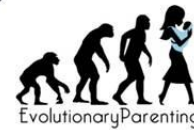


GROWING ORCHIDS

A COURSE ON RAISING THE HIGH-NEEDS OR ORCHID CHILD



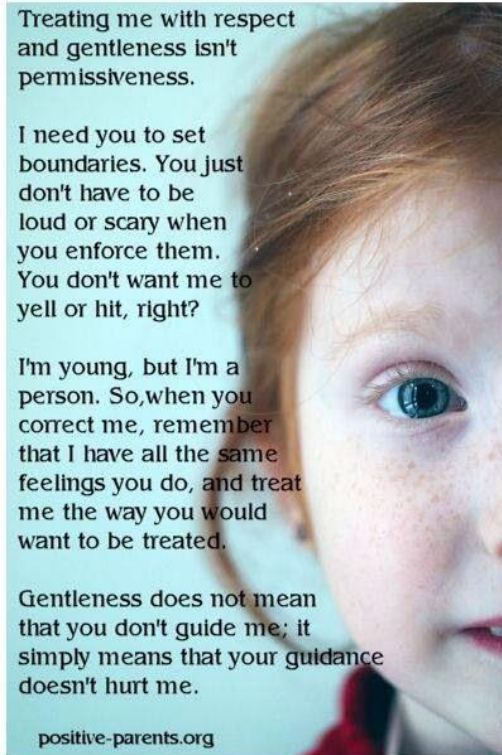
Growing Orchids: Week 3 Practical Issues Part I

Welcome to Week 3 of Growing Orchids. By now we've gone through a basic understanding of the orchid child and what their emotional and social worlds can look like (and hopefully how we can help). These next two weeks we will focus on specific elements that are relevant for many parents of orchids. This first part will focus on elements that are more central to the home life whereas next week we look at those environments that are more out of our control.

Before we begin, I want to take a moment to discuss something that I think is highly relevant for us as parents of orchids, and that is not mistaking orchidness for shyness or frailty. Many parents I speak to are confused because they think that having an orchid means their child will be withdrawn and shy almost all the time, as if the anxiety of the world around them must swallow them whole. However, many orchids will be strong, outgoing, daring children who can lead with the best of them *when in an environment they feel confident and safe in*. One day your child can be terrified of the new teacher in school and cries before going in and the next she can be running away from you leading a gang of kids at the park in a game of capture the flag. That's normal as is having an orchid who also happens to be shy, but even that shyness can manifest differently in different situations. Always remember that our orchids, being so sensitive to their environments, can seem the enigma but it's only a reflection on the environment they find themselves in.

Okay, let's begin this week's look at our home-based practical issues...

Section 1: The Effects of Parenting



Often us parents can feel like we have very little effect on our children. Our society often promotes this idea – one that makes some sense with dandelions – and this is often used to ease parental guilt over living and working in a society that does not support families and thus the type of responsive and sensitive parenting many of us strive for, but may fall short on. With orchids, however, we matter greatly and this is why we must examine the specific situations that can be hard for us and how to get ourselves out of them.

As previously discussed, the orchid has a differential susceptibility to their environment and parenting is perhaps the most crucial of these environments. The largest body of research has been on health and mental health outcomes linked to parenting styles and home environments (though they have also been linked to other environments like daycare and school which we'll get to next week). Children who are not in the type of supportive environment they need are more likely to be ill in the short and long-term with various diseases in adulthood linked to their childhood experiences. These children are more likely to suffer mental health problems (specifically the links to anxiety and depression have been robust). But in addition to this, we see more biologically-based relationships with areas such as the methylation of various genes or even the volume of the amygdala.

The question now is what are the features of these environments that seem to matter? As always, I worry when sharing this that some will panic because it fits their situation and they feel they have no control over it. In almost all cases, you do have control over how things are presented and the type of

support your child can receive. You must always remember this and I am here in office hours to discuss this as needed.

Okay, so the features of the home environment that have been identified as important include:

- Parental depression
- Marital conflict
- Parental psychopathology
- Family distress
- Parental support
- Parental warmth and sensitivity
- Supportive family interventions
- Beneficial experiences

Of note, there are other features of the environment that are outside a parent's control that are not included here like socio-economic status or dangers in the neighbourhood. They matter, but they often are part of a broader societal structure that can be more difficult to get away from, though parenting can help mitigate their effects.

