

# **AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH:**

**Showing Up; Buffering;  
Creating Sanctuary; and  
Soothing**

**A Community Conversation about  
Raising (and Teaching) Healthy Children**

**East Brunswick Public Schools**

**February 5, 2025**

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**George Scott, Minding Our Children**

# A BEGINNING FOR OUR BABIES...

While animals and humans alike exhibit intense care for their babies, the key difference lies in the nature of the extended duration, and the complexity of human parenting.



Human infants are highly dependent on their parents for a much longer period compared to most animal young, requiring extensive care and teaching throughout childhood and adolescence.



Humans have a prolonged period of childhood development where children rely heavily on parents for nourishment, protection, and social learning.



Humans actively teach cultural norms, language, and complex social skills to their children.



**BUT SOMETIMES WE DON'T GET THE CREDIT**

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Let me introduce you to Jeremy, a 17-year-old high school junior, and his mom, Connie.

Connie's first comment is...IMAGINE THAT!

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# BUT SOMETIMES WE DON'T GET THE CREDIT

ZITS



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Zits



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**IMAGINE THAT!!**

**STRONG EMOTIONAL TIES** between parents and children are a significant feature of human parenting. In the absence...there can be a struggle.



# STRUGGLE CAN LOOK LIKE THIS



# IN THE ANIMAL WORLD, IT COULD BE WORSE

In the absence of emotional parenting, there might be a different outcome.

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Female white sharks give birth to live young, and do not provide any parental care.

# CARING IS SOOOO IMPORTANT



It takes healthy parents, showing up and paying attention to arrive here.



# LET'S TAKE A "DEEPER" LOOK AT THIS:

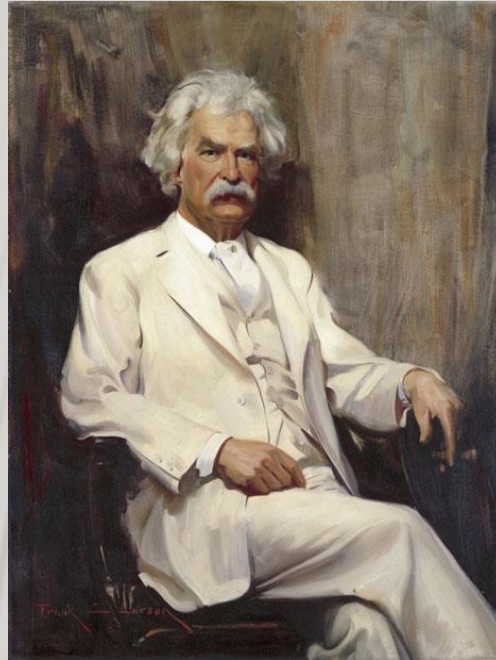
In May of 2006, Al Gore released his Oscar winning documentary about the environment and global warming. It was titled: an inconvenient truth.



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I was prepared to give Mr. Gore credit for that thinking  
and that title, until I found this...

# AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH



“What gets us into trouble is not what we don’t know, it’s what we know for sure [but treat it as if] it just ain’t so.”

Attributed to Mark Twain  
(1835-1910)

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**“...it’s what we know for sure...”**

# IT'S WHAT WE KNOW FOR SURE

We turn away. We even pretend we don't know. We pretend we didn't see it or hear it. We already feel overwhelmed with our lives. Maybe we think "It is none of my business."

Don't we have the will? Don't we care enough? Don't we feel the urgency?

Is it simply TOO INCONVENIENT?



# THE INCONVENIENT TRUTH IS...

we do know what interferes with our children's physical and emotional wellness, and we know what to do to make things better.

We know what healthy children look like, we know what healthy adolescents look like, AND we know what healthy adults look like.

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And - we know for sure how safe environments promote healing. We know how it all works. BUT - we seem to lack the urgency to make it a priority and make it better for our children.

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**Opportunity for comments  
and questions:**



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How does all of this work?

