

WHAT'S
INSIDE:

**The Science of
Parent-Child
Relationships**
Parental Openness Can Help
Children Learn to Trust
*by Jonathan Baylin, Ph.D. and
Daniel Hughes, Ph.D.*

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JUNE
2016

RESOURCES, NEWS & INFORMATION FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES IN TEHAMA COUNTY

TOGETHER on purpose

The Science of Parent-Child Relationships: *Parental Openness Can Help Children Learn to Trust*

*by Jonathan Baylin, Ph.D. and
Daniel Hughes, Ph.D.*

Children who experience early trauma learn to survive by not trusting their caregivers or the world around them. They become naturally defensive and face the daunting task of learning to trust once they are in the care of trustworthy parents. Caregivers face the huge challenge of keeping their minds and hearts open despite repeated experiences of what feels like rejection from a mistrustful child.

The neuroscience of parenting and attachment is deepening our understanding of challenges faced by both these children and their parents. New knowledge from brain science provides a better understanding of how and why the most loving parents can lose touch with their good intentions and develop what we call "blocked care" when

they don't receive caring responses from a child. With blocked care, brain systems that support empathy start to shut down to protect parents from rejection, and parents may feel angry or upset, or take children's behavior personally. Painful parenting can cause actual wear and tear on parents' brains, making it harder to be loving and nurturing.

If parents understand why their child has become mistrustful and how it affects the child's behavior, they are less likely to react defensively when a child does not reciprocate love. They can then begin to embrace parental actions that promote trust—playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy (PACE). When parents can regulate negative feelings, accept the whole child—mistrust and all—and employ actions like PACE, the child can

gradually feel safer and the parent-child bond improves.

Whole Brain Parenting

A brain-based caregiving approach helps parents stay open to untrusting children, embracing the whole child rather than shifting into defense. Parenting calls upon at least five different brain systems that enable us to:

- stay close to our kids without getting too defensive;
- derive pleasure or joy from caring for and interacting with our kids;
- attune to kids' inner lives using powers of empathy and understanding;

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Network Resource & Group

All Adoptive Families Welcome
Free Childcare Provided On-Site

June 21 & July 19
3:30 - 4:30 PM

345 David Avenue, Red Bluff
(North Valley Baptist Church)

Visit us online at www.togetheronpurpose.org for your ...

We only ask one small favor ...

Fill out the survey to let Together on Purpose know what services YOUR FAMILY would find valuable.

Eligibility: Must be over 18. Must be a foster or adoptive parent in the Tehama County area (we're interpreting that pretty loosely, but keep in mind, supplies are limited). One submission (and Starbucks card) per adult.

*While supplies last.
Rules are subject to change at any time.*

FREE
STARBUCKS
GIFT CARD

WHAT'S GOIN' ON? Coming Events & Activities

JUNE 2016

13 Free Summer Meals
Red Bluff High School's Food Services department will be offering breakfast and lunch meals free of charge to student age children & teenagers from Kindergarten to 12th grade. From **June 13th – July 8th** Breakfast: 7:30-9AM, Lunch: NOON-12:30PM. Please stop by and enjoy meals prepared daily by Café Sparta. Red Bluff High School Café Sparta, 1260 Union Street, Red Bluff. Please visit www.cafesparta.org or call 530-529-8838 for more information

21 Together on Purpose Network & Resource Group
Tuesday, June 21, 3:30 - 4:30PM at 345 David Ave., Red Bluff (North Valley Baptist Church). Come meet with professional therapist Scott Howell, MFTI and other Tehama County adoptive families for support, networking and resource sharing. **Free childcare provided on-site.** All adoptive families welcome. For more information, call Andrea or Tahnee at 530-528-0300 or email acurry@atvr.org. We look forward to seeing you there!

