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## ***PARENTING MATTERS***

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Newsletter

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Well it is already the end of November and I am feeling the pressure about Christmas and getting together with friends and neighbours and making it all work without stressing out! That is almost impossible!. And yet my daughter has already asked if we can keep Christmas to just the four of us this year, which tells me that our home renovation robbed us of a lot of free time to play with her, and that our family has not spent enough time just hanging out in our pajamas or playing board games all day! I am looking forward to the school holidays to allow us all to de-compress and appreciate the sounds and smells of the holiday season and not get too caught up in taking in too many events outside in the city. The lesson? Nine year olds can be very wise!

Wishing you all a peaceful holiday season!

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I would like to continue to write on the evening seminar I attended with Dr. Gordon Neufeld in April 2008 called Relationship Matters. His work on attachment relationships focuses on a SECURE BASE as the cornerstone to a strong attachment relationship between the parent and child. When children trust their parents to provide physical and emotional safety, it helps them to take on new challenges to further their development. Dr. Neufeld suggests when children cannot control aspects in their life, they “need to confront their futility so that adaptation can occur.” For parents this means allowing your child to feel the sadness that comes when things do not work out the way they wanted them to. The adaptation process happens for children two ways: by having a soft heart, and by having a safe place to cry.

Adaptation means allowing the “futility” (something that is fruitless, not able to work a certain way) to sink in for the child’s heart to soften instead of trying to brush over their disappointment by bartering for a happy outcome. Futility needs to register for the child at an emotional level and not just at a cognitive level. A child’s heart will numb out and will not become vulnerable when there is too much separation from their care giver, too much shame in their life and when they are feeling unsafe. Why is this important? Tears are a universal symbol of a deep change. If a child can not access their sadness, it will

increase their frustration and lead the child to become aggressive. The adaptive process is when a child can move from mad to sad. The parents job is to be a source of warm comfort, where they help “melt” the intensity of the frustration into the vulnerable feelings of futility. When this element is missing, the child who is defended against feeling vulnerable, moves towards an attitude of “I don’t care” or “it doesn’t matter”. In this example, the child’s heart has hardened. The job of the parent is to work at breaking down their child’s defensive stance by working with your child’s frustration when it arises and being creative to moving into the child’s feelings of loss. Invite your child to depend on you and to feel your closeness both physically and through the five senses. All efforts are to provide the loving and safe container for all of your child’s emotions.