choices to build decision-making skills.

8. Whole-Brain Parenting in Action

- **Pause before reacting** – take a breath before responding.
- **Validate before fixing** – show empathy before offering solutions.
- **Encourage storytelling** – help kids make sense of emotions through narratives.
- **Use humor & play** – lightness can shift big emotions.

By implementing these Whole-Brain Child strategies, you'll strengthen your child's ability to regulate emotions, think critically, and build resilience—all while deepening your connection!