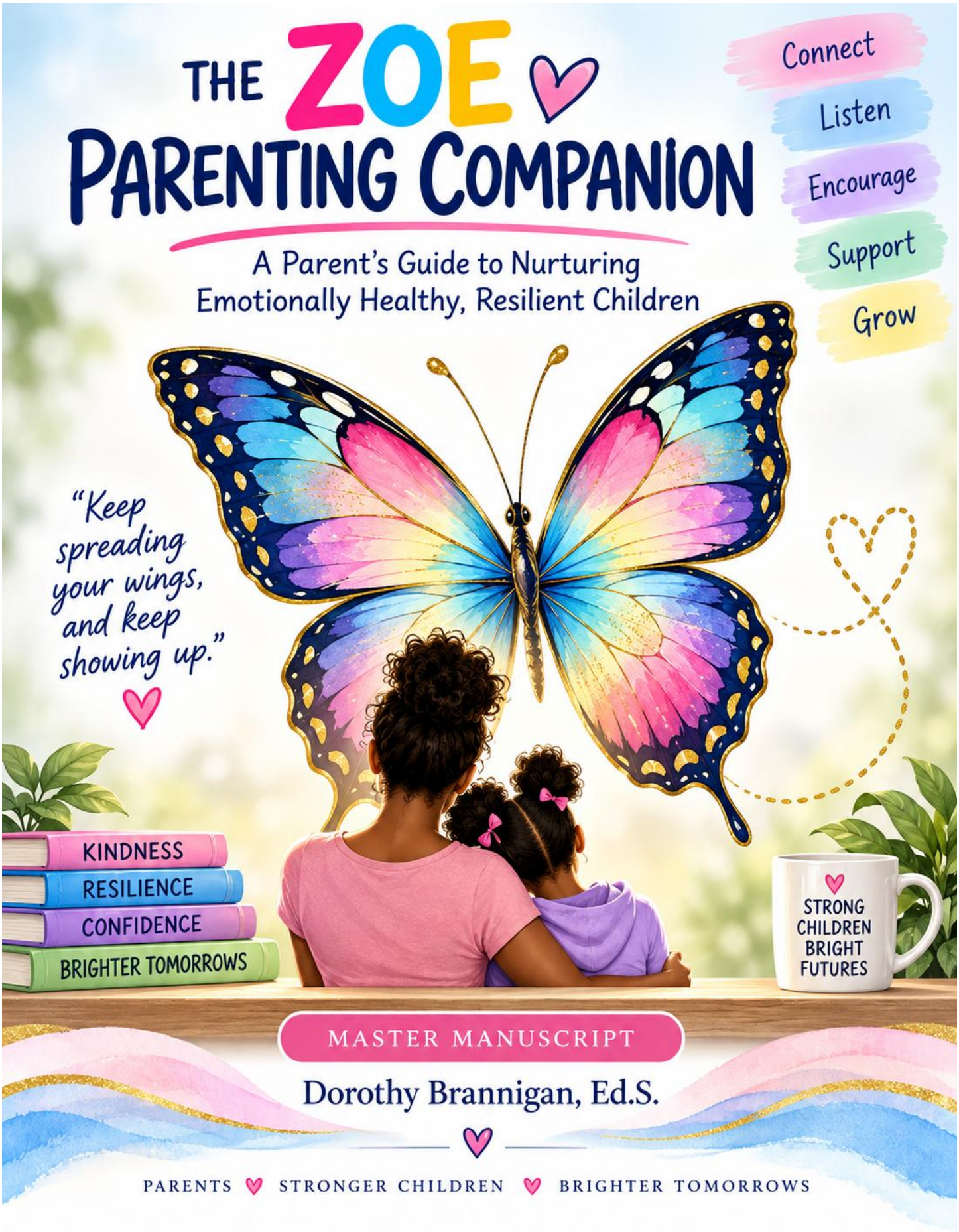

THE ZOE PARENTING COMPANION
A Parent's Guide to Nurturing Emotionally Healthy, Resilient Children
Connect
Listen
Encourage
Support
Grow
"Keep spreading your wings, and keep showing up."
KINDNESS
RESILIENCE
CONFIDENCE
BRIGHTER TOMORROWS
STRONG CHILDREN BRIGHT FUTURES
MASTER MANUSCRIPT
Dorothy Brannigan, Ed.S.
PARENTS ♥ STRONGER CHILDREN ♥ BRIGHTER TOMORROWS

How to Use This Companion

A Gentle Weekly Rhythm

Each module is designed to be practical, encouraging, and manageable for busy parents and caregivers. Read one module each week, practice the suggested ZOE Time activity, and reflect at the end of the week in your journal.

What Is ZOE Time?

ZOE Time is a brief, intentional daily check-in with your child. It may happen after school, during a car ride, at dinner, while taking a walk, or before bedtime. The purpose is simple: put away distractions, be present, listen, and help your child feel seen, heard, valued, and loved.

A Note from Dorothy

There is no manual on parenting. Every child is unique, and every family has its own journey. You do not have to be perfect. Keep learning, keep connecting, and keep showing up.

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Module 1: Understanding Your Child's Mental Health

Today's Butterfly Thought

"Understanding your child begins with listening."

Welcome

Welcome to Module 1. Children's mental health includes their emotional, psychological, and social well-being. This week, we begin by learning how to notice, listen, and respond with care.

Remember...

Every child deserves to feel seen, heard, valued, and loved. Understanding your child's mental health begins with listening.

