# Session Two

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<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session Prep</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>New Participant</td>
<td>At Home</td>
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### Session Two Goals

- Introduce the concept of self-soothing and Self-Regulation for mother and baby.
- Understand how the baby’s growing ability to self-regulate will affect their emotional and cognitive development.
- Recognize the co-regulation dance between mother and baby and its contribution to secure attachment, attunement and healthy development.
- Discuss ‘goodness of fit’ between baby’s actions and parental responses.
- Reflect on parental tendencies/temperament and begin the process of identifying triggers.
- Refine mother’s skills in observing baby’s temperamental tendencies but emphasize family environment and broader environment have an impact.
- Deepen the capacity to identify being out of balance and incorporate Self-Kindness to return to one’s center and sense of calm in the Mothering journey.

### Arrival and Welcome

**Pause for Practice: Centering with 4-5-6 Breathing**

‘I have arrived. I am here’.

### Benefits of Mindful Practice
# Session Two Facilitation Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Check-In</td>
<td>15 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review and Reflect</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflections Session One</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Additional element that has changed with in you since your baby has been born and or how you feel about the changes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Was there something you discovered about yourself after last week’s group?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Articles for Session Two:

- **Article:**
  - *Parenting from the Inside Out*
  - By: Daniel J. Siegel, MD and Mary Hartzell, M.ED

- **Article:**
  - *Raising Baby: What You Need to Know*
  - Lipari, Joanna
  - Psychology Today.

- **Self-Compassion Fosters Mental Health**
  - Scientific American
  - By Marina Krakovsky, Jun 2012
### Session Two Facilitation Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Emotional Development</strong></td>
<td>25 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Regulation and Interest in the World (0 - 3 Months)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Co-Regulation “Dance”</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heart-Centered Dialogue - Self-Regulation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Can you identify some of the things that you do to return to a calm state or Self-Regulate when something does not go as planned?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How does this feel in your body?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Does your baby show signs of Self-Regulation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What does your baby already use to calm themselves and how do they do it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When do they feel most calm?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• When did you first notice this ability?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pause for Practice: 4-5-6 Self-Compassion Pause - Inviting in Calm</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>I’ve done my best, now forget the rest.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goodness of Fit</strong></td>
<td>25 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heart-Centered Dialogue - Goodness of Fit - Mother’s Temperament</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- How do you react when you are put in a situation that is uncomfortable or stressful?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Tend to ‘go with the flow’ embrace change</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Clam up get anxious</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Withdraw but warm up</td>
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<tr>
<td>- What are the types of things that consistently make you uncomfortable (triggers)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- How do you return to calm?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assessing Baby’s Unique Style</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pause for Practice: Wait, Watch and Wonder</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart-Centered Dialogue - Baby’s Temperament</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What sights, sounds, touches, and movements bring them pleasure?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Which senses keep them calm and get their attention?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do they like firm or soft touch? Slow or fast rhythms?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Do they like soft or loud sounds? High or low voices?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Do they enjoy energetic, animated facial expressions and sounds or calm, soothing interactions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Which senses do they see their babies using most? Touch, sight, taste, hearing?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- How can you help baby learn to self-regulate?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultivating Self-Regulation and Supporting Baby’s Temperament</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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### Session Two Facilitation Outline

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Proposed Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pause for Practice - Fist Clench Exercise</strong></td>
<td>25 min</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Using Mindful Self-Compassion to Bring Back Balance</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Heart-Centered Dialogue - Bringing Back Balance</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Were they able to identify with the stress we carry and how by clenching their fists it activated the tightness we can feel when we experience stress?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- What sorts of feelings and sensations did they feel?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Were they able to find relief when they opened their fist and took in a cleansing breath?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Are there particular situations or circumstances that tend to pull them off balance?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- What do they do currently to turn that moment around?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do they calm themselves and return to center?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Compassion Focus: Self-Self-Kindness</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cultivating Self-Kindness</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Acts of Self-Kindness</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What Self-Compassion is Not</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Next Week’s Focus**
Attempt to rediscover our ‘beginner mind’. Discuss the concept of ‘falling in love with baby’ and recognizing baby’s cues. Understand the importance of being ‘attuned as well as being ‘attached’; explore the concept the Self-Compassion with a focus on Mindfulness.

