

How Parents Can Start Their Deep Inner Work in 6 Steps

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SPEAKERS

Seth Perler

Seth Perler 00:00

Hey, parents and teachers, what's going on? It's me, Seth, and today I'm going to talk about deep inner work. I had an awesome question in one of the Facebook groups about deep inner work. Deep inner work refers to self-development, work that you're doing on yourself, as a parent, as a teacher, as an adult, I do it many, people do it. The deep inner work is dealing with the very difficult questions, the things that are inside of us that are kind of scary. And I'm going to read this question to you, and then we're going to talk about the deep inner work. I'm going to talk a little bit about this model that I am using for today to sort of describe this and download this to your brain.

Seth Perler 00:36

So let's go ahead and start here with the question that I received in the Facebook group. So we just had TEFOS, The Executive Function Online Summit, and there were all these speakers, 24 speakers total. There are many themes that popped up from all these executive function experts that were repeated over and over and over, which I think is an amazing thing for parents and teachers to know, because when you hear the same exact thing over and over and over by people in the field, even though they're using completely different words or models to describe it, what it does is it tells you that there is a way to help your child. There are ways to help your child, they're concrete, this is doable, it can

sometimes feel very abstract. But we can do this. There are answers. There are people that spend their lifetimes working on this stuff. So one of the recurring themes that many of the speakers brought up was this, and this is how they wrote it. The person writes, "There was an emphasis on parents diving in, doing deep work, and processing childhood issues in several presentations. How do you even get started with that? I have a great counselor, but she hasn't delved too much into my childhood, does it help to have a counselor versed in giftedness? Are there any good books? How do you start that conversation with your counselor?"

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Seth Perler 02:05

I'm going to explain the answers to this, I'm going to give you six really clear steps that you can take to get started with this. But before I start, I want to talk about the way that this is framed. And one of the questions, one of the parts of it, it says processing childhood issues in several presentations. The term 'childhood issues' can be interpreted negatively, so I don't want you to be scared away by childhood issues. So we all have baggage, we all have stuff. We all have attachment wounds, we all have stuff in our past. But what I don't want you to walk away from is thinking is that you have to somehow go back into your childhood, bring up all of these things, delve into all of them and figure out like some magical way that you're to find something crazy back there that's gonna like just like answer everything. Here's the truth about it. It's messy. Some people have had, some of you watching, have had a lot of trauma. And some of you have had very little trauma, and there are many different types. But we have all had experiences, dysfunctional experiences, that have shaped us. And what we want to do with this deep inner work is sort of get to the root of what is influencing us. So I just don't want you to get sidetracked or be like, "Oh, this doesn't apply to me, I don't have any childhood issues." Look, we were impacted and influenced at young ages, we were taught by our parents and the people around, all the people around us, how to live in this world. And some of the things that we learned where maladaptive, were dysfunctional, are not working for us. And if you are a parent, or a teacher, or an adult who wants to get started diving into doing deep inner work, then I'm going to tell you how to do that. I have six concrete things you can do. And for those of you dads that are watching, not many dads watch this stuff, but I'm just so glad you're here. I'm in a men's group myself, this absolutely applies to men as well, in case you were wondering, so I'm really glad you're here watching this. So there are six steps that I'm going to go through. These are just steps that I made up, but I think it will explain it very clearly. Before I get there, though, we're looking at how to do deep inner work on ourselves. And it can be scary, but it is doable.

