

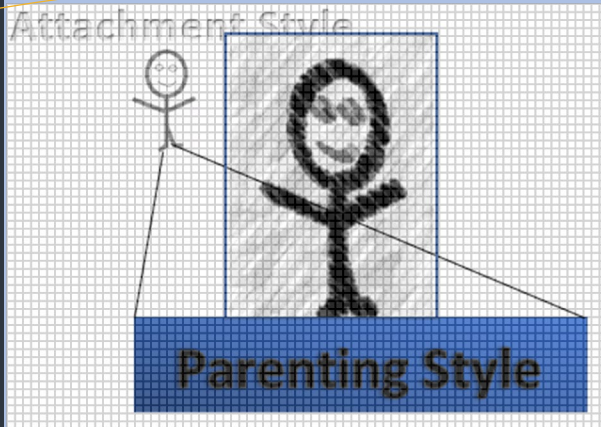
ATTACHMENT INFORMED Parenting

Nature Matters.

Nature refers to the organic, biological, life grounded in your DNA. Your DNA shapes your literal matter. Your matter exists as an actual “me,” a unique one-of-a-kind me with absolute distinct features such as fingerprint, iris, and face. Since your matter, matters, then you matter, your “me” matters. Organic life animates your me and expresses itself as a living me.

Attachment Matters.

Attachment theory pioneered by J. Bowlby (1969) revolutionized the study of human development by shifting focus from biological drives as destructive social forces in need of parental control, to constructive social signals in need of parental compassion. Involuntary infant behaviors like crying and cooing engage the caregiver in a nurturing relationship. Humans want for social connection like a thirst for water or hunger for food—but Bowlby viewed the signals as fundamentally relational. Bowlby’s theory gives grounds for treating human relationship as a primary need.



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Law of Nature and Attachment Wisdom

The sage in Proverbs 1:7 writes, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” The sage equated respect for the law of the Lord as the genesis of moral wisdom for joyful living. “Fear” actually means to revere, to take seriously what the Lord reveals about his character and to act in agreement to what he reveals about himself.

Our thinking nervous system develops in relationships according to an organic, biological attachment system that reveals your me-matter in sensory informed interactions between you and your child¹. The genesis of your child’s literal organic knowledge of you begins and develops through sensory-saturated interactions between your child and you². In other words, your child’s knowledge of you depends upon your knowledge of your self³. Your child learns what “I am me” means because your “I am me” animates life just like your child’s “I am me” animates life⁴.

What’s cool about this “me-matters” law of nature? Hearing and relating to the Lord as he reveals himself gives the soul informed energy (i.e living word) that yields insight about his nature, and organic discernment for making life work as the Creator intended.

Attachment refers to the process in which the social brain engages with a primary caregiver through sensory-expressive messages. A smile, gurgle, eye contact, and cooing reflect the infant brain engaging its environment.

Attachment begins as an organic self-activated behavior (i.e. me matter) signaling the caregiver to say, “I’m here. Where are you?” Attachment matters because this reciprocal, systemic process of organic signaling between infant and caregiver, predicts the infant’s sense of security and social competence in later years. Attachment matters in the quality of human relationships.

Be an attachment-informed parent! Respect the law of nature and its attachment system designed strategically for making human relationship secure and satisfying. Start noticing your body sensations as affective messages informing you about what matters, what you care about and find interesting or concerning.

Express your “me-message”. “I notice my stomach feels tense because I’m concerned about . . .” Or, sing, or say “Hello” to a friend or partner. Put your me “out there” and begin cultivating attachment wisdom.

Three Universal Truths that Unite Us

- WE ALL WANT REST. Attachment reveals that we all exist as vulnerable, dependent, and malleable beings in want of a caregiver.
- WE ALL NEED RESOURCE. Attachment behaviors reveal our need for proximity to a good-enough caregiver.
- WE ALL DESIRE RESPONSE. Attachment style reveals that our desire toward a caregiver and the caregiver's response define how we evaluate our existence and makes us esteem-dependent on past experience.