JULY 2016

12 FASD Support Group - Chico
Tuesday, July 12 (2nd Tuesday of every month) from 9:30-11:30AM at Lilliput Children's Services, 289 Rio Lindo Avenue Chico, CA 95926 Marji Thomas, MA, CCC is facilitating our new support group, focusing on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder starting March 8th, 2016. The FASD Support Group will provide general information, resources, referral information and provide a supportive circle for you and your family. Please join us every month for this new and informative support group. For information: Miko Wilson, MSW (530) 209-0817 Deborah Aronson, MSW (530) 646-7558

19 Together on Purpose Network & Resource Group
Tuesday, July 19, 3:30 - 4:30PM at 345 David Ave., Red Bluff (North Valley Baptist Church). Come meet with professional therapist Scott Howell, MFTI and other Tehama County adoptive families for support, networking and resource sharing. **Free childcare provided on-site.** All adoptive families welcome. For more information, call Andrea or Tahnee at 530-528-0300 or email acurry@atvr.org. We look forward to seeing you there!

FUN ALL SUMMER LONG:

Farmer's Markets

Saturday Mornings from June 4 to September 24 from 7:30AM-Noon at Red Bluff City Park

Wednesday Evenings from June 15 to September 7 from 5-8PM, Downtown Red Bluff at Washington and Pine Streets.

Fun Zone Day Camp

Fun Zone Day Camps are scheduled from June 13 - August 5. Camps are for kids ages 5-12. Each camp has a special theme and includes, games, crafts, movies and other activities. Cost per week varies by featured activity. \$40 discount for full summer registrations.

Registration can be completed online at <http://cityofredbluff.wix.com/parksandrecreation> (click on "Youth Activities"). You can download paper registration forms on that site or stop in at the Red Bluff Community Center to pick up the registration forms and/or waivers. Call 530-527-8177 for more information.

Alternative Payment Assistance - If you are eligible for CCRC (Child Care Referral and Education) Fun Zone Day Camp costs may be covered.

More Resources for Adoptive Families:

Support Groups:

Yuba, Sutter, Colusa, Glenn Counties
For Support Groups held in Yreka, Mt. Shasta, Orland or Sacramento contact Leslie Damschoder at 530.879.3861

Butte County Post Adoptive Services
Support Group, Drop in Assistance, WRAP Family Support Group ... For info, call Miko: 530-209-0817, Heather: 916-475-7198 or Deborah: 530-896-1920

Education:

Sierra Forever Families
Seminars on topics like Attachment, Understanding Poverty, Understanding Trauma, and more. Leslie Damschoder 530.879.3861

The Attach Place
Center for Strengthening Relationships
3406 American River Drive, Suite D
Sacramento, CA 95864
ce@attachplace.com (916) 403-0588

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- construct rich stories about being parents; and
- regulate negative, uncaring reactions most of the time.

When a parent can keep all five systems up and running, a child gets to interact with an open-minded, empathic adult in ways that enhance a child's brain development.

Learning to Mistrust

Children who start life with people who can be volatile learn to avoid getting too close to these adults. A complicated dance of approach and avoidance becomes the child's template for relating to others and surviving. Even very young infants learn from their experiences with caregivers whether it is safe or dangerous to interact with adults. These early experiences are stored in the child's brain as their first social memories, and these memories are easily triggered again by facial expression, tone of voice, or movement. When frightening memories are triggered later in life, they may act like flashbacks, the kind of memory in which the child's brain cannot tell the difference between now and then. In the midst of this kind of reaction, a child does not distinguish between former adults who were hurtful and current ones who aren't.

Learning to trust after first learning to mistrust is hard work for developing brains. Unlearning a strategy of basic mistrust involves two types of learning—called “reversal learning” and “fear extinction”—that depend heavily on the prefrontal cortex. Since early exposure to high levels of stress can suppress prefrontal cortex development, many children may have a hard time letting go of defensiveness. They are likely to do the same old defensive things over and over with new caregivers. As a result, learning to trust is often a slow and repetitive process requiring understanding and patience from all adults involved.