In This Lesson, You Will

- Understand what children's mental health and well-being mean.
- Recognize why emotional, psychological, and social well-being matter.
- Learn how active listening strengthens connection.
- Begin a daily ZOE Time check-in.

What Is Children's Mental Health?

Children's mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how children think, feel, relate to others, cope with challenges, and experience daily life.

Why It Matters

Children face stressors at increasingly early ages. A caring adult who notices changes, listens without judgment, and responds with patience can become an important source of safety and support. (Hudson et al., 2023; Zapf et al., 2023).

Dorothy's Insight

There is no manual on parenting. Every child is unique, and every family has its own journey. What children need most is not perfection—they need presence. When we take the time to listen, understand, and show up consistently, we create a foundation of love and trust that can last a lifetime. Mental health begins at home, one conversation, one hug, and one moment of connection at a time.

Zoe's Parenting Tip

Practice active listening. Give your child your attention, get on their level, make eye contact when appropriate, and listen before offering advice or solutions.

Opportunity to Connect: ZOE Time

Set aside 5–10 minutes each day for ZOE Time—a special moment dedicated to connecting with your child. Put away distractions and invite your child to share.

- What made you smile today?
- Was anything difficult or upsetting today?

- Is there something you would like me to know?
- How can I support you tomorrow?

Parent Reflection

At the end of the week, take a few quiet moments to reflect. Use your journal to record what you want to remember.

- What did I learn about my child this week?
- What moment of connection stood out most to me?
- What is one thing I want to remember from this week?

Key Takeaways

- There is no manual on parenting.
- Mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being.
- Active listening helps children feel safe and valued.
- Keep showing up and listening.

Zoe's Wings

Dear Parent,

Thank you for showing up this week. The fact that you are here—learning, listening, and growing—tells me something important: your child is loved. Your presence matters more than perfection.

Keep spreading your wings, and keep showing up.

With love,
Zoe

Parent Resource Corner

Looking to learn more? Explore trusted articles and resources on the following topics:

- Children's mental health and emotional well-being
- Developmental milestones
- Active listening and parent-child communication
- When and how to seek additional support

Seeking knowledge is a sign of strength. Every small step you take to understand your child helps build a stronger, healthier family.

References

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Module 2: Building Strong Emotional Connections

Today's Butterfly Thought

"The emotional experiences children have with us often stay with them long after specific conversations are forgotten."

Welcome

In Module 1, we explored children's mental health. This week, we focus on one of the most powerful tools in parenting: connection. Strong emotional connections help children feel safe, valued, and understood (Cooke et al., 2019).

Remember...

Children feel your energy before you speak the first word. Be mindful of the energy you bring into your home, conversations, and interactions.

In This Lesson, You Will

- Learn that small moments create connection.
- Understand how your energy influences your child's sense of safety and trust.
- Discover why connection comes before correction.
- Practice simple ways to strengthen your bond each day.
- Begin a 7-Day Connection Challenge.

Why Emotional Connection Matters

As a counselor and a parent, I have learned that children need connection and safety. They need to know they can talk about what is happening in their world—feeling left out, having a bad dream, being bullied, feeling sad, or facing something they do not yet have the words to explain.

Sometimes our reactions can unintentionally teach children to stay silent. If a child is met with anger, criticism, or dismissal, they may decide not to share again. Before reacting, pause and remember: your child is trusting you with their heart. Secure parent-child relationships are associated with children's emotional development and emotion regulation (Cooke et al., 2019).

- Is my child feeling safe at this moment?
- Am I listening to understand before I respond?
- What does my child need from me right now?

Zoe's Parenting Tip

Do not forget ZOE Time. Connection can happen after school, during dinner preparation, at bath time, on a walk, or before bed. Children may share important things while coloring, brushing their teeth, or cuddling before lights out. Be present and be ready.

Opportunity to Connect: 7-Day Connection Challenge

Spend 5–10 minutes each day practicing ZOE Time. Invite another parent, caregiver, grandparent, or sibling to join whenever possible.

- Read a book together.
- Take a family walk.
- Share the favorite part of the day.
- Draw pictures together.
- Play a game.
- Cuddle and talk before bedtime.

Parent Reflection

At the end of the week, take a few quiet moments to reflect. Use your journal to record what you want to remember.

- What did I learn about my child this week?
- What moment of connection stood out most?
- What is one thing I want to remember?

Key Takeaways

- Connect first, then guide.
- Small moments create connection.
- Children feel your energy before your words.
- Behavior is communication.
- Trust creates safety.

Zoe's Wings

Dear Parent,

Thank you for making connection a priority this week. Never underestimate the power of a bedtime story, a shared laugh, or a family hug. These moments help children feel safe, connected, and cherished.

Keep creating moments. Keep spreading your wings. And above all, keep showing up.

With love,
Zoe

Parent Resource Corner

Looking to learn more? Explore trusted articles and resources on the following topics:

- Understanding child behavior and what behavior may communicate
- Signs of anxiety, sadness, stress, or emotional overwhelm
- Bullying and friendship challenges
- Creating emotionally safe spaces for children to talk
- Changes such as school avoidance, refusing a familiar play date, withdrawal, or renewed bedwetting

Behavior is communication. These changes do not always mean something serious is happening, but they are invitations to slow down, remain curious, and listen.

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Module 3: Helping Children Identify and Express Their Emotions

Today's Butterfly Thought

"Every feeling deserves a name, a safe place, and someone willing to listen."

Welcome

Children are still learning how to identify, name, and express their emotions (Cooke et al., 2016). This module creates space for conversation, emotional vocabulary, and healthy expression.