These factors can seem overly vague and this is why it's important to look more clearly at what these mean for us as parents. Parental depression and parental psychopathology are ones that we often don't have control over in terms of the expression, but we do have a level of control over getting help when needed. If you find that you are struggling with any depression or psychopathology, I urge you to get assistance in whatever form you can. If you don't have access to mental health resources, we can chat in office hours or via email about affordable options that may be of assistance in your area.

Marital conflict is one that we should have control over yet we often feel we don't. If you need help managing your stress and conflict with your partner, I urge you to get it from whoever you can. If you need to separate, it may be that benefits the child more depending on the type of environment that can be provided (while separation is often a stressor for orchids, it need not be that way depending on the type of parenting that happens post-separation). The key here though is to keep your conflict away from the child, but because orchids are so sensitive, they may pick up on those undercurrents of emotions that exist in the house and that can be highly stressful and possibly traumatic for them. Thus addressing the conflict in healthy ways is always the best option.

Family distress may be a result of anything, but think about the life events that place high stress on a family: losing a job, death in the family, financial stressors, etc. All of these can have either a negative impact or we may be able to handle them in a healthier manner. Learning to cope with the adversity that you face is critical and why I highlighted earlier that you will have to work on yourself so that the stress a family faces does not fall on the shoulders of the orchid.

Positive family interventions can be beneficial in cases where there are high levels of family stress or a parent is struggling so if you are worried you may want to look into interventions that can help either your practical situation or even the way in which you handle your parenting. The ones that have been

studied have focused on providing more positive parenting and more sensitive discipline (we'll talk about discipline today too), but I imagine that any intervention that removes some of the stressors in a home would be beneficial as well. I would hope that this course may be seen as one of the positive interventions for families, but it's certainly never been tested!

Beneficial experiences here really refers to the ability to provide positive environments for the child in certain ways. Ones that have been examined include positive parenting (including maternal sensitivity and responsivity) in the younger years, paternal involvement in a child's life at a young age, particularly high mother-child quality of relationship, school-based resilience programs, experience successfully completing challenging situations, higher socio-economic status, receiving positive feedback in challenging situations, and high-quality non-parental care. Hopefully we can see at least one area of beneficial experience that we can bring in to our child's life if needs be.

Finally, parental support, sensitivity, and responsivity – in short, our parenting *quality*. I save this for last because this is the crucial one for us as we have the most control over it. It may be hard and my hope is that these next two weeks will provide you with the ideas that you may already have, but may need reinforced, to handle facing the ongoing difficulties of raising orchids in a world more suited to dandelions. Suffice it to say that it is crucial that we care for our children in a way that helps them thrive. We can overcome much of the negative in the environment around us if we can be the anchor they desperately need.

1a. The Perils of Perfect Parenting

One of the common pitfalls we can enter when we are faced with being a parent of an orchid is the feeling that we must be *perfect*. We know from experience the effects of the environment on our children and so our desire to make that go away can be massive. This can be compounded when we see how not perfect the external environment can be.

There are two serious problems with this approach. The first is practical – you are human and never will be perfect. I know first-hand the devastating effects of feeling like perfection is the only option; the anxiety and depression that can follow can eat you alive. And as a parent, you will actually be worse off for having such a mindset because your negative feelings towards yourself will be picked up on by your orchid and they may even feel like they are at fault for this. Of course, I know just saying this won't change it, so this brings me to point number two... You have the opportunity to use your imperfections to help your child cope with a world that will not always be amenable to them in ways we can be.

Let me elaborate here. We know our society is catered to dandelions; we expect children and adults to suck it up and be “resilient”, something the orchid child struggles with. However, our orchid children will live in this world and we have the wonderful opportunity to use our mistakes to teach our children about how other people will falter, what they can do in response, and what they can think about these situations in order to help them avoid the shame spiral discussed last week. With orchids, I always think of parenting as being not about being perfect in our first response, but rather being as good as we can there and then being able to turn any negative response into a positive. We use our mistakes to teach

our children they are worthy of being treated well, they are not to take on the burden of the world around them, and that people can behave in ways that do not reflect on them, even if it seems that way.