**Deepen Your Awareness at Home**

**Session Two Reflections**
Provide a brief understanding of the types of questions for this week’s reflection.

- Practice being present without judgement while observing baby.
- While observing baby, take note of their temperament tendencies.
- Observe the senses baby favors to soothe themselves while interacting.
- What sorts of things are mothers doing currently to support their baby’s positive holding environment and or based on the observations, what might they do to further support

**Readings for Session Three:**

*Five Basic Elements to Foster Secure Attachment*
By: Daniel J Siegel, MD
Interpersonal Neurobiology of the Developing Mind

*Mindful Motherhood*
By: Cassandra Vieten, Phd.
2009 New Harbinger Publications

*Developing Self-Compassion & Learning to Be Nicer to Ourselves*
Tiny Buddha
By Bobbi Emel
http://tinybuddha.com/blog/self-compassion-learning-to-be-nicer-to-ourselves/

*40 Ways to Practice Self-Kindness*
By Mike O’Connor Jan, 2014

**Online Handouts:**
- Signals that your Baby is Over Stimulated by John Gottman
- Games for Stimulation

**End Session: Poem - For Presence**

Awaken to the mystery of being here and enter the quiet immensity of your own presence.

*Have joy and peace in the temple of your senses.*

*Receive encouragement when new frontiers beckon.*
### Session Two Facilitation Outline

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Respond to the call of your gift and the courage to follow its path. Let the flame of anger free you of all falsity.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>May warmth of heart keep your presence aflame.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>May anxiety never linger about you.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>May your outer dignity mirror an inner dignity of soul.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Take time to celebrate the quiet miracles that seek no attention.</em></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Be consoled in the secret symmetry of your soul.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>May you experience each day as a sacred gift woven around the heart of wonder.</em></td>
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<td>~ John O’Donohue</td>
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### Closing Ritual - Weaving the Circle

### End of the Session Summary

At Home
Session Two Course Material

Session Two Framework

Goals:

- Introduce the concept of self-soothing and Self-Regulation for mother and baby.
- Understand how the baby’s growing ability to self-regulate will affect their emotional and cognitive development.
- Recognize the co-regulation dance between mother and baby and its contribution to secure attachment, attunement and healthy development.
- Discuss ‘goodness of fit’ between baby’s actions and parental responses.
- Reflect on parental tendencies/temperament and begin the process of identifying triggers.
- Refine mother’s skills in observing baby’s temperamental tendencies but emphasize family environment and broader environment have an impact.
- Deepen the capacity to identify being out of balance and incorporate Self-Kindness to return to one’s center and sense of calm in the Mothering journey.

Theoretical Background:
The books identified below are used in session two and are referenced throughout the curriculum:

1. FIRST FEELINGS, Stanley Greenspan M.D.
2. THE CHILD THE FAMILY AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD, D.W. Winnicott
3. BUDDHA’S BRAIN, Rick Hanson
4. THE COMPASSIONATE INSTINCT: THE SCIENCE OF HUMAN GOODNESS, by Dacher Keltner
5. NEW EVIDENCE ON UNEXPLAINED EARLY INFANT CRYING: ITS ORIGINS, NATURE AND MANAGEMENT by Ronald G. Barr
6. CLASSROOM STRATEGIES FOR SELF-REGULATION, Shanker, Stuart

Winnicott: “There is no such thing as an infant, meaning that whenever one finds an infant one finds maternal care, and without maternal care there would be no infant.”

Session Prep

Consider the following items when preparing for your group session:

- **Name tags** – may still be needed.
- **Snack food** - ask for volunteer for snack going forward.
- **String and scissors** – for ‘Weaving the Circle’ closing ritual, if need to replace a string or new mother joins.
- Plan to print session two **REFLECTIONS**.
- Set your space with beauty.
New Participant:
If you have a new mother joining this session, welcome her as you have the other mothers, by calling her and reviewing the Pre Group Contact outline and questions used prior to session one as a guide.
Plan to also review session one’s core learnings including:

- Heart-felt Invitation/ Guiding Principals in session one,
- introduce the foundational pillars of the Listening Mothers™ curriculum,
- briefly cover they key elements of Self-Compassion, and the 4-5-6 Breathing exercise.
- and highlight one or two stories and overall sharing from the previous week creating a bridge for the mother as she joins the group.
- Let her know that when the group does “check-in” you will invite her to share what called her to the group in addition to her highlight of the week.
- Encourage your new mother to read the articles for session two and make an attempt to fill in the REFLECTIONS exercise for session one.