Remember...

All feelings are welcome, but not every behavior is acceptable. Children can learn safe and respectful ways to express what they feel.

In This Lesson, You Will

- Help your child identify and name emotions.
- Create opportunities for children to express feelings.
- Use device-free moments to encourage conversation.
- Model healthy emotional expression.

Why It Matters

Children cannot always express what they are feeling when they are constantly distracted. When devices are put away, children have more opportunities to notice, name, and talk about sadness, fear, excitement, frustration, and other emotions.

Dorothy's Insight

In today's world, children are introduced to electronic devices at younger ages. Technology can be helpful, but it should never replace connection and conversation. Research examining adolescents has found that family factors are associated with both screen-media use and mental -health outcomes (Liu et al., 2024). Some of the most meaningful conversations happen during dinner, a car ride, or bedtime when devices are put away.

Zoe's Parenting Tip

Create a technology-free dinner table for everyone—including adults. Use mealtime to reconnect and ask about feelings and experiences. Children learn by watching us. When we put our phones away, they learn that connection matters.

- What made you smile today?
- Was anything frustrating or upsetting?
- What was your favorite part of the day?
- Is there anything you would like to talk about?

Opportunity to Connect: Family Technology Basket

Invite your child or children to decorate a basket, box, or container for family devices. Explain that the basket is not about taking something away; it is about making room for connection.

- Use it at dinner.
- Use it during family game night.
- Use it during bedtime routines.
- Use it during ZOE Time.
- Use it during weekend family activities.

Parent Reflection

At the end of the week, take a few quiet moments to reflect. Use your journal to record what you want to remember.

- What feeling did my child express this week?
- When did my child seem most comfortable talking?
- What device-free moment would I like to continue?

Key Takeaways

- Children are still learning the language of feelings.
- Device-free moments create space for emotional expression.
- Adults model how to talk about emotions.
- A few minutes of focused attention can make a difference.

Zoe's Wings

Dear Parent,

Do not forget the daily check-ins. Feelings may appear through tears, laughter, silence, or changes in behavior. Keep listening, asking gentle questions, and creating space for your child to share. At the end of the week, reflect and write down the moments you want to remember.

Keep spreading your wings, and keep showing up.

With love,
Zoe

Parent Resource Corner

Looking to learn more? Explore trusted articles and resources on the following topics:

- Emotional vocabulary and feelings charts
- Healthy ways for children to express emotions
- Technology and young children
- Device-free family routines
- Parent-child conversation starters

Every conversation helps your child build emotional skills they can carry for a lifetime.

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Module 4: Raising Resilient Children

Today's Butterfly Thought

"Just like a butterfly, we grow through change. It is okay to make mistakes—they are part of becoming who we are meant to be."

Welcome

It can be difficult to watch children struggle, make mistakes, or experience disappointment. Yet challenges often become moments of growth. It is okay for children and adults to make mistakes. That is how we learn.

Remember...

Mistakes are not failures. They are opportunities to grow. Like the butterfly, we are all still becoming.

In This Lesson, You Will

- Understand resilience as the ability to move through challenges.
- Help children learn from mistakes.
- Encourage problem-solving and perseverance.
- Balance activities with rest and connection.

Why Resilience Matters

Resilience grows through safe relationships, encouragement, practice, and opportunities to try again. (King et al., 2021; Pinto et al., 2021). Parents cannot remove every obstacle, but they can walk beside children as they discover their own strength.

Dorothy's Insight

It is okay for children to make mistakes, and it is okay for adults to make mistakes. Every challenge teaches us something. Every time we try again, we are reminded that growth is a journey, not a destination.

Zoe's Parenting Tip

Sports and extracurricular activities can build confidence, teamwork, friendships, and resilience. However, do not overschedule. Children, like adults, need downtime to rest, play, imagine, and simply be children.

- Does my child have time to relax?
- Is my child enjoying the activity or feeling overwhelmed?
- Have we left room for family time and unstructured play?

Opportunity to Connect: Build In Time to Connect

Look at the family schedule together. Add connection time to the calendar just as you would a practice or appointment. The goal is not to do more; it is to protect time for what matters.

- A family walk

- Reading together
- Game night
- Baking together
- Dinner conversation
- Five uninterrupted minutes of ZOE Time

Parent Reflection

At the end of the week, take a few quiet moments to reflect. Use your journal to record what you want to remember.

- What challenge did my child work through this week?
- How did I encourage effort rather than perfection?
- Did our schedule include enough rest and connection?

Key Takeaways

- Mistakes help children and adults grow.
- Resilience develops through support and practice.
- Children need both activities and downtime.
- Connection provides a safe foundation for growth.

Zoe's Wings

Dear Parent,

Your child is learning that they can move through challenges, make mistakes, and try again. Stand beside them, encourage them, and remind them: “You are stronger than you know, and I will be beside you every step of the way.”

Keep spreading your wings, and keep showing up.

With love,
Zoe

Parent Resource Corner

Looking to learn more? Explore trusted articles and resources on the following topics:

- Raising resilient children
- Growth mindset and perseverance
- Problem-solving and independence
- The importance of play, rest, and unstructured time
- Balancing extracurricular activities and family well-being

Resilience is not about avoiding challenges. It is about helping children know they are capable of moving through them.

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Module 5: Supporting Children Through Anxiety and Stress

Today's Butterfly Thought

"Sometimes what a child cannot say with words, they show through actions, emotions, and physical symptoms."

Welcome

Anxiety and stress are part of life. Children experience worries and moments of feeling overwhelmed, but they are still learning how to understand and express what they feel.

