



LEAD THE WAY TO
Strong Connections

7 CONVERSATIONS THAT POSITIVELY
INFLUENCE YOUR KIDS
AND YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM

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Introduction

Welcome mums, dads, grandparents and carers

I'm really glad you're here! I have written this workbook because I want to help you connect better with your child. There were so many times when my 3 kids were young that I judged myself harshly. I had high standards and was forever feeling as though I couldn't live up to them, and it affected the way I parented. It affected the way I connected.

My kids are adults now, two of them with children of their own. They are all getting on fine. But the benefit of hindsight is wonderful, as I can now bring my experience and knowledge of what I've learnt about human behaviour, into a space to help parents or carers like you find ways to connect positively, develop strong connections, and positively influence the relationship in many wonderful ways.

Where did I go wrong?

I was fixated on behaviour. I wanted my kids to behave as perfect little people with the hindsight of experience. Of course I was overlooking the many developmental stages children go through and the mistakes they must make in order to learn. I had high expectations and standards, and I let these get in the way of being fully present, and connecting to understand. The moments where I did connect to understand I could see how positively this influenced the way my children learnt.

What would I do if I had my time over again?

What I learnt as they were growing up and what I've learnt since they became adults is why I wrote this book.

If I had my time over again I would:

- Turn my regrets into moments of learning
- Accept myself as I was
- Work on my inner calm and presence
- Tune into those emotionally charged moments
- Listen before telling them how it is from my perspective
- Develop stronger conversational connections
- Allow them to be the learner and the teacher
- Learn to love myself first

That's it. Nothing else. I love my kids and they love me. I think it takes a lot for a strong bond to be broken. You are loved because you are the parent. You have a responsibility to love and accept yourself so your influence comes from a place of genuine concern and not off the back of external expectations and standards.

What is it about?

- Conversational Connection
- Being a leader in your child's eyes
- Practice and mistakes
- Listening sensitivity
- Trust

What is it *not* about?

- Discipline methods
- Parenting styles or methods

Parents - the Inbuilt Leader

We are leaders the minute we become parents whether we believe it or not. We're thrown in hook line and sinker swimming through the myriad of opinions, judgments and traditions. The risk is that we listen to external distractions and don't trust our innate ability to parent simply because we are mammals. The thousands of messages about parenting can be confusing can't they?

The wonderful thing is, we all have it in us to be that leader for our child but sometimes when stuff is happening or life seems like it is falling apart the last thing we feel like is a leader. Positively influencing our kids the way insight and wisdom intended is a far reach in the busy-ness of life and external influences. This leads to confusion.

Tuning into what's happening each moment is a skill that requires presence. It requires us to tap into the intuition we were born with so we can parent from the heart and not so much the logical, rationale head where standards and expectations run us and steer us away from being fully there and developing strong emotional connections.

The **verb** definition of 'parent' is to *"be or act as a mother or father to (someone)"*. Whether you are a biological parent or grandparent, a foster parent or someone else in a child's life you are an important influence to that child. To simplify language, I'll be referring to all of you as 'parent'.

Interactions and Connections

Interactions and connections include positive conversations. Conversations can positively influence the social and emotional development a child. Through conversations we learn about one another, we explore our world, the broader world, we shape our perceptions and attitudes, and through positive conversations we can develop into independent and resilient human beings. Conversational spaces can also be a time where we share our deepest fears. They are a sacred space to figure out how to be in a world that is rapidly changing.

On Perfection

Parenting is not a place of perfection. It is a role where being a constant learner. A space where it's OK to (heaven forbid) accept mistakes not as something as simple as being 'wrong', but perhaps more accurately, an error in judgment which lead to a reactive emotional response. We have been misguided into believing we have to follow a certain parental protocols, attitudes, have a certain style, enforce certain disciplinary measures, and take steps to prevent our kids from risk an attempt to teach our children to behave the way society expects them to behave. There is a lot of pressure on us.

Of course we want our kids to grow up well-rounded stable and fully functioning human beings, but if we're not careful, while we're constantly alert to these expectations, we will fall into the guilt and shame trap for getting it wrong.

Our world has changed **dramatically** since we were born and it isn't slowing down anytime soon. Our roles as parents have to change with the times. Our role as a parent is to find positive ways to be with our children, make conscious, personal decisions about which traditions to hold onto and which

ones are outdated and ineffective. This is for us to discover, not for the world to tell us. That is a responsibility in itself.

Parent from the Heart

If there is a truth, it is that for every decision we make and action we take, there will be someone that will have done it differently. As the saying goes: *"There is more than one way to skin a cat."* This is a perfect reason to trust your heart. Give others a voice without giving them authority. Take being 'wrong' or being a 'failure' lightly. For every broad statement there is a narrative that sits behind it that says *"you should have been this way or you should have done it that way' because.... and now that you didn't you are a failure."*

When we take those narratives on as the 'truth', we stop parenting from the heart. You know your child better than anyone else. Step back from the expectations, standards and traditions and pave a clear path for listening and watching to learn. Let go of tips, strategies and opinions, to clear the way so you can begin to parent from the heart.

How to use this eBook

You are so not alone in this! I know firsthand what it's like to judge my parenting skills, motives and methods of disciplining. We are truly in this together. Everyday I am still finding ways to have conversations to positively influence my adult children. Listening is my number 1 go to **every time**. And it's not easy to listen without interjecting and thinking I know what's best without that constant in the moment presence.

Throughout the book if you experience uncomfortable emotions and you start to hear your self-judgments (because more than likely you will), before you click out do this

- Stop
- Check in

- Breathe
- Read on

There's no particular order or rules on how to approach it. Give yourself time, opportunities to practice and perhaps scan through and pick out the most relevant practices at a particular time. Throughout the book there are ways for you to practice this new learning. Each one of these involves time and presence. Being present and practicing is like developing any habit. The more you do it the more it sticks. For that reason I caution against rushing through and trying out everything in one week. We're parents for life. Give yourself time and space and be patient.

Always remember: You are the parent. I'm taking you on a journey of trust and forgiveness. Whatever has been done can be undone. Whatever has been said can be reversed. If you have experienced guilt or shame and find it difficult to forgive yourself for any reason, connect with me, send me an email and tell me about that. Don't be alone in this.

Some questions about you as a parent

It's likely you've got some questions about parenting and you may even have been living with these questions for a long time. I've posed some below that may help to orientate you into the practices that follow. Take the time to answer them before you move along. You can share them with a friend, or you can write and share them with me, or simply keep the answers to yourself.

1. Who and what shaped the parent you are?
2. What are the things you like about the way you parent?
3. If you could do one thing differently, what would that be?
4. What would your life be like if you could forgive yourself?

As you move along try to relate the practices to things you are already doing. Adapt or keep doing the things you sense are working. The connections you have already forged will support these practices.

At the end of each practice I ask you what you are already doing because I strongly believe that for most of us, we care and we put into practice caring responses to our child's needs, but...we perhaps we focus a little too much on what we don't do well. I want you to reflect on this and all the great things you are already doing.