One last thought here. Sometimes it's not just about providing the perfect environment to start, but about fixing all the problems our orchids face. We fear that we have to make it better for them to thrive. No. If we can fix something easily, great – I would never suggest you never should fix things! But sometimes we can't and sometimes we shouldn't or even sometimes our kids don't want us to. What we need to remember is that we are there to *support* our orchids and help them learn to cope, as mentioned above. Sometimes this looks just like being there and holding them through a hard time and letting them come up with the solution. Sometimes it means accepting there may be no solution and that you have to help your orchid find a way to accept it. If we get too caught up in fixing things, we lose this connection and emotional support that our orchids so very much need. So if you need to think about fixing anything, just think about fixing the emotional connection in that moment – *that* is what your orchid needs most.

Section 2: Disciplining the Orchid Child



This is perhaps one of the most treacherous areas to navigate because our orchids often do very poorly with modern or mainstream discipline techniques. Due to the high sensitivity of the orchid, they struggle with *any* harsh parenting and can even interpret the more “benign” emotions of frustration or annoyance as being personal and about them. When I mentioned the shame spiral last week, this is the area where most people often see it in their orchid. Any correction can be disastrous and it can take ages for us to help our orchids understand this correction and separate the act from the self.

One mother wrote the following about her orchid daughter [in an article for Motherly](#):

Disciplining, even the gentle type we try to employ, is a game of finding exactly the right words so my super sensitive child won't spiral into a world of self-loathing when corrected.

This mom is not alone as many people who are raising orchids don't quite know what to do when it comes to correction. We see that even when we are being as gentle as we think we can be, our kids can fall apart, but we also know that if we don't correct at all, what's to become of them? It can seem like an impossible situation. Hopefully it's not though.

2a. Ways to Discipline Effectively

Obviously gentle is the key here, but sometimes what most people consider gentle still isn't effective or gentle *enough* for the orchid child. The following points are done in a somewhat logical order, though depending on the situation you may find that some may be unnecessary or be done out of order. If you need help linking these actions to specific situations for your child, please ask in office hours.

1. Remain calm. You'll hear this a lot in this course (as you've probably already noticed), but you cannot effectively correct an orchid if you are upset. This was discussed last week with respect to the big emotions, but the same applies when you are having to provide any type of discipline. If you are angry or upset, your child will be focused on that and will not be able to take in what you are attempting to say or correct; furthermore, chances are all they will hear is, “You are bad” and that is

not the message we want to send. Importantly here, you will need to focus on those “flashes” of emotion that can be negative as your orchid will more than likely pick up on them and respond to them, as we discussed last week.

2. Perspective-take. You have to first be able to identify what it is your orchid wants before being able to address any behaviour. If you miss out on what they were aiming to do, you will lose them. So if your child is hitting another, you can't jump into “Don't hit!”, instead you have to focus on the *why* of your orchid's behaviour in order to have any effective intervention at all. If an orchid doesn't feel understood, it can lead to much greater anxiety, big feels, and meltdowns which then lead to a negative cycle and the failure to have any growth from a given experience. I recommend practicing starting with either, “Can you tell me why you did that?” or if you already know, “I know you want X” to show them that you care about their motives.

For older orchids, I can't tell you how helpful it is to ask why because often you'll see what you think is misbehaviour is really just them attempting something good but going about it in a different way. I remember one time I was ready to be upset at my daughter having made a huge mess with craft stuff after we'd talked about where to use it when I managed to remember to ask instead and learned she had rushed up to make something for her brother because he had been upset just before. Yes, she shouldn't have made a mess where she did, but if I focused on that without asking, I would have potentially turned an empathic moment into something bad. Instead I thanked her for thinking of him and asked that she please clean up after, which she did.

3. Start with a positive. Saying something positive to our orchids before offering correction helps them calm and be open to what we are going to say. Sometimes this can be one of the hardest elements because some behaviours don't seem like they are that positive. Take hitting or biting, for example, most people would wonder what the heck you can say that's positive. If you've already done some perspective-taking, then you may be able to see the real reason behind the behaviour and it's often about connection which we can always think of as positive. For example, if a child regularly acts aggressively when a friend doesn't play with them or engage when they want, the positive is that this little person *wants* to be with someone and you can acknowledge that positive desire for connection with something like, “I do love how much you want to play with your sister” and then move on. But if you can't do that, you can always start with something good even if it's just the reminder that you love them no matter what.
4. Take time. Often we want to link the correction to the event and so we focus on talking to children right away, but this is the one group where this often is *not* a good idea. Because the orchid can get so worked up over whatever has happened and can take longer to calm themselves, they will rarely be able to truly learn from the experience until quite a while later. Most parents find that either in the evening (if it happened earlier in the day) or even the next morning is a good time to have a discussion about what happened, what they learned from it, and what can be done to avoid the same situation next time.

