

Ask yourself about your childhood—and make yourself a stronger parent

Here is a quiz about your childhood experiences to help you understand yourself better. Why do this? By looking into the past, you'll shed light on your relationship with your child now, and open the door to being a better parent.

This is not a short-term exercise. You can ask yourself these questions over the course of many years. And, during a number of office visits, you can also briefly discuss your answers and observations with your child's pediatrician as to how they relate to raising a healthy, well-adjusted child. Your parents, brothers, sisters, friends, and spouse can also help you rediscover yourself; consider asking them about your childhood, too.

REMEMBRANCE

- What was it like growing up?
- What kind of people did you have in your family?
- What was your parents' philosophy of raising children?
- What did you like about your childhood? What didn't you like?
- *Do you plan to raise your child the way your parents raised you?*

RELATIONSHIP

- Did you get along well with your parents?
- What changes in that relationship occurred during your youth, and until now?
- How did your relationship with your mother differ from your relationship with your father? How were they similar?
- Describe three characteristics of your childhood relationship to each of your parents. Why did you choose these adjectives?
- *Are there ways in which you try to be like, or not like, each of your parents?*

SEPARATION

- Do you recall your earliest separation from your parents? How did it feel?
- Was there ever prolonged separation from your parents?
- *Have you ever been separated from your child?*

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GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Being a stronger parent

(Continued)

DISCIPLINE

- How did your parents discipline you? What impact did that have on your childhood?
- *Do you think that discipline shapes your role as a parent?*

TRAUMA

- Did you ever feel rejected or threatened by your parents?
- Were there other overwhelming or traumatizing experiences in your life? During childhood? Beyond?
- *Do any of these experiences still feel very much alive?*
- *Do they continue to influence your life?*

LOSS

- Did anyone significant in your life die during your childhood? Later in life?
- What was that like for you at the time?
- *How does that loss affect you now?*

BONDS

- How did your parents communicate with you when you were happy or excited?
- Did they join you in your enthusiasm?
- What happened when you were distressed or unhappy as a child?
- Did your father and mother respond differently to you during these emotional times? How?
- *How do you communicate with your child now?*

EXTENSIONS

- Did anyone else besides your parents take care of you during your childhood?
- What was that relationship like for you? What happened to those people?
- *What is it like for you when you let others take care of your child?*

REFUGE

- Were there positive relationships inside, or outside, your home that you could depend on during difficult times during your childhood?
- How do you feel those connections benefited you then?
- *How might they help you now?*

IMPRESSIONS

- How have your childhood experiences influenced your relationships with others as an adult?
- *How has your own childhood shaped the way you relate to your children?*

Adapted with permission from Siegel DJ, Hartzell M: *Parenting From the Inside Out: How a Deeper Self-Understanding Can Help You Raise Children Who Thrive*. New York, N.Y., Tarcher Penguin, 2003.