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# From The Green Couch

Term 1 - 2026



## The Generational Echo: When Our Childhood Shapes Our Parenting

Parenting rarely begins when our child is born. In many ways, it begins much earlier in our own classrooms, playgrounds, and homes. Long before we attend our first parent-teacher meeting or help with homework, we carry with us memories of what it felt like to be a learner, a friend, a child trying to find their place in the world. Sometimes these memories quietly guide us. Other times, they surface unexpectedly during homework hour, before a sports match, or when report cards are released. That familiar knot in the stomach, the urge to protect, push, or reassure, may belong not only to our child, but also to a younger version of ourselves. This is not failing. It is part of being human.

### How Our Past Shows Up in Our Parenting

Every parent brings a personal history into the relationship with their child. Our experiences of encouragement or criticism, success or struggle,

belonging or exclusion can shape how we interpret our children's experiences. A parent who felt unseen at school may be especially alert to their child's emotions. One who thrived academically may assume school comes naturally to everyone. Another who struggled may worry deeply about achievement or resilience. This is referred to as emotional memory: the way past experiences influences present reactions, often without conscious awareness. More recently, biological science has added another layer to this understanding through the study of epigenetics, the idea that life experiences can influence how certain genes express themselves, particularly in relation to stress, emotional regulation, and resilience. This does not mean our children are destined to repeat our stories. Rather, it reminds us that development happens within relationships, environments, and emotions that span generations.

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### From Early Childhood to Adolescence: Different Ages, Same Echo

While children change dramatically from age four to eighteen, the generational echo can appear at every stage. For parents of young children, it may show up in the urge to rush milestones or shield children from frustration. Play, experimentation, and emotional expression can sometimes feel uncomfortable if these were not fully supported in our own childhoods. For parents of primary school children, academic expectations often come into sharper focus. Reading levels, marks, friendships, and confidence can trigger memories of comparison and performance whether from our own experiences or those we observed in others.

For parents of teenagers, the echo can feel even louder. Adolescence often mirrors our own search for identity, belonging, and independence. We may react strongly to risk-taking, withdrawal, or resistance not because our child is failing, but because we remember how vulnerable that stage once felt.

Across all ages, the intention is usually the same: love, protection, and hope for a better path.



### When Love Becomes Projection

Many parents long to spare their children the pain they once felt. Others hope their children will achieve what they felt unable to. Both responses come from care, not criticism. Challenges arise when our child's experience begins to carry the weight of our unresolved emotions. Children may start to feel responsible for meeting expectations that are not entirely theirs, or uncertain about expressing emotions that feel too large for the moment. Children thrive best when they are seen for who they are not as reflections of past hopes or disappointments, but as individuals discovering their own strengths, interests, and capacities.

### Awareness Without Blame

The aim is not perfect parenting, nor the removal of our personal histories. Our experiences also contribute wisdom, empathy, and perspective. What supports healthy development most powerfully is awareness, the ability to pause and ask: Is this my child's experience, or am I responding to something from my own past? When parents model reflection, emotional honesty, and growth, children learn that learning does not end with school—it continues across the lifespan.



### Creating Space for Your Child's Story

Each child grows up in a world different from the one their parents knew. Educational systems evolve. Social contexts shift. Technologies transform daily life. While core values remain important, experiences do not repeat themselves exactly.

Children benefit from caregivers who listen attentively, guide thoughtfully, and allow room for mistakes, rest, and exploration. When we hold our own childhoods gently acknowledging their influence without allowing them to dominate, we create the safest space for children to develop confidence and self-understanding.

### A Closing Reflection

Our children do not require parents with flawless pasts. They need parents who are reflective, compassionate, and prepared to grow.

By becoming aware of the generational echoes that shape our parenting, we gain something invaluable: choice. And within that choice lies the possibility of transforming inherited experiences into insight, connection, and resilience.

### Reflection Questions for Parents

Which moments in my child's learning or social experiences evoke the strongest emotional response in me? Am I responding to my child's present needs, or to memories from my own childhood?

What experiences from my upbringing do I intentionally want to carry forward?

Where might I need to create more space for my child's individuality?

Ronewa Mphephu,  
Educational Psychologist

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## Some of what we got up to this term:

### **Grade 4 – Wow, this is New! My Brain Can Do It (Termly talk)**

Learners were supported through the many changes that come with Grade 4, including increased independence, moving between classes, and becoming more organised. The session also introduced digital responsibility, helping them understand how to use technology safely and appropriately.

### **Grade 5 – High Five, Let's Go! 9 (Termly talk)**

This session explored five key areas of development: friendships, goal setting, body changes, self-care, and managing emotions. Learners were encouraged to understand themselves better and develop healthy habits as they grow.

### **Grade 6 – Ready, Set, Go (Termly talk)**

Learners were encouraged to step into leadership roles by developing responsibility, initiative, and confidence. The session focused on preparing them for increased expectations as senior primary learners.

### **Grade 7 – Between a Rock and a Hard Place (Termly talk)**

Learners were guided in preparing for high school by reflecting on who they want to become. The session encouraged them to embrace individuality, run their own race, and prioritise kindness in their interactions with others.

### **Grade 8 – It's Okay to Be Me (Termly talk)**

This talk focused on identity, friendships, and the impact of behaviour on others.

### **Grade 9 – Where's My Compass? Let's Navigate (Termly talk)**

Learners reflected on self-image, personal identity, and decision-making.

### **Grade 10 – I'm Not Sure, But It's OK (Annual workshop)**

This session centred on communication skills, teaching learners how to express themselves responsibly with parents, teachers, and peers. They explored conflict management, how to have healthy disagreements, and how to move forward respectfully, even when they don't agree.

### **Grade 11 – The Makings of a Leader (Annual workshop)**

Learners were encouraged to see leadership as something that starts from within. The session focused on responsibility, accountability, and the power of influence, while also emphasising effective communication and the role they play in supporting and shaping the school's leadership culture.

### **Grade 12 – Fly Birdy Fly (Annual workshop)**

This talk focused on the emotional journey of Grade 12, helping learners navigate the pressure of being leaders while also caring for themselves. They explored what true leadership looks like (through role modelling, respect, and service), the importance of balance and self-care, and were reassured that although the year can feel overwhelming, they are supported and will be okay.

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**Termly Study Skills** - Grade 8 and Grade 10 learners attended study skills sessions, with a particular focus on developing effective time management strategies. These sessions are designed to support learners in managing increasing academic demands. All termly talks are intentionally structured to build on one another, ensuring ongoing development and reinforcement of key life skills throughout the year.

**High School Parent connect evening**

At our recent Parent Connect Evening, the focus was on understanding and reconnecting with teenagers during this complex stage of development.

Parents were guided through the neurological and emotional changes that underpin adolescent behaviour, helping to reframe common challenges such as mood swings, withdrawal, and conflict as part of normal development rather than defiance. The session also offered practical strategies for maintaining connection through calm, consistent parenting, setting appropriate boundaries, and creating emotionally safe spaces where teens feel supported, heard, and understood.

## Meet our Team



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**BE THE PERSON YOU NEEDED AS A CHILD**