I congratulate you for being here. Perhaps you could take the time right now to congratulate yourself. If you don't feel comfortable doing that right now, perhaps do it when you get to the end ☺

I'm pretty sure most of you will at some point, judge. Most parents do. Cut yourself a break, after all, you are human and no one wrote a perfect course on how to be a perfect parent and even if they did it would be out of context the minute it hit the shelves. There is no such thing as perfect parenting! That is simply a standard that none of us can live up to.

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Being Present

Whether we choose to parent the same or different to our parents or somewhere in between, is something we find ourselves attentive to, and it's exactly why we do the things we do. Some of us may not have parents as role models and if not, how do we parent? Because we are humans we relate and we connect. This enables us to learn and to choose our actions, which includes the way we connect.

No matter how we choose to parent we can always improve the way we listen, how present we are and how we tune into our children's concerns.

For example: If we hold strongly to the traditional standard "*my child must never interrupt me*", and they interrupt, what are we likely to do? Maybe we stop them in their tracks and hold them accountable, move them on, ask them nicely not to interrupt, abruptly ask them not to interrupt or both depending on the place, the context and our mood at the time. No matter what our expectations are, and how we react or respond, we can always pause and become fully present in that moment so we interact and even discipline from a place of love rather than a reactive resourceful emotion.

You are constantly developing and evolving as a parent. Your child is constantly developing and evolving as a human being. Their brains and their nervous systems are active but not fully developed. They will not and cannot possibly behave appropriately all the time. When they behave inappropriately this is the time for great learning, for you and your child. Rather than self-recrimination perhaps this is a moment to take the pause and check in on what's going on for you in your thoughts and your emotions, so you can be present to what's going on for your child.



Practice #1

Listening Moments

Create welcoming conversational spaces. Conversational spaces provide a space for shared learning. There is so much to learn from one another and being a leader is being a learner.

Children benefit from full and present attention. While we are all really busy it is important to find those little moments where your child experiences their daily 'happenings' have truly been listened to, where they feel welcomed into a conversation, or where they get to start a conversation and see it through until it's end. This is a space where anything goes – those moments where it's ok to talk about parts of their day that in their interpretation went well and those parts of their day that they found the most difficult.

We're all busy and sometimes these moments don't just pop up, so it's important to initiate them. The more little moments you chat, the more your kids will feel welcomed into and part of conversation. These are the moments that they can share, come up with different or better ways to do something, open up about their troubles and talk to you about their world. These are moments where your kids develop independent thinking and decision-making.

3 Things that Encourage Listening Moments

1.1. Listen during busy little moments

While you're in your 'busyness' find a little moment. Maybe while putting out the garbage, putting on your makeup, changing the oil in the car, cooking the dinner, washing up, doing the shopping, taking a rest, typing an email or driving to and from school sport.

1.2. Create quiet conversations

These are the conversations you have without distractions. Find the time at least once a day to have a conversation without interruption. Whether it's 5 or 50 minutes, quiet conversations are uninterrupted. That means stopping everything including television, Internet and social media, in a welcoming environment. It's not the length, but the quality of the conversation and the conversational space that counts.

1.3. Create regular listening practice activities

Each day set up a time where everyone comes together and gets to say how their day was – use your imagination here. You know how your home works...for one family that might be in the car on the way home from school and for another family that might be at the dinner table, and for another family that might be in the back yard, or in a swimming pool after school or work.

Practice for Learning and Leading

Give yourself permission to: Every day for the next week, in the busyness of your day, find these little moments. Then while you are listening in these moments try this:

- Tune into your child
- Become aware of your thoughts (non-judgmentally)



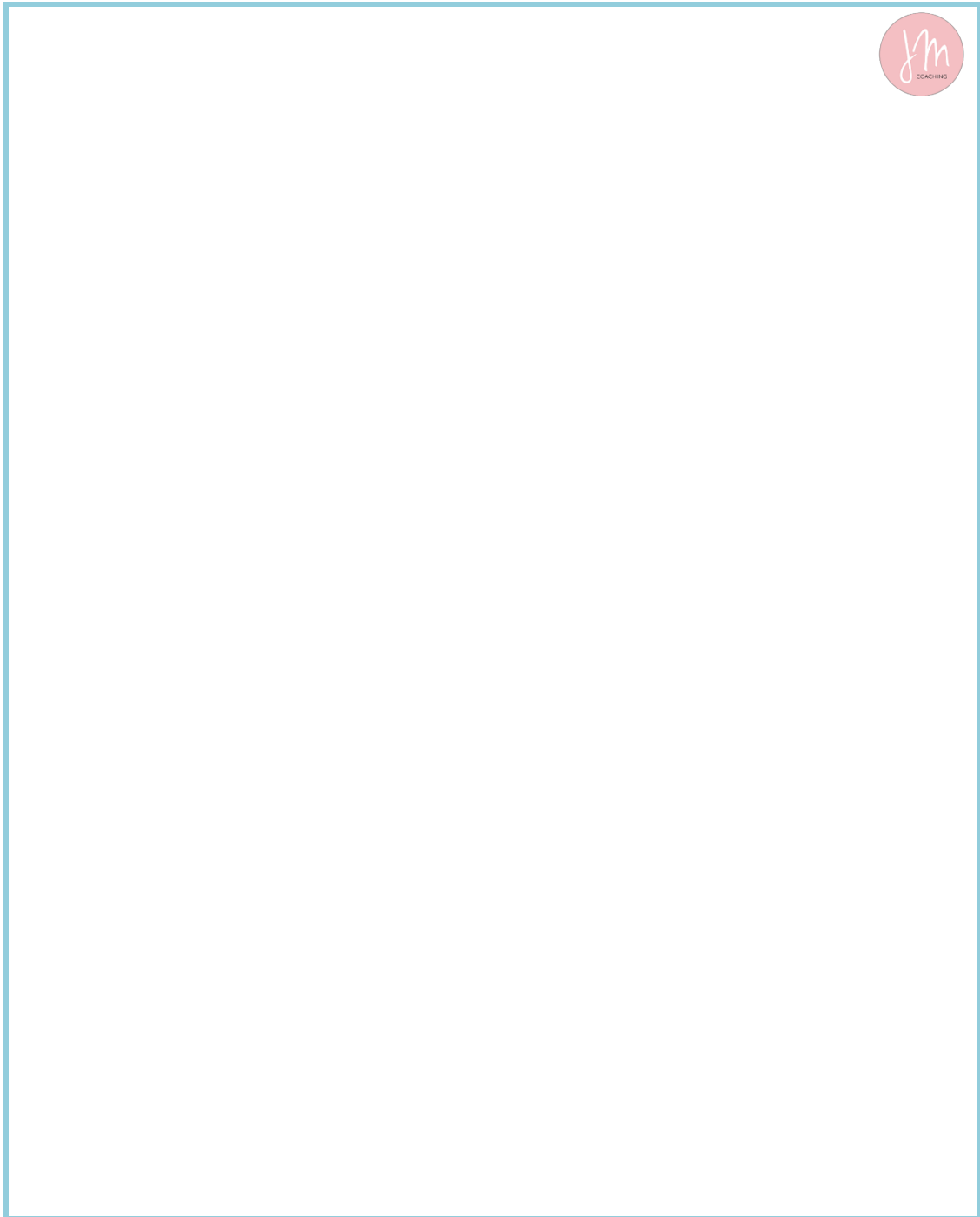
- Become aware when your thoughts wander (non-judgmentally)
- Bring yourself back to tuning into what your child is saying
- Notice when your thought wander again (non-judgmentally)
- Tune back into your child
- Repeat as often as you need to

There is nothing else to achieve in this practice except to listen and when you wander off, bring yourself back to listening. No forcing and no judging. It takes practice and presence before it will become automatic and it may not necessarily come easy, so doing it once and never doing it again won't develop the habit and skill of listening. What does come easily is allowing our thoughts to wander.