Attachment's Three Core Beliefs

- INFANTS USE PROXIMITY BEHAVIORS WHEN ADAPTING TO WANTS. Protest crying, pushing away, and pouting signal a search for the primary caregiver and continue expression until exhausted or comforted.
- INFANTS NEED A SECURE BASE TO RECUPERATE FROM PROXIMITY SEEKING. Inactivity from exhaustion or comfort rests the nervous system and allows it to return attention to daily activities.
- INFANT TRUST IN A SAFE HAVEN REGULATES DESIRE FOR PROXIMITY. A child internalizes the attachment process and parent proximity within 2 to 5 years.



What attachment-informed parents need to know.

Research links a parent's attachment history to that parent's parenting style. Attachment-informed parents look within to know their style.

Anxiety and sense of security when trusting self or others presents the parent with a clue about that parent's first few years of life and attachment development. Anxiety and sense of security indicate learned, involuntary, & implicit strategies used to regulate your nervous system in your family of origin.

Early life experiences calibrate your nervous system to feel secure, insecure, or indifferent in your environment. Erikson's Stages of Development posits trust versus mistrust as the first ego development challenge. A positive outcome predicts an ego enriched with hope. A hope-regulated ego resists anxious and negative mindsets.

Remember, implicit anxiety or depressed moods reflect how your family of origin regulated the energy of natural life, of your "me" matter. What if you learn other ways to regulate how you feel, like talking about and dealing with primary feelings, interests & concerns?

CHILD ATTACHMENT → ADULT ATTACHMENT

☐ **Secure:** trust and depend on caregivers to be sensitive, safe and emotionally available; have a "secure base" to explore, learn and thrive.

☐ **Avoidant:** caregivers are distant, rejecting, emotionally unavailable; deactivate attachment behavior –deny needs and avoid closeness; does not trust, self-reliant.

☐ **Anxious:** caregivers are inconsistent and anxious; hyperactive attachment behavior –demanding, clingy, needy; does not trust, constant anxiety.

☐ **Disorganized:** caregivers inflict severe maltreatment; no organized strategy to connect – confused, frightened, disoriented, dissociates; controlling and punitive with caregiver.

■ **Autonomous** (Secure): comfortable with warm, loving, close relationship; depends on partner and allows partner to depend on them; not worried about rejection or threatened by partner's separateness.

■ **Dismissive** (Avoidant): uncomfortable w/closeness, distant and rejecting; equates intimacy w/loss of independence; does not depend on partner & partner can't depend on them; controlled, cool, compulsively self-reliant.

■ **Preoccupied** (Anxious): constantly worried about rejection & abandonment; needs continual reassurance; wants to merge with partner; neediness & distress scares partner away.

■ **Unresolved** (Disorganized): cannot tolerate closeness; past traumas intrude into current relationships; severe psychological problems and acting-out; chaotic and dysfunctional relationships (violence, substance abuse).



Breaking Intergenerational Attachment Wounds

Attachment experience develops in cycles through time. An infant aroused by want expresses need for attention and a responsive caregiver's feedback gratifies the want which relaxes and relieves the infant. Through time in this cycle, the infant develops neurological networks that provide sensory support for trust and security in life. **Attachment wounds** occur when, in cycles through time the caregiver provides inadequate, deficient, disruptive or worse, destructive responsiveness to the infant/child's want of attention, understanding, and help.

Attachment wounds tend to repeat from one to the next generation for two reasons. First, our **attachment wounds tend to remain fixed**, beneath our level of consciousness so that it shapes our future parenting style (see above & banner pic). Second, **parenting style prunes an infant's attachment system** to mirror the parent's attachment style. **Attachment develops** in sync with the parent caregiving style (fig. 1). Caregiving style derives from the parent's attachment system and cross-generationally influences the child's characteristics (see fig. 2).