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Seth Perler 04:39

So here's what I'm going to start with. This is just my model, there are many models that describe a similar thing, but this is how I'm talking about it. Basically we are looking at who is in charge, who is driving our action. And the problem is when we are taking action in our relationships, in our culture, in our careers, in our lives, when we're taking action, and we are not really in charge. And what I mean by that is all of us, all of you, have had the experience where we look back on something we're like, "Yeah, well, if I knew what I know, now, I would do things differently." Why? And we'll also say things like, "Yeah, I had a feeling that wasn't going to work out." Why did we have that feeling? Because there was a voice that was telling us and we were driven by the other voices, what the heck does that mean? Here's what it means. The body and the story often drives us. The body and the story. The body and the story, and we want to get to the observer. Here's what that means. What often drives us, we are very often unconscious, robotic, we are just habituated and patterned to do things unconsciously, and just go through life, not making conscious choices, and they can often get us in trouble. They can often not only get us in trouble, but not get us what we really want. The type of connection, and relationships, and feelings of deep sense of peace and joy, and fulfillment in life. We are being ruled by these two things, when we are being ruled by the body or the story.

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Seth Perler 06:18

What does that mean? The story is in the mind, the story, the narrative. We often make mountains out of molehills, but at the time we don't know that we're doing it. We often misjudge or misperceive things, we often blame others, we feel like a victim, saying "It's their fault, they did this, they did that. If they weren't like that, then I wouldn't be going through this." So we often get stuck in a story or a narrative that is based in fear, that might be based in not being real honest with ourselves about the the entire situation, that might not be empathetic, and compassionate, and understanding of the other person's point of view. We can get stuck in a story or a narrative in our mind that we believe; we really believe it. Think about your child. Your child has a story that they really believe. And you as the adult might be able to look and be like, "That is not the reality of the situation." Your perception of the situation is off, but try and get them to see that and that's very difficult. So that's what we're doing here, is we're trying to as adults, see where our story or narrative in our mind off. And then the body is that we all also have physical reactions, repulsion, withdraw, a constriction, or a pushing away, an uncomfortableness that we often feel accompanied with our story. So we have a story, and that story usually is one of fear, that we're not safe, that we're being threatened somehow. Somehow, that's the story, that we're not safe, we're being threatened, and there's fear that we're not going to get what we want, or we might lose something. So we have this fear in the story, and then the body is reacting to that. Usually we're responding with fight, flight, or freeze, where the story is telling the amygdala, "Hey, we're in trouble. We're not safe," the amygdala shoots

a message to the adrenals, adrenaline goes to the heart, the muscular systems are ready for fight, flight, or freeze. We're not in our prefrontal thinking brain anymore. We're not in our good decision making brain, we're cloudy, we're running on fear or anger, or these sorts of emotions when we're not really clear on the situation. So we go back to this, and what happens is, is we hear the story, or we hear the body, we have these uncomfortable feelings, and we want them to stop. We don't want to feel uncomfortable, we want to feel in control. But those stories often drive us to make decisions that are not really working for us in the long run, they may seem to in the short run, okay. So what we want to do when we are in a story is we want to get to emotional regulation. The ER, emotional regulation, where we are the observer. And what that means is it's this idea that there's a part of the mind that's observing everything where we can sort of step back and say, "Whoa, Seth, dude, why'd you flip off that person in the car? Like, Is that really necessary?" Don't worry, I don't do that, actually I did at once. But the the point is, are we going to listen to that story or are we going to listen to the observer? When we get really nervous, you know, if we see something, if there was a car that "Oh, I almost got an accident and I'm nervous and I'm angry." Well, that story is "You're threatening me," or "Your car is threatening me so I'm angry and I'm going to fight, flight, or freeze to take care of the situation." Well, we want to get to is to the observer to say "Okay, maybe they're having a bad day, maybe they were looking at their cell phone (that really frustrates me), but you know, we're safe, let's move on, blah, blah, blah." This is just an example of a story. But the idea is we want to get to the observer, that objective part in the mind, the non-judgmental, non-critical, clear thinking part of the mind, that can observe the situation in a non-judgmental way so that we can make better decisions. But again, the problem parents is, is that we are often driven by fear, by the uncomfortable sensations in the body that we want to stop. So we resolve that by dealing with the story however we deal with it.