Remember...

Children are still learning the language of feelings. Anxiety and stress can sometimes show up through physical symptoms or changes in behavior (Comer et al., 2019).

- Frequent stomachaches or headaches
- Difficulty sleeping
- Changes in appetite
- Irritability or clinginess
- Trouble concentrating
- Bedwetting or other regressions
- Avoiding school or activities once enjoyed

In This Lesson, You Will

- Recognize that anxiety and stress may look different in each child.
- Notice physical and behavioral signs.
- Learn that support can look different for every child.
- Use ZOE Time to create a safe opening for conversation.

Why It Matters

As a counselor and a parent, I have learned that anxiety and stress can look different from one child to another. One child may become quiet; another may become restless or frustrated. Children are not trying to make life difficult for us—they are trying to make sense of what they are feeling.

Dorothy's Insight

Our role is not to immediately fix every feeling. Our role is to help children feel safe, supported, and understood as they learn to navigate emotions. A child's behavior is often a message. The question is: Are we listening?

Zoe's Parenting Tip

Support can look different for every child. What comforts one child may not comfort another. Learn what support looks like for your child.

- A hug
- Quiet time with a trusted adult

- Extra reassurance
- A walk outside
- Drawing or coloring
- A bedtime story
- A few extra minutes of ZOE Time
- Simply sitting beside someone they trust

Opportunity to Connect: Protect ZOE Time

Do not forget ZOE Time in a busy schedule. Set aside 5–10 intentional minutes each day to check in. Children often open up when we least expect it.

- How is your heart feeling today?
- Is anything on your mind?
- What was the best part of your day?
- Is there anything you would like to talk about?

Parent Reflection

At the end of the week, take a few quiet moments to reflect. Use your journal to record what you want to remember.

- What signs of stress or worry did I notice?
- What helped my child feel supported?
- What helped me manage my own stress this week?

Key Takeaways

- Anxiety and stress can appear as physical symptoms.
- Behavior is often communication.
- Support looks different for every child.
- Your presence is often more powerful than perfect words.
- Self-care is not selfish—it is mandatory.

Zoe's Wings

Dear Parent,

You do not need to have all the answers. Your child needs to know they are loved and supported. Keep listening, asking gentle questions, and caring for yourself too.

Self-care is not selfish—it is mandatory.

Keep spreading your wings, and keep showing up.

With love,
Zoe

Parent Resource Corner

Looking to learn more? Explore trusted articles and resources on the following topics:

- Recognizing anxiety and stress in children
- Calming routines, breathing, and relaxation techniques
- Sleep, nutrition, movement, and downtime
- Healthy ways for parents to manage stress and avoid burnout
- When to consult a pediatrician or qualified mental health professional

Supporting your child begins with supporting yourself. When parents feel supported, children feel it too.

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 Comer, J. S., Hong, N., Poznanski, B., Silva, K., & Wilson, M. (2019). Evidence base update on the treatment of early childhood anxiety and related problems. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology, 48*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/15374416.2018.1534208

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Module 6: Positive Discipline and Setting Healthy Boundaries

Today's Butterfly Thought

"Connect first, then guide."

Welcome

Discipline is not simply about stopping behavior. It is about teaching, guiding, setting healthy limits, and helping children learn skills they will use at school and throughout life (Leijten et al., 2019).

Remember...

Mixed messages confuse children. Whenever possible, parents, guardians, grandparents, and other caregivers should communicate about expectations and boundaries.

In This Lesson, You Will

- Understand discipline as teaching rather than punishment.
- Set healthy and consistent boundaries.
- Seek to understand before reacting.
- Work with other caregivers and extended family.
- Model the behavior you hope to see.

Why It Matters

Discipline and rules are part of life. Children will encounter expectations, responsibilities, and boundaries in school, activities, relationships, and adulthood. A solid foundation and positive role models help children develop respect, responsibility, accountability, problem-solving, self-control, kindness, and empathy. Research supports parenting approaches that combine sensitivity, positive parenting, and appropriate discipline in promoting healthy child development (van IJzendoorn et al., 2023).

The goal is not to raise children who obey out of fear. The goal is to raise children who understand, think for themselves, and carry strong values wherever they go.

Dorothy's Insight

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to discipline. What works for one child may not work for another. It is okay to try different approaches, reflect, adjust, and try again. Discipline is not about winning a battle. It is about building a relationship and teaching life lessons.

Zoe's Parenting Tip

Make sure you are on the same page with the other parent, guardian, and important caregivers—including grandparents and extended family. Consistency does not mean everyone must parent exactly the same way; it means working together to create a safe, supportive, and predictable environment.

- Family values

- Household expectations
- Routines and responsibilities
- Discipline and consequences
- Ways to support emotional well-being

Opportunity to Connect: Seek to Understand

Communication is essential in every module, and discipline is no different. During ZOE Time, seek to understand before responding.

- Can you help me understand what happened?
- How were you feeling at that moment?
- Is there something you would like me to know?
- What can we do differently next time?

Parent Reflection

At the end of the week, take a few quiet moments to reflect. Use your journal to record what you want to remember.

- Did I respond or react this week?
- What approach helped my child learn?
- Are the adults in my child's life giving consistent messages?

Key Takeaways

- Discipline is teaching, not punishment.
- Connection first then guide.
- Consistency creates security.
- Different children may need different approaches.
- Children learn from what adults model.

Zoe's Wings

Dear Parent,

Give yourself permission to learn and adjust. You are teaching values, responsibility, and healthy boundaries one conversation at a time. Keep seeking understanding, keep modeling respect, and keep the door of communication open.

