

For Professionals & Therapists: Hand in Hand in Your Work

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SUMMARY

Karen Wolfe, a marriage and family therapist, presents a webinar on the brain science behind the hand-in-hand parenting approach, focusing on children's emotions. She emphasizes the importance of connection for children to function well and discusses how disconnection can lead to behavioral issues. The session covers brain functioning, the impact of trauma, and how adults can support children through emotional challenges.

- *Children need to feel connected to use their whole brain effectively and cooperate.*
- *Disconnection leads to behavioral issues, not because children are manipulative, but due to emotional overload.*
- *The triune brain model (brain stem, limbic system, neocortex) explains how emotions affect children's ability to think and behave.*
- *Healing emotional overload requires connection, warmth, and loving limits from adults.*
- *The hand-in-hand parenting approach includes five listening tools: listening partnerships, special time, stay listening, play listening, and limit-setting.*
- *Emotional releases (tears, tantrums, laughter) are essential for healing and should be supported by adults.*
- *Parents and therapists must recognize their own emotional responses to children's behaviors and work through them to provide effective support.*
- *The upcoming class for therapists will provide practical training in these tools to enhance their work with children and families.*

you you you you you you

you you hello everyone and welcome I am Karen Wolfe marriage & Family Therapist and this is a webinar on the brain science behind the hand-in-hand parenting approach to children's emotions and I'll tell you a little bit about myself and then what this webinar will entail and

we'll have some time at the end for live questions you can put in your questions in the chat bar or save them up end and speaking live and I'll also share with you an opportunity to work together at the end a class that I'm giving on hand and hand parenting this class specifically is for therapists I do

classes for parents as well six weeks classes but the class that's coming up in Oakland excuse me I'm getting over a cough the class that I'm giving an Oakland starting January 31st will be for therapists but I'll share a little bit more about that at the end and it will make more sense after we go through some of this but whether you're listening live or listening to the recording think through your questions that you might want to ask and you can

always email me as well at the end so I am I'm Karen Wolfe and I'm part of created a group practice in San Francisco and Oakland called SF Bay play therapy and that picture on the top left is my therapy dog Nandi which he's been coming with me to most sessions picture on the bottom is my nephew Aden a couple years ago yeah and

at SF Bay play therapy calm well there's lots of information about us there's two other clinicians that I have as part of this practice and there's lots of information about us and blog about you know parenting support and understanding kids emotions on that website and other resources and and essentially what we do is we offer a few different services to play therapy for children and families and play therapy

is using play as the modality to help children to heal because for kids under 12 they process things more through play than through words because verbal verbal development is not fully developed until well you know more or less until it really adulthood but adolescence is when you can start using your verbal ability to connect more deeply to emotions and before that we really need to kids need

to be able to play it out and hand-in-hand parenting is a very playful approach so I won't be talking too much about the playful aspects today but if you have questions about it or about play therapy please do chime in we also offer a playful SF Bay play therapy dog on parent support groups parent support and groups so individuals support for parents drawing from hand to hand parenting as well as play therapy and and I do hand in hand parenting groups

for for parents we do social skills groups we have ones for kids between the ages of five and ten we have a middle girl middle school girls group and a teen girls group as well so you can find all of that information on the website we also do counseling for adults and couples more information about that is on my other website embodied relationship therapy calm if you want to find out more about the work that in

particular I do with adults and couples using EFT and intimacy an SF Bay play therapy calm we do trainings for therapists and schools and counseling centers as well in play therapy and in hand-in-hand parenting so hand and also say a little bit about hand in hand parenting it's a Nash nann practically in turn a tional at this point I believe nonprofit started by parents run by parents and they teach

they teach five these five listening tools that help parents to feel more sane first and foremost and to connect to their children and their family and connect to the reason they wanted to be a parent and get support for that very down-to-earth tools attachment and attachment based and trauma-informed based you know there's a lot of work from Peter Levine's a lot of influence

from Peter Levine's trauma work Bowlby attachment as well as Winnicott so I love hand-in-hand parenting I came to it 2013 I think it was or 14 and was just blown away by how simple and profound the organization is the tools have to under earth the people are the eliciting partnerships which allows parents or professionals to basically do

Co counseling for free with each other and get support to work through what's in the way of parenting it's very humanistic and Rogerian as well so I highly highly recommend hand-in-hand parenting it's a chain it changed the way that I work with children it's I'd already been working with kids for like a decade before that and and it changed the way that I support parents and I see I see the transformation that happens so

I'll talk more about how if you're a therapist you can you can get involved with with hand-in-hand parenting at the end particularly through my class that's coming up it's it's it's transformative if it was for me and I've never experienced anything that's opened me in the way the hand-in-hand parenting has and it's helped me with giving tools to parents and families so that's just a little bit about me okay so an overview of what I'm going to

talk about today so kids need to feel connected need to feel kiddo there's a typo here kids need to feel connected to use their whole brain to think well and cooperate so what essentially kids want to think well and cooperate already if it's naturally wired in but in order to do that you they have to they have to feel connected and I'll we'll talk more about what that means to be using their whole brain and why they're not when

they're not cooperating and not thinking well when children feel disconnected it affects their brain functioning and they act out this is the reason that kids act out not because they're manipulative or naughty and you know they it's because they're disconnected adults can help heal the disconnection and return normal brain functioning by listening and offering connection with loving limits so we're going to talk through what all of this actually means

okay I'm just wondering if I can see questions as we go along all right so oh wow I need to escape for a second sorry go back okay so a little great bit about brain functioning so this is the triune Bop model of the brain um bass excuse me largely on the work of

