



DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMS

The Power of Attachment-informed Leadership in Schools

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PROGRAM DESIGNED FOR:

Conferences, Seminars, and Leadership Development Trainings

TARGET AUDIENCE:

Superintendents, Principals, Campus Administrators, School Nutrition Directors, Supervisors, all school Leadership positions

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The Power of Attachment-informed Leadership in Schools

The critical missing piece to a secure and thriving school environment

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Aric Bostick, who specializes in the science of attachment in schools, will teach your school leaders a distinct approach to leadership, based on modern **attachment theory** and relational neuroscience. He will help them gain an understanding of attachment theory, how it manifests in the workplace, and how to use this awareness as a leader to be a key strategic partner in your organization/school's success, by better understanding how to manage relationships, and to help you and your other leaders become the secure attachment figure your staff needs.

By understanding the **Power of Attachment-informed Leadership**, at the **very least** you can get happier and more productive educators and employees. At the **very best**, you can literally turn your workplace into a therapeutic healing environment with your own *security* and how you *show up* for those you lead.

Problems Today's Schools are Facing

- Many **children** are **behind academically**
- Many **educators and leaders** are **burnt out** and are leaving their profession
- Sadly, even teen **suicide** rates have **risen** sharply
- Many parents, school leaders and educators are feeling **insecure** and **worried** about their **kid's futures**
- Due to the challenges these last couple years, many have **lost connection** to each other. Their **social skills** have taken a hit from being distanced from each other
- Many individuals are feeling **anxious** and **frightened**, due to **local** and **global events**

We also have been seeing a historical exodus of educators, principals, and superintendents leaving the profession. Desperate to retain their educators and staff, school leaders are scrambling to offer more money, better incentives, and more benefits. The trouble is, these are only band-aid fixes and don't address the root of the problem.

According to multiple studies, the #1 reason people leave their job is because of an unhealthy work culture and difficult relationships with their leaders and colleagues. Research has shown that toxic school culture can be deeply rooted in the unresolved *attachment* history of each individual and the lack of a secure Attachment Figure, to establish a secure bond and meaningful connection with their leaders and those they work with.

What is Attachment Theory?

Attachment Theory is an established ideology of human relationships and among the most influential theories in psychology. It demonstrates that depending on our interactions with our caregivers early on in childhood, we develop certain ‘attachment styles,’ leading us to form *secure* or *insecure* bonds with individuals, which consequently we bring with us into our adult life and into the school environment we work in.

Each individual is going through their own invisible version of attachment struggle, and behaviors associated with this struggle, combined with the dynamics they create between their leaders and employees, are the real reason a school, and its students and educators, will either thrive or struggle.

Attachment theory researchers have established how attachment dynamics in work relationships are directly related to **valued outcomes** such as:

- follower proactivity
- ethical decision making
- effective negotiation behavior
- and creative problem solving

When an educator’s attachment needs go unfulfilled in a work context, it leads to:

- increased stress
- higher reports of burnout
- increased turnover

Thus, we see that attachment serves as the foundation on which organizational/school culture is built.

Attachment Theory and the Leader/Teacher Relationship and the Teacher/Student Relationship

In Philip Riley’s book, *Attachment Theory and the Teacher-Student Relationship*, he indicates that there are two distinguishing features of educational leadership that differ from the leadership of many other professions. He states that the first being that “educational leaders generally move up from the shopfloor, beginning their careers as classroom teachers and moving through the ranks to leadership positions. The second distinguishing feature lies in the nature of the teachers work. Teaching is a form of leadership. Teachers are the leaders of their classes. This means that formally appointed educational leaders lead leaders, not followers. Yet for their leadership to be effective, teachers must be followers also, at least to a certain context. This structure creates a number of challenges for educational leaders and for the teachers as leader-followers.”

“Teachers practice leadership from their first day in the classroom. When they are appointed to formal school leadership positions, they bring all of this experience of leadership, albeit with children, to the role. This is not to underplay the significant new challenges that leading adults demands of educational leadership. However, leadership in the context of schools and teaching are almost interchangeable in terms of attachment theory. The rapidly growing literature on leadership conceived as attachment relationship attests to this, but until now has **not** been applied to *educational* leadership.”

Riley's book rests on a primary premise that the traditionally conceived foundations of education, the 3 R's (Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic) are not foundations at all. In fact, they can only be built on an even more fundamental set of 3 Rs: Relationships, Relationships, Relationships.