4 PARENTING STYLES

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Authoritative
 RESPONSIVE
 CLEAR BOUNDARIES
 HIGH DEMANDS
 SUPERVISE
 GIVE CONSEQUENCES

Authoritarian
 HIGH SUPERVISION & STRICTNESS
 LOW WARMTH & INVOLVEMENT
 PUNATIVE

Permissive
 LOW DEMANDS
 HIGH RESPONSIVE
 POOR BOUNDARIES

Indifferent
 LOW DEMAND
 LOW WARMTH

Making Connections: Primary needs and Esteem

In the "Nature Matters" section we observed that your life's primary needs as an infant primed "me" expectations and behaviors (crying, cooing) designed to prompt caregiver feedback that mirrored and matched the meaning of your primary want-concern-interest. Studies indicate that as infants we have an innate neurochemical prescribed knowledge, an expectation based on the existence of our primary need⁵.

Caregiving that over or under corrects our attachment signal creates dissonance within our nervous system between our "true" need and the actual feedback. This dissonance prunes the brain and wires/programs it with an inherent evaluation that shapes our life story and biases how we esteem our self and our needs.

Attachment and Parenting Style

Since your attachment history shapes your parenting style, your attachment history shapes your child's attachment style because parenting style mediates the child's attachment style. Thus, attachment wounds pass from generation to generation through prescribed parenting styles.

The **good news?** Modifying your attachment and parenting style, can modify intergenerational wounds

Figure 1

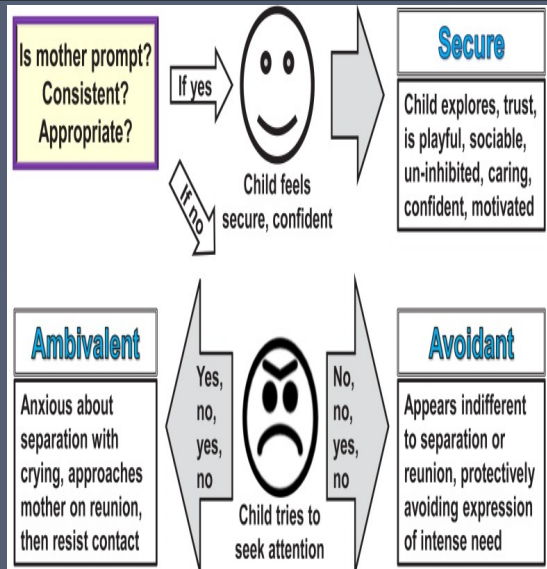
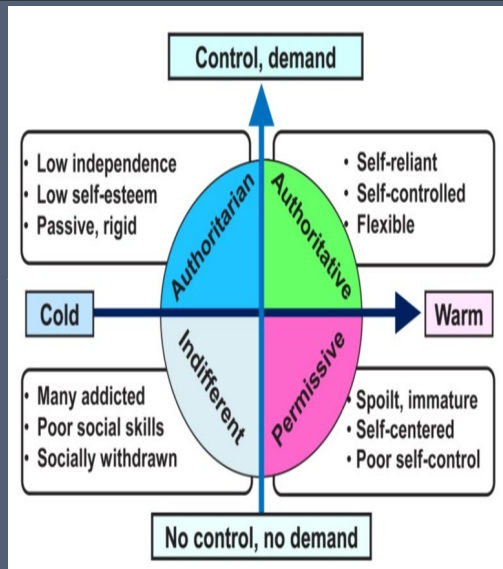
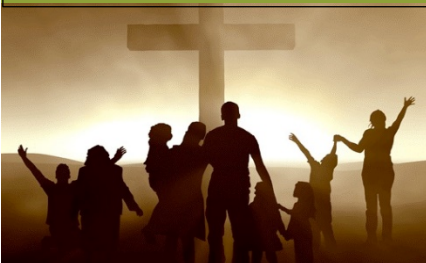


Figure 2



ATTACHMENT PARENTING TIPS



God Attachment & Faith Development

Studies indicate that a child with a secure attachment style tends to view God as nurturing, authoritative, worthy of honor and respect⁵. In other words, the parent-child relationship parallels the child-God relationship. As the parent relates to the child, so the child generalizes this experience to God. The proverbs present the parents as covenant agents of God, so as the child relates to the parent's practice of faith, the parent observes how the child relates to Jesus Christ as the author of the Christian faith. What an interesting diagnostic tool. Parent-training programs recognize the value of this diagnostic idea because the parent role serves as an agent of society. As the child relates to the parent, so the parent discerns the child's readiness for transition into adult life.

