

Hold on to your Child

Winning the hearts and minds of your kids.

Based on “Hold on to your Kids”

By Gordan Neufeld and Gabor Mate

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Restoring Adolescent Lives



Life Controlling Issues

Substance Abuse

Pornography

Challenging Behaviour

Self Harm

Suicidal Ideation

Depression





A Change of Heart

Winning the hearts and minds of your kids.

Hold On to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers

Authors: Gordon Neufeld and Gabor Mate



The disorder affecting the generations of young children and adolescents now heading toward adulthood is rooted in the lost orientation of children toward the nurturing adults in their lives.



Depression and Self-harm

- Suicide rates have increased by 400% among 10 – 14 years olds in the last 50 years
- Key trigger: how they're treated by peers



The secret of parenting is not in what a parent *does* but rather who the parent *is* to the child.

The Phenomenon of Peer Orientation



Attachment:

- the pursuit and preservation of proximity, closeness, and connection
- We make a compass point out of those we're attached to

Orientation:

- The drive to get one's bearings and become acquainted with one's surroundings
- People orient themselves by seeking cues from those to whom they're attached
- Think about those who have been most influential in your life
- What is your attachment quotient with God?



Peer Orientation:

- When a young person turns to his peers for instruction, modeling, and guidance



Activity:

- Discuss peer orientation. Is it good? Bad? Both?
- Rate your current attachment relationship with your child/children, scale of 1 - 10.
- What adult(s) is he/she most attached to? Rate that relationship as well.

6 Ways of Attachment

1. **Sensing:** Physical proximity, involves the “senses”
2. **Sameness:** Seek to be like those who you feel closest to
3. **Belonging and Loyalty:** To be a part of and try to possess those you’re attached to

6 Ways of Attachment

4. Significance: To feel that you matter

5. Feeling: Warm, affectionate, and loving emotions.
At this level, high risk and vulnerability involved

6. Being Known: The ultimate in psychological closeness. No secrets, fully known, and an assurance of being liked, accepted, and welcomed in spite of it¹⁶

What are you up against?

Cultural trends, Counterwill, and Attachment voids

Cultural Trends

- Both parents working
- Move away from extended family networks for job opportunities
- Family meals, family vacations, talks, reading together is becoming less normal
- Secularization of society
- Nuclear and natural family is under attack
- We have lost the “attachment village” – a set of nurturing adult relationships outside of the parents (extended family, church, friend’s parents, etc.)



In 1935, the average man had 40 hours per week free. By 1990, this was down to 17 hours. 23 lost hours of which to be a nurturing father and husband.



Counterwill

- An instinctive, automatic resistance to any sense of being forced

Attachment Void

- Current cultural trends, coupled with a child's counterwill, can create an "attachment void" in which the parents will be replaced as a child's primary attachment
- Your son/daughter will be influenced by someone, and you want to make sure that person is you



Activity

- Evaluate the challenges to healthy attachments in your families' life. How difficult would it be to change some of these?
- Can you think of things that are or have caused an attachment void in your son's/daughter's life?

The Major Challenges

How attachment issues stunt healthy development



Flight From Feeling

- Children put themselves in an emotional state to guard against vulnerability at all costs
- This defense can become more than just a mask a child puts on, but who they actually are



Aggression

- Aggression stems from frustration
- Frustration that comes up against impassable obstacles is meant to lead to adaptation; we change ourselves when unable to change the frustrating circumstance
- Children must learn the art of adaptation rather than aggression



Making of Bullies

- Being in a dominant role without a sense of responsibility for others
- Hardened to feelings of caring and responsibility



Sexual Deviancy

- Sex is used to satisfy primitive attachment needs
- The more sexually active our adolescents are, the more emotionally hardened they become.



The long-term effect is soul numbing, impairing the capacity to enter into relationships in which true contact and intimacy are possible...sex momentarily pacifies attachment hunger without ever fulfilling it.

Reclaiming Your Kids



Remember:

- The challenge is to win the heart and mind of your son/daughter, not simply have his/her body under your roof.
- He/she needs you, even if he/she doesn't know it.
- The more defiant and difficult the kid, the more he's/she's in need of being reclaimed.