CHECK OUT MY BLOG: [Listen to your Listening](#)

Reflection

Possible Family Listening Moments





Practice #2

Listen Without Teaching

We listen when we are fully attentive, in the moment, non-judgmentally, putting aside all preferences, prejudices and truly tuning in without voicing our opinions.

Take a moment now to have think about a recent conversation you had with your child and get a sense of how long it took before you provided a solution, gave advice or told them 'how it is'. I know! We want to keep our kids safe and teach them life lessons. When we do this every time they open their mouths our kids may think we are not attuned to their concerns, plus they don't actually get a chance to work some things out for themselves. We want them to come to us when they have a concern. Providing life lessons and solutions all the time leads to frustration, can stop them from speaking up, developing their own views, and influence the way they interact and relate to others. Their social and emotional development relies on them working some things out for themselves and conversational spaces provide that opportunity.

3 things you can do to listen without teaching

2.1. Positioning

It's really important that your child can sense your sincerity. It doesn't matter whether it's a 5 or 50-minute conversation, get into a comfortable position, eye level or lower, face your child and give genuine, sincere eye

contact. Make sure they feel comfortable. It might be that you have to go to them to find this space – perhaps it is in their bedroom at the end of the day, or sitting outside in the garden. When you get into this position your child will automatically feel like you're ready to listen. While you're in this position, keep listening and then listen some more.

2.2. Hold the quiet space

Phew...this is not easy so it may take practice! Wait for them to finish speaking, and then wait some more. A lot of learning happens in the space between the words and yet often we try to fill up the space with 'life lessons'. When you give this a try, over time you'll be surprised at the things you hear like your child's immediate concerns, worldviews, and even coming to terms with some of their deepest fears. Be patient with you. When you find yourself interrupting just notice what was going on in your thoughts and with your emotions that you found yourself jumping in.

2.3. Acknowledgement

Conversations can be sparse or slim pickings with some kids. When they come to you its opportunity to let them know you enjoyed the chat and they are always welcome to have a conversation any time, whenever they need to, or want to. For some kids this might be a big step so let them know you:

- Appreciate them coming to you
- Enjoy chatting to them
- Are there for them any time

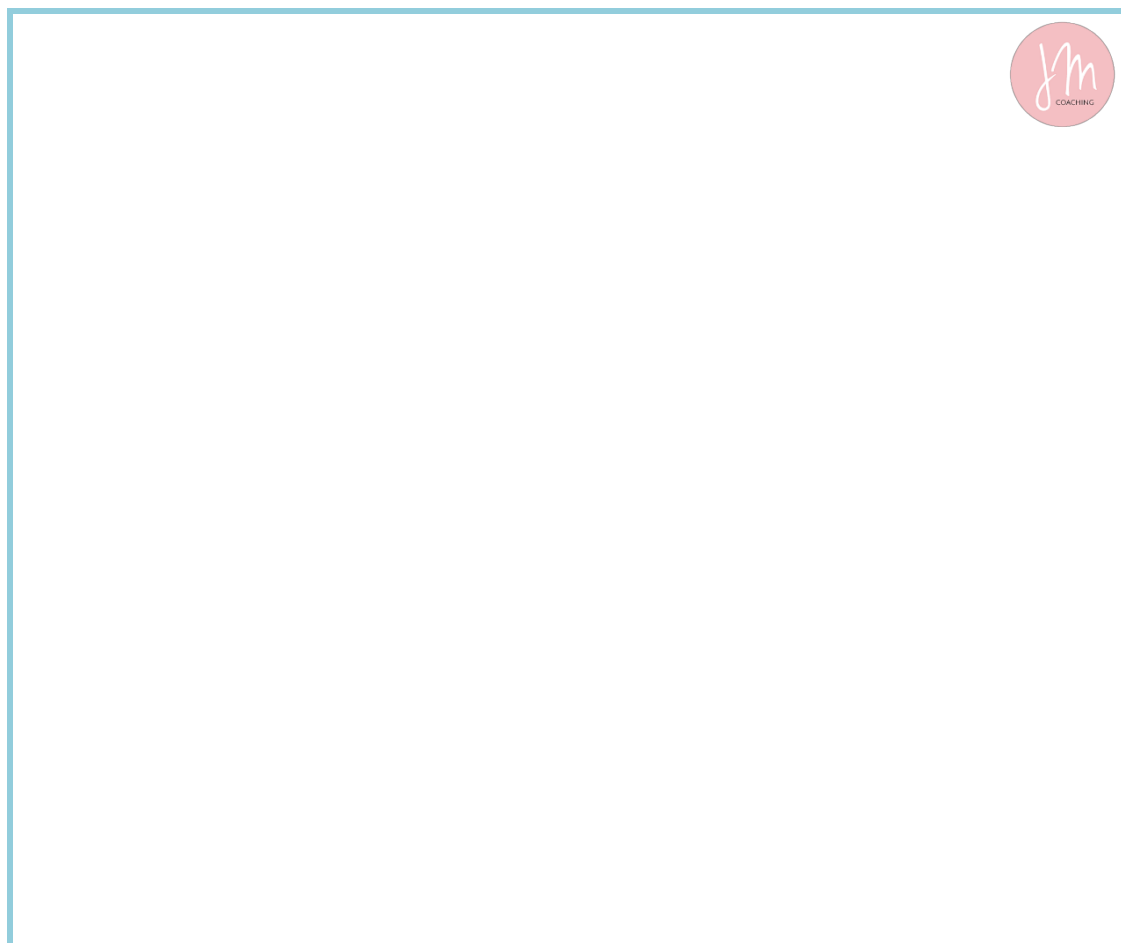
These simple acknowledgements will encourage that space.

Practice for Learning and Leading

Give yourself permission to: Truly tune in and listen. Listening is a skill and it takes practice. We won't always be tuned in because life concerns sometimes get in the way, but as many times as you possibly can, give it a try! You can't force kids to have a conversation let alone open up in conversation but you can acknowledge them when they do. This will encourage them to come back and try again. Each day this week notice conversation opportunities and practice tuning in.