Dan Siegel in the whole brain child and parenting from the inside out so mm-hmm if you think of the brain as having three parts that's the triune you can think of it as having the brain stem which is the reptilian part of the brain this is this is the part of the brain that deals with survival autonomic nervous function like your heart rate your body temperature and and reflexes it's a part

of the brain that we share with with reptiles in the middle of the brain but you know this is evolutionary so the first was the brain stem and growing on top of that this is a limbic limbic brain and that's in the very center of the brain and that is where the seat of our emotions it's where there's a lot of talk of the amygdala which is where fear is processed in the limbic system and so

this is where all the emotions are and this is where this is the mammalian brain so this is what we share with mammals overlaid on top of that is the cortex and then the Finley's around over that it's a neo cortex and the cortex in New York cortex is where our higher-order thinking is it's a part of the brain that's unique to two primates in humans so the neocortex is unique to humans maybe dolphins you know learning

more every day but it's it's that's the part of the brain that's unique to us is is the important part to remember and it's a part of the brain that has executive function in particular the frontal lobe which is right behind 4head when we hear a lot about executive function when we hear about attention deficit disorder and what executive function is is the ability to plan and sequence and filter so the ability to filter out relevant information both in

your sensory world so what you're seeing what you're feeling what you're hearing as well as cognitively filtering out the important information to take in and sequencing and planning so I'm I'm at first I'm gonna do this and I'm gonna do this and then this will happen so that's planning and then the sequence of it and it's also on the neocortex on the left part of the brain is where words are there's a there's actually an organ in

the brain that processes language and it's on the neocortex so what does this mean for understanding our clients and understanding when a child acts out well this is this is this I find is very very helpful for parents to understand and so please feel free to share this with any parents that you work with I'm sure

share the information that is that when a child's limbic system is overloaded what that means is they're not having as much access to their higher order thinking and which that means they're not going to be able to have as much ability to control their impulses with their you know executive function skills or to use language so the limbic system may be saying Danger Danger Danger I'm

angry I'm sad I'm mad you know just it's just a visceral emotion but it's the ability to calmly say you know I really feel like hitting that child right there but I know that if I do that I'm gonna get in trouble so maybe I'll take some breaths deep breaths and calm down that the child needs their neocortex fully functioning in order to do that when a

child limbic system is overloaded they literally cannot access those words in a cohesive way that relates to their emotions and the ability to control the impulses it's it's is we we have this term called flippin your lid and it's like the neocortex is the lid and it's been flipped so if you beat if you put your hand into a fist right now where you have the thumb in the middle of your

palm and then you wrap your fingers on top of it you can that that can be a model for the brain so in that case your wrist is the brain stem the thumb in the middle is your limbic system and the fingers on top are your neocortex when the limba if you move your thumb around like a limbic system is starting to get overloaded and then flip up your finger your lid has been flipped and so the

child limbic system is kind of raw and exposed it's where all of the attention and blood and awareness is going and the ability to think through behaviors and use coping mechanisms and tools like anger management strategies is they're not able to and so in order to allow a child to be able to come back to have their their cortex you know rested and connected you know that lid back down and not flipped the

limbic system first has to settle down enough so I find this a very very important point for for parents to

understand teachers to understand is that we can teach coping mechanisms but a child is not going to be able to use them if their limbic systems overwhelmed now if there's any trauma involved then they're more likely to flip their lid because the brains it's you know it starts at the bottom up so the brainstem

is is there and I'm focusing on survival and if there's trauma the brains may be compromised and more likely to heat the body up and send signals of not being safe which sends signals to the limbic system of not being safe which then you know you don't have to think through things if you're not safe if you you know back when we were evolving into humans if a if there was a lion in the

bush if you said if you have if you think through hmm ah the lion I'm not sure it sounded like it could be but maybe it wasn't made okay well where should I go should I go left or should I go right if you're thinking through things in that way you'd be dead so that our ancestors that did think through things in that way we we'd there are they're gone but there we are not evolved from them

were you involved from the ones who saw the lion it's a run and did not you know did not if they connect it to the neocortex that's what saved us so and so so the limbic system you know is is going to take over in those moments and of course we're not going to be able to use coping mechanisms so there's an important piece in this which is that which is that there's no such thing as

an individual human brain the limbic system is always paying attention to and tuning in to those around you in particular children so the limbic system it's fully developed at birth some say before so that means kids can feel all all your despair and joy and and rage you know from birth or before but the ability to to process it and understand

it it doesn't is not fully formed until adulthood so what that limbic system does is it scans for for safety it's kids are constantly scanning to see to feel if the adults and the environment around them is is safe so so the human brain is not really you know it's not it you can't think of it as separate where we're constant when we're

it we're more around other people we're constantly tuning in to what they're feeling even if we're not aware of it our brains are are doing that and so a kid's limbic system it's constantly scanning to see hey are people paying attention to me am I am i safe that's what they're constantly doing and if again if there's any sort of trauma that would cause them to be more prone to

feeling unsafe or to interpreting even neutral information as dangerous then they're more likely to their brain is more likely to signal danger if a parent or a caregiver is not able to pay attention when they're feeling a little bit distressed because of this limbic connectedness because the limbic system is constantly scanning to see am i safe

am I connected are there people around that can that can help me so when no one is available if a child is feeling unsafe in some way and it could be as simple as they're you know they're they're sitting like I'm thinking about maybe a preschooler sitting at at their table and doing art and they can't figure out how to use the glue and and

they look around and

there's there's no adult paying attention so if this child is already full of emotions this for whatever reason whether it's it's a history of trauma or neurodiversity that causes them to be more sensitive or simply a difficult day at school or at home if there's something that's going to trigger them or maybe there was where they really needed someone and they weren't there and so the

associations trigger that then they're looking around there's no adult to help now it's not a dangerous situation but their limbic system could signal danger now and it depend and it could be a small signal you know that they can recover from pretty quickly or it could be a big signal where they either shut down and withdraw look away go inside of themselves dissociate a little bit you know until maybe a teacher notices or or

