

Raising successful children

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Attachment – Our understanding of how children grow up has advanced. A new attachment model replaces our old behavior model. The new model is not all that new. It is actually older, it is intuitive and natural; our understanding of it is new. Briefly,

*A child behaves well because he wants to please his parents,
not to avoid pain or receive a reward.*

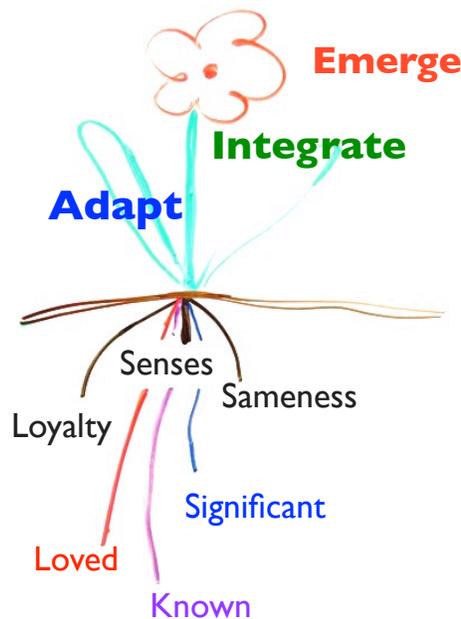
Experience has shown me that an attachment approach brings him* closer to you and increases his desire to please you, while a behavior approach increases his defiance.

*the pronoun 'him' refers to both 'him' and 'her'.

Flowers develop from
Roots of Attachment



- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. Senses | held close |
| 2. Sameness | feels normal |
| 3. Loyalty | belongs |
| 4. Significance | counts |
| 5. Love | loved |
| 6. Known | understood |



Dr Gordon Neufeld

Attachment is the basis of development and it occurs in a sequence.

Developmental stages

Attachment has always occurred naturally and without particular effort. However, prolonged physical or emotional separation from parents can bring a need to renew these bonds.

For it is upon these bonds of attachment that parents are able to lead their children forward on a path to maturity, until they emerge as the caring, principled and dependable youth they are meant to be.

The Goal

Starting when your child is an infant, your goal is to bring him under your protective guidance. You will want him to look to you as his guide and protector. This will be for both physical and emotional protection. He will come to you to be consoled and to cry about the things in life that aren't fair - the sad things that he cannot change. In times of stress it will be to you, his parent, that he turns with his sadness and his tears, not to strangers.

Properly attached, he will seek your good pleasure.

Trust your intuition

Following a predictable pattern so that your child has a sense of order and security (boundaries) is good and even necessary. However as a parent you also rely on your intuition in preference to being consistent or following rules, so that you remain responsive and compassionate. This teaches empathy. Empathy is taught primarily by reflecting emotions, smiles and frowns with your infant in his first year of life.

We assume that you are mentally well, neither depressed nor intoxicated, and that you really do love this child.

Time-outs are *out* – Time-ins are *in*

Time-outs have been shown to increase a child's fear of abandonment. This leads them into panic mode rather than learning mode. While the immediate effect may be to stop a wrong behavior, the long term effect is the lessening of the child's sense of security, attachment and willingness to comply. If you must separate yourself from your child, keep it brief, a few minutes should be enough.

By contrast, **Time-ins** keep your child in your presence, close enough to see you and to know that you still care about him. He might sit beside you for a few minutes rather than being sent to his room.

Conditional Approval

While we love our child unconditionally, it is better for him to think that our approval is conditional upon his good behavior. No matter how much love he gets, he could always get more and will work for that extra expression of your love.

You as a parent love high principles. You love honesty and kindness more than his good pleasure. You know that you wouldn't lie or steal to make him happy. He needs to know that too.

Who will be dominant

Parents begin in a position of absolute caring and dominance. Your infant is completely dependent upon you for everything including feeding. It is normal that you remain in this dominant position throughout early childhood. This role will best support your child's development. His sense of independence will arrive naturally, about age 15, just as walking came naturally when he was ready.