Reflection

What listening do you already do that doesn't involve teaching?





Practice #3

Listen for Concerns

Listening for concerns is a conversational practice that opens up the space to hear things that may relate to, and be getting in the way of social, emotional and developmental learning experiences. This is about listening to what's behind behaviour. Behaviour is not just 'misbehaving'. Behaviour is ways of going about things that can be considered uncharacteristic or unusual for your child. It may be something you notice that you haven't noticed before, such as withdrawing.

Caution!

It's important at this point not to jump to conclusions that your child is somewhat 'unusual' or 'different'. What's out of character for one child may be a perfectly normal for another. Behaviours come and go through developmental stages as normal biological, hormonal and chemical processes. However, when we notice our child's behaviour is out of character or unacceptable there is a fair chance that there's something else at play that we might be missing. This is a practice of enquiry, of intentionally learning together about what might be going on.

Remember I said at the beginning of this book that this is not a book to teach you how to discipline. As a parent you've already set limits, have standards for acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and you more than likely know what works and what doesn't.

This conversational practice is not a teaching moment. There is a time and a place for teaching and this isn't it. Jumping in with pearls of wisdom may not

get to the bottom of a concern. These connecting moments are an opportunity to help them understand what's going on for them and then develop their own sensitivity toward their behaviours and opens up a space to talk about that.

When you tune your listening to hear concerns, you will begin to hear them. In those very silent moments where you don't jump in, but you tune your listening to the concerns channel, you and your child will learn together.

Between the ages of 6 – 10 kids are starting to understand basic moral principles e.g. fairness and honesty, and between the ages of 10 – 14 years, they are starting to challenge parents, teachers and other authorities regarding rules and boundaries. These are normal developmental behavioural stages, but they do influence our conversations especially when as parents, we oppose their behaviour.

Some concerns that may influence behaviour

- Fatigue
- Development
- Social interactions
- Frustration
- Fear or anxiety
- Confusion or worry
- Trust

More often than not unacceptable behaviour equates to a concern that hasn't been taken care of. Something that is important to them, confusion or worry impacts behaviour. Of course unacceptable behaviour must be addressed. But addressing in isolation of any underlying concerns your child may have is a strategy, not a practice for connection.

In the most intense moments the part of the brain that involves emotioning kicks in and it seems that the higher order parts of the brain that we use to plan, solve problems and reason take a long lunch! This is common in development and it is where the learning starts for both you and your child. In this very sacred conversational moment there is an opportunity through listening to indirectly tame your child's emotions. Right there and then brains capability to reason, solve problems and plan, can develop.

Real Life Scenario

The following scenario is an account of child's concerns that were not taken care of.

A 16 year old was informed he had to move to another part of Australia with his family. The family move was unprecedented and the teenager did not want to move away from his friends and his sport. He tried to explain his position to his parents but to him, they didn't appear to listen. The subject was closed. One early evening he ran away from home. When his parents found him, there were consequences for running away and the conversation was closed. The teenager was forced to move regardless of his reasons for wanting to stay.

What message did the approach send to the teenager? His concerns were less important than his parents and there was no space to express them. Was fear and sadness for having to make such a big transition to another state and leave behind his friends and the sport he loved at the basis of his behaviour? The teenager and the parents had a particular way of behaving that was taking care of their individual concerns and neither fully understood the perspective of the other. Even if the move was non-negotiable, perhaps some shared understanding might have softened the blow or provided a space for the teen to express his concerns and emotions, and negotiate the conditions of the move.

A rule of thumb: In relationships everyone's concerns matter. Be the conversational leader.

3 things you can do to listen to concerns

3.1. Ask questions

Ask yourself questions about your child's concerns (see practice below for examples)

3.2. Permission for space

Give yourself permission to take time to consider your approach and response – you don't have to find an answer or have the conversation straight away

3.3. Ask your child for understanding

Start the conversation with something like: *"Help me understand what's going on for you right now"* OR; *"What am I not getting that you need me to understand?"* Then show that you are really willing to genuinely listen, which requires a deep listening, reserving judgment and withholding standards.

Practice for Learning and Leading

Give yourself permission to: Ask yourself questions before the conversation. If you've taken the steps above chances are you're already starting to make some sense about what the concern is. Try reflecting with these questions during the next week and see what difference it makes to your emotions and responses to a situation:

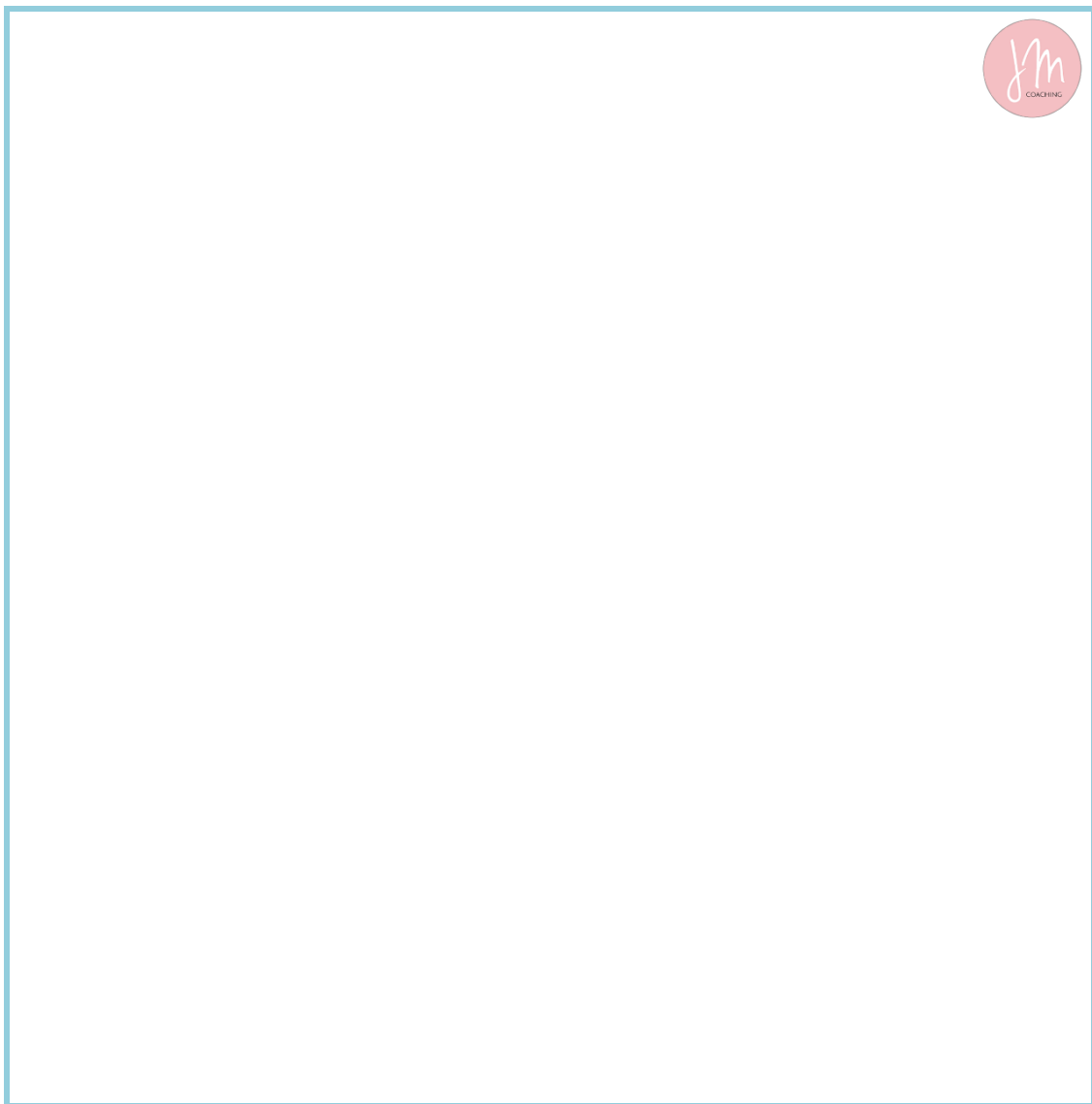
- *What seems to be really important for my child right now?*
- *What really matters for them in this situation?*