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Seth Perler 10:43

I know, that was a little abstract, but let me get on with this. So, basically, there are six steps that I'm going to suggest about how you start to do the deep inner work so that you can differentiate between the story and the body and hear the observer. Now, the observer can also be called your heart, your gut feeling, what you know to be true, you might be a God consciousness, a higher awareness, your higher self, people call it all different things. Just a greater awareness. So that awareness, that voice, is always there. The problem is the body and the story and the narrative are very, very, very loud. They scream at you, "Oh, that restaurant, they they messed up, blah, blah, blah," whatever the situation is. The story is very loud. The the quiet voice, your hearts voice, the gut, the the truth, is very quiet. So that's what doing your own deep inner work helps you do, is to hear the quiet voice.

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Seth Perler 11:52

Number one: So the first step, and for the parent who wrote this in, who wrote this comment in the Facebook group, the first step you've done, the first step is being honest with yourself. We have to be honest with ourselves. We don't have all the answers, we need help. That is a good thing. That's when we want to teach our kids, how to ask for help, how to have some humility, how to know when we've gone beyond our limits with things. So the first step is to be honest with ourselves and say, "Hey, I want to grow, I want to be a better parent or a better teacher, or a better human, or a better coach, or a better me," or whatever. So being honest with ourselves that "Hey, you know, there's some things that I've got some cognitive dissonance with about me. There are some things that I'm, you know, I'm not crazy about about myself, I'd like to look into that." Okay. So the first thing is to be honest with yourself, you are there. If you're watching this video, you're there. If anybody who's still watching this wants to grow as a person, so don't overthink it. Step one. Just getting honest with yourself. "I want to grow, I want to learn, I want to see what drives me, is that the narrative and the story and the body? Or am I more being driven by the observer, and the truth, and logic, and reason, and things that are really in everyone's best interest?"

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Seth Perler 13:10

Number two: Step two is what I'm calling an anti-step. Now I just made these six steps up. But I think you'll understand where I'm going with this. Step two, in where you start to do your own deep inner work is an anti-step. It's not a real step, it's what not to do. Don't get stuck in analysis paralysis. So oftentimes, after people get honest with themselves, something happens. They're like, "Man, I really want to work on this aspect of myself." And they start thinking about it, they think, "How am I going to do that?" Then they get stuck. They get into analysis paralysis, they think, "Oh, I have to get all my ducks in a row and figure out everything before I can get started attacking this stuff. I need a linear step-by-step way to go through this stuff. I don't feel like it's the right time. I don't know if I'm ready." There is no right time. Okay. We have these limiting thoughts, limiting beliefs, scarcity beliefs, these scarcity stories or limiting stories that we say, "Oh, I can't afford a counselor. Oh, I can't afford that book. Oh, I don't have time to read that book. Oh, I don't like support groups. Oh, they don't work for me. Oh, this doesn't work for me. Oh, that wouldn't work for me." We have these limiting beliefs, these blinders that keep us from having an open mind and it's called analysis paralysis. So step number two, the anti-step is don't get into analysis paralysis. Don't overthink it. Okay.

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Seth Perler 14:31

Number three: Now, step number three is to seek. So there's a quote by Paulo Coelho, I

don't know if I said his name right, the the author of The Alchemist that I love. The quote is "When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it." So my step number three is to seek. It doesn't matter how you seek, in my belief, in my sort of spiritual belief or whatever, but if you put your energy out to the universe, I don't care how you do it, if you pray, or whatever. Really, you want to go scientific and you use the reticular activation system and you focus on finding solutions. So now step three, you start seeking solutions. Look everywhere, ask the universe, ask your religion, ask your priest or rabbi, ask your friends, ask yourself, ask your parents. And kind of the question you're asking them, or you're asking yourself is "Hey, look, if you could give me any advice," I just made this question because I thought this is a good way to do it. But say, "Hey, if you could give me any advice, and you knew I would listen to you openly, and without getting offended, what would you say to me?" And then really hear what they say, and then say, "Tell me more," and really listen to what they say. But next step is to start seeking, start looking for answers, start looking for the deep inner work and where to start, and ask people, "How do you do your deep inner work and what ideas you have, or books, or resources, or whatever?" But don't get too overwhelmed. Just start seeking, you're going to find the answers once you start seeking. So again, the first step to where do you even start is being honest yourself. Second step was, don't get stuck in analysis paralysis. The third step is to start seeking.

