



Choose Compassion

The Heart of Attachment Parenting

Attachment Parenting International

Attachment Parenting International

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DEDICATION

To Barbara Nicholson and Lysa Parker, cofounders of
Attachment Parenting International

To Dr. William Sears and Martha Sears, the “father” (and
“mother”) of Attachment Parenting

To all the parents throughout history who questioned the
status quo and raised their children with warmth, joy, trust,
compassion, affection, empathy and connection

To API support group leaders and volunteers, giving a
season of their lives to encourage and inform parents while
practicing attachment parenting with their own children.

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1

What in the world is Attachment Parenting?

Maybe you never knew there was a name for it—the unique way you raise your child—but it’s in tune with your child's needs and with your own needs, and your family lives it out daily.

Or, perhaps, you do know there is a name for it, with many synonyms and variations, but you live it out without being defined.

It's in the news, blogs, social media and forums where parenting approaches are more contentious than politics or religion. Some may know what they know about it from a critique or a comment.

But, every day, growing numbers of parents find the name and the communities that come with it...and breathe a sigh of relief to find welcome, encouragement, information and freedom from judgment.

From professionals to media, it's not just parents who are discussing Attachment Parenting.

The Latest Fad, or Something More?

The international dialogue about Attachment Parenting is enveloped in confusion and opinion. Meanwhile, parents who practice it, knowingly or unknowingly, are simply following their instincts for attunement with their child.

Attachment Parenting International

Nearly 17 years ago, Attachment Parenting International was founded by two educators and mothers, Barbara Nicholson and Lysa Parker in Nashville, Tennessee, USA. Both were teachers who noticed a growing need among their students for greater family security and caregiver availability.

This was the generation of latch-key children: the first generation of dual-income families where both parents work outside the home. It was a dynamic change to the family structure in the United States, one that was not supportive of parent-child relationships. Attachment Parenting International was founded as a way to bring information and support to parents through a centralized collection of resources.

At the time, “attachment parenting” was a term known only to a small percentage of parents. Many mothers learned about attachment-oriented parenting techniques, like breastfeeding, through La Leche League International and books authored by Dr. William and Martha Sears. Other parents sought out the support of Attachment Parenting International when cultural childrearing advice conflicted with their natural parenting instincts. Steadily, Attachment Parenting International grew, now stretching its reach around the globe, and awareness of Attachment Parenting has blossomed.

Today, “attachment parenting” has become a buzzword. The Attachment Parenting movement is well established in our culture and influences more and more of our parenting—though not often identified as so. More parents recognize the power of nurturing touch, positive discipline and other practices associated with Attachment Parenting.

While a secure parent-child attachment remains just as beneficial now as ever, the essence of Attachment Parenting has been muddled. It is often confused with such parenting styles as permissive parenting, helicopter parenting and natural parenting. Attachment Parenting

International approaches parenting in ways that can be adapted by any parent with the mutual goal and desire of helping children reach their fullest, individual potential.

What is Attachment Parenting?

Attachment Parenting is an approach to child rearing that promotes a secure attachment bond between parents and their children.

The term “attachment” is the scientific name for the emotional bond in a relationship. The attachment quality that forms between parents and children, learned from the relational patterns with caregivers from birth on, correlates with how a child perceives—and ultimately is able to experience—relationships. Attachment quality is correlated with lifelong effects and often has much more profound an impact than people understand. A person with a secure attachment is generally able to respond to stress in healthy ways and establish more meaningful and close relationships more often. A person with an insecure attachment style may be more susceptible to stress and less healthy relationships. A greater number of insecurely attached individuals are at risk for more serious mental health concerns such as depression and anxiety.

How parents develop a secure attachment with their child lies in the parent's ability to fulfill that child's need for trust, empathy and affection by providing consistent, loving and responsive care. By demonstrating healthy and positive relationship skills, the parent provides critical emotional scaffolding for the child to learn essential self-regulatory skills.