# NATURE'S LESSONS

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## Penguins and Rats



# VULNERABLE AND SEEKING SHELTER WHEN THE ENVIRONMENT IS THREATENING



**AND WHEN IT BECOMES MORE HOSTILE, THE  
ADULTS SHOW UP... ITS ABOUT SURVIVAL.**



# THE ADULTS CREATE SANCTUARY.





# WHAT HOSTILE LOOKS LIKE IN OUR HOMES AND SCHOOLS?

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5. Discipline that is punitive, not instructive;
6. Exposure to adults whose behavior is hostile;
7. Lack of access to an adult to protect them.
8. Teaching children NOT to trust.

# TAKE AWAY

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So, showing up, buffering the young and creating sanctuary for our children is part of the solution we've been looking for, call it an **INCONVENIENT TRUTH.**

# BUFFERING AND CREATING SANCTUARY LOOKS LIKE THIS:



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**Opportunity for comments  
and questions:**



# LET'S BE CLEAR ABOUT PARENTING

Research is now demonstrating that...

the impact of lived experiences is more profound  
than the impact of genetics on both emotional  
and physical health.

# LIVED EXPERIENCES...



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Some of the strongest evidence for the link between mood and stress has come from the laboratory of Dr. Michael Meaney at McGill University in Montreal.

In the 1990s, Meaney and his colleagues started a study to see how rats experience stress.

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The researchers observed that when they removed rat pups from the family cage, and put them in a small plastic box, the animals got anxious, producing stress hormones (cortisole) that raised their pulse. Some rats reacted more strongly than others to the stress.





# LICKING AND GROOMING

The researchers also found that when returned them to their mothers, those pups who received a healthy dose of maternal licking and grooming developed into much calmer adults than their less-groomed counterparts.



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The pup who received more calming attention from the mother was not so easily startled, was more curious, and did not suffer surges of stress hormones.

The neglected pups, however, where the parent didn't pay enough attention, were easily startled by noises, and they were reluctant to explore new places. When they experienced stress, they produced lots of stress hormones.

# BUT THEN THERE IS THIS...

The most intriguing part is that the rat pups of "minimal-licking" mothers who were then given to "frequent-licking" moms (who paid attention) ended up with the behavioral makeup of their new foster moms, they began to calm and attune.

# BUT WAIT

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I am not suggesting that you adopt a licking behavior with your children at home, or on your sports team.  
YUK!!

That is not sanitary...and...

# BUT WAIT

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I am not suggesting that you adopt a licking behavior with your children at home, or on your sports team.  
YUK!!

That is not sanitary...and...**that would be very creepy!!**

So...

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What are some ways that parents lick and groom their children?

# WHAT ARE SOME OTHER EASY THINGS TO DO?

“Time in nature builds happier, healthier, and more social children”

Jamie Friedlander Serrano  
The Washington Post

# SOME FINDINGS:

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- time spent in nature improves cognition, mood, self-esteem, and social skills (Today Americans spend 90% of time indoors);
- long term exposure to nature reduces stress and anxiety in children;
- time in nature can improve pro-social behavior including sharing, cooperating, and comforting others



# NATURE VS TECHNOLOGY

- children ages 8-12 are estimated to spend 4-6 hours a day on a screen; and teens up to 9 hrs.
- children's "roaming radius" from home has also gotten smaller; parents' fear for safety may be an issue
- children's time is more scheduled and programmed than in previous generations

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6. Make “Forest Bathing” a regular activity;

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2. Start small (3 trees can feel like a forest)
3. Let your own love for nature show;
4. PUT YOUR PHONE AWAY;
5. Invite other children to join you;
6. Make “Forest Bathing” a regular activity;
7. Perhaps allow each family member to choose.



# JUST AN FYI:

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“The Township of East Brunswick has nearly 1,000 acres of verdant parkland and open spaces providing an array of recreational opportunities.”

“Playgrounds, nature trails and lakes and rivers for fishing and boating complete a well-rounded system that beckons young and old alike to enjoy rest and recreation close to home.”

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# WHAT DO YOUR CHILDREN NEED FROM YOU?

- × Limited exposure to media news
- × Limited exposure to harsh adult opinions
- × Routines and predictability
- × Assurance and reassurance that the adults will look out for them
- × Opportunity to express their worries and fears
- × Opportunity for fun, play and laughter

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**Opportunity for comments  
and questions:**





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Tonight is intended to be a serious and important conversation about the wellbeing of our children...