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Seth Perler 16:24

Number four: Take imperfect action. Just do something, it doesn't really matter. This is a messy nonlinear process, and it works. But you have to do something, there is no right place to start, just do something. Now one of my favorite, favorite, most amazing things to do is journaling. And you know, a lot of people are like, "I don't like the limiting belief, I can't journal, I don't like journaling, it takes too much time, I can't think, I can't write, blah." That's just a belief. That's just a story. I cannot tell you how powerful journaling has been in my life, because it slows me down and it gets me thinking on a different level and getting more clarity about, and more of the observer, and I get more clarity about the story that I'm living in, and whether or not that story is working for me. Another thing you can do is get an... Oh I'm going to show you why, I'll show you the books later... Get a therapist, a counselor, a psychiatrist, a psychologist, whatever. You can get a somatic therapist, I'm a big fan of somatic therapist, you can get a trauma therapist, what's called a CBT therapist, not to be confused with CBD, cognitive behavioral therapy, therapist medications, biofeedback. There are many ways to go. Just start seeking. Next thing you can do is talk to a friend over and over and say, "Hey, I'm going on this journey, a new chapter of my life, I'm going to start looking at myself in a different way than I ever have. Can I talk to you often about it? Can we check in do accountability?" whatever. The next thing is to meditate and reflect, you can do yoga. It gets your mind very still and it gets

you into a meditative state. But meditation, I cannot tell you enough, when I went through panic attack disorder for three years after I was in a coma with basically SARS but ARDS (Accute Respiratory Distress Syndrome), I was in coma for nine days. After I came out of the coma, I had trauma from that and panic attacks for years where I thought I was suffocating. And meditation was the number one thing that helped me through that period, and helped me because when I was having panic attacks, what do you think that is? That's the body. The story was "I'm suffocating, I was in a coma, I can't get enough oxygen, my lungs don't work, right and I'm gonna die." That was my story. And I'm scared. So the body was having a reaction of anxiety and panic, okay. And in meditation, I got to really listen, to be the observer and observe these things in a nonjudgmental way. And this was not easy, and it's not overnight, but I got to start to observe them where they lost their power over me. They weren't ruling me or driving me anymore. And anxiety and panic no longer do that to me. The next thing is books, podcasts, videos, things like that. YouTube, okay, there are some people I'm going to mention to you. One is Alan Robarge, he's on YouTube. One is Stan Tatkin, he's one of my favorite authors in the attachment world. There's a YouTuber called the Crappy Childhood Fairy. I swear that's what she calls herself, the Crappy Childhood Fairy. She's fantastic. Katie Morton, who I tried to get on the summit this year and couldn't, maybe she'll be on next year. Same with Alan Robarge, I tried to get him on. And there's a YouTuber called the Holistic Psychologist. She is fantastic, she has an amazing way of explaining things. And then we're going to put a plug in for my dear friend Debbie Reber. Her podcast, the TiLT Parenting Podcast, is amazing because she interviews all these experts that go from so many different angles. The next thing I want to mention to you in terms of imperfect action is group programs. Support groups, weekend immersion groups, online courses, men's groups. Like I said, I'm in a men's group, I've been in many different types of groups for things like this. They're amazing when you see other people who are like-minded and trying to grow as well, and what you can learn from them that kind of a space. The next thing I want to mention in terms of this is to start researching topics. So research attachment, theory, research, polyvagal theory, research spiritual approaches, if that's something that you're into. And I'll show you a couple books, or talk about a couple of those in a minute. Then the next thing you can do is creative outlets. So you can do music or dance, or you can do even having a pet can be amazing, talking to your pet. Pets can really help you regulate emotion. There's equine therapy, there's so many more creative outside-the-box things that can be very healing and very revealing. Poetry, music, whatever you do. Then the last one I have is ask others what to do. Ask people, ask people in the grocery store that you don't know, ask people that you do know ask, ask anybody what they do to sort of do that. So those were the imperfect actions, I just listed a bunch of imperfect actions that you can start with, so jot some of those down, get started.