have a tantrum you know a kid is maybe next to them bumps them and they and they freak out or they hit them or they fall to the ground because and and then it looks like they're the problem child but really what was happening is their limbic system was signaling threat and danger because an adult was not able to pay attention in that moment because that's how we evolved that's normal and it's healthy and it's it's normal and

healthy for kids to be tuned into whether adults are paying attention now we'll talk about you know what to do when it's you know essentially maladaptive you know if a child is if child's brain is signaling danger and threat at the smallest thing all of the time obviously there's something that we we that needs to happen in order to help that and I'll talk through what we can do but I first wanted to just lay the

groundwork for this philosophy to understand why a children might act out sorry why child might act out and and we we talk about that as a limbic hijack it's like their limbic system has completely hijacked their brain parents and you know therapists will say oh you know they were unreasonable I couldn't talk through it with them well because they're learning literally not in the reasoning part of their brain its flipped their limbic system has hijacked

the entire brain the limbic systems only job is to find emotional safety and so when a child limbic system is is hijacked then they're not able to to cooperate and and behave now the other thing is because there's no such thing as an individual human brain that is true also for us as adults that we get impacted by children so if your child is

in limbic hijack you will start to feel that and and especially new clinicians I find this all of the time that our own trauma big T or a little T trauma gets Reese Tim elated when a child is going into limbic hijacks so a child has some unreasonable behavior that's what it looks like on the outside on the inside their limbic system is sending an alarm

so we our nervous system stirs to feel what they're feeling and are not able to digest so threat / limbic hijack is when our nervous system cannot process the emotions that are happening it goes into overwhelm and so the

new that we flip our lids so a child's going into limbic hijack and we limbic lee resonate with them our heart rate starts to race you know so the limbic sour limbic system starts to signal danger which goes down

to our brain stem and it's you know says oh man oh man like we're in danger we need to do what we need to do to survive your mind starts racing you might fight your stomach clenches and you might just start to feel panic so then if we then flip our lids - if you if you were to put your hands and fists both your hands in those fists with a thumb in the middle and then flip

up your fingers so they both lit both of the neocortex's are flipped and it's like via the adult and a child are both exposed limbic systems and you know if you put your hands together like you were clapping but your thumbs are the ones that are touching what happens just your limbic systems are hitting each other no one's reasonable and this is what happens when adults get into our struggles with kids it's because we are limbic hijacked and we don't often

know when we are because we it doesn't show up in the same way as with kids I mean sometimes it does but but oftentimes we're not you know yelling and screaming we just we just feel irritated and self-righteous and what's actually happening is we are we are not regulated in the sense of not pushing our emotions down but but able to hold our emotions that are happening and

digest them in an in a calm way we're just uh we're just limit hijacked so there we would we need to look at what to do when when that happens as well so let me see what happens my next slide so right so so how do we feel about limbic overload so if you find that you have a child that's constantly going into limbic hijack they're acting out in class or hitting other kids or you know

running away from their parents at home or you or your parents that you work with our limbic hijack where you're you know this goes up as clinicians as us feeling very irritated with our clients feeling like I don't want to play that game one more time feeling unsafe with them feeling angry at them and you see this with parents all the time as well and there's lots of other reasons that both us as clinicians and parents get

limbic lis hijacked the situation's that we have to deal with in life and it's like parenting and working with kids it does not happen in a vacuum in a particular parenting is a very isolating experience in in our society so many parents feel like they're alone even when they have others around them because this is feeling like there's just so much pressure on parents to have to do it right and there's no great

there's a million different books and methods and there's some lot of judgment from other parents as well as from you know parents inside of themselves judging themselves so so there and there's no support for parents and so parents are more likely to become limbic lis overloaded and it's not their fault they just needs support so if we remember that kids are good kids are evolved to want to behave and well and

to cooperate and to love that this is then this is our natural way of being you know we as human beings it's it's

not survival of the fittest survival of the most cooperative we as human beings want to want to love when we can't it's because there's something in our way and this is true for children and this is true for parents there's no such thing of the bad kid there's no such thing as a bad parent it's just there's something

in their way and this is a very important piece especially for clinicians who don't have children to help with the compassion for parents you know it's easy for clinicians to judge parents you know you go to the park and you see a parent on their phone and thinking oh my gosh all these parents are so checked out well they don't have any time to themselves they're totally overwhelmed by parenting and then they come into your office and they need to

feel like it's okay for them to be overwhelmed and into - to release that so so how in hand-and-hand parenting the understanding which this comes a lot from Peter Levine's work around trauma how we heal that limbic overload is through these release processes that happen in the body if you take a look at the slide here I have six so tears is

one of the ways that the limbic system releases you know these are always we want to think about how do you release that stuck limbic system so that so that the neocortex can come back online so tears have the stress hormone cortisol in them and so when we cry tears of we're actually washing our body clear of the stress that we've been holding now I'm gonna take a side note all of these

things are releases however we need another limbic system that's holding us in love and compassion in order for it to be a healing moment otherwise that you know there may be some catharsis and you may feel a little better afterwards or it may just be neutral at best but crying and you know for a child to go cry in their room alone is not what's healing it may it may be that it's not damaging because the parents are

overwhelmed and they need a break from from the crying and so no one's hurting each other if the child is crying in their room alone but in order for the limbic system to be healed we need another limbic system that is shining that's resonating compassion and attention and non judgment so so this is true for us as as clinicians as well so if you know if you're laying in your bed

at night crying you know you might feel a little more released the next day but if you're on the you know on the couch with your own therapist you're on the phone with a friend and crying and you feel their love and attention something different happens in your brain then so the the limbic system is healed by these release mechanisms happening in relationship so back to what those release mechanisms are of the body that the natural processes that our bodies

are endowed with to heal ourselves tears is one so crying is good crying is healing tantrums so in Tantrums tantrum is we think of that as a righteous indignation not self-righteous but righteous indignation like no this is not okay I will not stand for this and your body heats up that happens that's part of the next piece the perspiration which which