- *Relationship* from the student's perspective,
- *Relationship* from the teacher's perspective,
- **and the priority given to the *Relationship* formation and maintenance from school leadership.**

"For a school to function effectively, and for students to learn effectively, both sets of 3 Rs must be in place."

"Understanding attachment theory (the quality and development of relationships), and in particular *adult* attachment theory, changes your understanding of all school-based relationships. These new understandings are then put to practical use, by outlining new ways to form, maintain, and if necessary, re-examine existing professional relationships in the school context."

Effects of Attachment Styles in the Workplace (school environment)

Hazan and Shaver were among the first researchers to examine the effect of employees' attachment styles in the workplace. The three main 'attachment styles' being **anxious**, **avoidant**, and **secure**. Specifically, they found that:

- **Securely attached** employees were least likely to put off work, least likely to have difficulty completing tasks, and least likely to fear failure or rejection from co-workers
- **Anxiously attached** employees reported greater fear of rejection from poor performance
- **Avoidantly attached** employees tended to use work to avoid social interaction

The Good News

The good news is that, because of the neuroplasticity of our brain, if one isn't secure, then secure attachment can be learned and earned. Reliable and consistent presence of a secure attachment figure (such as the leaders within the school) can help their followers to create new neural pathways that lead to the formation of new mental models of how one sees themselves, others, and the world. When the school leaders (attachment figures) respond appropriately and consistently during times of stress, the followers' experience 'felt security' and are more likely to engage in autonomous behavior and creative problem solving.

The Power of Attachment-informed Leadership in Schools

The purpose of **Attachment-informed Leadership** is for leaders (school principals and superintendents) to lead in such a way that those being led (their school staff) *feel*:

1. **Safe** (by being an active listener, not criticizing, allow others to make mistakes, admit when you are wrong, maintain clear boundaries)
2. **Seen** (by paying attention to their needs and feelings)
3. **Supported** (by responding with care and concern)
4. **Secure** (by the follower experiencing all of the above from the leader)

This approach enables those being led to experience ‘**felt security**’ within a ‘**secure base and safe haven**’ **leadership relationship**. Secure leaders (i.e., superintendents, principals, teacher mentors) become a secure base for their teachers. Teachers can then become secure bases for their students, thus creating a safe haven school environment.

Key Learning Objectives:

1. Gain a comprehensive understanding of attachment theory and how it manifests within the organization/school
2. Understand the key components of a secure Attachment Figure and why they are key to the organization/school’s success
3. Learn how to use this awareness to not only become a *secure* Attachment Figure themselves, but how as leaders, they can use this knowledge to become the secure base and safe haven leader that their staff need, so that they can thrive and develop a deep and lasting connection to their work and with those they work with.

Resources:

Grady et al, (2020). *Workplace Attachments*

Yip et al, (2018). *Attachment Theory at Work*

Hazan C., and Shaver, P. (1990). Love and work: An attachment-theoretical perspective. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 270-280.

Jonathan Wolf-Phillips, unpublished materials (2021).

Philip Riley (2011). *Attachment Theory and the Teacher-Student Relationship*

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ABOUT ARIC BOSTICK

Over the past 23 years, Aric has been an Education and Corporate Speaker and Trainer. He has spoken to over half a million people at conferences, events, and school districts from coast to coast. His audiences include students, educators, principals, superintendents, and parents at School Districts and National, State, and Regional Education Conferences. He has also been an Employee Engagement Speaker for Corporations and Human Resources Conferences in the USA and Canada.



During the course of his education career, as a High School teacher and coach, Aric created and led a student leadership club and summer camps; he created online programs for students and educators; authored books, created curricula and developed online programs and trainings.

Building on a professional interest in leadership and relationships in the workplace, he has spent the last few years studying an attachment-informed approach to leadership, drawing on the work of some of the leading academics in this emerging area of leadership theory and practice.

Background

Aric's 23 years in education and corporate leadership speaking and training can be seen as comprising three distinct phases:

School teacher (1998 to 2002) – During the first phase, starting in 1998, Aric learned what it was like to be a teacher and sports coach. During this time, he drew on his original teacher training, other specialist in-service training, and the support of more experienced educators and school leaders.