- *How come they are reacting or behaving this way?*

Step into the shoes of your child before you enter the conversation to soften your approach, then go into the conversation in a more accepting mood. Accepting that behaviour happen can help you connect first.

Reflection

What has worked in the past to clarify concerns?

A large empty rectangular box with a light blue border, intended for reflection. In the top right corner of the box, there is a small circular logo with the letters 'jm' in a cursive font and the word 'COACHING' underneath.



Practice #4

Use Listening Questions

Keep the conversation flowing and give your child time to respond. Ask open-ended non-judgmental questions to prevent conversational friction and closing down conversational possibilities. If a response doesn't come, that's normal – keep your expectations realistic because kids don't always know how to respond or what to respond with. They may need time to digest the question especially if this is a new practice for both of you. You may have to wait for another day.

Be genuinely curious rather than interrogative. Remember the scenario from practice #3? If you have placed yourself in the position of your child, you are less likely to enter into and stay in the conversation in an unresourceful mood and you're more likely to ask resourceful questions. This practice will evolve over time.

Conversation Stoppers

Avoid questions that begin with 'why'. These questions may send a message that you're questioning their intent or judging their actions – 'why' questions can be conversation 'stoppers'. Open-ended questions such as those that begin with what, how and when or 'help me understand' are conversation 'starters'. The following examples of conversation starters can help your child express how they are feeling and articulate their perspective. In the practice #3 scenario you might be tempted to ask: "Why did you run away?" While this

seems like a perfectly reasonable question, it may turn into a conversation stopper if its listened to by your child as a judgment.

Conversation Starters

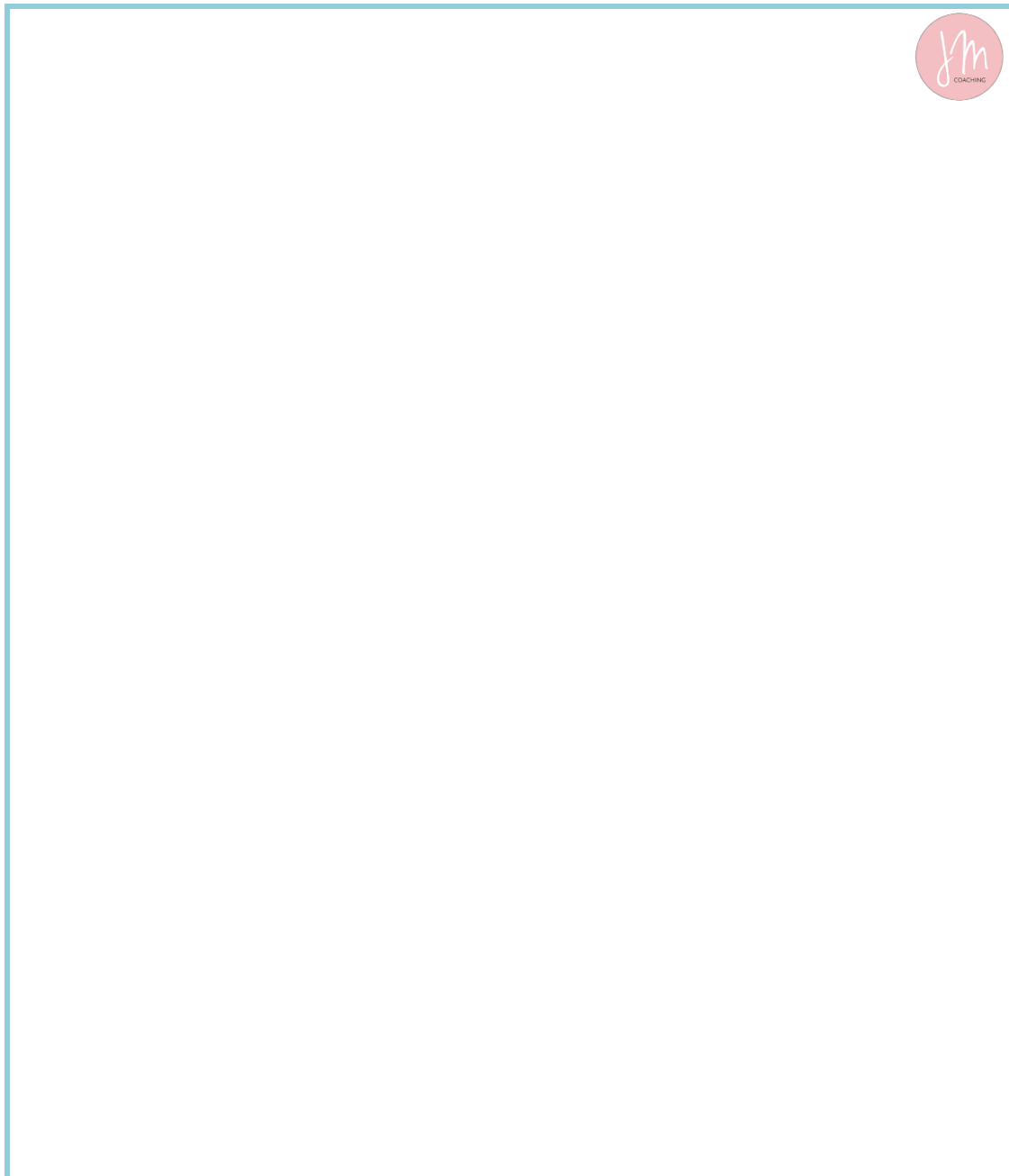
- *How can you help me to understand what's going on for you?*
- *What are your concerns that I am not seeing?*
- *What might happen if...?*
- *How does this affect you?*
- *What would you do if you were me in this situation?*

Practice for Learning and Leading

Give yourself permission to: Find little moments to ask open-ended listening questions each day this week. There's a lot to learn in a conversation with open-ended questions and you may be surprised at what comes up during the conversation. Stay attuned to their concerns and sense your emotions as they flow throughout the conversation.