releases that stuck places in the in the brain stem but but we want to think about Tantrums like the content of a child's Tantrums may make no sense to us and then of course they happen at very inconvenient times when we're already stressed out and limbic ly overloaded or uh next or you know or we we get sort of thrown by it where it's unexpected and so then we go into a limbic hijack as clinicians but a tantrum is a healthy

process any mille k day is coming up and I know he was he was you know nonviolent but that sense of this needs to change that is a healthy tantrum that's going to come out different with kids because they're not using their neocortex but also we as adults need times where we can have a big fat tantrum on purpose as consciously and wall with with a listening partner listening to us about

how how things you know letting yourself be illogical how something feels unfair or like I don't want to play this game with this child again I'm tired of getting hit in the head with these fake snowballs that's a tantrum that I had to have a couple times when I was doing a social skills group with with four six-year-old boys and I do a lot of roughhouse claim we have I have these little sort of polyester snowballs and they love

throwing them at me which is great it's important for them to feel powerful and there was group cohesion and laughter but I was just over it and I and I would go into those sessions for a little while thinking oh my god if they hit me in the head one more frickin time I don't know what I'm gonna do so I had to you know have a listening party excuse me which is a hand-in-hand parenting tool who I i had a tantrum with and she

listened and she got me to laugh about it and then i my mind was more freed up in order to be present for her for what the kids wanted to play and to follow their lead so so tantrums is a way that the limbic system heals when there's another person holding loving space with them it's perspiration laughter laughter is also a way that the limbic system releases emotion they found this in some other trauma work as well but laughter it does

something around I know the specifics but there's something around it it unsticks the way that the that trauma memories get stuck in the hippocampus and they just keep repeating and it helps them in code laughter sort of opens something up and up and hope helps it encode and like integrate into long-term memory in a more integrative way in the whole brain so laughter is a very good way to help release the difficult stress and I had a little girl

in my office just today who's been experiencing a ton of anxiety and at school and so you know what what did we do I let her pick up little fuzz balls on the carpet and pretended to be afraid of her and for about 45 minutes we played versions of that game and where she giggled and giggled and giggled and you know left looking so much brighter and so much more confident and been able to to take on the world so laughter is a

really wonderful way for children and adults to heal the limbic system and when parents are able to laugh about the ridiculous challenges of parenting laugh along with them let you know let that know that that's actually healthy and healing and we we need to not just laugh Patty Whistler the founder of handed him parenting has said that kids kids need to laugh and cry about difficult experiences in their life and I found that to be true for in my experiences

you know for kids as well as adults but when the laughter happens go with it it's the natural healing process that we have to shaking or trembling is also a way that the limbic system heals in particular deep fear so if a child is crying so much that their jaws shivering or their you know the arms are quivering a little bit that's actually

the body releasing deep fear from the limbic system and when you just allow it and our you know shower your warmth in your presence then it then it allows the healing process to happen yawning and stretching is also a way that the limbic system kind of comes back to equilibrium so I want you to just think about when you see these processes and children and when parents come to your office and talk about their kids crying and

tantruming to think through you know okay or you know that they're trying to get their parents to laugh and to play in certain ways that they can laugh and maybe the parents are picking up on it I want you to think about these processes as a way that the the the body is the the body is attempting to release these stuck places and that when a parent is sitting in your office and if they go into righteous indignation to

make a space for that so you know let's let them off load that limbic stuckness and and notice are they starting to perspire are they starting to shake or they're going to laughter or tears and keep doing what you're doing that evokes those releases okay let's see what's next so how adults can help children to get to that limbic release when they are limbic lis

overloaded limits is the first way so kids need loving limits to move through stuck feelings when a child is acting uncooperative and hand in hand parenting we talk about it as austrack behavior it's like they're there they're not in the track of their neocortex and so and so we hold the limit I can't let you I can't let you hit your sister or I can't

let you you know push the blocks over and and and you do that with love and when you do that with love and attention then what happens is the yucky feelings that are stuck inside of them rise to the surface and this is where you get a child who wants to tantrum or wants to spit in your face or starts breaking down and and crying and that is their their their body starting to release as you offer your warmth and your limit to

stop the unreasonable behavior when you listen to a child's tantrum it helps both the crier and the listeners nervous system come back to equilibrium there's nothing that you need to do just hold you know if you can get close to the child like the woman is in this picture you know having having some gentle body contact a hand on the back your eye contact where you're offering your eye contact it and just breathing it

actually allows your nervous system also to come back to equilibrium because remember your limbic lis resonating with what's happening inside of that child as well and if you have any unresolved experiences from your childhood which most of us do especially for therapists in particular where you're difficult feelings were not listened to those may also get reese immolated in in various ways where maybe you might start to get overwhelmed or sometimes what happens is

this feeling of like I never got this so you know and how can like this like oh there they want too much for me you know that sometimes come up from us because we're we're sort of a lying with what our perception of our parents was when we were a child that if they weren't able to give that to us so you know that's a chance for those traumas and us also to heal as we let

them come to the surface and we feel our body heating up and we feel our soul starting to get nervous and we bring some mindful attention to those feelings in our body and we take deep breaths and you just make eye contact with the child they may not be looking back at you because that's that some may make them feel well that's gonna make them feel their feelings more and the child limbic system is feeling overwhelmed so our job

is just to offer that warmth in that connection offer that eye contact offer that gentle hand that deep breathing and it actually will allow both of you if you let the whole arc happen if you breathe through the difficulties and you keep it safe then then the brain and the nervous system of both of you will come naturally back to equilibrium and sometimes it can take a while and it certainly takes a great amount of trust