Let your group mothers know that a new mother and baby will be joining for session two and that you have shared the guiding principles. Plan to have everyone go around the circle again and give their baby names and baby’s birthdate for a brief introduction.

Arrival & Welcome

- Plan to arrive a few minutes early to set the beauty of your space.
- Welcome mothers and babies as they arrive.
- Name tags may still be useful for this session.

Transition: Once everyone is settled in, begin with a Centering Practice but going forward, add the 4-5-6 Breathing.

Pause for Practice - Centering - with 4-5-6 Breathing

Allow participants to get settled.

Invoke them to bring their hand to their heart.

Breathe in and out several times slowly.
Focus on your breath.

Take a deep breath in, hold for four and say to yourself “I have arrived,”
Hold your breath for a count of five.
Exhale for a count of six and say to yourself “I am here.”

Repeat two to three times.
Benefits of Mindful Practice:

Facilitator Note: If you have a group of mothers that express additional interest in the science of how mindful practices work, you may share with them additional detail on the Three Modes of Operation available in the Additional Supporting Reference Documents section.

Why do we practice Mindfulness?

The human body has a governing system called the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS). This system is responsible for regulating functions that are unconsciously directed such as heartbeat, digestion and breathing. The ANS has two wings; the Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS) and the Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS).

The SNS automatically administers the physical and psychological response our bodies have to a perceived threat. When our bodies are under stress, the sympathetic system secretes essential hormones that increase heartrate, alertness, glucose levels and breathing which engages our primal instinct of our ‘fight or flight’ response.

The PNS governs recovery and relaxation and is engaged after the stimulus triggering the SNS has been responded to; it relaxes muscles, slows the heart rate and lowers blood pressure. It also supports sleep and the immune function. Under normal conditions a balanced exchange occurs between the two systems, producing a feeling of well-being and confidence that we can handle what life hands us.

The autonomic nervous system (ANS) is activated by external demands. Colic is a common but distressing phenomena where a baby will have difficulty feeding and can cry every day for hours. This can cause the mother stress, engaging her SNS for an extended period of time as she may feel at a loss at not being able to soothe her baby.

Through the use of mindful practices, mothers can learn to engage their parasympathetic nervous system at will, supporting a return to one’s center, sense of calm and clarity. This calm gives mothers more control over their inner landscape and their ability to engage their babies in the loving and safe container they are beginning to understand.

Check-In

Check-ins are an opportunity to bring mother’s voices in and be witnessed in the mothering journey.

Questions:

- What is a ‘pearl’ for you from last week?
- Sometimes a highlight can be difficult. If a mother doesn’t have a highlight, ask them to share something that feels comfortable.

Facilitator Note: You may choose to briefly share a highlight from your week as a parent, demonstrating Common Humanity.

Track the sharing during check-ins as the ‘pearls’ shared can inform the course material and what you may choose to emphasize.
Review and Reflect

Transition from the check-in to the discussion of last week’s reflection. Ask if there was something that stood out for them in the reading material that they would like to share. Mothers may not have had a chance to read the articles so be prepared to share one or two salient thoughts.

Session One Reflections:

Last week’s reflections exercise provided a window to further explore where expectations and actual changes in transitioning to motherhood had been expected or unexpected.

- Additional element that has changed with in you since your baby has been born and or how you feel about the changes?
- Was there something you discovered about yourself after last week’s group?

Readings for Session Two:

*Parenting from the Inside Out*
By: Daniel J. Siegel, MD and Mary Hartzell, M.ED

*Raising Baby: What You Need to Know*
Lipari, Joanna
Psychology Today.

*Self-Compassion Fosters Mental Health*
Scientific American
By Marina Krakovsky, Jun 2012

Transition to this Week’s Focus

Guide mothers from the review of the prior week’s material regarding The Fourth Trimester and Primary Maternal Preoccupation to Self-Regulation and Interest in the World, Goodness of Fit and Baby’s Unique Style, while further exploring Self-Compassion.