Reflection

What conversational spaces have you already asked listening questions?





Practice #5

Listen for Clarity

The purpose of clarity is to ensure we have mutual understanding of an issue, as the basis for moving forward together. This is a 3-way process of:

1. Expressing how we understand something to be
2. Listening to understand others
3. Reaching mutual understanding

To do this we have to put our assumptions aside. It's very easy to assume but ungrounded assumptions, can lead to pain and confusion. We isolate ourselves when we assume something to be a fact when it is really an assumption, a judgment, or an opinion.

Be clear that you are listening for clarity so you don't fall into the trap of treating your opinions as facts. Beware when you are going into the conversation with an agenda to be 'right'. In a conversation for clarity, there is clear intent to gain clarity where there is something that needs to be understood, a misunderstanding, confusion or concern.

Two sides of the listening coin during conversation for clarity

1. You listen to hear things the way they are intended
2. Your child listens to hear you the way you intended to be heard

We are often so tuned into our private conversation that we forget to tune into the other person! Teaching your child listening for clarity is a resourceful and crucial life skill.

This practice requires a conversational space where there is genuine permission for questions and mutual respect of perspective. It requires the moods of curiosity and acceptance. This space has no room for moods of anger, arrogance or anxiety.

Reflection

1. Think of a time where you've come out of a conversation feeling like you haven't been heard let alone understood
2. Think of a time you've come out of a conversation and found that the person speaking to you didn't make much sense

We all have different interpretations and sometimes it's hard to understand each other. We can be really good at sending messages to people assuming they 'get it'. It's very easy to fall into the trap of making assumptions and jumping to conclusions that we have been understood. A great indicator that we haven't been understood, is when whatever it was you wanted to change, didn't change. It is the response (behaviours and actions) of the listener that tells us if our message has or has not been understood.

A conversation between 2 people always involves three conversations.

1. The conversation between person A and B
2. The private conversation of person A
3. The private conversation of person B

In all three conversations there are different interpretations. It's not just about hearing words and understanding them. As we listen we make meaning and sometimes the meaning we are making is a misinterpretation of what we have heard and seen.

As a parent you can develop skills in not only listening to words, but also tuning into voice tone, body posture and other non-verbal gestures, which

will help you make interpretations of what might be going on. However, the only way to interpret accurately is to gain shared understanding.

2 things you can do to ensure shared understanding

5.1. Gain your own clarity first

Before initiating a conversation to address a concern gain your own clarity

- *What is the reason I want this conversation?*
- *Is there a particular outcome I am hoping for and what is that?*
- *Do I want to gain clarity or do I want to 'teach' a lesson?*
- *How can I make sure I listen and I am listened to?*

When you're personally clear you're more likely to go into the conversation from a resourcefully emotional space and it's more likely you'll speak clearly and calmly and your child is more likely to start to understand your adult perspective.

5.2. Be curious not expectant

Demonstrate that you are ready to listen – don't just go in expecting the outcome to be as you intended. Role model conversational practices you want your child to have. Remember practice #2 Listen without teaching – Positioning and holding the quiet space.

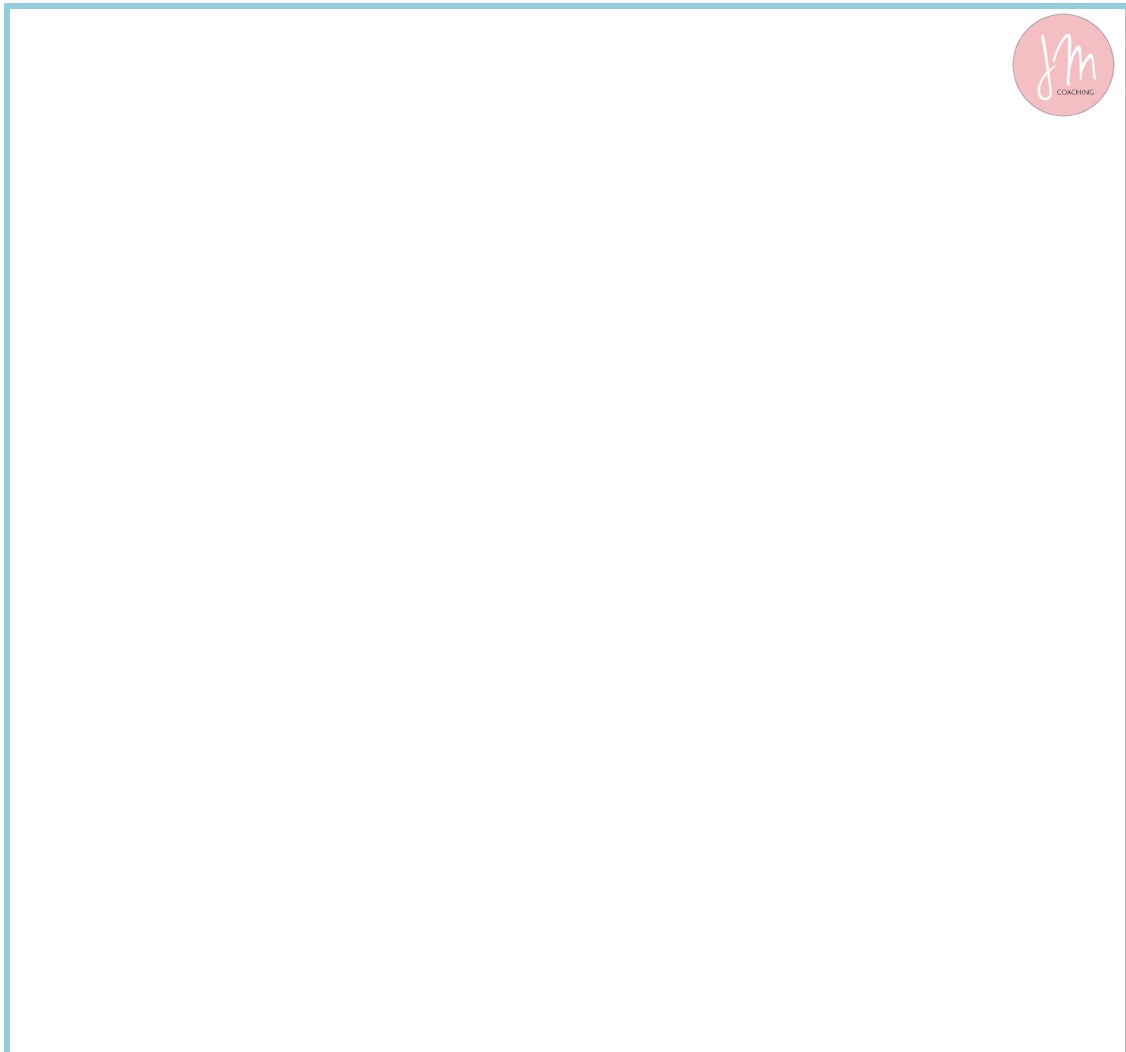
Accusations and unresourceful emotions shut down the conversation and negate the sharing of perspectives that might just have some deeper underlying concerns at play. Listen curiously, listen curiously and do that some more.