Attachment Parenting International provides its Eight Principles of Parenting, which are designed to give parents the science-backed “tools”—valuable, practical insights for everyday parenting—that they can use to apply the concept behind Attachment Parenting. These tools guide parents as they incorporate attachment into their individual parenting styles:

- 1) **Prepare for Pregnancy, Childbirth and Parenting**—The overarching message is the importance of parents to research their decisions regarding pregnancy care, childbirth choices and parenting styles. Childbirth without the use of interventions shows the best start to the parent-infant bond. However, there are ways to modify the initial bonding experience for mothers who do encounter complications.
- 2) **Feed with Love and Respect**—Research shows unequivocal evidence for breastfeeding for infants, along with gentle weaning into nutritious food choices. Breastfeeding is the healthiest infant-feeding choice. The physiology of breastfeeding promotes a high degree of maternal responsiveness and is associated with several other positive outcomes. In the case where breastfeeding is not possible, “bottle-nursing”—a term to describe attentive bottle-feeding—emulates the closeness of breastfeeding.
- 3) **Respond with Sensitivity**—This Principle is a central element in all of the Principles and is viewed by many parents as the cornerstone to Attachment Parenting. It encompasses a timely warm response by a nurturing caregiver. The foundation of responding with sensitivity in the early years prepares parents for all their years of parenting, by modeling respect and caring. Baby-training systems, such as the commonly referred-to “cry it out,” are inconsistent with this Principle.
- 4) **Provide Nurturing Touch**—Parents may “wear” their babies in a sling or wrap. Infants who are opposed to babywearing enjoy being held in-arms. Touch remains important throughout childhood and can be done through massage, hugs, hand-holding and cuddling.

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- 5) **Ensure Safe Sleep, Emotionally and Physically**—Many parents share a room with their young children. Those who exclusively breastfeed and who take necessary safety precautions may prefer to share their bed. However, some parents and children prefer crib-sleeping situations. The point is not the sleeping surface but that parents remain responsive to their children during sleep.
- 6) **Use Consistent and Loving Care**—Secure attachment depends on continuity of care by a single, primary caregiver. Ideally, this is the parent. However, if both parents must work outside the home, parents are encouraged to ensure that the child is being cared for by one childcare provider who embodies a responsive, empathic caregiver over the long-term, such as an in-home nanny versus a large daycare center with rotating staff.
- 7) **Practice Positive Discipline**—There is a strong push against physical punishment in recent years, but research shows that all forms of punishment, including punitive timeouts, can not only be ineffective in teaching children boundaries in their behavior but also harmful to psychological and emotional development. Parents are encouraged to teach by example and to use non-punitive discipline techniques such as substitution, distraction, problem solving and playful parenting. Parents do not set rules so that their child obeys for the sake of structure, but rather to be the teacher, the coach, the cheerleader and the guidepost as the child develops his or her own sense of moral responsibility within the construct of the family value system.
- 8) **Strive for Personal and Family Balance**—Attachment Parenting is a family-centered approach in that all members of the family have equal value. The parent is not a tyrant, yet also not

a martyr. Parents need balance between their parenting role and their personal life in order to continue having the energy and motivation to maintain a healthy relationship and to model healthy lifestyles for their children.

There are some parenting choices that Attachment Parenting International does not take a stance on. Vaccinating, cloth diapering, circumcising, educational choices, elimination communication, homebirth and others are often quoted by some parents as part and parcel to Attachment Parenting. Attachment Parenting, itself is not a checklist of practices but encompasses parenting that promotes and are most likely to positively influence the parent-child attachment quality.

Is Attachment Parenting an Urban American Thing?

Attachment Parenting is not exclusive. Every parent—from every socioeconomic class, every ethnicity, every culture—can incorporate attachment-minded techniques into his or her child-rearing philosophy.

Moreover, while the basis of Attachment Theory is rooted in studies involving infants and toddlers, research in adult relationships is increasingly showing that attachment quality is an important feature of development and the effects of parent-child attachment quality persist over the lifetime, beyond these early years.

Children of all ages and developmental stages can benefit from parenting that takes attachment into account, whether or not their parents practiced Attachment Parenting from birth on, or are making adjustments to their parenting style that may have previously overlooked attachment benefits. For example, school-age children and teenagers benefit from sit-down meals of nutritious foods over which family members discuss the happenings of the day or play a game. Frequent hugs or shoulder massages or even a light touch on the shoulder can provide moments of sensitive responsiveness that only deepen as children

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mature and parents' connection with their children remains critical for providing them guidance.

There is a wide spectrum of what Attachment Parenting looks like within each family. Attachment Parenting International encourages parents to embrace all of its Eight Principles of Parenting, but there is no one way within these Principles to apply the attachment concept. Parents are advised to “take what works and leave the rest,” meaning that not every attachment-minded family must choose all of the parenting practices within a certain Principle. For example, some families may prefer homebirths and midwives; others, birthing centers or hospitals and obstetricians. Most families strive to breastfeed, but there are alternatives when this option cannot happen. Many families enjoy babywearing, but others would rather forgo the sling. A lot of families advocate for the right to cosleep, but for others, different sleeping arrangements work best. Many families prefer to have one parent at home full time, but others rely on Attachment Parenting as a beneficial family support when both parents are employed full time. Some families are more structured than others.

