

Parent Support

Parenting is a continuously challenging and changing role that we can rarely adequately prepare for and at best hope to do our best based on the needs of our child and the functioning of the family. For many children they can be adequately supported by an attuned parent who can, most of the time, self-regulate. These children are typically responsive to parent directions and appear aware of and sensitive to social norms and expected behaviour. For many other parents, typical parenting practices are unhelpful, and this can leave the parents in a difficult position of not knowing why their child isn't responding and how to parent in a way that supports their child.

To assist in situations of parenting challenges, we seek to better understand the parent, family and the child, and the relationships that exist both currently and historically. Often this support includes but is not limited to, the following:

- Explore parenting experiences of the parents of the child. For many parents they raise their kids as they were raised, sometimes this can create misalignment particularly if the child has a temperament that doesn't match the parenting style. Many parents find that they must unlearn or adjust how they were parented, to show up in a helpful way for their child, and themselves
- Co-regulation and appreciation of the developmental nature of children: With a wealth of knowledge now made available to families and children through wellbeing resources provided at schools we are now far more educated about the needs of children, and their emotional experiences. Children are taught about emotions in school and are learning about ways they can manage big feelings. For many parents they were never taught these skills. This can create a disconnect between parents and children. Supporting parents to co-regulate their child's emotions can assist in deescalating big feelings.
- In supporting families, we provide skill development and education around emotion regulation and how this is developed via co-regulation with the parent. For many parents this can be difficult to navigate as they are relearning about their own emotions and how to regulate them at the same time as having to understand, support and co regulate with their child. We find that supporting parents to appreciate the developmental nature of childhood, and the process of learning emotion regulation, can be helpful to attuning the parenting to the child's nervous system and emotional experiences.
- We find that in some cases this is all the support a child and family needs. In other cases, the challenges persist, and families require additional support for and understanding of their child and how they function as a family.

Strategies that may assist:

- Tuning to your child's emotional experiences and listening in a non-judgement way and without offering direction unless it is requested
- Collaboration with the child around the challenges they currently face
- Building the parents support systems
- Engaging the child in therapeutic supports
- Reflecting on interactions between the parent and the child; are the mutually satisfying and enjoyable? How can they be adjusted? Is there time for shared joy?
- Building your own self-regulation skills. Identifying behaviours of your child that 'bother' you and reflecting on why you feel the way you do about them