5. Be clear you're correcting behaviour, not them. As long as your child is already calm, you can discuss what you don't like about the behaviour and how this doesn't reflect on them. You can love them no matter what they do. Because orchids can internalize these negative feelings so readily, you may need to remind your child that nothing they can do will make you love them less, as we discussed in the shame section last week. I will remind you again that I have had to repeat this over and over to mine when they're feeling particularly low until it seems to break through.
6. Allow them to feel sad over it. Sometimes we feel bad because our kids respond with sadness and distress at any correction. This sadness and distress is different from shame though and is a normal part of their big feelings that come with learning that something they did may have been wrong. Their acute awareness of others (remember from last week) means they may feel that their mistake was much larger in the grand scheme of things and fear the social outcomes of it. Even though you're correcting them, you can still offer comfort and love as they come to terms with what they have done wrong and why they need to learn.
7. If you have a child who has spiraled while facing correction, apologize. I cannot stress enough that we have to own our mistakes and it can take ages to find the right way to speak to your orchid so we have to be able to acknowledge that the way we said something may have been wrong. Be clear on what your intentions were and tell them that you will do your best to find a better way to say things next time.
8. Practice makes perfect. Because orchids have trouble with memory for things when in stressful situations, it is that much harder to remember the corrections we give them in the moments. For correction to be effective, we need to help our orchids learn it and that requires practice and practice when they aren't in an emotional state. Think of it as trying to build up muscle memory like riding a bike or learning a song. In a non-stressed out moment, talk about what you want your orchid to learn – e.g., what can they do when they are angry instead of hit someone – and then take time out in your week to practice this on a regular basis. It won't be instant, but this practice will help them when they struggle and eventually they will master it.

2b. Getting Out of the House Anytime Soon?

This may not seem like an issue that deserves its own section, but it is such a common complaint amongst parents with orchids that I felt it really did deserve its own discussion here. I can't tell you how often parents speak about how hard it is just to leave the house – morning, noon, or night – and how often this is one of the biggest issues that is typically put under “discipline problems” category.

Now, I should add that this isn't just a problem for orchids as many families struggle with getting out of the house, as was so hilariously epitomized in this wonderful clip from comedian Michael McIntyre: <https://youtu.be/4GO2xz0L9gQ>. Of note, if you haven't seen the whole performance, it's totally worth it as a parent ☺ But returning to orchids...

The problem for us parents of orchids is that it's often not just about the hassles of getting out, but the inevitable meltdowns that come when we are in a rush. By now I hope you can see how often the

problem isn't leaving the house, but rather the added stress and rushed *environment* that makes leaving so difficult. Our orchids get hung up on this stress that encompasses them and so when we ask them to do things, half of it is lost in translation and then we get upset at them forgetting which leads to the internalization that they have done wrong and they are the reason we're late and they fall apart even more. By the end of these moments, you can be half an hour late, have no idea what went wrong, and still have a crying child who cannot be consoled. I've been there. There are, however, some things you can do to help you in this specific circumstance:

1. Leave lots of time to get out of the house. This is often a mistake we all make because we are so used to leaving the house quickly and rather efficiently, but the onset of kids changes this dramatically. I once heard that you should leave 10-15 min per person leaving and it's pretty accurate.
2. Start with all you need to do and get it done. Get everything packed and put in the car before you even start turning to your child so that you won't be pulled in multiple directions if they need your help. You could also have your child start some things earlier too, like packing a bag or getting dressed, when you have ample time instead of when you're rushing.
3. Be specific about what your orchid needs to do. Don't just tell them to get ready, but tell them specifically what needs to be done. You can have a visual schedule for this to help (or written if older), but all kids benefit from knowing exactly what they need to get done. Remember that if you are heading somewhere that may be stressful for your orchid (e.g., school, activity, new place), they may be distracted and so this level of specificity can help.
4. Be patient and calm. Going on with the above notion your orchid may be stressed out, so you need to be prepared for them to forget things and be kind and patient when they do. Just keep reviewing the list and if needs be, go to giving them one thing at a time to do. And of course staying calm and kind in your interactions will make things flow that much easier, for if your child stays calm, you will be far more likely to be on time (or at least not *as* late) than if you get frustrated and let that emotion take over the house.