Collect Your Kids

- The starting point and primary goal of interactions should be the relationship itself, not the conduct or behavior
- Be in your child's space in a friendly way; it's simply about being together and enjoying the other person
- The greeting is crucial
- Offer them something to attach to
- Invite dependence
- Act as your child's compass point

Create an Attachment Void

- If possible, take a weekend (or longer) getaway, impose restrictions on peer interactions, extended times away with relatives, etc.
- Fill the attachment void by collecting your child
- The hardest part is shifting your focus from *behavior* to *relationship*; unless this shift is authentic, you likely won't have enough patience for the task



Preserve the Attachment Bond

- Make the relationship a priority
- Must be able to communicate to your child that they are more important than what they do
- Make the relationship safe before addressing behaviors

Parent With Attachment In Mind

- Your priorities are:
 - 1) Attachment (relationship)
 - 2) Maturation (teaching)
 - 3) Socialization (behavior)
- Your child experiences withdrawal as rejection



Help Your Child Keep You Close

- Be honest
- Make it clear that he/she is a priority
- Be around! – some would say that quality time is an accident of quantity time



When apart, find ways to stay connected

- Pictures, letters, phone calls, gifts at special times, tokens of remembrance
- Don't assume that because they don't reciprocate that your efforts are unnoticed or unappreciated

Establish structures to cultivate connection

- Patiently build relationships through structuring family rituals
- Family meals, reading together, family outings, games, activities, etc.



Restrict peer contact

- Find your son's prime peer-attaching time, and compete with it
- The more indirect you can be, the better

Final Warnings

- If you create an attachment void through restrictions, you need to be prepared to fill it with yourself.
- **It is not recommended that you accept these suggestions until you have the confidence, patience, and warmth to follow through with them.**



Activity

- What are you currently doing to “reclaim your child”? What impact is it having on your family?
- What is one thing you could start doing that would positively impact your relationship with your child?

Discipline That Does Not Divide

Disciplining through the lens of relationship

- Kids require discipline and boundaries
- We need to ensure that it doesn't damage the relationship
- Here are 7 principles of discipline that are respectful of the relationship

Use connection, not separation, to bring a child into line

- Connection is our source of parenting power and influence.
- Connection before direction – collect the child, activate the attachment, and then give guidance and provide direction.



When problems occur, work the relationship, not the incident

- Stop the behavior (if needed) and preserve the attachment.
- Give time and space, as needed.
- Once the intense feelings have calmed, reestablish the connection and talk about the behavior.

When things aren't working for your child, promote adaptation

- Your child encounters a wall or obstacle.
- Present the reality of the situation firmly.
- Come alongside his experience of frustration and provide comfort.
- Once the wall of futility has been established, help him find the sadness beneath the frustration.

Solicit good intentions instead of demanding good behavior

- Change the focus from behavior to intentions.
- Acknowledge good intentions.
- Harping on bad behavior is pointless if we can't even solicit a good intention.

Draw out mixed feelings instead of trying to stop impulsive behavior

- When a child's behavior is rooted in impulse and emotion, barking commands has little chance of correcting it long-term.
- The key to self-control isn't willpower, but conflicting feelings
- These should be brought into the child's consciousness outside of the incident when emotions have subsided
- “compare and contrast”

Script behavior instead of demanding maturity

- Where maturity isn't present, we can script behavior
- Collect the child, then give cues to what the behavior should look like
- Getting kids to act mature will not make them mature, but it will keep them out of trouble until the underlying impediments to maturity can be addressed



Control the Environment

- Instead of trying to change the child, we try to alter the circumstances that give rise to the problem behavior
- Make the right thing to do the easy thing to do and the wrong thing to do the hard thing to do
- This should never be used to the exclusion of other methods



Activity

- Which of the 7 discipline principles would be the most effective with your children?
- Think of a situation you could have handled differently using that principle.

Preventing Peer Orientation

Don't court the competition

- We have been fooled into thinking peer orientation is good
- Don't be fooled by the first fruits of it
- Shyness is not the problem we think it is
- Getting along with others does not arise from peer attachment
- It is not friends that children need
- Peers are not the answer to boredom
- When and how much peer contact is acceptable?
- Don't depend on peers for your kids' self esteem
- Peers are no substitute for you, siblings and the attachment village



Again, I'm not saying that some social play will, by itself, harm a child's development, but it will not further it either. So, once more, it's not that children shouldn't spend time with one another, but we should not expect such play to meet their deepest needs. Only nurturing adults can do that. In our urgency for our children to socialize, we leave little time for our kids to be with us or to engage in the solitary, creative play I've called emergent play. We fill up their free time with play dates or with videos, television, electronic games. We need to leave much more room for the self to emerge.

Re-create the Attachment Village

- Help children feel at home with the adults we entrust them to
- Children shouldn't have to leave a sense of "being at home" until they are mature enough to be at home with their own true selves.
- Create customs and traditions that connect our children to extended family
- If extended family contact isn't possible, cultivate relationships with adults who are willing to fill in



Activity

- Who is currently part of your “attachment village”?
- Who could/should you add to this?

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