Keep spreading your wings, and keep showing up.

With love,
Zoe

Parent Resource Corner

Looking to learn more? Explore trusted articles and resources on the following topics:

- Positive discipline and age-appropriate expectations
- Understanding child behavior

- Natural and logical consequences
- Co-parenting and consistency among caregivers
- Preparing for parent-teacher meetings
- Advocating for your child while collaborating with schools
- Respectful conversations and boundaries with other parents
- Ways to say: “That does not work for our family.”

Parenting does not happen in isolation. Children benefit when adults communicate respectfully, collaborate when appropriate, and maintain healthy family boundaries.

References

 Leijten, P., Gardner, F., Melendez-Torres, G. J., van Aar, J., Hutchings, J., Schulz, S., Knerr, W., & Overbeek, G. (2019). Meta-analyses: Key parenting program components for disruptive child behavior. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 58*(2), 180–190.
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Module 7: Creating Healthy Family Habits and Routines

Today's Butterfly Thought

“The little things we do each day become the memories our children carry for a lifetime.”

Welcome

Families thrive on connection, consistency, and routines. Healthy habits provide comfort, security, and belonging. Routines do not need to be complicated. Dinner together, a bedtime story, an evening walk, or a few minutes of ZOE Time can become meaningful family traditions.

Remember...

Children may outgrow favorite toys, clothes, and activities, but they will never outgrow the need to feel connected, safe, and loved.

In This Lesson, You Will

- Learn why routines matter.
- Explore meaningful family traditions.
- Understand the importance of balance and downtime.
- Create habits that support emotional well-being.
- Protect time for connection.

Why It Matters

Children spend a great deal of time away from home at school and in outside activities. Establishing ZOE Time and family traditions helps grow healthy connections and reminds children that home is a place where they are loved, supported, and accepted. Research has associated family mealtimes with a range of positive health, psychosocial, and family outcomes for children and adolescents (Snuggs & Harvey, 2023).

One conversation. One game night. One bedtime story. One moment of ZOE Time at a time. One day, your child may look back and realize that the little things were actually the big things.

Dorothy's Insight

Time goes by faster than we expect. One day, you are holding a baby; before you know it, you are watching that child walk across a stage. The days may feel long, but the years are short. In the busyness of life, remember to stop and enjoy your child. Pause for the hugs, listen to the stories, laugh a little longer, play one more game, and read one more bedtime story.

Zoe's Parenting Tip

Invite your child and the other important adults in their life to help create family traditions. Children love knowing that their ideas matter and that they are helping shape family memories.

- Family Game Night
- Friday Movie Night
- Saturday Morning Pancakes
- Sunday Family Walks
- Bedtime Story Time
- Gratitude at Dinner
- Holiday Baking Day
- Birthday traditions

Opportunity to Connect: Be Present

During ZOE Time this week, dedicate yourself to being fully present. Put down the phone, turn off the television, close the laptop, and pause the to-do list. Give your child your undivided attention.

- Sit beside them.
- Listen to their stories.
- Play their favorite game.
- Take a walk.
- Laugh together.
- Simply be present.

Parent Reflection

At the end of the week, take a few quiet moments to reflect. Use your journal to record what you want to remember.

- What moment brought us the most joy?

- When did I feel most connected to my child?
- What family tradition would we like to continue?

Key Takeaways

- Routines create comfort and security.
- Traditions strengthen identity and belonging.
- Family connection should be intentionally protected.
- Presence is one of the greatest gifts we can give children.

Zoe's Wings

Dear Parent,

The days may be full, but childhood passes quickly. Keep making room for the moments that matter. Your child may not remember everything on the schedule, but they will remember that you made time for them.

Keep spreading your wings, and keep showing up.

With love,
Zoe

Parent Resource Corner

Looking to learn more? Explore trusted articles and resources on the following topics:

- Healthy family routines
- Sleep and bedtime routines
- Family meals and connection
- Creating meaningful family traditions
- Balancing schedules and downtime
- Healthy technology boundaries

The little things we do each day often become the memories our children carry for a lifetime.

References

- Snuggs, S., & Harvey, K. (2023). Family mealtimes: A systematic umbrella review of characteristics, correlates, outcomes and interventions. *Nutrients, 15*(13), 2841. https://doi.org/10.3390/nu15132841

 Selman, S. B., Distefano, R., Dilworth-Bart, J. E., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2026). Child routines across preschool and associations with socioemotional adjustment. *Journal of Family Psychology, 40*(1), 25–36. https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0001299

 Snuggs and Harvey's umbrella review is particularly valuable because it synthesized **41 systematic reviews** on family mealtimes rather than relying on a single study.

Module 8: Putting It All Together

Today's Butterfly Thought

"There is no manual on parenting. There is only love, learning, and the courage to keep showing up."

Welcome

Over the past eight modules, you have learned, reflected, and grown alongside your child. Take a moment to recognize how far you have come. Perhaps you began daily ZOE Time, created a tradition, became more intentional about listening, or gave yourself permission to slow down. You are here. You are learning. You are showing up.

Remember...

You do not have to be a perfect parent to be a meaningful one.

In This Lesson, You Will

- Reflect on your family's journey.
- Celebrate growth and progress.
- Revisit connection and communication.
- Recognize the impact of small moments.
- Create a vision for the future.

Why It Matters

Parenting is not a destination; it is a journey. The lessons in this course were never about becoming perfect. They were about discovering that one of your greatest parenting tools is your ability to love, connect, and keep showing up.