Importantly, if you've forgotten all this and find yourself with the crying child and already late, take a moment for yourself then focus on the most important thing: your child. Be calm and provide the comfort spoken about in the big feelings section from last week until your child is calm, explain why you may have gotten frustrated and how it's not a reflection on your orchid, then start the process over with clear eyes and full hearts.

Section 3: Sleep (Or Rather, Lack Thereof)



Source: BASIS

Do orchids sleep? I believe it's a question we all ask ourselves, especially when our orchids are young. Most families I know who have orchids struggle with sleep in the younger years (and sometimes in the later ones too) and there are good reasons for this. The first is that orchids are more sensitive to and reactive to stress and nighttime is inherently stressful and scary – we are evolutionarily hardwired to fear being alone at night. Our orchids require much more from us at this period simply because their awareness of and experience of this anxiety or fear is so much greater than that of other children and they require more assistance from us to overcome this.

Here I want to highlight the five most common sleep concerns of parents of orchids and what you can reasonably expect of your orchid.

1. Difficulty falling asleep. Those anxieties that run through their heads – even at young ages when they are picking up everything from the world around them – can make falling asleep difficult. Most parents report that their orchids require more assistance to fall asleep at night, whether it's nursing, rocking, cuddling, etc. This is very normal given the struggles they can have to shut things down in their head *and* physiologically (we help regulate in this regard). This does get better with age, but I have found most orchids will require more assistance for a longer period so that expectation of shutting the door and having your child fall asleep blissfully on their own may be years and years out.
2. Frequent wakings. Especially at younger ages, orchids can wake frequently for a number of reasons and will require parental assistance to fall back asleep. The problem is that as parents we start looking for reasons for these wakings, reasons we can ameliorate, but often we just won't know until they're older. Sometimes it's fears or anxieties that creep into their head, but sometimes it's sensory and our kids may not have the capacity to share this with us. Of course you can try to address common sensory concerns such as removing any white/blue light from the bedroom, or removing tags from sleeping clothes or checking how the fabric feels, or checking temperature to ensure it's not too hot or cold, then you may find stuff that works well for you. If you think it's

psychological, then I urge you to help create space at night to calm the brain either using pink noise during your evening time or talking to your orchid about their day to help them conceptualize all that happened, especially in the event of anything distressing.

3. Lack of independent sleep. Orchids are not known for their innate ability to sleep alone and this isn't just for babies, but for years after. Much of this stems from the difficulties above and the need for co-regulation from their caregivers to help overcome these issues. Co-sleeping is a very common method of increasing sleep for everyone when you're the parent of an orchid. If you know this in advance, you can set up your sleeping arrangements in ways that will facilitate this closeness as best as possible while ensuring everyone is comfortable. This may include a side-car crib, a larger floor bed, combining beds to make a large family bed (our family's solution), and so on. Of course, this also means being aware that your bedroom will likely no longer be a place of too much intimacy so start planning for other spaces in the house to enjoy yourselves.
4. Will not tolerate a crib. Many (but not all) orchids seem to end up hating the crib at a certain point. I don't know if it's sensory (crib mattresses are often very hard and this may be an issue for some) or if it's the anxiety that can come with feeling trapped and unable to have control over moving out of that space. The problem for parents of orchids who are desperately pushing the crib is that it can lead to massive bedtime resistance. The orchid will extend the anxiety of the crib to the entire room and can end up fighting any cue to sleep (and remember, as they are highly aware of their surroundings, they know those cues well) which creates larger problems. Often getting rid of the crib or using it as side-car crib can make a difference.
5. Remember changes can take a long time. It's important to remember that orchids are just as sensitive to their nighttime environment as they are their daytime environment. In order to feel safe, they need you and they may take more time to adapt to changes like moving to a new room. If you are doing such moves (when your orchid shows signs of being ready), then I strongly suggest having a plan that involves you being in the new space for a while to help your orchid develop a sense of safety. This means that you will need space in their room for a parent for a while as they adapt, then you can start moving out for the first part of the night, but return at first waking for the rest of the night. With orchids, one of the concerns is how quickly they can seem to make negative associations when they are anxious so you want to ensure any transition is as anxiety-free as possible, and that just takes more time.