The power of the Listening Mothers™ program is the way in which the lesson material is delivered. Facilitators are provided a collection of discussion materials to use each week. After a brief introduction to the material, facilitators use their understanding of the material and expertise to guide participants through open-ended questions creating space for self-discovery via dialogue rather than a traditional lecture. The beauty of the Listening Mothers™ program is that it provides context for the transition to motherhood by nurturing mothers’ inner wisdom, while providing tools by which to aid in the appreciation of their journey through self-discovery.

Life is a curriculum. The process is as important as the outcome. Remember to be flexible to make room for additional topics, recognizing that although we have a stated curriculum, each gathering is dynamic and is shaped by the stories and exchange in the room.
Child Emotional Development

Child Emotional Development is the third pillar of the Listening Mothers™ curriculum. Stanly Greenspan identifies six stages of emotional development that infants and toddlers progress through. The Listening Mothers™ curriculum provides context to the first three stages, and in our group environment and the space to practice mindful strategies with the purpose of strengthening that foundation. A Summary of the six different stages are available as part of the Listening Mothers™ pillar documents on the curriculum page.

The three stages highlighted throughout the sessions are:

- Self-Regulation and Interest in the World (0-3 Months)
- Falling in love and Appreciating Relationships (2-7 Months)
- Developing Intentional Communication (3-10 Months)

Self-Regulation and Interest in the World (0 - 3 Months)

As identified in session one, the first four months in an infant’s life are a discovery process where they are learning to process the external stimuli. Both positive and negative experiences can overwhelm an infant.

A mother’s primary focus is to help her infant navigate this new world. As a mother gains understanding of herself and her new role, they mother becomes calmer and they are better able to tune into their babies and address the baby’s needs.

A newborn is faced with two fundamental and simultaneous challenges during the first weeks of life. Greenspan says the first task of baby is to feel calm and relaxed. The second, is to become interested in the world through using senses: taste, touch, smell, sound and sight. These two tasks work hand in hand. As a baby is able to feel relaxed, they are better able to take in their environment. We call this process Self-Regulation and is the second foundational pillar of the Listening Mothers™ program.

The baby learns to Self-Regulate by experiencing a mother who helps them at the beginning to stay calm. The mother is the auxiliary regulator for her baby. Her soothing voice, self-control, gentle touch and sharing of the world around them help set the tone of Self-Regulation. This allows the baby to stay relaxed and practice using their senses. Relying on soothing faces or interesting objects help a baby to transcend internal chaos; much like an adult can feel somewhat anxious when approaching a crowd and is calmed by seeing a familiar face.

The Co-Regulation “Dance”

Co-Regulation occurs when a mother and a baby reach the point where they are “in synch” with each other because they:

- Understand what is on each other’s mind by making sense of cues and gestures.
- Recognize the effects of each other’s behavior on the other.
- Adjust their behavior to help up-regulate or down-regulate each other as necessary.

Such a “dance”, it is now recognized, begins as early as mothers and others react with infants under their care. Shanker, Stuart. (2012) Classroom Strategies for Self-Regulation. Pearson Education Canada
The ability for a baby to Self-Regulate and the Co-Regulation dance that occurs between a mother and baby, expand the foundation for life-long emotional regulation. This Co-Regulation dance gives access to a full range and the potential to modulate the intensity and the duration of emotions; supporting the fluidity to shift from one emotional state to another.

**Heart-Centered Dialogue - Self-Regulation:**

Extreme or unchecked emotional reactions ultimately impede our ability to function, but as mothers, unchecked emotional reactions impact how babies see the world. We spoke last week, about the transition to Motherhood and the unexpected demands, changes and challenges mothers find themselves needing to manage.

Using the questions below, guide a discussion with regard to how mothers knowingly or unknowingly regulate themselves:

- Can you identify some of the things that you do to return to a calm state or Self-Regulate when something does not go as planned?
- How does this feel in your body?
- Does your baby show signs of Self-Regulation?
- What does your baby already use to calm themselves and how do they do it?
- When do they feel most calm?
- When did you first notice this ability?