What differentiates Attachment Parenting from other childrearing approaches is the parent's desire to treat children with equal dignity, love and respect as he or she would afford an adult. To put this in everyday terms, parents treat their children as they would a new coworker or employee, a new member of their church or community club, or their friends and adult family members. They come from a place of great compassion, forgiveness and patience as the child is learning about their place in the world.

Is Attachment Parenting Hard?

It's important to remember that the relationships established and maintained through Attachment Parenting are healthy parent-child relationships.

Any relationship based on secure attachment is healthy, but it can seem to require more energy than a relationship developed out of unhealthy patterns. A common misconception of Attachment Parenting is that it is time-consuming and a child-centered approach that neglects the needs of the parent.

In fact, Attachment Parenting may be different—sometimes very different—from other approaches to childrearing, but the level of difficulty is a matter of subjectivity. Providing for a child’s emotional, as well as physical, needs requires time and energy as any healthy relationship does. The difference between a parent-child relationship and an adult-adult relationship is that the child is at a dissimilar developmental stage and is psychologically unable to provide equal relationship give-and-take. For this reason, Attachment Parenting can seem more intense than other parenting approaches.

Most parents who incorporate attachment-orientation into their parenting style comment that Attachment Parenting actually makes their lives smoother: Attachment Parenting requires more time and energy than other parenting approaches during the infant stage, or the initial period of time if this approach is introduced to an older child, but the results are actually an easier relationship long-term because the parent and child are cooperating rather than engaging in power struggles.

Even with infants, many families report more sleep and less crying—without sacrificing a parent’s sense of satisfaction—with breastfeeding, babywearing and cosleeping. When it comes to a parent’s happiness, the role that parenting plays is a matter of subjectivity, as well: Attachment-minded parents are happy to give their children more attention than not, whereas parents of other parenting approaches may argue that a child seeking attention is being manipulative. Parents who practice Attachment Parenting simply do not view children, or their choices, in this way.

10 Ways to Start with Attachment Parenting

Attachment Parenting practices can be incorporated by any parent. Here are 10 ideas to incorporate Attachment Parenting International's Eight Principles of Parenting into your home life:

Prepare for Pregnancy, Childbirth and Parenting:

- 1) **Research all of the types of prenatal care providers and birthing options in your area**, as well as tests and procedures considered standard or voluntary for prenatal checkups, childbirth, and newborn care. Make your choices based on what's best for your baby, as well as yourself. Take a pregnancy/childbirth education class.
- 2) **Learn as much as you can about various parenting styles and approaches**, and then discuss them with your parenting partner to work out differences. Read books and articles, visit websites, attend teleseminars and support groups, and talk to other parents to learn more about adding attachment-minded principles into your parenting techniques.

Feeding with Love and Respect:

- 3) **Plan on breastfeeding**, and get support early on to head off any problems that arise. If you will need to return back to work, try to pump your breastmilk to be bottled in your absence so you can reconnect with your baby or toddler after the workday. If breastfeeding is not an option, bottle-nurse – meaning that you hold your baby and give him or her eye contact and interaction while bottlefeeding, as a way to simulate breastfeeding behaviors.
- 4) **Feed your infant on demand**, whether breastfeeding or bottle-feeding, meaning that the

baby eats when he or she wants to eat, rather than on a parent-mandated schedule. Not only does on-demand feeding reduce the health risks of overfeeding, but it also teaches your baby to respect his or her hunger and fullness signals. Additionally, on-demand breastfeeding stimulates a stronger milk supply and more satisfying breastfeeding relationship.

- 5) **Have a sit-down family meal** as often as possible. It may be the only time that you're able to reconnect with a busy teen.

Respond with Sensitivity:

- 6) **Learn to see infant crying as his or her communicating of needs**, and then learn how to decipher those needs. Learn to see a child's tantrums as an expression of a need for understanding, rather than manipulation, and then learn how to teach your child how to handle his or her strong emotions through example. Know your child, and learn to anticipate and help them express their needs.
- 7) **Honor your child's separation anxiety.** You are likely feeling pressure to separate from your child, as a test of independence and healthy development. However, outside of unusual circumstances, you will find that if you wait to leave your child in the care of another person until your child is developmentally ready, you won't second-guess this decision.

Ensure Safe Sleep, Emotionally and Physically:

- 8) **Sleep in close proximity**, taking appropriate safety precautions depending on the age of your child. If this arrangement doesn't work for your family, create an atmosphere where your child feels welcome to seek comfort at night.