Section 4: Dealing with Change



Source: Doug Savage

As discussed in Week 1 there are three types of change that orchids can struggle with – environment, caregivers, and routines – and you may find your orchid struggles with some or all of them, but not always consistently. The problem with having a child that struggles with change is that change is one inevitability of life; we simply can't go through life with nothing changing! The way in which we approach change with our orchids, however, can help them through the more benign changes that we all face and even some of the more difficult times.

Why is change hard? Remember that change is really all about the unknown, unexpected, and unpredictable. Whenever any of us face change, there is anxiety. We are creatures who thrive on knowing what is coming next – it helps us survive – so when we face times in life that are less predictable and we don't know what's going to happen we worry. We worry about all the possible outcomes that may happen and as you learned last week, the orchid is particularly susceptible to worry or sensing threat and change is a breeding ground for such worry. We also have to be more vigilant because we don't quite know what's going to happen. Of course, if you're already hyper-aware of your surroundings, going into even greater overdrive can lead to the type of cognitive overload that we discussed last week. And then of course there is having to process all that information until it becomes predictable, again another element that can lead to overload.

So is it any surprise change is hard? Probably not, but similar to the perils of perfect parenting discussed above, the answer is not in providing no change for our children. After all, change will come for them and a life with no change would be a sorry life indeed. So what can we do for them?

The key to handling change is the ability to provide the very opposite of change: sameness or routine. Even our orchids can handle the changes if they are provided with enough of the same in their home life. Now, this "same" does not have to be anything exciting, just the same, and what that looks like for each family will differ. Some may have dinner together each night or go out to dinner on the same night every week or go to church together weekly or have a game night or any number of things. In the case

of the orchid, the more of these routines, the better, because they help to counter the uncertainty and fear that comes with the ongoing change around them.

The following are some key points to remember about how to make routines the most effective:

1. Routines should speak to your child and provide them with a safe environment. For example, driving to and from school may be a routine, but if you don't talk or engage in the car, it may not provide that counter to the anxiety your orchid can experience. In contrast, having time as a family at dinner is likely a period of safety and engagement that can help calm your child.
2. Routines can involve only the child if they ground the child. For example, my daughter needs time to play by herself and be with her thoughts each day. It doesn't need to be at the same time every day (though she certainly does best when it happens first thing in the morning), but she needs this to center herself. Similarly, your orchid may need time to feel like they are in control of what they do – the ultimate predictability – so providing that can be essential.
3. It's good to have routines that center on relationships with given people so that if there is a change in caregiver, the routine associated with that particular person can continue and provide some overlap. For example, if your child is in daycare, having a special greeting with their primary carer can help them feel safe at the start of the day and can be extended to the next carer or teacher they encounter.

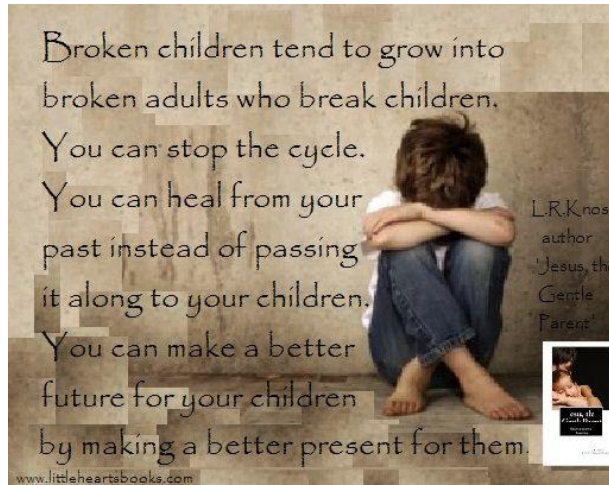
Of note, having regular, special time with a primary carer – typically Mom or Dad – is often essential for orchids, but this may not be as translatable as with another carer as highlighted by my daughter struggling with her Dad in the restaurant which was discussed last week. Should something ever happen to me, I would not expect him to take over that day (though he could try it to see if it brought any comfort), but rather to potentially take over some of the smaller moments, like our morning cuddles or watching certain shows together.