**Facilitator Note:** It is quite possible that as mothers have been so immersed in the care taking of their new baby and absorbed in the Primary Maternal Preoccupation phase, they have yet to be present with their child to begin to recognize their important cues. As you facilitate the above dialogue, keep in the mind the following material on Goodness of Fit/Temperament and introducing the practices of Wait, Watch and Wonder below.

**Pause for Practice: 4-5-6 Self-Compassion Pause - Inviting in Calm**

The **4-5-6 Self-Compassion Pause** is a way to help Self-Regulate by returning to center after celebrating a success, or when something does not go as anticipated. It adds a focused soothing phrase that when used with a calm breath returns us to the important and loving place of understanding and support. You can use any soothing phrase for this pause.

*Close your eyes*

*Breathing in through your nose for a count of four repeating to yourself “I have done my best”.*

*Hold your breath for a count of five.*

*Breathing out for a count of six repeating to yourself “Now, let go of the rest”.*

*Repeat two to three times.*

*Invite them back into the room and open their eyes.*

**Facilitator Note:** The important part of this exercise is that the exhalation takes twice as long as inhalation.
Goodness of Fit:
Each and every child is unique. However, research has shown that we have an “inborn filter” through which life is organized and experienced. How a parent chooses to respond and create space for their child’s tendencies, supports the growth of the individual child.

The ‘goodness of fit’ between the actions of the baby and the responses of the parent determines the harmony between them. Although babies may be predisposed to certain tendencies, family environment, broader culture and life experiences have an influence. Parents who are sensitive to their baby’s strengths and style and respond accordingly will make this transitions smoother.

There are three generally understood categories of temperament:

- **Easy babies**: tend to be calm, happy, have regular sleeping and eating habits, are quick to adapt and are interested in new experiences.
- **Difficult babies**: tend to be fussy, irregular in feeding and sleeping habits, slow to adapt, tend to withdraw in new situations and react with high intensity.
- **Slow to warm up babies**: tend to be relatively inactive, reflective and are inclined to withdraw or react negatively to new encounters but their reactions tend to gradually become more positive with experience.

Understanding a parent’s own tendencies, is an important part of understanding a child’s temperament. As adults, we have had many years to understand and appreciate the context in which situations arise and as adults, we still sometimes need to take a moment to process our emotional response. Recognizing each parents’ own triggers and temperament can guide parents in the direction of better understanding and supporting their child’s own general temperament.

Heart-Centered Dialogue - Goodness of Fit -Mother’s Temperament
Help guide a discussion that identifies aspects of the mother’s own temperament:

- How do you react when you are put in a situation that is uncomfortable or stressful?
  - Tend to ‘go with the flow’ embrace change
  - Clam up get anxious
  - Withdraw but warm up
- What are the types of things that consistently make you uncomfortable (triggers)?
- How do you return to calm?

*Facilitator Note: if the concept of falling into self-criticism emerges, you can take the opportunity to Pause for Practice and create space to complete the Fist Clench exercise and circle back to Assessing Baby’s Unique Style. The Fist Clench exercise provides an opportunity to feel the sense of release, freedom, and appreciate the process of Self-Regulation that practicing Self-Compassion provides.*

Assessing Baby’s Unique Style:
After assessing some elements of the mother’s temperament, triggers and how mothers return to calm, transition to guide them to further explore their baby’s unique temperament. As parents, it is our job to learn our baby’s cues and help them learn how to find calm.
Pause for Practice: Wait, Watch and Wonder

The premise of *Wait, Watch and Wonder* is for mothers to let their babies take the lead, be the initiator and learn to appreciate their baby’s cues for engagement through focused observation.

A parent’s role is to be curious and allow their baby to experience feelings and practice their strengths. When parents follow their baby’s lead, they will be able to help their baby calm themselves in the best way for their particular baby. Using all baby’s senses to experience the world lays the groundwork for emotional development. Interest in the world furthers the foundation for interest in human relationships.

Heart-Centered Dialogue - Baby’s Temperament:
Using the key elements below, and the process of *Wait, Watch and Wonder*, guide a discussion that moves from a mother’s ability to identify their own temperament and triggers and how they return to calm to that of their baby’s.