You want to remain in the parental role that says 'You can depend on me, I am your answer'. Your parent-child relationship would be eroded if you treated your child as a buddy, friend or equal. Wanting to please your child undermines your role, rather he should strive to please you.

Your child needs to know is that you can be pleased and how he can please you. You will want to smile more, complain less and refrain from yelling.

Rather than ask your young child what they want, tell them what they want. For example, have them eat whatever you offer, unless he is not hungry, in which case he can wait for the next meal, or see a doctor. We don't want picky eaters.

Feelings

Childhood (under age 8) is about feelings, rather than thinking. If you deal with your child at the level of feelings you will have greater success. For example as a parent you will ask 'What were you feeling' rather than 'What were you thinking.' A child isn't really able to reflect on what they are thinking until they reach the age of being rational at about age 7-8yr.

You will want to deal with your children, both boys and girls, on the level of feelings, emotions and good intentions until this age.

Tears

It is through our tears that we are able to accept the sad things in our life that we cannot change. Without tears, our **sad** becomes **mad**. We need to cry about something painful before we can accept it and move on. Temper tantrums can be seen as a child's way to their tears. A parent's most effective move for a frustrated child will be to allow him to have his tears in a protective relationship, one which is not threatened by his behavior. You may need to help him by reflective listening and then leading them into their tears. For example: *"I know that this is very hard for you. I can see you're angry, you're a lot angry"*.

Anger

Anger lies in fear and frustration. Severe anger lies in fear of abandonment. This especially occurs if they have been abandoned in their past, as is often seen in foster children who have had many placements. Witnessing domestic violence can be overwhelmingly frightening for a child. If it occurred while he was young and preverbal, he may not be able to find words to explain what he is feeling. Anger is common in young children; as they become older and their physical strength increases, we call it violence. As this expression of anger can scare adults we begin to label the child as dangerous and then start to increasingly punish him, which makes him worse.

Anger is relieved by getting a child to their tears, so much as you are able, in a protected setting and in a timely manner. He will want to be at home with you, rather than with a teacher at school, to have his tears. Mad has to register as sad for the anger to dissipate. Us yelling is never the answer to his frustration and anger.

Praise

Praise is effective when it is connected to things that require effort and that he can improve on. It is counterproductive if exaggerated, given lavishly or without reason. It is also not helpful if it is given for those chances of birth which he did not work for, such as innate good-looks, strength or intelligence. While we all like praise, it can be intoxicating for a child. It can lead to arrogance.

Our praise must be for accomplishments, things they can change with effort, not for inherent qualities. If you praise indiscriminately, they will go elsewhere for feedback and guidance and over-praise leads to arrogance rather than to the true humility.

Shaming

Embarrassing or shaming a child is very powerful. It may curb a specific behavior but it will break his bond of attachment to you, worsening problem behaviors. A directed frown is all that is required. It is never appropriate to demean or make fun of a child. We are not here to break his curious, playful spirit. He has to have a sense of self worth that will allow him to self-correct faults knowing that he is capable and will succeed. He needs hope for his future.

Phrases like “I know you can do it”, “I know you are good” are more effective. Shaming a child leads to self-demeaning thoughts as they come to believe that they are unworthy of love and of success. It’s not useful to say ‘grow-up, don’t cry’.

Sibling rivalry

Trying to treat our children equally, a very modern idea, appears to be the underlying cause of sibling rivalry.

Natural family order is when the older sibling helps to care for the younger one while the younger one defers to the older. This is a natural hierarchy based on age.

Give your older child age preference. They get to go to bed later, to have first choice, etc. When he knows his place in the family is secure, it will evoke caring behavior towards his siblings. It works - try it.

It’s not about being equal, it’s about being in a relationship.

Peer attachment (*peer pressure*)

Peers are one's age equals. *Peer attachment* is when a child is guided by their peers rather than by responsible adults. This is also been called *peer pressure*. It is when he values what friends think over what you think. It is when he takes the advice of friends in preference to the advice of responsible and caring adults - you and his teachers.