I had a child in my office once who he was seven years old and he had been having difficulties at school not participating in in the classroom and had been having a lot of anxieties and so I mostly had done non directed play with him but I wanted to do a little directive play so my limit that I brought that day was that we're gonna play this game we're gonna play this game where we write down our worries on

a piece of paper and then we build a Jenga tower and then we crumple the worries up and throw them inside the Jenga tower and that was that was the limit that I had brought that day that we were gonna do that for part of the time well he started to refuse at first saying no I'm not going to do that you can't make me now if I had tried to negotiate with and then I am a madman I'm thinking that

he's in his his neocortex which was not what was happening and it would have gotten us into a power struggle and so I'm not didn't try to reason with him I understood oh okay there's some stuck feelings here that are happening so I continue to bring the limit but also to bring my warmth and listening so I said I know you don't I know you don't want to do this and this is what we have to

do today and he'd say no I'm not going to you can't make me and I would same thing so I would let the impact of his negative emotion hit me in my soma in my body I would feel the impact of it I'd feel a rush of adrenaline that's what happens I might feel a moment of wanting to go into a habit of no this is what we have to do or if I don't do this I'm not a good

therapist all those things that run through your mind but I let that hit me I breathe through that and I simply bring my compassion and the limit and take a deep breath and I know I know you really don't want to do this I'd be reflecting his feeling you know hide out a little more strength to match that with him I know you really don't want to do this and then with compassion this is what we have to do today and so we did

that for about maybe a half hour and he was ramping up ramping up ramping up till he got to the point where he was jumping his foot on the floor and tears were starting to stream down his face and he was even saying I'm gonna call my mom I'm gonna call my mom and I'm gonna tell her that I never want to come back here now if I had let that hit my limbic system and flip me you know because

maybe I'm getting scared oh my gosh I don't want to lose this client am i doing the right thing is she gonna judge me then then I would not have been in a space to hold his emotion but I instead trusted the process which is I think Trust is like an act of faith a lot of times like maybe I didn't feel trust in that moment but I actually do believe in this process and so I'm going to I'm

going to make a choice to trust this and to trust myself and if I mess up I also trust that I can repair that so let me go ahead and take a stand for trusting myself and trusting where I'm coming from so he was saying oh you know I'm gonna call my mom and I and I and I just breathe through that that I felt what he was feeling and reflected back yeah you know I know you

don't want to come back here and then I offered him some compassion in the form of saying yes we can't call your mom because I could tell he needed he needed some more he needed connection to his attachment figure at that moment his mind was going into more panic so I let him call her and she listened to him and they got off the phone and then he was and he was crying still and then and

then because we had both gone through this and our limbic systems had been processing these difficult emotions together the content of what his his emotion brought up in my mind was different than the content of his mind because it brought up content around you know am i doing the right thing am i a good therapist what's mom the mom gonna think all of these things but because we had breathed through that together and I worked to bring compassion to what was

happening in my body as well as what was happening in his body and and continuing to hold the limit then I was able to say to him no wonder if some I wonder what's hard about this he wasn't able to do that before he didn't he thought was that would have been too cognitive of a question for me to ask of him before but because we had worked through some of the upset he was able to in a very

grief-stricken way so in a different energy he was no longer righteously tantrum a grief-stricken way say that I said I don't like writing and I said Oh as I understood at that point that he had looked some learning differences and the actual like holding of the pencil he had judgment about himself about how he did it and it felt hard and scary and so what he was able to get to that deeper grief the deeper vulnerable

feeling of like I'm not good enough because I can't I can't hold my pencil all just through his all food the emotion because all he said was we don't like writing from that point I was able to feel that along with him and compassionately collaborate to come to another agreement agreement I said well we don't have to do it with writing you know we can do it with another way and then he was we were able to collaborate

and find a way to do that to still do that worry activity but not do it was something that was triggering him but it was important to allow it wasn't about the solving of the problem was not just to solve like how to get to doing that activity it was giving him space to work through that very very difficult scary emotion of I'm different because at school he would just refuse you just

refuse I'm just not going to do that and I continue to hold the limit but also offered my compassion so he was able to also see hey another person can be with me even when I reject them even when I say I hate you I'm gonna call my mom I'm never coming back here that someone can take that someone can hold that and still love me and that that that builds your trust and rapport that builds healthy attachment both with

you as a therapist or caregiver and this is you know what you know and handed hand parenting we teach to parents as well although it takes a while to get there because it's just complex but it allows him to then have that experience later on in his life that that I am lovable even when I'm having these big big huge feelings so when we listen to a kid's tantrum it can bring both of our nervous systems back to equilibrium but

we have to be willing to go through that process and trauma is healed by loving acceptance of the difficult emotion being added to the experience of that emotion so you know the difficult emotion and you're having the difficult you know the child's having the difficult feeling you're having a difficult feeling and then you add some loving acceptance to that first you have to add loving acceptance to your difficult feeling oh I'm frustrated oh I'm scared and then you can app you know

that's probably what the child's feeling oftentimes with kids especially under 12 we are we're feeling what they're feeling although I would say it's true with teenagers too it's just a lot more complicated yeah but when we add to loving exceptions to what we're feeling and then what they're feeling that's what helps to to heal that that stuck emotion so how do we think about kids behavior this is what we've been talking about that all kids are good even when

they're full of feelings and aren't able to follow directions or play well with others that actually kids are good this little girl who's standing in the corner sticking her tongue out she's she's she was just limbic Lehi jacked at that moment she's not she's not a little brat you know it's like these things come through these you have to watch the uncensored thoughts that come through your mind and it's okay and that's good to bring out in listening partnerships

to you know to let your Brawl limbic system just release but with awareness that you're doing that to get to something that's stuck underneath you have to be aware of what comes up because that's also what's gonna come up with with parents and to allow that and to be accepting of that oh okay there's like some judgment that I have some irritation that I have about if this child was was in my office and I might I