Chess and Thomas identify several traits that contribute to a child’s temperament. By the time a baby is about four months old, mothers should be able to begin noticing engagement and disengagement cues around the following:

- **Activity**: what kind of sound and activity level do they prefer?
- **Adaptability**: how receptive is their baby to new things how do they do with transitions or surprises?
- **Distractibility**: how easily are they distracted from discomfort?
- **Frustration tolerance/Persistence**: how long will they attempt to do something like lift their head as they give them tummy time before the baby gives up or demonstrate frustration?
- **Intensity**: how vigorously do they react when they are hungry, uncomfortable or is not fond of something?
- **Mood**: are they generally happy, content or unhappy and fussy?
- **Regularity**: how regular are they in their forming habits, like eating and sleeping, pooping?
- **Sensitivity**: how do they react to stimuli such as noise, light and textiles, human touch?

**Questions:**

- What sights, sounds, touches, and movements bring them pleasure?
- Which senses keep them calm and get their attention?
- Do they like firm or soft touch? Slow or fast rhythms?
- Do they like soft or loud sounds? High or low voices?
- Do they enjoy energetic, animated facial expressions and sounds or calm, soothing interactions?
- Which senses do they see their babies using most? Touch, sight, taste, hearing?
- How can you help baby learn to self-regulate?
Facilitator Note: This week’s REFLECTIONS encourage mothers to create space to further explore their baby’s tendencies. As the timing of the group session may not be conducive or supportive to their baby’s natural state of engagement, encourage them to take the time to practice noticing their baby when their baby may be more receptive.

Cultivating Self-Regulation and Supporting Baby’s Temperament:
Plan to weave in and reiterate the following important points about Self-Regulation and supporting baby’s temperament:

- Mothers cannot spoil their child by spending too much time with them. Don’t leave their babies unattended for long stretches of time.
- Plan to be present and interact with their babies with no distractions, for short stretches of time (5-15 minutes), several times per day. This focused interaction contributes to brain development.
- Find enjoyable ways to cultivate their child’s multiple senses and movement at the same time.
- The activity that most contributes to brain development is mothers direct interaction with their child – plan to use touch, sound and direct gazing not just stimulate them with the latest toys.
- Pausing to practice Self-Compassion as mothers navigate their baby’s temperament to celebrate a success or reflect on difficulty provides an opportunity to Self-Regulate. This allows mothers to maintain a positive holding and learning environment for their baby.
- A calm breath and a soothing touch to the heart helps return to an important and loving place of understanding and support.
Pause for Practice - Fist Clench

This Fist Clench exercise provides an opportunity to practice moving our senses ever so slightly into the ‘fight or flight’ state. This enables us to use Self-Compassion as a way to engage our parasympathetic nervous system to find inner calm, affection and kindness and help mothers return to the important and loving place of understanding and support.

Close your eyes.
Take a moment to feel the sensations of your body’s current state.
Clench your fists.

After about 20 seconds in a soft voice, while mothers are still clenching their fists, guide their internal thoughts by asking the following questions:

Focus on the feelings in your hands.
What sensations does the tightening of your hands evoke for you?
What emotions does the clenching and tightness of your fists suggest?
How does your body feel?

Now release your fists, open your hands, and display your palms facing upward.
Take a deep breath, cleansing breath – breathing in hope and happiness.
What shifts as you open your hands and face them upward?
How does your body feel?

Place one hand on top of the other, and put them both gently on the center of your chest.
Focus on and feel the warmth of your hands on your heart.
Focusing only on the process of holding your hand over your heart, feeling warmth and breathing deeply.
What feelings, thoughts or sensations does the process of holding your hand on your heart and breathing deeply encourage?

Take a deep breath, open your eyes

Heart-Centered Dialogue - Bringing Back Balance

The process of the Fist Clench exercise created a flood of focused sensations to our fists. Guide a brief discussion in the context of Self-Compassion below, that enables mothers to begin noticing those ‘triggers’ that throw mothers off balance and where they find themselves reacting.

- Were they able to identify with the stress we carry and how by clenching their fists it activated the tightness we can feel when we experience stress?
- What sorts of feelings and sensations did they feel?
- Were they able to find relief when they opened their fist and took in a cleansing breath?
- Are there particular situations or circumstances that tend to pull them off balance?
- What do they do currently to turn that moment around?
- How do they calm themselves and return to center?
Facilitator Note: Have mothers begin to informally take notice of those things that ‘trigger’ them this week. Many of them may not be aware or have ever given much thought especially being caught up in the transition to Motherhood. Session four’s lesson material and Reflections will focus on this topic.