When attachment to parents is weak, children will attach to those they spend the most time with - their peers. Children are immature by definition and unable to act as reliable guides. As you know, their loyalty is fickle - they can alternate between friend and enemy. Your child will turn to you for direction because you are predictable, caring, wise and available.

Discipline

It is necessary to acquire a sense of discipline while still a child; as an adult it matures into self-discipline. This will enable him to accomplish in life. Discipline allows one's inner-self to give higher thoughts priority over lower thoughts – helping with chores or brushing his teeth every day.

Obedience

To obey your parents is a necessary and natural part of childhood. However, obedience doesn't come with the application of force nor escalating punishments, but rather by drawing out your child's desire to please you. This is neither by indulging nor shaming. Rather, it is done by increasing their attachment to you. When attachment is working, a mother's frown will be enough.

Homework

While important at the high school level, homework at a young age has no positive connection with academic success as an adult and it risks alienating the child against learning. If a child goes to school all day and comes home only to face more schooling he may become discouraged - especially so for the child with ADD or dyslexia. Their high level of frustration will get worse. This frustration can aggravate any parent-child conflict and deprive them of necessary playtime - the real 'work' of childhood. After-school homework may also interfere with your child's urgent need to share their day's emotional struggles.

School

The nature of schools is that they must manage groups of children and take the best interests of the group over the individual. A disruptive angry child will necessarily be suspended to ensure the safety of the group. While your child is of paramount importance to you, the school will have the collective interest as their most important concern. Fighting the school is not helpful to your child. Express your concerns without being insistent or critical and participate in collaborative parent-teacher consultations and activities.

Self-esteem

The source of a child's self-esteem changes with age. As a young child it lies in their parents. 'My dad is a fireman!' or 'My mom is the best mom!' - that is, 'My parents are great!' His esteem lies in the value of his parents. So to increase your child's self-esteem you will praise your spouse, "Your dad/mom is the best ...", and of course you will say out loud 'Mommy and daddy love each other'.

A youth feels esteem in as much as they are useful and can help; that they can care for younger siblings, that they are polite and well-behaved. They should not feel pride in being pretty, handsome, smart or athletic as these are innate qualities that they were born with and mostly beyond their control.

A grown child's true value is their humanness; their sensibilities, not their abilities, their kindness not their awards, their capacity to love not their skill to perform. This is something I believe we all know intuitively.

Too much self esteem leads to arrogance instead of a natural humility.

Counseling

Until a child has the capacity to express a thought and then examine that thought, which happens at about age 8, they cannot think about their thoughts. When asked 'What were you thinking?' they will honestly answer 'I don't know'. Thus child counseling is done with the parent who, through the child's attachment, can then lead him to a better place. Play therapy is an indirect way to get to deep feelings, typically thru art or puppets.

Depression

Children follow a natural developmental pattern but it can be disrupted.

Depression is a failure to achieve a developmental stage:

1. Infant (age 0-2yr) - loss of mother's loving attachment "I'm not lovable"
2. Child (2-8yr) - lack or loss of friends "nobody likes me"
3. Adolescent (8-15yr) - feeling inadequate "I'm stupid; I can't do anything"

Intervention to address one of these developmental issues could be:

1. Infant - treat a mother's postpartum depression
2. Child - find playmates for the child and stop any bullying
3. Youth - assist the child's learning and feelings of competence

As your child becomes a youth, they form a self-concept that relates to 3 core needs:

- 1) that they are lovable (mom & dad),
- 2) that they are likable (friends & relatives), and
- 3) that they are useful (teachers & community).

So that at age 15, your child will feel **loved**, **liked** and **useful**;
their **character** will be formed and they will **emerge** as their true self.
Your parenting will have been a success.

Recommended reading

HOLD ON TO YOUR KIDS - WHY PARENTS MATTER

by Dr Gordon Neufeld,

available libraries, bookstores and at gordonneufeld.com