might have to work through some of those feelings but but can I understand the concept that even though it's difficult to be with her and be with these feelings the underneath actually there's just something in her way there's some emotion that's stuck in her way so I don't know so so the idea of the cycle that happens I like to

think of in terms of the human condition which is a Buddhist term you know the human

condition is basically suffering exists we suffer and I think that's relevant because the concept of Buddhism is is that first you have to accept that but there is suffering and that there's pain and then there's our response to it which is which is suffering and that there is a way out but that but that suffering is is always going to be there and so how it looks at how it shows up with kids is if we start at the top here

there's some disconnection so the parent turns away our teacher turns away at a moment where they are wanting or needing something and they feel they feel well like what you know in an emotionally focused therapy with Susan Johnson would say they might feel like an attachment injury you know that they're they're having this attachment need or longing I need I need you and they they aren't they don't get it they feel dropped and

so there's this this this relationship panic that happens inside and hand-in-hand parenting we talk about that as disconnection and that leads to broken thinking now this is a very important and helpful analogy of what happens so what we see on the surface of these difficult behaviors and feelings kids grabbing not cooperating in class pushing other kids you know saying mean

things sitting in the corner being anxious or dissociated in bullying so that we what we see these difficult feelings and behaviors but what's going on underneath is that their thinking is broken so this is another way to think of the limbic hijack and here's the analogy if you say you're wanting to do something a parent is wanting to do something their child they're wanting to get their

kid out the door and they won't put their shoes on and it turns into a big tantrum okay so there's the difficult behavior right there now if we think of it in terms of broken broken thinking an analogy would be that you are on your way to a meeting and you have to go up these stairs in order to get to the meeting and you're already late and you're feeling anxious and stressed about that and the stairs are very

narrow but the person in front of you is walking incredibly slow now if you look at their behavior and you think oh my god they're so selfish what a jerk they're in my way you know maybe maybe you would sit quietly walk behind them but stew and get yourself more worked up maybe you push push by them and brush by them you know quickly and kind of rudely and you know or see you think can you move please or you

know you might react to them in that way but if that person in front of you actually was walking slow because their ankle was broken and you couldn't see it because they were maybe in a boot or it was in the process of healing but you knew once you knew that their ankle was broken the way that you react to them would be different you might still be a little stressed out that you were going to be late to your meeting but you might

respond to that stress by accepting that you're going to be late and adding loving exceptions to the feeling of judgment of yourself of being late or stress or you might a little bit more gently ask to move around them or you

might offer them help if this was someone you cared about in particular you know maybe this is a close co-worker you might look at them and say hey is everything okay can I carry a bag for you because

they're not doing it to be a jerk or to be manipulative or just to get your goat they're doing it because something is broken now if we take that back to the analogy with the kids same thing they're not putting their shoes on in order just to you know to slow you down one more time because they're the most ungrateful kids in the world which is how I feel and it's okay that it feels that way but

they're doing it because their thinking is broken now your thinking might be broken in that moment too in which case you need some help maybe you need a timeout to go you know sit down or maybe you need to get through yes get through what you're going what you're doing and get off the door and get to the next thing but you know if your thinking is broken that's another that's another that's another issue to deal with which

you know then you know you look at how how do parents get limbic release how do they get support for the difficult job of parenting so that their thinking is broken less often especially in the face of their child's broken thinking but if the parent looks at the child and says oh they're not putting on their shoes because their thinking is broken then what's going to happen is they're have a different response the response would be a more one of how do I heal

this broken thinking how do I heal but and it is literally the neocortex's like not you know connected so to speak it's not online as much in that moment it's of a thinking cap is like broken in that minute so if they think if they look at their child and say oh they're thinking is broken how can I help you know well if you understand that disconnection is a is the underlying cause then you would go and you would add connection warmth

and safety maybe maybe they would kneel down look the child in the eye and say honey do you need some help now what happens next when if broken thinking leads to connection warmth and safety from an adult what actually happens next is the healing process now if it's a small disconnection the healing process may simply be an expression of a vulnerable emotion yes can you help me with my shoes or I'm worried about school today but more often than not the

healing process is if you remember that if we remember going back to the slide with the tears and the shaking and the Tantrums and the perspiration that's the healing process so the parent might come up to the child and offer that warmth in connection honey what's going on do you need help and then what's going to happen probably some sort of righteous indignation no I can do it myself wait but if we understand that that is

part of the healing process and we continue to add connection warmth and safety obviously we can't let a child actually hurt us or hurt someone else or hurt the environment because that's that's um that hurts them actually so we would you know we'd hold you know I can't I can't I can't leave your shoe can't leave your shoe honey and maybe we turn it into a game which will lead them to some laughter or we you know just hold the limit and warmth

and then they get to tears that's the healing process so adding connection this isn't a very important piece in hand and parenting adding connection it doesn't like just cause good manners and good behavior it causes healing the disconnection that caused those difficult behaviors in the first place once we hold space for healing those tears and tantrums then the child limbic system can release and we can go back to collaborate collaborative problem-solving thinking well what happens next

more disconnection that's just the human condition cannot get away from disconnection so what does that healing process look like I'll give a very just like that it can just lots of different ways that can happen I'll give a very you know short successful example because you know things we're not always able to do this process to its full extent because of time but one example was a child so starting with a disconnection so I have a child who

did who didn't want to leave my office he wanted he wanted one more sticker and then he wanted a piece of gum and then he wanted another sticker and and you know at first I thought I don't know big deal sticker you know no big deal he's gone transitional object and then it dawned on me that what was happening was actually he was having some broken thinking and he was calling for a when kids need to release they will call

for a limit so I didn't I had a million stickers I could have given him the whole pack but what I realized was there was some disconnection that was underneath there that needed to come out so I held the limits I'm sorry I can't give you another sticker and he tried to cajole a little bit more and I just added connection and warmth and safety I I kneeled a little bit closer to him I looked into his eyes I added warmth and