Learning to Trust in Stages

As children gradually transition to trust, one of the crucial stages is beginning to question their own feelings of mistrust.

Being conflicted about trusting a parent is progress, big progress, over automatically mistrusting. Care - givers and therapists should take heart when a deeply defensive child begins to question her mistrust, asking: Are you being mean or nice? Can I trust you or should I stick with mistrust and know I won't get hurt again?

Parents who are able to see the child's lack of trust as a natural outgrowth of early experiences are more prepared to welcome opportunities to help a child verbalize mistrustful feelings. For example, if a child looks upset when a parent says something positive, the parent could ask the child what she is feeling and encourage her to talk about her reaction. The goal is to make it safe for a child to bring her hidden strategy of mistrust into the light of day, where it's safe to speak about it, be curious about it, and begin to change it.

The parent can also play detective, exploring why the child learned to mistrust. Curiosity can help construct a new narrative, a coherent, engaging story that contradicts untold stories of being a bad kid who didn't deserve parental love. By taking responsibility for being a trust builder, a parent can hold on to her own good intentions. Realizing that a parent is and will be in the trust building business can go a long way toward preventing blocked care.

Safe to Be Sad

An important step in helping a child learn to trust is enabling the child to risk feeling sad around their parent. Building opportunities for comforting a sad child who usually resists any offer of comfort is vital to promote the development of more secure attachment. Parents must look for opportunities to help children experience the sadness of their early experiences and losses, not just the anger, alienation, or numbness.

Sadness calls out for help, for comfort. Sadness comes from the cingulate, the part of the brain that generates cries for help in young mammals separated from their caregivers. When caregivers hear these distress sounds, their cingulates

light up in response, urging them to find, retrieve, and comfort the lost baby. Effective attachment-focused treatment awakens the cingulate and activates this call-and-response system between parent and child. Therefore, feeling emotional pain can be good, allowing the child to experience a parent as caring and the parent to feel effective and empowered.

Parents can build chances to activate this vital distress system by watching for subtle signs of a child trying to suppress tears or hold back the need for a hug. Using a soft, caring voice at these times may help the child accept and feel the emerging sadness, and create a safe space to express this scary emotion. Children who are finally able to cry and be comforted often seem to find great relief in this reciprocal interaction with their parents.

The Element of Surprise

Another essential component of change involves surprising the defensive child with unexpected playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy (PACE). Indeed, there can be no change without surprise as part of the parent-child relationship. Parents have to violate the child's negative expectations to help the child's brain start to see and feel the current signs of love and safety. In therapy lingo, creating a “therapeutic conflict” in the child's mind is an essential ingredient of change. When we detect a conflict between what we expect and what is actually happening, the brain's anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) becomes more active. ACC activity signals us that something important is going on and we need to pay attention so we can understand what's happening. This internal conflict helps put the brakes on old automatic ways of feeling, thinking, and acting, and thus serves as a gateway to change.

Using PACE, parents can promote the reversal learning and fear extinction that help defensive kids shift from mistrust to trust. PACE helps children see, hear, and feel the difference between the new sensations of being truly cared for and

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the negative sights, sounds, and touch associated with previous experiences and caregivers. Parents can highlight the element of surprise by using a surprised voice: “Wow, I get it! You thought I was being mean when I said you’ve really been showing your feelings lately. I guess it’s still hard for you to know how much I love you!”

Playfulness promotes engagement by keeping the defense system off. Just as receiving comfort soothes the stress response system, playful interactions can shift brains from defensiveness to pleasurable engagement. Playfulness can make a child forget to be mistrustful for a while. For example, when a child gets a bit silly, a parent might join in the silliness, taking care to monitor the child’s response and match the child’s energy without going overboard.

