

PROMOTE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

REFLECT upon your temperament. How does your intensity, sensitivity, overall mood, and recharge style impact your moment to moment reactions? You will be more prepared to connect with your child if you appreciate your own parental temperament and style.

DISCOVER what you need to be the parent you want to be. Does writing in a journal help? Do you think best while resting in a bubble bath, taking long walks alone, talking with a friend, support group or professional? Self-care is more than a luxury, it is a parental responsibility.

CONSIDER the “goodness of fit”. While it is painful to admit the ways in which you and your child do not fit well, it may also be liberating. No fit is perfect. When you are honest about the areas where it is difficult to connect with your child you can parent in a way that expresses self-respect as well as respect for your child.

MODEL a vocabulary about temperamental strengths and challenges. Begin sentences with “I’m the type of parent who needs..... in order to feel rested, enthusiastic, etc... You are a child who needs....in order to feel happy about school, friends, playdates etc...”

TEACH your child to recognize the mind-body-behavior connection. Use yourself as an example. “You know, I hate being late. When I’m late my tummy feels like there are butterflies inside and I have to remember to take big breaths.” When you talk about your tummy feeling funny, I wonder if you feel nervous about something?”

UNDERSTAND your child’s developmental process. Learn why four year olds love potty talk, why six and seven years old are concerned about rules while twelve year olds are intensely pre-occupied by social status. Consider the differences between boys and girls. Understanding development will ease parental anxiety and help you enjoy the challenges inherent to each developmental stage.