The little things matter: ZOE Time, family traditions, bedtime stories, game nights, listening without judgment, offering a hug, saying "I'm proud of you," and being present.

Dorothy's Insight

Children change us for the better. They teach us patience, unconditional love, how to slow down, how to laugh more, and how to see the world through new eyes. While you were raising your child, your child was also helping shape the person you were becoming.

Zoe's Parenting Tip

Give yourself and your child grace. Like a quilt, family life may include rough patches, ragged pieces, and colors that do not match perfectly. Yet when stitched together with love, patience, and time, they create a beautiful work of art. It is not the perfect pieces that make the quilt special. It is the love that holds it all together.

- We are learning together.
- We are growing together.
- We are healing together.
- We are creating something beautiful together.

Opportunity to Connect: Celebrate Uniqueness

During ZOE Time, remind your child that it is okay to be different—just like Zoe in the story. We are not all the same, and that is what makes life interesting. Uniqueness helps create identity.

- What makes you unique?
- What do you love most about yourself?
- What are you proud of?
- What makes our family special?

Parent Reflection

At the end of the week, take a few quiet moments to reflect. Use your journal to record what you want to remember.

- How have I grown throughout this journey?
- What lesson will I carry forward?
- What family tradition or ZOE Time practice will we continue?

Key Takeaways

- There is no manual on parenting.
- Small moments create connection.
- Behavior is communication.
- Connection comes before correction.
- Self-care is mandatory.
- Give yourself and your child grace.
- Keep spreading your wings and keep showing up.

Zoe's Wings

Dear Parent,

Thank you for inviting me into your home and your heart. Every conversation, every hug, and every moment of connection matters. Continue celebrating what makes your child unique, continue giving yourself grace, and continue growing together.

Keep spreading your wings, and keep showing up.

With love,
Zoe

Parent Resource Corner

Looking to learn more? Explore trusted articles and resources on the following topics:

- Age-appropriate child development from infancy through adolescence
- Responding to common parenting situations
- Communication strategies for different ages
- Friendships, peer pressure, and social situations

- Transitions such as starting or changing schools
- Technology and social media boundaries
- Grief, disappointment, and significant life events
- Advocating for children in educational and community settings
- Self-care and support for parents and caregivers

Every child develops at their own pace, and every family has its own story. What works in one season may look different in the next—and that is okay.

References?

Hanauer, C., Telaar, B., Rosner, R., & Doering, B. K. (2024). The efficacy of psychosocial interventions for grief symptoms in bereaved children and adolescents: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 350*, 164–173. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2024.01.063

Oswald, T. K., Rumbold, A. R., Kedzior, S. G. E., & Moore, V. M. (2020). Psychological impacts of "screen time" and "green time" for children and adolescents: A systematic scoping review. *PLOS ONE, 15*(9), e0237725. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0237725

 Zhang, T., Krysinska, K., Alisic, E., & Andriessen, K. (2025). Grief instruments in children and adolescents: A systematic review. *OMEGA—Journal of Death and Dying, 91*(4), 2183–2225. https://doi.org/10.1177/00302228231171188

Congratulations!

Congratulations on completing The Zoe Parenting Companion!

Thank you for staying the course and making a commitment to yourself and your family.

Over the past eight modules, you have learned, reflected, and grown alongside your child. Parenting is not about perfection—it is about connection.

And never forget: while you were raising your child, they were helping shape the person you were becoming, too. Children truly change us for the better.

Congratulations on completing this journey. **The best is yet to come.**

With love,

Dorothy Brannigan, Ed.S.



Appendix A: Family Activities

ZOE Time Check-In Cards printable a cut-apart sheet of 8 cards**. Parents can keep them in a jar, on the refrigerator, in the car, or beside the child's bed.**

7-Day Connection Challenge

- Choose one brief connection activity each day.
- Include another parent, sibling, grandparent, or caregiver when possible.
- Reflect together at the end of the week.

Family Technology Basket

- Decorate a basket or box together.
- Place devices inside during meals, ZOE Time, game night, and bedtime routines.
- Name the basket as a family.

Family Game Night

- Choose games together.
- Rotate who selects the game.
- Focus on laughter, connection, and sportsmanship.

Family Quilt of Uniqueness

- Give each family member a paper square.
- Write or draw something unique about each person.
- Arrange the squares together as a family quilt.

Build In Time to Connect

- Review the weekly schedule.
- Protect at least one family connection period.
- Keep the activity simple and realistic.

Calm Corner

- Choose a quiet space.
- Add books, drawing supplies, a soft item, and breathing prompts.
- Use it as a supportive space—not a punishment.

Family Tradition Brainstorm

- Invite children and caregivers to contribute ideas.
- Choose one tradition to begin this month.
- Revisit and adjust traditions as the family grows.

Appendix B: Parent Reflection Journal Pages

Week 1 Reflection

What did I learn about my child this week?

_____

_____

_____

What moment of connection stood out most?

_____

_____

_____

What is one thing I want to remember?

_____

_____

_____

Week 2 Reflection

What did I learn about my child this week?

_____

_____

_____

What moment of connection stood out most?

_____

_____

_____

What is one thing I want to remember?

_____

_____

_____

Week 3 Reflection

What did I learn about my child this week?

_____

_____

_____

What moment of connection stood out most?

_____

_____

_____

What is one thing I want to remember?

_____

_____

_____

Week 4 Reflection

What did I learn about my child this week?

_____

_____

_____

What moment of connection stood out most?

_____

_____

_____

What is one thing I want to remember?

