

february-march @ symbio

upcoming presentations & webinars

Emotionally Intelligent Discipline

Wednesday 7 March

6:45-8:15pm

In order for discipline to be truly effective, it has to help a child learn how to regulate and appropriately express emotions as well as control behavior. Because of the goal of discipline is for a child to internalize a sense of appropriate vs. inappropriate behavior and ultimately moral action, discipline has to be relationally relevant.

We will discuss effective ways to set limits, deliver emotionally supportive guidance and foster the development of a healthy sense of self in your child in the toddler and preschool years.

@ GetzWell Pediatrics
1701 Church Street
San Francisco CA

GetzWell members:
\$35/person or \$55/couple
non-members:
\$45/person or \$65/couple

RSVP: reception@getzwell.com

Webinar: Discipline Challenges: Open office hours with Lele Diamond, MFT

Monday 27 February

12:30-1:30pm PDT

[click here for information and registration](#)

Webinar: The Transition from Crib to Bed with Noelle Cochran, PsyD

Tuesday 28 February

7:00pm - 8:00 pm PDT

[click here for information and registration](#)

Webinar: Discipline Challenges: Open office hours with Lele Diamond, MFT

Tuesday 20 March

12:30-1:30pm PDT

[click here for information and registration](#)

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Caring for your Couplehood.

Q: *My wife and I are the parents of a 6 month-old baby girl. We are both madly in love with our daughter and enjoy being parents but were completely unprepared for how much time and emotional resources were going to be devoted to caring for her. I work full-time and after spending time with my daughter when I get home, all I really want to do is go to bed. I know that my wife is equally, if not more, tired. My wife and I have a good relationship but we've been fighting more recently, I think because we're so sleep deprived and not getting much time alone together. I know my wife wants me to do something to make things better but I have no idea what to do. I don't want our relationship to be neglected but I also don't know how to stay connected during this time when we're both so exhausted. My hope was that things would get better as our daughter got older but that doesn't help us right now. Do you have any suggestions for what we can do during this time when we're both so depleted?*

A: We hear similar laments from many of our clients. Many others barely have time or energy in the midst the daily fray for wistful moments over the impact parenthood has had on their relationship with their partner. For most of the parents we work with, having children was a choice, not a foregone conclusion. They approached parenthood intentionally. Many had time in their pre-child lives to develop plans, hopes and goals for how they would fashion their family and nurture their children.

During the early years of this great endeavor, parents struggle to maintain and apply their vision of parenthood through sleepless nights, first steps, temper tantrums, and preschool applications. Keeping pace with the rapid changes of the first five years requires an extraordinary level of attention and energy; it's

virtually impossible for parents to avoid taking some of that out of their own relationship.

In the best of situations, couples maintain intimacy by sharing the revelatory experience of becoming parents. They develop a new bond as they are, together, changed by supporting a new life. In the course of the day-to-day, they rely on some sort of implicit or explicit agreement that they will find each other in date nights, stolen moments and shared glances as they more or less divide and (on good days) conquer.

But this process is not always seamless. Even the most solid of partnerships is tested by the magnitude of change involved in the early years of family life. Commonly, couples find themselves making sacrifices and compromises they would not have anticipated. It's easy for new parents to feel as though they have lost touch with themselves, not to mention their partners. And even when a relationship is sound and healthy, it may not always feel so to one or both partners struggling with sleep deprivation and overwhelm. It can be hard to know which disruptions and distances to view with concern and which to chalk up to growing pains; and, as one toddler-dad put it, "Even if you know things are off, what can you do when you are both maxed out already?"

We tell couples that one of the most important things that you can do, is to talk about "things being off." Overwhelm can breed a sense of hopelessness when it comes to attending to the needs of a partnership. This often leads, in turn, to silence - the ideal growing environment for the emotional distance that takes its toll on so many relationships between partners who have young children. Of course, doubling up on date night or a getaway weekend once a month (or even once, period) can do a lot to help, but it's not always possible to carve out the time.

(continued from front page)

Webinar: Sleep Challenges: Open office hours with Noelle Cochran, PsyD

Thursday 29 March

4:00pm - 5:00 pm PDT

[click here for information and registration](#)

Webinar: Discipline Challenges: Open office hours with Lele Diamond, MFT

Tuesday 24 April

12:30-1:30pm PDT

[click here for information and registration](#)

However, while it's hard to avoid the overwhelm, there is much you can do to combat hopelessness, and even more you can do to guard against communication breakdown. Keeping the conversation alive is the biggest key to winning both battles.

For some couples, especially those who were not big talkers before they were parents, starting or reviving a dialogue about the state of their relationship can be challenging. Of course, parenting is challenging enough so, for couples who are inclined to make the effort, we have summarized a few thinking points and guidelines from our conversations with the parents that come to us for help:

- Don't make it a goal for couplehood to feel easy, or even easier than it does in the hardest of times. The early years of parenthood (when your kids are ages 0 – 5) are the most stressful period in the lifecycle of most relationships. Take the pressure off yourself and your partner by accepting that your relationship may not feel or look like you would like it to during these years. Instead, have the goal be, as a couple, to do what is needed for you each to maintain an overall sense of confidence that you will be able to increase your level of intimacy and satisfaction in time. Of course, doing this means that you must have both a practice of considering your own level of confidence and a means of communicating with your partner about where you each stand. A conversation about these questions is a great jumping off point.
- Complain together. We've found that some shared lamenting about the lack of intimate contact and non-kid related experience together is one of the most connecting things partners can do when they are feeling swallowed by the fray. A statement as basic as "I miss you, I feel like I haven't seen you in a long time" can have a surprising impact on both the person speaking and the person hearing. It's a simple marker of the fact that, however much you adore your children and your ever-deepening relationships with them, and however much you might prefer to spend 15 free minutes sleeping than with your partner, your relationship with him or her has its own place. Just take care that the complaints you offer in the middle of other things are complaints that you share with your partner, not complaints about your partner. Those complaints deserve their own time. When you have a complaint about your partner, schedule time to talk about it. Partners who fall into a pattern of adding to their partner's overwhelm by venting their own inadvertently contribute to a situation in which silence feels better than communication. Work to modulate and prioritize expressions of dissatisfaction with your partner, and be sure to give him or her warning and a chance to be ready to listen well before you begin.

- Have shared goals. Talk together about what you want your relationship to look like in six months, one year, five years. Research has shown that couples who share a vision of partnership over time experience higher levels of satisfaction in relationship than couples who do not.
- Have a plan for how to get help when you need it. Talk together about what you will do as a couple if either of you ever feels stuck or despairing for a significant period of time. Identify outside resources you can call on for support when your own resources are temporarily maxed out. Whether this means couples' therapy, speaking with clergy or other lay counselors, or talking things over with trusted friends or family, agree what to do before you need the help.
- Surprise each other. Make a practice of randomly doing something fun, loving, sexy, or supportive for each other. In order to maintain the practice, keep the scale of surprises within the range of what feels doable, and like something you could repeat. Creating a pattern of random pleasure and surprise in a relationship increases hope and resilience.



Symbio has a new online partner!

We are delighted to announce our partnership with Digital Parent, a diverse web-based resource for parents. Digital Parent offers information and support in an array of formats including an online education library, live and on-demand web seminars, expert-led Q&A forums, and tools to track child growth and development. Through the Digital Parent site members can also access live Symbio webinars featuring real time Q & A. Unlimited access is available for a low membership fee.

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