Acceptance—especially when a parent accepts the full range of a child’s feelings while also setting limits to ensure safety—helps a child learn to feel safe with her own feelings and thoughts without having to suppress parts of herself and her experience. Deep acceptance is crucial in helping a child question her deeply engrained experience of feeling bad or unlovable. Parents of mistrusting kids have many opportunities to show acceptance of their child’s negative feelings. One of the best times for showing parental acceptance is when a child is angry and expecting the parent to get mad in response. When the parent acknowledges the child’s anger without being defensive, the child gets to feel safe expressing anger. This can help the child feel heard and seen in a way that can reduce the likelihood of escalation into prolonged rage. Feeling safe with negative emotions is crucial for learning to regulate these emotions.

Curiosity promotes a search for meaning, for incorporating new aspects of our experience into our knowledge base. When parents are curious about what’s going on inside a defensive child’s mind, they might jiggle the child’s brain out of defense and get the child interested in why she feels what she does. A parent can

use curiosity with a child about a negative interaction after the heat of the moment has passed, wondering out loud with the child what happened and what the child experienced. This is a great way to help a child reflect on her and her parents’ actions instead of just moving on.

Empathy, in which parents mirror a child’s emotions while still being a parent, helps parents attune to the child’s experience and connect more deeply with the child. Fortunately, we have mirror cells in our brains to help us do this. When the brain’s empathy system is on, the defense system is off. Parents of mistrusting kids do well, at times, to picture their child as an infant learning to be defensive without even knowing she was learning. This imagery can help the parent empathize with a child who is behaving defensively now.

PACE for Parents

In brain terms, parenting is a pretty complex process. Keeping the parenting brain healthy and working well takes self-care and supportive connections with other adults. Tending to the wellbeing and brain health of parents is one of the best investments we can make as a society. We need to understand as deeply as we can what it takes to parent well and how we can support parents, especially those who are experiencing extreme stress and are at risk of developing chronic blocked care.

Helping parents embrace this model of brain-based parenting, a model of parenting the “whole brain child” as Siegel and Bryson put it, may be the most powerful intervention mental health professionals can use with families raising mistrusting children. Depending upon the parent’s background and adult attachment status, this process can be straightforward or complex. Parents who have not resolved their own unfinished business from childhood will need to experience PACE from therapists in the early stages of treatment. Just as children need to be surprised by PACE, parents who expect to be misunderstood need to experience the opposite. They have to feel safe to share their darkest feelings about

themselves and their children if they are going to trust the professional as a guide toward a better parent-child bond. Professionals can also help parents examine their own familial relationships and look for triggers in their own parenting.

To build attachment and enhance the parent-child relationship, we need to employ a whole brain approach for both parents and children—a model that addresses how a child’s early experiences affect not only the child but also the parent’s ability to provide loving care. By helping parents learn to respond positively and proactively to their children’s learned mistrust, we can create a roadmap for helping them teach their children to trust.

Dr. Jonathan Baylin received his doctorate in clinical psychology from Peabody College of Vanderbilt University in 1981. He has been working in the mental health field for 35 years. For the past fifteen years, he has immersed himself in the study of neurobiology and in teaching mental health practitioners about the brain. He has given numerous workshops for mental health professionals on “Putting the Brain in Therapy.”



Several years ago, Dr. Baylin began a collaborative relationship with Daniel Hughes, a clinical psychologist a leader in the field of attachment-focused therapy. Dr. Hughes specializes in the treatment of children and youth who had experienced abuse and neglect and for the most part now manifested serious psychological problems secondary to childhood trauma and attachment disorganization. Not having much success helping these children with traditional treatments, he developed an attachment-focused treatment that relied heavily on the theories and research of attachment and intersubjectivity to guide his model of treatment and parenting.