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Use Consistent and Loving Care:

- 9) **If you're working, consider ways to work from home or to work part time.** If this isn't an option, seek out a childcare provider that will provide consistent, loving, warm and sensitive responsiveness in your stead.

Practice Positive Discipline:

- 10) **Move toward non-punitive discipline,** if you use spanking, punitive timeouts, logical consequences, or other forms of punishments. Because discipline is often emotionally charged, it may help to take a parental "timeout" when you feel stressed, such as closing your eyes and taking deep breaths or counting, or even going to another room until you're calmed down (only briefly if your child is an infant or toddler). Learn effective conflict resolution skills, such as Nonviolent Communication and playful parenting. Learn child development to not expect more from a child than he or she is developmentally able to give.

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Attachment Parenting is about true connection

Attachment Parenting International is often contacted by confused parents, like a mother who asks, “I no longer breastfeed or babywear, but I like the idea of having an attached relationship and using positive discipline. Where I can go to find other parents whose children have outgrown Attachment Parenting?”

Many parents, especially when first learning about Attachment Parenting, may be disillusioned about what it fundamentally means to practice Attachment Parenting and where they fall into the parenting philosophy spectrum. How many parents are out there wondering, “Where do I fit in?”

A parent can be following most of Attachment Parenting International’s Eight Principles of Parenting through such common techniques as babywearing, breastfeeding, cosleeping, limiting separations and so on, and still not be actually practicing Attachment Parenting if he or she isn’t letting him- or herself get emotionally attached to the baby or child.

Or a parent can choose to use only a few of Attachment Parenting International’s Eight Principles of Parenting and yet be actually be forming a genuine emotional connection.

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Attachment isn't about whether you love your children or how much—all parents love their children—but rather, attachment is a deep mutual understanding and knowledge built upon empathy.

Attachment Parenting happens when we take the time to really get to know our children, from their favorite games, to their persistent fears, to their most cherished expressions of our love for them. It happens when we allow ourselves to cross over into their world, into their shoes, to feel what they feel and to respect those feelings as being every bit as important as our own.

Attachment Parenting isn't about how often we take our children on outings, or how many minutes a day we spend reading to them, or even whether we use a stroller or a sling, whether we cosleep or use a crib.

Attachment Parenting is about being in tune with who our children are and what they need. It's about placing a priority not just on their physical health, but their emotional health, and recognizing the importance that parenting has in reaching that goal.

Attachment Parenting in today's western society takes something else, too: faith in our ability to parent our own children and a reliance on our inner knowledge of our children to guide us in raising them.

Mainstream thinking has not yet evolved to embrace the importance of a solid foundation of peaceful attachment for optimal child development or to understand the damage caused to children whose emotional needs are trivialized. Parenting resources still abound with one-size-fits-all child-raising rules and fix-it-all solutions that neither respect the child nor the parent-child relationship.

Who knows your child best? You do. This is true especially if you have a strong attached relationship.

And who knows how to parent your child best? You do. Not your mother-in-law, not your best friend, not your

pediatrician, Dr. Phil or the latest advice-giving expert. Every person on this planet is unique, physically and emotionally, and every child has unique needs that change as they grow. Listen to your child and to what your relationship and deep knowledge of your child tell you to do, and politely shrug off any well-meaning advice to the contrary.

De-feather all of the talk about Attachment Parenting, and you'll find that it's really about just one thing: connection. A true connection fosters mutual sensitivity, understanding and trust—essential ingredients for a strong positive relationship.

With a connection like this, the ride that is parenting, with all of its sunshine and its storms, is a more enjoyable and more successful journey for both the child and the parent. Our attached relationship with our children guides us as we escort them from their days as needy infants, along the twists, bumps, calms, chills and thrills of their childhood, adolescence and young adulthood to the great plateau of their adulthood.

With their hearts and minds full from a lifetime of basking in our support, our children can carry with them the tools they need to form their own true connections with the rest of the world.

It's difficult to not form a strong connection and get to know your child really well when you breastfeed, spend lots of time with them, wear or carry them everywhere you go, are available to them all night, use positive discipline and practice the other Eight Principles of Parenting from Attachment Parenting International.

If you are a parent who trusts your instincts to nurture, who gets behind your children's eyes and into their heads, tries to understand what it is like to live from their perspective and really gets to know them...

...If you ask yourself, "How would I feel if I were in my child's place and how would I want to be treated?"...

...If you strive to have the kind of connection between

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you and your child that brings out the best in both of you, and work to understand your child's needs and to help her feel her best...