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Tonight is intended to be a serious and important conversation about the wellbeing of our children...

Your presence here demonstrates your concern and your willingness to be part of the solution in your home, in school and in the community.

# HERE ARE THE HIGH LIGHTS...



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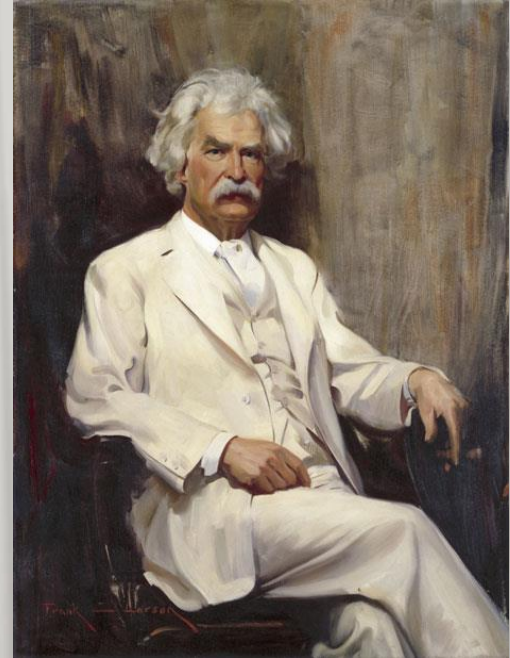


# KEEP IN MIND

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How are you doing with:

- Showing up



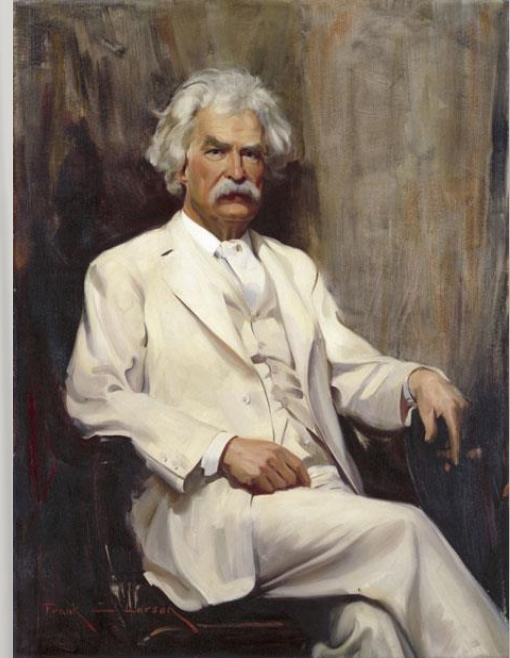


# KEEP IN MIND

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How are you doing with:

- Showing up
- Buffering

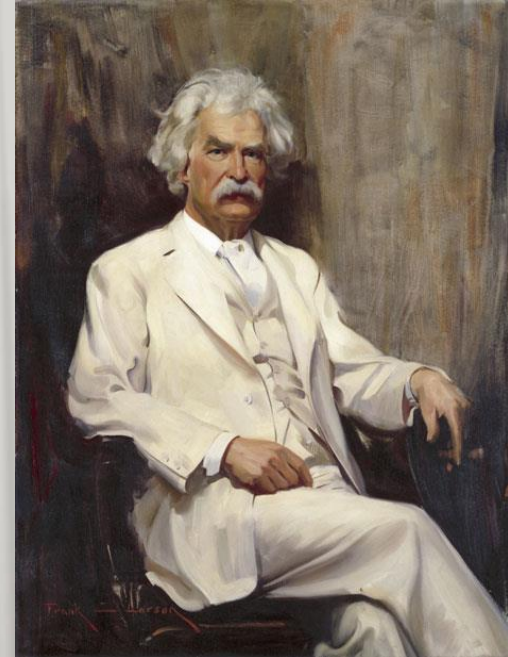


# KEEP IN MIND

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How are you doing with:

