

saw his face flush, his brow furrow and lips grimace, which gave me just a moment to prepare myself as his nervous system tipped into fight mode. He grabbed my arm and squeezed it with force, his mouth descending to bite my arm. "Ouch! Rylan! My arm hurts!" I grasped at a sudden inspiration, to guess which developmental part of him was present in this moment and to name it. "Rylan, I'm checking in to see what part of you is at choice right now. Is it the really little Rylan or is it the young man Rylan?" His eyelids widened as our eyes connected briefly, his gaze moved slightly off to his right, and his grip relaxed as he paused. I empathized, "Is really little Rylan scared and overwhelmed, wanting to know just how much he matters?" His neurobiological system calmed with the release of oxytocin as his face softened and his eyes came back to meet mine again. "Is Rylan the young man there with you? Can he come out now to support you with some tools?" Letting go of my arm and turning his body towards me, with great inner strength and inspiration, he said with a few tears, "Okay, truth or dare?" Recognizing his favorite new game, I smiled, reaching out to shake his hand, and said softly, "Welcome back, and thanks for your support." With a louder voice I said, "Truth!" And the game was on. "Do you have five kids?" he asked. "Yes," I replied. He hugged my sore arm and slipped under it for me to return his warm embrace, releasing more oxytocin and further

calming our nervous systems. "Your turn to ask me now!" And we continued on with our errands.



This driving experience illustrates the power of connection. When I gain attunement with my son, I sense with more ease how to empathize, to name experience, and to be with him in such a way that he feels known. I feel inspired witnessing how naming Rylan's inner community empowered him to stretch his window of tolerance and hold his younger self with compassion. As I hold him, metaphorically, he learns to hold, nurture, and soothe himself. This is the root of a healing empathic connection. I am committed to helping those roots grow strong and deep.

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For nothing is fixed, forever and forever and forever, it is not fixed; the earth is always shifting, the light is always changing, the sea does not cease to grind down rock. Generations do not cease to be born, and we are responsible to them because we are the only witnesses they have. The sea rises, the light fails, lovers cling to each other, and children cling to us. The moment we cease to hold each other, the sea engulfs us and the light goes out.

-James Baldwin