I just you know I just empathize I know it's it's hard to leave it's hard to leave you know so I kind of made a guess at what was happening which is not really what you do and hand in hand parenting that's more from my play therapy background but you know you you could say you know you want to if you want another sticker you can't give you one and then what happened was the healing process for him it was very

simple and short he just tucked like one little tear rolled down his cheek and I just sat there with it for a moment breathing through my own anxiety of like oh my gosh what's this gonna turn into or at the end of our session are we gonna have time to you know am I gonna delete from my next client just breathing through that and putting my attention on him when we trust I find that often time not always but often

times the time anxiety that we feel it just it it becomes irrelevant and actually we were not late we're not we don't end up being late when we make space in this conscious way more often than not um and he just had one little tear and then he was able to get up and like cheerfully say okay see you next week so that's a very simple example of how simple and easy and successful example

of how adding understanding that his sinking was broken adding some connection leads to the healing process leads to collaborative problem solving now what happens when we add frustration and into the broken thinking so a child is having a difficult moment it won't go out the door you feel frustrated maybe the parent might even punish or banish okay you need no iPad no iPad or you okay go to your room when you add that

what happens next is isolation so a child feels isolated in their feelings they have more fear they have more shame which leads to avoiding the feeling or or more acting out so if there was avoiding it hide and repressed and if or if there was you know acting out there'd be more more difficult behaviors so when we add frustration it will just add fuel to the fire even if it's not in that moment it may be they tamp it down out

of fear and shame they have some isolation so they tamp the feeling down but it will come out more strongly later on so we can't save children from all disconnection it happens disconnection happens it's a very very important for parents to hear this because there is so much pressure to feel like you um you know to be a good parent to be a safe haven and to you know hold you know how

have our children you know be healthy and well-adjusted that we think that we can save them from disconnection and we just can't it's part of the human it's part of the human condition the disconnection will happen in disconnection because of something that you as a parent do will happen and there's a certain like grief but also solace that I see that parents get from that because yes we want to change the

cycle in the sense that we want to add warmth and connection when when our when when our behavior stimulates difficult feelings in our children um and that it's not also not always from parents you know the children come in with all sorts of their own challenges and challenges in school as well and we actually can't save them from disconnection all we can do is offer listening and that's enough that is enough so the connection piece here are

the five listening tools in hand and hand parenting so I see that we are at an hour I'm going to go for I think just ten more minutes and then hopefully get some questions here at the end too so I'll just rush a little bit through some of the rest of this so those connectors I want to go back here for a second so the listening tools that we add when a

child has broken thinking in hand in hand parenting we talked about five listening tool so one of the lists and this is what you would learn in depth and in my class you would so what we do is we actually practice all of the tools in person it's highly highly highly experiential class and all the hands and hand parenting's classes are you do the tool you do it yourself

and if you didn't you do the tools with your own children if you have them or with your clients so I'll just briefly go through what those five plus new tools are because I think that that is important so the first listening tool is called listening partnerships and that is where two parents or could also be two people who work with children or one that works with children and one that's a parent get together on the phone or in

person and you share listening time and what that means is you set a specific amount of time one person goes first and they just look themselves offload all of the difficulties around parenting or working with and loving children letting yourself laugh about the ridiculousness letting yourself rage about how hard it is you know we stomp the ground hit a pillow you know pretend that like you

know hey you know I just want to choke this child letting yourself laugh it out so you really like take the let your let yourself just take the top off of all of the things that you censor with the understanding that you're doing that to release these big stuck feelings and once you do that then and then expert the listener just listens non-judgmentally with open awareness and acceptance they may offer you like their if it's in person like their hands to

push on if you're feeling angry they might say things that like I had a listening partner with the snowball listening partnership I did where she you know she said all I'm gonna throw a snowball at you and that got me to laugh and got me to be able to say no I can't take one more and then you know she so she would say things that would draw out the feeling that I was experiencing and this is a simple but in

some ways complex tool that takes a while to learn and to learn how to let your own limbic system feel the trust and safety with another person to let all of that big stuckness out so we do that in in the class we do that as a group as a whole group each person gets listening time where we get to really go for it go from those big stuck feelings get loud sob about difficult emotions

just be listened to if you want to think through a problem have that - it's like there's a deep deep trust that as a parent or as a clinician you have the truth inside of you you or you have it inside of you and there is just so much truth in that but you only learn that they're doing it so that's the first listening tools listening partnerships and that is number one because that it really connects parents with each other

and it reduces that isolation that parents feel so that's something that we would learn in the hand-in-hand parenting class for therapists coming up the next tool would be special time and special time is where you set aside a specific amount of time to just follow your child's lead this is akin to non-directive play therapy and what this does is it warms up the connection with the child and it allows the parent to

attune to them so we would learn about doing special time and we would start to do it those of you who work with children you would start to do it and I have I did fine I'd already been doing play therapy for years but when I switched it into special time I would set a timer in in the office at least sometimes I'd want to do something directed like the last 15 minutes there's something about when

you set that timer it's like 30 minutes of special time it's now out of your control you're not going to change it just because you feel done or because it feels like there's something else that needs to be done that is that child's time and make it to literally do anything that they want and and we do a little adult-to-adult special time where even just five minutes if you can do whatever you want and this other adult pours their

attention on you this is very very healing very profound to know that you don't have to do anything to get another person's devoted attention that you're enough that they want to pour their delight on you and this is what we practice with the children as well so that's special time and stay listening stay listening is in a lot of ways what we've been talking about today stay

listening is one of the key listening tools they're all very important if you miss one of them it's like a wobble it's like a stool with one leg and missing it's - it's wobbly you need all of the tools to have a what balanced approach but stay listening is the crux of hand-in-hand parenting and in stay listening this what we've been talking about today when a child is having off-track behavior their limbic system hijacks they get broken thinking