- Showing up
- Buffering
- Creating Sanctuary

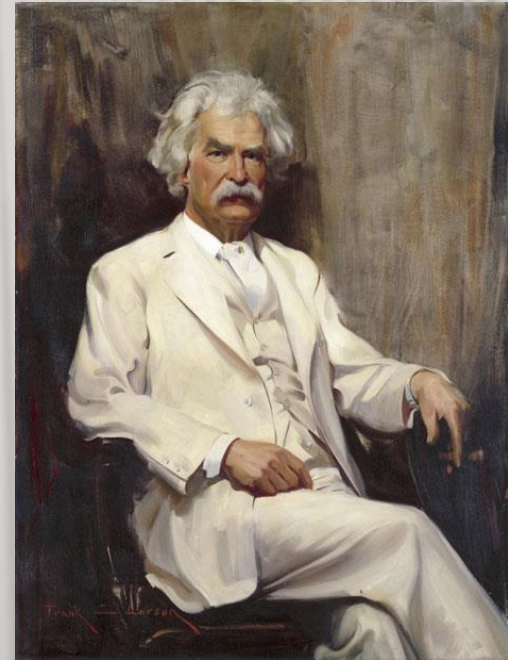


# KEEP IN MIND

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How are you doing with:

- Showing up
- Buffering
- Creating Sanctuary
- Cuddling and soothing



# ONE MORE REALLY IMPORTANT THING TO KNOW

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4. CALMING PRACTICES LIKE YOGA/MEDITATION



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All of us, and your children, need the following in our lives:

1. SLEEP (7-9 hours/night)
2. NUTRITION
3. EXERCISE AND MOVEMENT
4. CALMING PRACTICES LIKE YOGA/MEDITATION
5. HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

**WITH YOUR HELP, YOUR CHILDREN CAN  
THRIVE...**



THEY ALL NEED OUR SUPPORT:



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**Together, all of us are stronger  
than some of us.**

# REMEMBER

Human infants are highly dependent on their parents for a much longer period compared to most animal young, requiring extensive care and teaching throughout childhood and adolescence.



# AND

Humans have a prolonged period of childhood development where children rely heavily on parents for nourishment, protection, and social learning.



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I am hoping that all of this is  
**NOT INCONVENIENT**

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Resources for you that might help.



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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHORS OF

**THE WHOLE-BRAIN CHILD**

DANIEL J. SIEGEL, M.D., AND

TINA PAYNE BRYSON, Ph.D.



# THE POWER OF SHOWING UP

HOW PARENTAL PRESENCE  
SHAPES WHO OUR KIDS BECOME AND  
HOW THEIR BRAINS GET WIRED

Copyrighted Material

the  
deepest well



NADINE BURKE HARRIS, M.D.

Donna Jackson Nakazawa

# CHILDHOOD DISRUPTED

How Your Biography  
Becomes Your Biology,  
and How You Can Heal



"A truly important gift  
of understanding—  
illuminates the  
heartbreaking costs of  
childhood trauma and,  
like good medicine, offers  
the promising science of  
healing and prevention."  
—JACK EDENFIELD, PhD, author  
of *A Path with Heart*

# WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

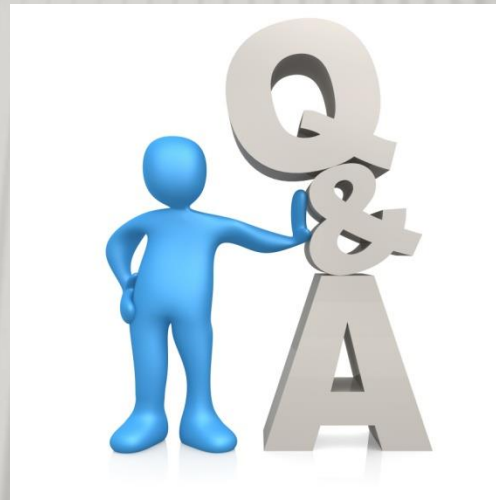
CONVERSATIONS ON TRAUMA,  
RESILIENCE, AND HEALING



BRUCE D. PERRY, MD, PhD  
OPRAH WINFREY

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**More opportunity for comments  
and questions:**



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George Scott, EdS, LMFT

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[george.centerforcounseling@verizon.net](mailto:george.centerforcounseling@verizon.net)