Using Mindful Self-Compassion to Bring Back Balance

We spoke earlier about the Autonomic Nervous System and the two supporting systems, sympathetic (fight or flight) and the parasympathetic (rest and revitalize). When these systems are in balance we maintain a feeling of well-being and confidence and are able to handle what life hands us.

The clenched fist posture is a metaphor for what feeling out of balance feels like; we feel stress, pain, are uncomfortable, tight and rigid. This is often our attitude toward ourselves when things don’t go as planned; we tend to criticize ourselves.

Clenching Fists:
The process of clenching our fist taps into our ‘fight or flight’ or sympathetic nervous system. In western culture, the real threat is often trying to protect our own self-perception. We are often dragged out of balance between these two systems and into self-criticism when we feel our worth is in danger; the threat is to unveil our imperfect self. This can be especially true for women because the transition to Motherhood can seem overwhelming, but it is important to remember this transition is a natural process.

As new mothers, we are instinctively more driven by the “survival” system; constantly scanning the world for potential danger and responding to any threat. This constant state of stress, throws our internal nervous systems out of balance which can feed insecurities as our bodies’ transition from a nurturing container and we awaken our instincts becoming aware of what it means to care for this young being.

Open Fists and Self-Compassion:
When we open our hands, we feel a great sense of release, freedom, and spaciousness. Opening our hands is a fitting metaphor for mindfulness, and allowing things to be as they are.

When we put both hands over our heart, it feels safe, warm, caring, and tender. This is what Self-Kindness feels like; giving ourselves what we want and what we need.

After little sleep and constant feedings it can feel like there is no relief in sight. It is through showing kindness to ourselves that we enable our thoughts and feelings to continue to remain constant and in balance for the important role of creating the supportive container for their new baby.

When we practice Self-Compassion by incorporating Self-Kindness, Mindfulness (session three) and the understanding of our Common Humanity (session four) we are better able to maintain balance. We are able to soothe our own pain and create an environment that allows our bodies to activate the parasympathetic nervous system releasing oxytocin and other natural opiates that strongly increase feelings of trust, calm, and connectedness. Oxytocin is released in a variety of situations including breastfeeding, tender touching and when parents are present and engage with their small children. Research strongly suggests that Self-Compassion may be a compelling trigger and bridge to the calming state of the parasympathetic nervous system.
Self-Compassion Focus: Self-Kindness

**Self-Kindness:** Self-Kindness: as noted above is the conscious decision to turn toward yourself with love and kindness instead of ignoring pain or being self-critical.

**Facilitator Note:** Plan to provide a personal example or an example of when a mother might find themselves being self-critical such as not understanding baby’s cues, not finding time for herself, not getting to things that are piling up around the house, etc.

As discussed in session one, the transition to Motherhood, as a first time mother or a mother to a third child, requires a period of adjustment. Mothers long to do what is best for their babies and families. The practice of inviting in calm and consciously nurturing a loving presence with one’s own self is an important tool in the journey of motherhood.

**Cultivating Self-Kindness:**
We discussed earlier the ‘see/saw’ that happens between our autonomic nervous systems. Being able to identify when our systems fall out of balance enables us to broaden our choices when presented with a stressful moment. When we are more self-aware and non-judgmental, we are able to witness our stress, identify self-criticism or anxiety and choose Self-Kindness rather than a harmful response.

We can cultivate self-awareness through mindful attention to our breath in any given moment noticing breathing in and breathing out without judgment. When judgment arises, which is expected, notice what we feel in our body and mind, and know we can bring kindness toward ourselves by putting our hands on our heart and repeating words of comfort toward ourselves as we did in the 4-5-6 Self-Compassion Pause exercise above.

Instead of ignoring or feeding pain or discomfort, show kindness by appreciating the difficulty or the uncomfortable nature of a situation.