National speaker (2000 to present) – As a national speaker (*Aric's 'Fired Up'* program), he spoke to over half a million people (students, educators, HR Managers and corporate employees and executives) over an 18-year period. For this work, he drew on his own time in the classroom, an understanding of positive psychology (including CBT tools and techniques), and feedback from colleagues and clients. During this time, he became increasingly interested in the welfare of senior leaders in the corporate world and the welfare of school principals and superintendents in education, as well as the distinctive needs of educators in rural education settings.

Leadership trainer (2018 to present) – In 2018, Aric decided to combine his teaching and speaking experience with his interest in the welfare of education and corporate senior leaders, to create and start delivering a new range of training, based on the latest attachment and brain science (*Aric's Attachment-informed Leadership* program). Given his understanding of the distinctive needs of educational and corporate settings and their leaders (gained while working with them as a national speaker), he decided that he needed to strengthen the theoretical underpinning for his work. He did this by developing an understanding of modern attachment science (the quality and development of relationships over the life course), and interpersonal neurobiology (the neuroscience of attachment). During this time, he also started working with an attachment-informed leadership specialist.

Client and Conference List

National Education Conferences:

- Collaborative Conference for Student Achievement
- National Alternative Education Conference
- National Association Community Colleges Teacher Education Prep
- National Business Professionals of America Student Conference
- National Council for Community and Education Partnership Conference
- National Dropout Prevention Conference
- National Nutrition Conference

State Education Conferences:

- Adolescent Symposium Conference
- Arizona State School Nutrition Conference
- Association of Texas Professional Educators
- California FFA State Conference
- California State School Nutrition Conference
- Fort Bend ISD Peer Assisted Leadership Conference
- Franklin Covey 'Leader in Me' event – Vicksburg, MS
- Georgia State Title 1 Conference
- Hawaii Teen Traffic Safety Conference
- Indiana State Student Council Conference
- Kentucky State School Nutrition Conference
- Maine School Nutrition Conference
- Montana State Title 1 Conference
- Northeast ISD Peer Assisted Leadership Conference
- Regional FCCLA Conferences held in Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Arizona and Texas.
- Tennessee Head Start
- Texas Association of Secondary School Principals Conference
- Texas Career and Technical Education Conference
- Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills Conference
- Texas GEAR UP Conference
- Texas Higher Education Human Resources Association Conference
- Texas School Safety Center Conference
- Texas State FCCLA Conference
- Texas State Peer Assisted Leadership Conference
- Texas State School Nutrition Conference
- West Coast GEAR UP Conference
- West Virginia GEAR UP Conference
- West Virginia School State Nutrition Conference
- Wisconsin FFA State Conference

Schools:

- Over 500 School Districts Nationwide
- Education Service Centers Nationwide

Universities:

- Bacchus and Gamma Area 5
- Bacchus and Gamma Area 6
- Bacchus and Gamma Area 7
- Bacchus and Gamma National Conference
- Bloomsburg University
- California University of Pennsylvania
- Clarion University
- Colorado Collegiate Tobacco Prevention Initiative Spring Conference
- East Stroudsburg University
- Edinboro University
- Florida State University - Freshman Orientation Speaker for 22 nights

- Frostburg University
- Indiana University of Pennsylvania
- Kutztown University
- Lock Haven University
- Mansfield University
- Meeting of the Minds – Partners in Prevention Conference
- Millersville University
- Park University
- People to People Ambassador Student Leadership Program held at: Harvard, Stanford, UCLA, Johns Hopkins University and George Washington University with students from 60 countries
- Roger Williams University
- Shippensburg University
- Slippery Rock University
- Sonoma State University
- Stockton College
- Tarleton State University
- Texas State University
- University of Nevada Reno
- University of Pittsburgh at Bradford
- University of Texas
- Wells College
- Wesley College
- West Chester University
- Young Harris University

Corporate Clients:

- Cellular Plus
- Cornerstone Credit Union
- Gold's Gym
- Houston Meeting Planners Association
- MedAmerica Billing Services
- Medical Management Association
- Meeting Planners International
- Mr. Rooter
- Practice Management Institute
- Society of Government Meeting Professionals
- South Florida Meeting Planners Association
- TransAmerica Investments & Insurance
- Travel Alberta Canada

Human Resource Conferences:

- Alabama State Society of Human Resource Professionals
- Austin Human Resource Management Association
- Central Texas Human Resource Management Association
- Corpus Christi Human Resource Management Association
- Human Resource Southwest Conference
- North Texas SHRM
- Permian Basin SHRM
- South Texas HR Symposium
- Texas Association of Higher Education Human Resources

Non-profit Clients:

- Child Care Associates
- Child Care Group
- Dallas Children's Medical Hospital
- Federal Bank Reserve of Chicago
- Pineland Behavioral and Developmental Disabilities
- United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission – Fair Employment Practice Agencies – National Conference

TESTIMONIALS

Education Testimonials

"At an elementary school, it seems impossible to engage a speaker that will be able to appeal to the wide range of ages, inspire the faculty and staff, and have a message so powerful that kids encourage their parents to bring them back to school to hear him again in the evening. However, that is exactly what happened when we spent a full day with Aric Bostick! The morning programs, the leadership workshops, and a family event, in the evening, left our students, staff and their families Fired Up! And ready to tackle this school year- and life- head on!"

-Angela Kunkel, VP of Programs, Shafer PTA

"In one word, Aric Bostick is: AWESOME. From his fast-talking, high-energy, get-you-moving, can't stop laughing antics to his real-life, personal, touching story about being "that kid," Aric Bostick is exactly who your school needs. Get ready to feel motivated, inspired and awesome."

-Leslie Garza, Public Information Officer, Harlandale ISD

"Aric's visit was truly inspirational for our students, staff, and parents. All of Aric's interactions with our community was genuine, energetic and just what we needed to spark the flame to FIRE US UP! Aric's words of encouragement are truly inspirational. His visit is one to remember! Thank you to you and all of Aric's team. He is LEGENDARY, and I know his team is too!"

-Lesley Austin, Principal, Maypearl Jr. High School

"Aric's presentation was so fabulous that I am still hearing staff comment on what an impact his presentation had on them professionally and personally. Our staff members are actually holding each other accountable for their attitudes and behaviors. We have never had a speaker have such an impact on our staff."

-Tammy Lemoine, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction and Special Programs, Center ISD

"Aric's presentation is life-changing and inspiring!! He is one of a kind!! The energy that he gives is contagious!!"

-Vicki Guillory, Assistant Principal, Tisinger Elementary

"Aric Bostick is honest, speaks from the heart, and connects on all levels regarding education! After his presentation many of our participants were moved to tears because they recognized things that they needed to change in both their personal and professional lives. If you need to be reminded about why you chose education as your career or WHY education is so important to our workforce and communities then you must invite Aric to your school or community event."

-Kimberly Tobey, Director, National Association of Community College Teacher Education Programs (NACCTEP)

"Aric presented as a keynote speaker to over 1,000 staff members in East Aurora School District 131 for a special Institute Day focused on staff wellness—body, mind, and spirit. His presentation was simply electrifying! This was not only due to his high-spirited approach to "fire up" the staff, but also due to his comprehensive preparation before the event. He spent several hours listening to an overview of the state of the District and the needs of the staff and seamlessly wove those ideas into a presentation that was unforgettable. Throughout the day, the staff lined up to speak with him, have their books signed, and to hear his additional words of wisdom. The shared sentiment was that Aric was one of the best presenters they have ever seen!"

-David Brusak, School Improvement Director, East Aurora School District 131

"Because Aric has been in the education field, he can relate to the teacher working in the classroom day in and day out. He knows the struggles and the blessing that go with this profession and he gives the teachers inspiration and motivation to continue to do what they love, making a difference in a child's life."

-Diana Ferguson, Executive Director, TIVA

"Aric became an instant hit with our child care teachers and staff. He as them "Fired Up" to greet our incoming preschoolers for the new school year. His presentation was lively, interactive and inspiring. Many staff stated that he changed their perspective and outlook on life."

-Bob Duke, Child Care Associates - Interim President and CEO

"Aric's genuine love for the educator community and his shared mission for what we all do comes across at every moment of his presentation. It's this passion more than anything that gets us all Fired Up!"

-Johanna Hoyo, Gear Up Coordinator, Manor ISD Office of Federal Programs

"Aric is so easy to work with! It was a very simple process to get Aric on our campus! I have never seen our employees so engaged with a speaker or with each other! Aric is what we needed!! We have heard from several employees who have said that Aric is the best guest speaker we have ever had!!"

-Jenny Keener, HR Assistant, Western Nebraska Community College