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Seth Perler 21:36

Now I'm going to show you a couple of books. So I like Stan Tatkin a lot. He's in the attachment world. There's a book called 'Polyvagal Theory for Therapists,' which I'm not a therapist, and that book is amazing. Also 'The Self-Driven Child,' we had the authors of this on TEFOS last year. That is a fantastic book to get started. 'Soul Craft' is a really interesting book that I don't want to ruin for you, but really talks about how to do an approach to deep inner work. I have not read this book, but I found it in a bookstore or a used bookstore, 'You're Not Crazy. It's Your Mother Understanding and Healing Daughters of Narcissistic Mothers.' So then there's Brittany Brown, this is one of Brittany Brown's book, 'The Gifts of Imperfection,' 'The Writers Journey,' which really helps a lot with journaling and stuff. So anyhow, there's a few books, but obviously there's a million out there.

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Seth Perler 22:45

Number 5: Okay, step number five. So we just did take imperfect action, step five, the next step. The next step, step number five is persistence. Patiently and persistently keep going. There's an old Calvin Coolidge quote, "Nothing in the world can take the place of Persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and Determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan "Press On" has solved and will always solve the problems of the human race." So the next step here is persistence. Keep taking imperfect action, just keep going. It's baby steps people, it's the tiny things, that's what's gonna get you there. And finally, number six, oh, and I say this in my coaching a lot. The baby steps, the micro-successes, two steps forward, one step back, it feels like you're not getting traction but you will. And then number six.

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Seth Perler 23:56

Number six: The last step, the last step isn't even a step. Let me go over the first five to lead into this. If you are honest with yourself, you want to grow, then you don't get stuck in analysis paralysis and overthinking. Then number three, you seek and you look for answers. Then number four, you take imperfect action. Then number five, you persist and keep taking imperfect action. Then you will come to number six. I promise you, I promise you, these are very long journeys. Oftentimes when you're looking at things that are difficult to look, it has a very long dark tunnel. It feels like "When am I ever going to get out of this?" There will come a day, with this step six, if you are persistent, there will come a day when you look back and you say "Wow, I started doing this deep inner work stuff. I started working on this, that and the other. I'm not there anymore. It's behind me. I am not

there anymore." I promise you, people watching, this will happen. If you're persistent. You'll be able to look back and say, "Wow, I've got some peace around that issue. I've got some peace in my heart. I've done some healing around this. I've got deeper joy, deeper peace, I've got a little bit more self-love, and self-compassion, I'm in a better place. And I'm in a better place where I can be of better service to my family and my children." And if you're a teacher, to the students that you work with, and yourself in the world, in your community. There will come a day when you look back and those things that can feel like you're very stuck in right now will be behind you in a positive way. Where you haven't just avoided them, but you've worked through them.



Seth Perler 25:55

That's all I got for today. I didn't even introduce myself in this video. My name is Seth Perler. I'm an executive function coach in Colorado, and I help struggling students navigate this thing called education so that they can have a great life. If you like what I'm doing, give me a thumbs up. Leave a comment. Tell me what you think of this video. What are your thoughts about this stuff? What ideas do you have? Share that below and subscribe on my YouTube channel, that helps my channel grow. And on my site, SethPerler.com. I have free freebies for parents and teachers, you can sign up to subscribe. Every Sunday I send something out. Have a fantastic day. Be good to yourself. I hope you have peace and joy and connection with your kids. The most important thing in the world is your relationship with your kids. If you have good connection, enjoy with your family today. Take care