difficult difficult feelings and you hold space and you listen with warmth and attention and that allows them to heal their limbic system as well as for you to heal yours the fourth tool is play listening and play listening is a wonderful tool it's a lot of fun it's also a really good way to work through our difficult feelings about working with parents a lot of therapists experience where you actually flip the

roles and you so it's a role reversal so in play listening with a child the child is the one who's big and in charge and in control and faster than you and they they throw their little snowball and it knocks you over and they put on their lion mask and oh my god you're so scared and they try to they push on your hands and you just fall to the ground because they're so strong and and that it elicits their laughter

their strength they get to feel in control they get to feel powerful and it's the way to actually work on specific issues to like if a child is having separation anxiety you can use play listening by pleading with them not to go please don't go please please please no no I'll just dial please and and that's them getting to think about and address the issue which is the separation but they get to feel like they're the one in control and in power

through the play and through ordering you well nope sorry it's I've got to go sorry nope you've got to be alone and then and then you you know exaggeratedly and grieve then leaving you know kids just it fills them up it fills their cup up when we do this kind of play and it's kind of easy to say but a little bit harder to do so we we get to practice it in the class with each other or we'll

you know wad up pieces of paper and have a little snowball fight son and and also get to practice that with your clients and and talk about how it's different I've seen when I used this tool instead of more like behavior modification tools how just how much the child's behavior will shift for example I had a child who was constantly stepping on other kids toes at school and then denying it like creighton the teacher would see it

happen and then the little girl would say I didn't do it and so we would play these competitive games that she instigated in our special time where like we would play baseball and I wouldn't win of course I would never be allowed to win even if I got a point and at first I would try and employ a tool where I thought I was teaching her empathy by saying oh I feel sad when you don't let me have a point because I

actually did get a point and or I'd say you know no no I actually did win there and that did not add any warmth to our connection did not add any report it did not change her behavior it just made me feel like I was teaching her it was something moral and so when I changed it to play listening where I would pretend to run as fast as I can and I'm like fall on the ground at the last second you know

when she she would say nope you didn't get a point you know just oh man okay maybe I'll do 20 push-ups and I would do 20 push-ups and I'm gonna meditate oh okay now I'm gonna win for sure and she loved that and we played that game where I was losing terribly first sessions and sessions and sessions and then it's at some point she started to give me a point and then then the next session I

got three points in the next session it was tied and in the next session she wanted to play a cooperative game she had moved on because she had gotten to work through her feelings of not being in control and not being powerful and that's why she was stepping on kids hands not because she didn't have empathy but because she was not feeling powerful and once we started playing that game 45 minutes a week you know it's like it doesn't take that much time

then she you know within within a couple months her behavior changed let's play listening and then the last tool is around studying Loomis which we talked a little bit about today where we do listen limit listen where you you set the limit you listen to the feelings and then you set the limit again in order to get the healing so I'm gonna go through this just to the last slide because we

did talk through all of us and you'll get the Bobbsey you'll get the recording so if you're interested in the hand-in-hand parenting for therapist class where you'll learn all these five tools it starts January 31st in Oakland and Montclair it's two and a half hour class so there's plenty of time to really drop in and learn these tools and you can find more information on SF Bay play therapy calm if you click the link

that says training for therapists so I wanna make space here now for her questions I'm gonna see what's what's already here and then let's say someone said what did you say the perspiration was good for or caused by so perspiration is is a healing of anger so deep-seated anger when we get in touch with it it allows it the perspiration allows our limbic system to heal times

that we have felt like oppressed so anger is when we have felt that we have not something has not been just you know in our lives and so anger is a way to these be righteously indignant and say this is not just I take a stand for this and when we and then perspiration allows that to heal so a lot of times I see when we do listening partnerships in my office with the parents or with

therapists people start to get hot you know oh gosh I'm heating up there's the releasing anger but oftentimes it's just releasing other emotion as well so that's a good question okay so let's see if there's any other questions you can raise your hand or just type them in and a lot of times people have questions about how to apply this in school with with teachers and it

can be challenging because the teachers a teacher has a different job than we as therapists do and we have to really honor and respect that but a good place to start is just offer it and listening and you don't even have to tell them you're offering them listening but just know in your mind that they've got they're dealing with a lot they've got so many kids a lot of pressure if it's a public school they're often overworked and underpaid

and so note that they need to offload their emotions to and allow them a chance to laugh about how irritated they are at a kid let the and and and let them actually you know if they are venting about it a kid you but you can do you know as you can get out of pillow and say let's pretend this is Johnny and I'm gonna just I'm gonna just hit him right here and pound on the pillow you need to do

your work and they'll probably look at you like like you're crazy but it will help them it'll either invite them to do it with you and it will at least allow them the the that as an option that they can release that or they might start laughing which then then their limbic system is releasing so offering you're listening and then oftentimes the tool beyond that that I find that teachers are able to use readily is special time I've seen so

often when a child is acting out if they just get five minutes a special time with that teacher once or twice a week where they just stay in for five extra minutes you know at lunchtime and the teacher says okay we can do whatever you want and the teacher just has their full attention on them it's it's kind of remarkable how children's behavior will change pretty quickly so special time is a really good one to teach them and

there's also I have a bunch of articles on my website SF Bay play sorry SF Bay play therapy calm that you are welcome to share with teachers or parents I do have one on special time I have one on roughhousing have a whole bunch so that's it for today thank you so much for joining again if you're listening to the recording please do feel free to send an email with any questions - Karen wolf therapy at gmail.com and I

hope that you will join me for this upcoming class we have four spots out of six left and I'm I'm very excited about it because it really changed my life to do this work so and not just the work lady with kids actually changed like my life and the ways that I get support now so thank you so much everyone and I hope you have a wonderful day