Practice for Learning and Leading

Give yourself permission to: During the next week go into conversations in a mood of curiosity and keep them open by gaining clarity and shared understanding. Then notice the difference. Remember practice #3; Listen for concerns.

Reflection

What are you already doing to listen for shared understanding?



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Practice #6

Listening Moods

“The right conversation in the wrong mood is the wrong conversation.”

~ Alan Seiler Newfield Institute

Moods and emotions really matter because they shape our perceptions and behaviours. You may be annoyed, frustrated or hurt, but going into a conversation in these moods with a harsh tone can rapidly throw you and your child into combat, which shuts down any chance of shared understanding. Following these reactive moments, we’re likely to experience guilt and even shame, and so is our child if they have reacted in response to our response.

Guilt is an emotion we have all experienced from time to time, but if it hangs around in the background of your thoughts and you spend all your time judging yourself for the thing you did, guilt becomes worry, and worry turns to anxiety. Before long you build up a whole story of self-criticism. Now that’s counter productive!

What would it feel like if you replaced self-criticism with forgiveness? If you can speak these words: *“I forgive myself”*, you are less likely to have a meltdown. When you forgive yourself, you are more likely to forgive your child and your future conversations are more likely to come from love, and not anger. When we soften, our approach softens.

Tune into your mood – Body posture, bodily sensations and other non-verbal sensations are our body’s way of telling us something. Listen to that! Because your mood is in there and there is always a narrative that

influences a mood...and narratives are stories, judgements and opinions, not necessarily facts!

2 things you can do

6.1. Tune into your own moods

Resourceful moods create spaces of trust. When you step into a conversation in a resourceful mood openness and trust are cultivated. Moods shape our listening, and the way we listen shapes our moods. Remember in practice #5 Gain your own clarity first? This is so crucial to managing your moods and deciding what mood to step into the conversation in.

6.2. Be curious

Curiosity is a mood. If you decide you're going to be curious about the behaviour you're more likely to see the underlying driver of the behaviour rather than being stuck on judging the behaviour itself.

Remember practice #2; Listen and hold the space


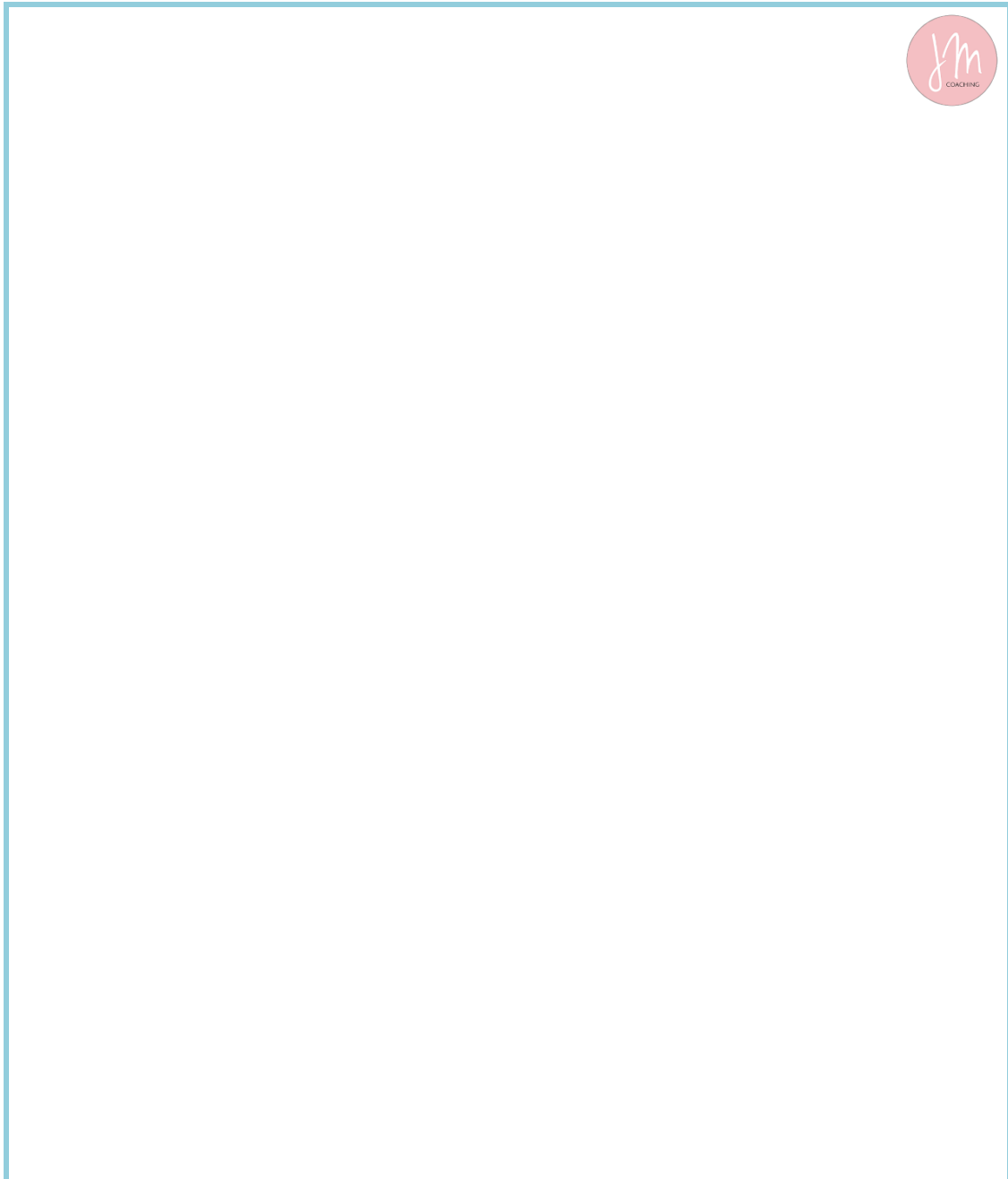
Practice for Learning and Leading

Give yourself permission to: Do a daily mood check in

- Be fully present to your mood each day
- Try not to let past situations influence your mood
- Listen for mood influencers e.g. something that was done 6 months ago
- Forgive the past and soften your approach
- "Be in" the resourceful mood as much as it takes before having the conversation

Reflection

How do you already check in on your mood?





Practice #7

Listen and Trust

We are born trusting our parents. Trust is at the basis of every interaction and trust supports healthy relationships. It is about feeling cared for, which includes feeling treated fairly and being listened to. Trust is not a given. Trust has ebbs and flows and as much as it begins innately it is vulnerable. Where there is a conversation there is always potential for vulnerability, uncertainty and mistrust.

4 elements of trust

1. Sincerity

Do I believe this person is genuine in their actions and intentions?

