



“Take the Moment”: New Report on Putting Early Relational Health Principles into Action

With May’s Mental Health Awareness Month behind us—and Father’s Day just around the corner—it’s a good time to check in about the power of early childhood relationships to significantly improve emotional and mental well-being. We’re excited to share that we recently released a new report, **Putting Principles into Action: Building an Early Relational Health Ecosystem**.

Building on the early relational health (ERH) principles that we previously shared and reflected on, our new report elaborates on ten principles and recommends practices to act on them.

This report also aligns with Mental Health Awareness Month’s call to “**take the moment**” to prioritize and take action on mental health. These moments look different for all of us. Father’s Day, for example—while a great moment to celebrate fathers’ role in a child’s early development—won’t be the same for everyone. Moments don’t have to be holidays. As our report says, simple and everyday human interactions are “good enough” early relational experiences.

What connects us is the understanding that how parents and our broader community—whether you’re a father, mother, aunt, uncle, caregiver, or community advocate—show up for children from cradle to their first steps and beyond can change the course of their lifetime.

Take a moment to read some additional reflections (below) on ERH principles from earlier this year to complement your exploration of our new report.

Dominique Charlot-Swilley, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor/Senior Policy Associate/Director of Provider Wellbeing,
Georgetown University

“Exploring and understanding the intersection of historical, intergenerational, social, cultural, and political contexts are crucial for promoting early relational health and fostering inclusive and equitable interventions that support children, families, and communities.”

“Practices suggested by **Putting Principles into Action: Building an Early Relational Health Ecosystem** such as drawing strength from the insight and wisdom of parents, communities and recruiting staff members from diverse racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds are pivotal for promoting child and caregiver well-being. Furthermore, as we expand this work in the field, it is imperative to broaden our scope beyond the traditional confines of the mother-and-child dyad. Families often extend beyond that dyad, drawing upon the collective support of their community, illustrating the proverbial ‘it takes a village’ ethos.”

Kay Johnson, President, Johnson Group Consulting

"I see the potential for those championing early relational health to be another new wave. Leaders focusing on early relational health have the potential to bring together science, political will, and social strategy."

"In this excellent report, Harper Browne and her colleagues note that the research and concepts that ground early relational health are not new, and go on to say: 'What is new is that the early relational health paradigm brings expanded opportunities for early childhood policymakers, advocates, practitioners, and researchers to integrate relational principles into [action].' The 10 foundational principles for early relational health help the reader see how and why this is true. This paradigm shift could help us envision and actualize a 'society which enables all children and families to thrive is healthy, equitable, just, free, and one which prioritizes and invests in children, families, and communities.' To do so in reality will require policy change."

Parent Perspective



Question: Why are you involved in the Family Network Collaborative?

Happy Father's Day! We are resurfacing a Parent Perspective from Steven Thibert, a Parent leader representing the Washington Fatherhood Council, and Nurture Connection Steering Committee Member:

"Becoming a dad and going through the tumultuous, traumatic situation with my son's mom and only having limited time with him, all made it even more important that I make sure our connection is really strong. Then I have an influence on him becoming a healthy individual who contributes positively to society and has a good life. My broader 'why' is wanting to help other fathers and all parents feel that connection and feel like they have a positive impact on their child."

To learn more about the Family Network Collaborative at Nurture Connection, visit our website [here](#).

Explore More



What is Early Relational Health?

[Early Relational Health](#) is the state of emotional well-being that grows from emotional connection between babies and toddlers and their parents and

Washington Fatherhood Council



ERH in Action with Washington Fatherhood Council: Fathers Play Major Role in Fostering Early Relational Health

Dads matter! A new Nurture Connection blog featuring parenting perspectives from the **Washington Fatherhood Council** explores the role of fatherhood in fostering early relational health, and offers ways to increase fathers' involvement, including training on how to have positive disagreements, dedicated support for new fathers' mental health needs, and parenting classes for dads with diverse life experiences.

[Read Here](#)

Standing on Our Principles:

How the Child Tax Credit Can Promote the Economic Security and Well-Being of Children and Families.

Time: June 10, 1-2 p.m. EST

Where: Webinar/Zoom

As 2025 approaches, we have an incredible opportunity to permanently expand the child tax credit. Listen to our special panel of parents explain how!



A=C AUTOMATIC BENEFIT FOR CHILDREN

Standing on Our Principles: How the Child Tax Credit can Promote the Economic Security and Well-Being of Children and Families

On June 10th, CSSP will take part in a webinar on the Child Tax Credit, featuring a panel discussion of parents and caregivers from across the country, who will share their insights and recommendations for improving the Child Tax Credit (CTC) so that it provides meaningful assistance with the costs of raising children, and effectively supports healthy and flourishing communities.

caregivers when they experience strong, positive, and nurturing relationships with each other.

ERH is foundational to children's healthy growth and development and parents' and caregivers' sense of competence, connection, and overall well-being. These strong and enduring relationships also help to protect the family from the harmful effects of stress.

Core ERH Resources

Frameworks Institute. **Building Relationships: Framing Early Relational Health**. Prepared in collaboration with the Center for the Study of Social Policy. May 2020.

Willis D, Chavez S, Lee J, Hampton P, Fine A. **Early Relational Health National Survey: What We're Learning from the Field**. Center for the Study of Social Policy. 2020.

Willis D, Sege R, Johnson K. **Changing the Mindset: Foundational Relationships Counter Adversity with HOPE**. (Blog) Center for the Study of Social Policy. May 2020.

Perspectives on ERH Video Series. **Perspectives on Early Relational Health Series**. Center for the Study of Social Policy. 2022.

Center of the Study of Social Policy and Health+ Studio. **How to Communicate Effectively About Early Relational Health: What It Is and Why It Matters**. 2022.

Find additional resources on our [website](#).

This webinar is hosted by the Automatic Benefit for Children (ABC) Coalition, Center for the Study of Social Policy, Children's Defense Fund, and First Focus on Children. It is co-sponsored by Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), Children's HealthWatch, Coalition on Human Needs, Economic Security Project Action, Global Women's Strike and Women of Color/Global Women's Strike, GRACE-End Child Poverty CA, NETWORK Advocates for Catholic Social Justice, ParentsTogether Action, and RESULTS.

[Read Here](#)

What We're Reading

- Willis, D. W., & Eddy, J. M. (2022). Early relational health: Innovations in child health for promotion, screening, and research. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 43, 361–372. [Read here](#).
- Lili Farhang and Julian Drix, "Bridging Public Health and Social Movements," *To the Point* (blog), Commonwealth Fund, Apr. 24, 2024. [Read here](#).
- Bryan Boroughs, "How Partnerships Between Organizations Can Transform a Community for the Better," *Newsweek*, Mar. 13, 2024. [Read here](#).
- de la Rosa, Rosemarie PhD, MPH, et al. Associations Between Early-Life Adversity, Ambient Air Pollution, and Telomere Length in Children. *Psychosomatic Medicine* 86(5):p 422-430, June 2024. [Read here](#).
- "In This Together: A Cross-partisan Action Plan To Support Families With Young Children In America." Convergence Collaborative on Supports for Working Families (2023-2024). [Read here](#).

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Contact

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The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), which conceived Nurture Connection, is a national, non-profit policy organization that connects community action, public system reform, and policy change to create a fair and just society in which all children and families thrive. We work to achieve a racially, economically, and socially just society in which all children and families thrive. To do this, we translate ideas into action, promote public policies grounded in equity, support strong and inclusive communities, and advocate with and for all children and families marginalized by public policies and institutional practices.