4. Routines take time to become effective. Just like anything that is supposed to be predictable and safe for our orchids, routines will take time so if you know you have an orchid, it is never too early to start building up some easier ones like dinner or special weekly time (even if what is done in that time changes). For carers, have your child develop a special greeting that they can use to help them feel comfortable with people and you can start to introduce it to anyone who will be caring for your orchid outside of you.

In addition, many parents of orchids find the use of visual schedules to be helpful. There can be a lot to remember about what is going on in our lives and our orchids can struggle with trying to maintain a semblance of control over their day-to-day lives if it is changing. If there are different activities each day or changes to the usual routine, having a way for orchids to see this can help counter the fear over this change. It also means they don't have to keep it all in their head which can be stressful and add to their cognitive load. Having a weekly schedule up somewhere lets the child see what is happening and when. If you can add in those key routine moments as well, it helps frame the uncertain parts as they will be surrounded by safe and certain events.

Remember: You cannot stop change from happening to your child, but you can help them through it which will serve them for years to come.

Bonus: The Adult Orchid – Linking Early Home Environments to Current Issues



Chances are if you're interested in this section it's not because your partner or yourself feels like one of those successful orchids who has flourished and has topped the rest of your peers in many regards. Chances are, you or your loved ones still struggle. Perhaps not as badly as some may fare, but you notice the struggles and wonder why you (or they, but I'm going to stick with you from now on) seem to have been unable to overcome what others have. Why did a divorce or move affect you so profoundly and in ways that others shrugged off? What if you feel this way despite thinking back to generally a good solid upbringing? What happened?

I hope this week has answered some of that even without me adding another word. However, you can leave it to me to *always* add words.

I first want to reiterate what I spoke of last week when discussing the emotional life of the adult orchid and that is that therapy is strongly recommended if you can find someone you trust and that you can afford. If not, I strongly suggest workbooks or workshops that can help you work towards overcoming some of the struggles you faced yourself. On top of this though, I want to offer a few words that may help.

First, there is no quick fix. If you experienced higher stress situations as a child and have struggled, there is no magic bullet to fix things. It is a *process* and one that can take quite a while to wrap your head around and see how you can find new ways of coping. Remember that this isn't about never feeling overwhelmed or anxious, but about learning ways to not let it overwhelm you or finding healthy coping habits. It may be useful to just jot down some of the events of your childhood that you felt were particularly stressful for you, even if you think they should be no big deal now (or felt that you were overreacting then). Think about how you felt in the moment through this new lens of being an orchid and see if you can provide for yourself the understanding that the child you may not have received.

Second, know that you will likely be triggered by your child's orchidness. This is very common if you haven't had the chance to learn positive emotion regulation techniques and so I urge you to first start by finding ways that you can at least *avoid* having your triggers result in inappropriate responses that may

cause your child to develop the same triggers you have. For many, it's talking to your partner about walking away when triggered and letting the other take over. My husband and I have words we use when we see the other is triggered and hasn't noticed which allows us to step in and let the other person leave. We don't always leave happy being pushed out, but within minutes of calming we know it was exactly the right thing to do.

Third, try to move away from the blame game and focus on where your control is. Sometimes our parents really are to blame, but at the end of the day, having them own up to that is not an area in which we have any control. What we control is how we respond to our triggers and choose to move forward or not. This is likely the hardest issue and why I firmly believe therapy is in the best interests of anyone struggling with their upbringing and the fallout either behaviourally or psychologically. A reminder that do not control other people's behaviours, emotions, responses, or anything really, nor do you necessarily control your own emotions as you experience them. You do control your responses to your emotions, your behaviours, and the environments you can provide for yourself and your children (sometimes).

The crucial part to remember here is that it's okay to acknowledge your struggles and it's okay to take time to deal with them, but you also need to take time to identify ways to avoid putting the same struggles on your own orchid. You don't have to be perfect, just aware, as hard as that can be.

This is the end of Growing Orchids: Week 3: Practical Issues Part I