_____

_____

_____

Week 5 Reflection

What did I learn about my child this week?

_____

_____

_____

What moment of connection stood out most?

_____

_____

_____

What is one thing I want to remember?

_____

_____

_____

Week 6 Reflection

What did I learn about my child this week?

_____

_____

_____

What moment of connection stood out most?

_____

_____

_____

What is one thing I want to remember?

_____

_____

_____

Week 7 Reflection

What did I learn about my child this week?

_____

_____

_____

What moment of connection stood out most?

_____

_____

_____

What is one thing I want to remember?

_____

_____

_____

Week 8 Reflection

What did I learn about my child this week?

_____

_____

_____

What moment of connection stood out most?

_____

_____

_____

What is one thing I want to remember?

_____

_____

_____

Appendix C: Printable Resources

ZOE Time Conversation Starters

Printable worksheet to be designed and formatted during the companion-resource design stage.

How Is Your Heart Feeling Today?

Printable worksheet to be designed and formatted during the companion-resource design stage.

Family Values Worksheet

Printable worksheet to be designed and formatted during the companion-resource design stage.

Family Technology Agreement

Printable worksheet to be designed and formatted during the companion-resource design stage.

Family Rules and Expectations Worksheet

Printable worksheet to be designed and formatted during the companion-resource design stage.

Bedtime Reflection Questions

Printable worksheet to be designed and formatted during the companion-resource design stage.

Family Tradition Planner

Printable worksheet to be designed and formatted during the companion-resource design stage.

Weekly Connection Calendar

Printable worksheet to be designed and formatted during the companion-resource design stage.

Calm Corner Planning Page

Printable worksheet to be designed and formatted during the companion-resource design stage.

ZOE Time Check-In Cards

A Little Time. A Lot of Connection.

Cut along the dotted lines. Keep the cards in a jar, on the refrigerator, in the car, or by your child's bed.

1

SOMETHING HAPPY

What made you smile today?



Tell me all about it.

2

SOMETHING HARD

Was anything difficult or upsetting today?



I'm here to listen.

3

YOUR HEART

How is your heart feeling today?



Happy? Sad? Worried?
Excited? Frustrated?
Something else?

4

I WANT YOU TO KNOW...

Is there something you want me to know?



You can always talk to me.

5

PROUD OF YOU

What is something you are proud of today?



Big or small—
it matters.

6

SOMETHING I NEED

Is there anything you need from me right now?



A hug? Help? Quiet time?
Someone to listen?
Something else?

7

LOOKING AHEAD

What are you looking forward to?



Tomorrow, this week,
or sometime soon.

8

YOUR CHOICE

What would YOU like to talk about today?



This is your
ZOE Time.

There is no right or wrong way to use these cards.

Choose one question or let your child choose. Listen without rushing to fix the problem or provide an answer.
Some days your child may have a lot to say. Other days, they may say very little. Both are okay.
The goal is simple: **Be present. Be curious. Listen. Keep showing up.**

ZOE Time
Connect. Listen. Grow.

ZOE Time Conversation Starters

Big Conversations. Brighter Connections.

Cut along the dotted lines. Use these cards at dinner, in the car, at bedtime, or anytime you want to connect!

1

What is your favorite thing about our family?



Family makes life special!

2

If you could have any superpower, what would it be? Why?



You can dream big!

3

What is something kind you saw, heard, or did today?



Kindness changes the world!

4

What is your favorite memory?



Good memories make happy hearts!

5

What do you want to be when you grow up? Why?



Your dreams are important!

6

What is something that makes you feel brave?



You are braver than you think!

7

What do you like most about school?



You are always learning!

8

Who is someone that makes you feel loved? What do they do that is special?



You are surrounded by love!

9

If you could spend a whole day doing anything, what would you do?



Imagination makes life brighter!

10

What is something that makes you feel calm and happy?



Find what helps you bloom!

11

What is a goal you would like to work on?



You can do hard things!

12

Is there anything else you want to talk about today?



I'm always here to listen.

1

How Is Your Heart Feeling Today?

All feelings are okay!

Circle the feeling (or feelings) that match your heart today.


Happy


Loved


Sad


Calm


Worried


Excited


Frustrated


Tired


Surprised


Silly


Okay


Something Else

Today my heart feels _____

Because _____

_____

What I need right now is _____

One thing that would make today better is _____



ZOE Time • Connect. Listen. Grow.



2

Our Family Values

The things that matter most to us.

Circle or check the values that are most important to your family.
You can also add your own!

- Love
- Kindness
- Respect
- Honesty
- Responsibility
- Patience
- Courage
- Gratitude
- Helping Others
- Teamwork
- Faith/Beliefs
- Family Time
- Perseverance
- Creativity
- Health
- Other: _____ _____

In Our Family, These Values Look Like...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

ZOE Time • Connect. Listen. Grow.

3

Family Technology Agreement



Working together for a healthy, happy balance.

Our family agrees to use technology in a way that keeps us safe, healthy, and connected. We will...

Set healthy time limits.
We will agree on daily or weekly screen time. ☐

Keep certain places device-free.
Examples: dinner table, bedrooms, family time, or rides. ☐

Finish responsibilities first.
We will complete homework and chores before recreational screen time. ☐

Be kind and respectful online.
We will use kind words and treat others with respect. ☐

Stay safe.
We will not share personal information and will talk to a trusted adult if something makes us uncomfortable. ☐

Ask permission.
We will ask before downloading apps, making purchases, or talking to people online. ☐

Take breaks.
We will balance screen time with play, reading, exercise, and time with family and friends. ☐

Parents/Caregivers agree to model healthy technology habits too.
We will be mindful of our own screen use and spend intentional time together. ☐

We agree to support each other!