2. Reliability

Do I believe this person is reliable and can I rely on them doing what they say they will do? Are they fully committed to their actions?

3. Competence

Can I rely on this person to competently take care of my concerns? Do they have the experience, the knowledge and the competence to carry out the required task or take care of my concern – including how they communicate with me?

4. Involvement

How has this person listened and understood what is important to me?
Have they been emotionally involved in my concerns?

When we trust someone, we believe (sometimes unconsciously) that they are likely to take care of our concerns.

The relationship we have with our children begins with trust and yet the thousands of conversations we have with our children from the moment they are born until they are adults can so quickly compromise trust. Trust is making sure we are keeping our promises and letting them know in all sorts of ways that they are loved. It also means setting and maintaining behavioural boundaries and ensuring consistency in what is important so your expectations are clear.

Because trust emerges from how we relate in everyday dealings with our children, it requires commitment and ongoing practice. The interpretation such as *“my mum/dad doesn't care”* compromises trust. It doesn't mean that interpretation is the truth. After all, it's an interpretation, which is based around judgments and opinions. Nor does it mean it is lost forever. When our children trust us they will be more likely to come to us with their concerns. The great news is, through genuine care and conversational practices trust can be the basis of your relationship with your child.

When you put practices #1-6 consistently into action, you will start to show up as someone your children can come to when they have a concern. Your child will strongly believe you are genuine in what you say and are attuned to their concerns. Building a strong foundation for trust requires leading by example.

Being involved in conversations with genuine concern will strengthen connections, send a beautiful message and illuminate the inner being of your child.

2 things you can do

7.1. Listening conversations

When you think trust has been compromised

- Listen for clarity
- Listen for understanding
- Listen for hurt

7.2. Relationship conversations


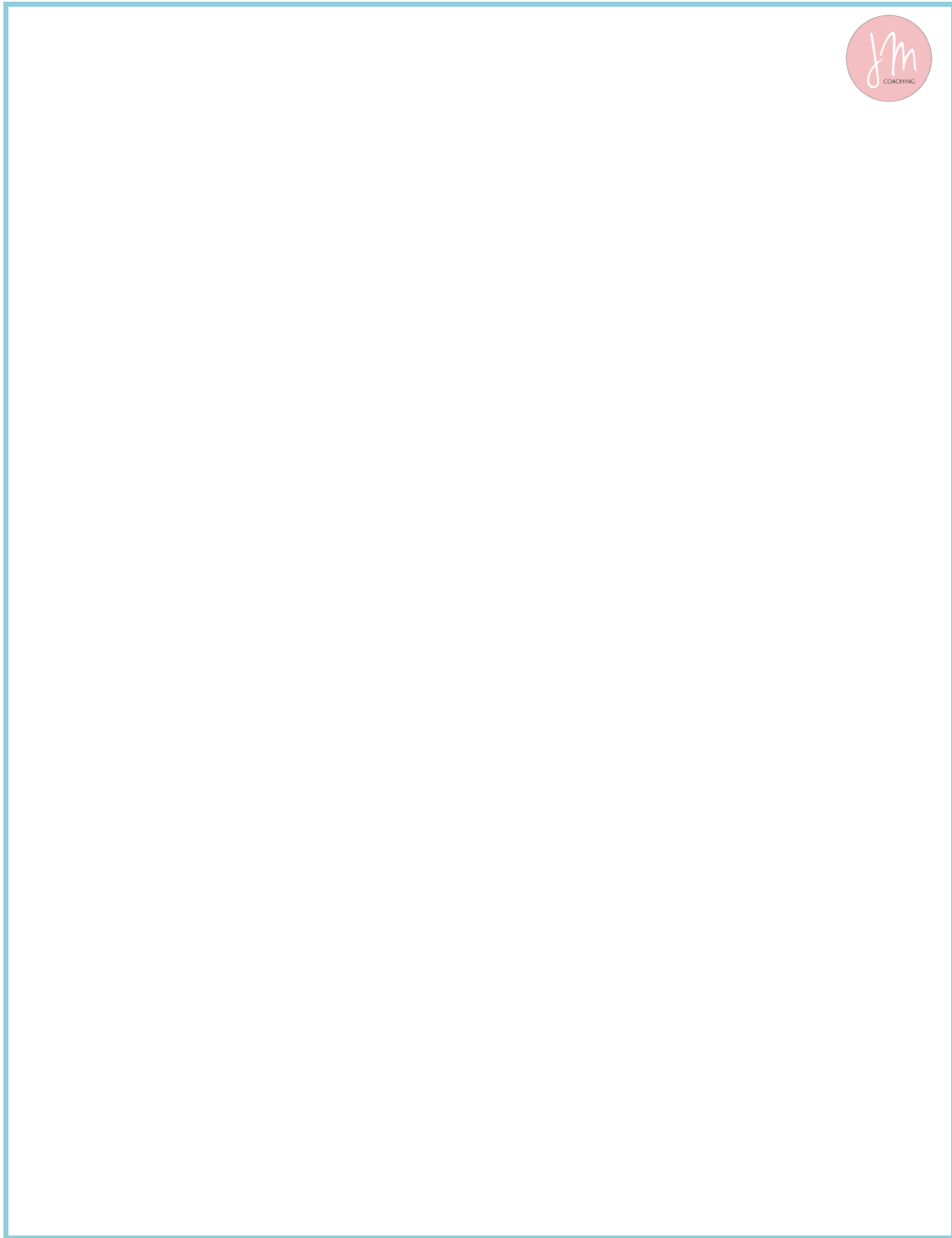
Open up and declare that there has been a breakdown. You will sense when something has gone wrong. If you need to apologise do so. Apologising is a wonderful way to restore trust especially when it is followed by resourceful conversational practices. Conversations that restore relationship breakdowns may start like this:

- *Last night didn't go very well did it?*
- *I wish I didn't react like I did yesterday*
- *I'm sorry for the way I reacted this morning*
- *I want have another conversation about 'X' because I'm concerned we didn't understand each other last time...are you ok with that?*

Trust underpins all interactions. Practices #1-6 will help to continually develop or restore trust where trust may have been compromised.

Reflection

What are you already doing to gain your child's trust?



These 7 practices harness the qualities of a strong parent leader. You are a leader in your child's life, and your child's future relationships depend on you learning from every single interaction. You're already a leader in many ways that you may not realise. My intent is to enhance your parenting leadership practices to enrich your interactions and relationships.

Applying these practices regularly can improve the way you engage with, and develop open relationships with your child that equips you and them face their everyday concerns and develop into caring, resilient, functional and well socialized human beings who will also be leaders.

Go forth and lead and learn together with your child. You can do it!

Caveat

******Like all things in life, there are no guarantees with these conversational practices. As I mentioned at the start this is not a book for discipline, it is about conversational and leadership practices, connection, listening sensitivity and trust. My wish for you is that you do practice and build stronger and more intimate and trusting connections with your child. When you persist in this new learning, strong connections are probable.

I wish you all the best.

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