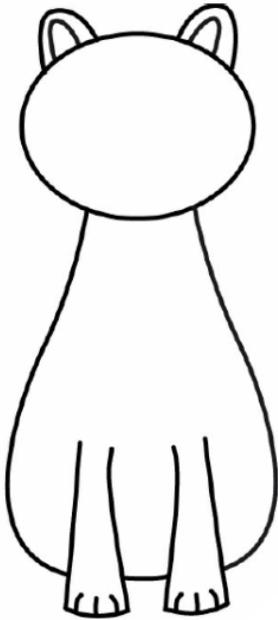
Their book, *Brain Based Parenting*, was released by Norton Press in the spring of 2012 as part of the Norton series on Interpersonal Neurobiology.

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BOREDOM BUSTERS

Can YOU Complete this Picture?

Draw a face and a tail on the cat!



Summertime Word Search

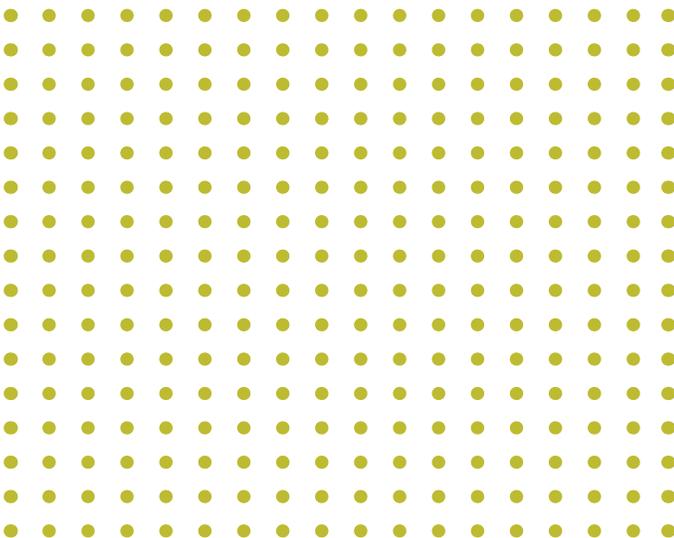
See if you can find them all!

- SWIMMING
- ROADTRIP
- SUNSHINE
- POPSICLE
- OUTSIDE
- VACATION
- PLAY

P	K	G	V	S	P	L	Q	V	M	V	K	J	K	T
A	A	E	V	T	W	H	A	J	M	A	C	I	E	F
T	W	V	L	M	G	C	W	Y	V	M	S	D	G	S
Y	D	U	H	C	A	H	M	O	P	Q	I	A	U	R
C	Q	U	R	T	I	T	Q	K	A	S	H	N	N	A
I	Y	O	I	T	L	S	P	S	T	B	S	X	M	Y
H	T	O	D	L	F	T	P	U	H	H	K	G	C	S
J	N	S	B	P	J	W	O	O	I	X	M	P	Q	W
N	G	E	N	U	E	R	G	N	P	Y	K	I	Y	I
Z	O	D	N	N	J	T	E	I	V	L	F	R	Q	M
Y	Z	S	X	W	H	A	D	X	X	K	P	T	O	M
C	H	M	L	D	U	L	H	F	Y	D	L	D	R	I
L	V	A	L	X	S	L	O	G	E	M	A	A	F	N
G	H	P	A	H	D	O	N	U	J	Q	Y	O	S	G
R	B	H	Y	O	Y	P	Z	V	W	R	M	R	H	M

Dots-n-Boxes

Instructions: Each player takes it in turns to draw a line that joins two dots, either horizontally or vertically. The dots must be adjacent (no skipping over any dots!). When a player completes a whole box, he or she gets to put his or her initial or mark in the box. When the whole grid is filled with boxes, the person who has made the most boxes wins!



Wait, what?

How many answers can you guess?

- A. When do you go at red and stop at green?
- B. What does the sun drink out of?
- C. What did the ocean say to the sailboat?
- D. Why do bananas use sunscreen?
- E. What is as big as an elephant but weighs nothing?

Answers: A. When you're eating a watermelon; B. Sunglasses; C. Nothing, it just waved; D. Because they peel; E. Its Shadow!

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