YOU MATTER!!!

The law of nature, your "ME" matter, your sense of self expressed as your identity carries intergenerational and spiritual importance. **You matter!** If you feel resistant, skeptical, cynical, or inadequate, know that the very nature of life cries out for your affirmation. You deserve affirmation because life itself deserves it and apparently the Creator planned it this way.

Remember that attachment informed parenting begins with an attachment-informed person in the parenting role. Use your **body**, **relational style**, **parenting approach**, and **agency** role as attachment-informing resources.

1. Practice *noticing* **body** sensations, affections, feelings, and emotions (S.A.F.E) and *expressing* what you notice.

- USE journaling tools and by writing, access, activate, and acknowledge your primary interests and concerns.
- DRAW a lifestory timeline listing both positive and negative memories and track the impact on your self-esteem.

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2. Honor your vulnerability, dependence, and malleability (ability to change) as essential for a secure **relational style**.

- NOTICE how these qualities tend to trigger self-criticism and self-contempt and shift self-talk to self-compassion.
- REFLECT on how loss, trauma, and/or addiction impacted your family of origin & what your family's response taught you about the value of grief. **How did your family express or repress grief?**
- PURCHASE a book & workbook on attachment that promotes wisdom for increasing security in relationship.

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3. Practice patience (**breathing**) and mindfulness (**quiet**) when tolerating discomfort with your **parenting approach**.

- OBSERVE without judgment what the situation presents
- TUNE INTO your attachment system & note the difference between want of relief, need for resource, and desire toward the object that resonates with your expectation.
- SCRIPT "I feel a want for relief, I need someone to understand my problem, I desire this someone to listen & provide relief."
- ADDRESS the primary concern or interest.

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4. View yourself as an **agent** of covenant faith and/or society training your child to honor and respect you as a person.

- EDUCATE them by word and example that honor means give attention to and respect means take words literally.
- RECIPROCATE this same honor and respect when your child needs attention. This fosters mutual trust.

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Visit www.take-thenextstep.com for Commentary, Resources, and Tools

NOTES

PATHWAY 4 PARENING

PARENTING SERIES

Strategic Plan

Envision Families enjoying nurture-enriched relationships supporting secure social development through the lifespan.

Aim Manifesting portraits, principles, and precepts for patient and wise adaptations to all challenges encountered by the family on their pathway through their contemporary environment.

Therapeutic Mission: Focus on navigating the family institution through their genealogical, cultural, and social climate by identifying and removing stumbling blocks and replacing stumbling blocks with stepping stones.

Goal: Equip the interested with information and intelligence for insight and understanding about instruction and execution of principles derived from the study of natural and biblical revelation relevant to stewarding psychological and spiritual life.

Objective: Define behaviors that actualize the life's deepest values in the family management activities of daily living.

Activities: Demonstrate the models, methods, and measures for accessing and activating the empowering force of the human spirit impressed with and in reception of prescriptions for soul rest, recovery, and renewal.

Learning Support: Written & visual material presented in newsletter and website describing, commenting on, and resourcing for engaging with and incorporating core concepts relevant to family life.

INTERACTION OPTIONS

Each issue in the parenting series presents:

An **ESSENTIAL TRUTH** for building family wholeness and joyfulness.

CORE TOPICS for accessing and activating the truth in daily living.

INFO-ENRICHED pages to educate, equip, & empower your parenting.

A **WEEK-BY-WEEK TREATMENT PLAN** to access & activate your parenting values.

EYE-CATCHING FORMAT to support a glance through & go-deeper.

WEBSITE ACCESS Interaction includes commentary that unpacks each topic, offers tools, & resources.

TOPICS UPCOMING

The truth about:

ATTACHMENT

BONDING

COVENANT

EMPATHY

FORGIVENESS

GRIEF

HONOR

IDENTITY

JUSTICE

K – 12

LOVE

MOVING ON

(launching)

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