*Ask yourself, “How can I comfort and care for myself in this moment?”*

**Acts of Self-Kindness:**
- Finding patience with yourself.
- Acknowledging your effort.
- Trusting yourself.
- Forgiving yourself for mistakes.
- Being truthful to yourself.
- Nurturing your dreams.
- Expressing gratitude to yourself.
- Look for opportunities for success; build self-confidence.
- Positive internal dialogue.
- Have fun and enjoy life.

**What Self-Compassion is Not**
**Facilitator Note:** Please see What Self-Compassion is Not in the Additional Supporting Reference Documents section of the curriculum page to be better prepared to speak to the ideas that Self-Compassion is not pity, self-indulgence or self-esteem.
Deepen Your Awareness at Home

Encourage mothers to complete the session two Reflection exercise and read the following articles to further explore lesson material that will provide an opportunity for reflection and introspection.

Reflections for Session Two:

- Practice being present without judgement while observing baby.
- While observing baby, take note of their temperament tendencies.
- Observe the senses baby favors to soothe themselves while interacting.
- What sorts of things are mothers doing currently to support their baby’s positive holding environment and or based on the observations, what might they do to further support.
- Practice the 4-5-6 Compassion Pause.

Readings for Session Three:

Five Basic Elements to Foster Secure Attachment
By: Daniel J Siegel, MD
Interpersonal Neurobiology of the Developing Mind

Mindful Motherhood
By: Cassandra Vieten, Phd.
2009 New Harbinger Publications

Developing Self-Compassion & Learning to Be Nicer to Ourselves
Tiny Buddha
By Bobbi Emel
http://tinybuddha.com/blog/self-compassion-learning-to-be-nicer-to-ourselves/

40 Ways to Practice Self-Kindness
By Mike O’Connor Jan, 2014

Online Handouts:

- Signals that your Baby is Over Stimulated
- Games for Stimulation

Next Week’s Focus:
Rediscover our ‘beginner mind’. Attempt to rediscover our ‘beginner mind’. Discuss the concept of ‘falling in love with baby’ and recognizing baby’s cues. Understand the importance of being ‘attuned as well as being ‘attached’; explore the concept the Self-Compassion with a focus on Mindfulness.
End Session: Poem - For Presence:

Awaken to the mystery of being here and enter the quiet immensity of your own presence.
Have joy and peace in the temple of your senses.
Receive encouragement when new frontiers beckon.
Respond to the call of your gift and the courage to follow its path. Let the flame of anger free you of all falsity.
May warmth of heart keep your presence aflame.
May anxiety never linger about you.
May your outer dignity mirror an inner dignity of soul.
Take time to celebrate the quiet miracles that seek no attention.
Be consoled in the secret symmetry of your soul.
May you experience each day as a sacred gift woven around the heart of wonder.

~ John O’Donohue

Closing Ritual - Weaving the Circle

Materials: strong string that will withstand being worn for eight weeks; scissors.

String Intention:

- To be a reminder as to the importance of this special time that mothers have carved out for themselves and act as a touchstone in a ceremonial way throughout the eight weeks.

Ritual Exercise:

- Invite all the mothers to stand together in a circle.
- If you have a new mother or a mother whose string has broken, plan to wrap a string around their wrist and talk about the strength of the circle, it’s never-ending nature and how now this group of women and babies have formed a circle that will journey together for these next eight weeks.
- If mothers don’t want the string on their wrist, invite them to put it somewhere that is regularly visible and available to them, such as a diaper bag or keychain.
- After the mothers are situated, invite them to identify one word from the day that has resonated with them; A word they will carry with them through the week when they see the string and think about the group. It could be inspirational, something they want to learn more about or something they wish to focus on personally.
- Mothers may say words like: strength, honesty, compassion.

Every week at the end of the group, go around the circle and ask them to pause and identify a word they will carry with them for the week.
An additional option:
A complementary activity is to write down each of the words identified each week and compile and send them to the mothers at the very end of the group. It crafts a living poem over the course of the eight week series.

End of the Session Summary
Between your sessions, bridge the gap between the days before your next group by emailing a summary of what was covered in the prior session, a gentle reminder to practice their mindful pauses, as well as attempt to deepen their awareness by taking an opportunity to fill in the Reflection exercises and read the attached articles.
This summary also provides an invitation for a mother that might be struggling to contact you directly, assess their state and refer them out if necessary.