Child(ren): _____ Date: _____

Parent/Caregiver(s): _____ Date: _____

ZOE Time • Connect. Listen. Grow.

4

Family Rules & Expectations

A safe, kind, and happy home for everyone.

In Our Family We...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

When a Rule is Forgotten...

- We will take a deep breath.
- We will talk about what happened.
- We will make a plan to do better next time.
- We will remember that everyone makes mistakes.
- We will choose kindness, respect, and learning over punishment.

Our Signatures

Child(ren): _____ Date: _____

Parent/Caregiver(s): _____ Date: _____

ZOE Time • Connect. Listen. Grow.

5

Bedtime Reflection Questions

Small questions. Big conversations.

Cut along the dotted lines. Use one or more cards each night.



What made you smile today?



What are you proud of today?



Was anything hard today?



Who were you kind to today?



What are you thankful for today?



What did you learn today?



What are you looking forward to tomorrow?



Is there anything you want to talk about before bed?



ZOE Time • Connect. Listen. Grow.



6

Family Tradition Planner

Creating memories that last.

Our Tradition

What is the tradition? (Example: Game night, Sunday breakfast, family walk, etc.)

Why It Is Special

Why do we want to start (or continue) this tradition?

When We Will Do It

How often? (Weekly, monthly, holidays, etc.)

What We Need

What supplies, planning, or preparation is needed?

Who Will Join

Who will be part of this tradition? (Family members, friends, etc.)

A Memory We Want to Make

What do we hope to remember about this tradition?

ZOE Time • Connect. Listen. Grow.

7

Weekly Connection Calendar

Little moments make a big difference.

MON	Connection Activity: _____ ☐
TUE	Connection Activity: _____ ☐
WED	Connection Activity: _____ ☐
THU	Connection Activity: _____ ☐
FRI	Connection Activity: _____ ☐
SAT	Connection Activity: _____ ☐
SUN	Connection Activity: _____ ☐

Weekly Reflection

Our favorite ZOE Time moment this week was:

_____

_____

ZOE Time • Connect. Listen. Grow.

8

My Calm Corner Planning Page

My safe space. My calm space. My happy space.

Where Will My Calm Corner Be?

Example: bedroom, reading nook, corner of the living room, etc.

_____

_____



What Helps My Body Feel Calm?

Examples: deep breathing, counting, quiet time, stretching, fidget toy, etc.

_____

_____

Things I Want in My Calm Corner

Examples: soft pillow, books, stuffed animal, quiet activities, sensory items, etc.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

When I Might Use It

Examples: when I feel upset, worried, angry, overwhelmed, or just need a quiet break.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

When I'm Ready, I Can...

- Take a few deep breaths.
- Use something from my Calm Corner.
- Talk to a trusted adult.
- Return to my activities when I feel calm and ready.

Calm mind. Brighter days.

Appendix D: Parent Resource Library

Module	Resource Topics
1	Children's mental health, well-being, developmental milestones, active listening
2	Emotional connection, trust, behavior changes, bullying, emotional safety
3	Feelings, emotional vocabulary, technology and children, device-free routines
4	Resilience, growth mindset, play, rest, extracurricular balance
5	Anxiety, stress, physical symptoms, calming strategies, parent self-care
6	Positive discipline, boundaries, school meetings, co-parenting, other parents
7	Healthy routines, sleep, family traditions, family meals, schedule balance
8	Child development across ages, transitions, friendships, technology, grief, advocacy

Specific articles, publication dates, links, and formal citations will be verified and inserted before publication.

Appendix E: Professional Support Resources

- Pediatrician or family physician
- School counselor, psychologist, or social worker
- Licensed mental health professional
- Community family-support organizations
- Emergency and crisis resources appropriate to the family's location

Finding Support

- **211 — Community Resources & Support**
  Call **211** to connect with information about community resources and services that may be available in your area, including housing, food, healthcare, mental-health resources, family support, and other local services.
- **988 — Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**
  Call or text **988** for 24/7 support during a mental-health, emotional, substance-use, or suicidal crisis. Parents and caregivers may also contact 988 when concerned about someone they love.
- If you have concerns about your child's physical or emotional well-being, contact a qualified healthcare or mental-health professional.
- **In an immediate or life-threatening emergency, call 911 or contact local emergency services.**

This parenting companion is intended for educational purposes and is not a substitute for professional medical or mental-health evaluation, diagnosis, or treatment.

Appendix F: A Closing Letter from Dorothy

Dear Parent,

There is no manual on parenting. There will be days when you feel confident and days when you question everything. Through it all, remember that **your presence matters**.

Keep listening. Keep connecting. Keep taking care of yourself. Give yourself and your child grace.

Like the butterfly, we are all still becoming.

Thank you for allowing me to walk beside you on this journey. May your home be filled with love, connection, and moments that remind your children they are **seen, heard, valued, and deeply loved**.

Keep spreading your wings and keep showing up.

With love,

Dorothy Brannigan, Ed.S.



CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION



The Zoe Parenting Companion

This certificate is proudly presented to

_____

for successfully completing the eight-module parenting companion and demonstrating a commitment to connection, growth, and lifelong learning.

“Keep spreading your wings, and keep showing up.”

Awarded this _____ day of _____, 20_____

_____ *Dorothy Brannigan, Ed.S.*_____

Dorothy Brannigan, Ed.S.

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