

THE WOODEN SOLDIER MIRRORING EXERCISE

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Purpose: For parents to practice the skill of attunement, in a lead-follow-lead sequence, by tuning in to non-verbal communication and body language, in both the lead role as well as the follow role.

Time: 20 minutes total

Instructions:

1. Divide participants into groups of three. They will each take one turn in the roles of talker, listener and recorder.
2. Instruct the listener to stand perfectly still, akin to a wooden soldier (hands down to sides, feet forward, etc.).
3. Instruct the talker to tell an insignificant story, such as what he/she did that morning, in simple detail (“I woke up early, washed my face, ate toast for breakfast...”). Talker should use their whole body in telling this story, with animated hand gestures, etc. Talker should actively attempt to engage the listener, such as by trying to make eye contact (a parallel to this would be how people try to engage with the guards at Buckingham Palace).
4. Instruct the listener to fix his/her gaze over the shoulder of the talker, not making eye contact during the story telling. A hint can be given to the listener to feel as if there is a wall between the two of them. The listener remains like a wooden soldier for the duration of the story.
5. The recorder is to note the following:
 - a. What happened to the talker as the listener continually did not respond?
 - b. What changed in the face of the talker as the story continued?
 - c. What bodily changes were visible in either the talker or listener?
 - d. What difficulties did you have in observing this interaction?
 - e. Was there anything else noteworthy that could relate to a parent-child interaction?
6. Each turn should be quick, about 1 minute in each role.
7. Allow a brief pause between each role change for small groups to share amongst themselves and for recorder to write observations (maximum of 1 minute between each role change).
8. After each person has had an opportunity to play each role, come back together as a large group to process. Use the questions asked of the recorder to stimulate a conversation around “lessons learned.” Note how quickly the mis-attunement between talker and listener in the role plays evoked feelings of discomfort or disconnect (less than a minute). Ask participants to relate this to moments when they attune or mis-attune with their children throughout each day, even in seemingly mundane moments. Allow a maximum of 10 minutes for this group process.
9. Remind participants that it is not possible for parents to attune 24/7 to their children. However, research has shown that as long as it is over half the time, we are hitting the mark!



Pathways to
Permanence 2

Parenting
Children
Who Have
Experienced
Trauma
AND LOSS

Session 4
Creating
Positive
Attachments
Part 1

Exercises