...Then you are part of this Attachment Parenting community.

And as part of this community, you not only love your children, but you also love being with them, learning with them and building on that attached relationship for a lifetime.

Thank you to Jennifer Scoby for your contribution

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Is Attachment Parenting worth it?

Among the questions many parents who are new to the Attachment Parenting concept is: How do children raised with Attachment Parenting turn out as adults?

The research is clear on the benefits of Attachment Parenting International's Eight Principles of Parenting. However, especially in western society, not all parents are exposed to parent-child relationships built on secure attachment, warmth, trust and empathy. So, it helps to hear from others who have raised children, or were raised themselves, with Attachment Parenting.

Worth Every Moment

Camille North, mother of 3, reported this about Attachment Parenting when her oldest son was touring colleges at age 18:

“My son was ‘that’ kid. The one who shrieked in anguish when another child got the green cup. The one who hid under the table screaming with his hands over his ears when party-goers sang ‘Happy Birthday.’ The one who completely disrobed when a drop of water touched his clothes. The one who yanked the dump truck out of the hands of an unfamiliar toddler at the park sandbox.

He was also the one who had hour-long meltdowns several times a day, every day, for months—sometimes until he’d lose his voice. He was the one who would wake with night terrors about being abandoned in the woods, even though I was sleeping next to him. He could have been the poster child for ‘The Spirited Child.’

So here we are, looking at the beginning of the end: The beginning of his adulthood, as a strong, confident, self-assured man. And the end of the difficulties of a childhood with a rough start, a complicated middle and a promising finish.

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He spent several summers at intense, 3-week camps across the country and did just fine. And my daughter spent all of last summer in a small village in the Andes of Peru, with no English-speaking adults around, and thrived.

The roots of attachment we give them enable them to be secure and grounded. Contrary to mainstream belief, kids raised with Attachment Parenting are more responsible, balanced and secure in themselves than kids not raised with Attachment Parenting, when they become teens—and beyond—and thus more comfortable with going out on their own. That's my own unscientific observation, but I have observed this many, many times.”

Letting My Emotions Be My Own

Autumn McCarthy, mother of 1, was raised with Attachment Parenting. She was among 6 children who shared the family bed, were breastfed, were “worn” in slings by their parents and were guided through gentle discipline. She had this to say about her childhood:

“They also pretty much took us with them wherever they went. They included us in whatever they had to do.

They let my emotions be my own. They didn't react. They didn't take things personally. They let me express myself even if I wasn't doing it in the 'right' way or the healthiest way or the least destructive way.

I remember once telling my parents, 'F*** YOU!' at age 15 right after my grandfather died. And they recognized it for what it was: a teenager full of crazy emotions not knowing how to express them. They didn't flip out at me for being super disrespectful. They helped me to understand and express myself better.

Growing up, my parents were stricter in some areas. There were just more rules or expectations. There was an expectation for mutual respect.”

Lovingly Cared For

Barbara Nicholson is the mother of 4 grown children and cofounder of Attachment Parenting International. Even before there was a term for “attachment parenting,” there were families practicing it, among them Barbara's parents. Barbara recalled these memories of her childhood as a tribute to her 95-year-old mother:

“One of my earliest memories is a Christmas when I was about 4 years old and wasn't feeling well, so Mother held me in her arms that whole morning while my dad and brother unwrapped my presents and brought them to me on the couch. I can even remember that she was wearing a soft sweater, and I loved feeling safe and warm in her arms. She didn't budge for hours, even though I know now she must have needed to get Christmas dinner on the table and clean up the wrapping paper—things that seemed important at the time.

I think of all the times she so lovingly cared for my brother and I when we were home from school with some childhood illness. Back then, in a time when doctors made house calls, everyone got the measles or chicken pox. My mom would give me a little brass bell so I could ring it whenever I needed her.”

A Connection Point

Patricia Mackie, mother of 3, was also raised with Attachment Parenting. Her own mother's emphasis on emotional connection influenced her career choice: Patricia is a licensed marriage and family therapist. She shared these thoughts on her upbringing:

“My parents grew into it. They practiced more Attachment Parenting with me than they were with my older sister. For the most part, they followed all of Attachment Parenting International's Eight Principles of Parenting.

I grew up in Alaska, and Mom's favorite thing to do was to go to this little pull-off on the road, Beluga Point. Sometimes when we were having a hard day or a really good day, or just because, we would go for a drive, get Subway sandwiches, go to Beluga Point, and sit and eat and watch the ocean and the mountain sheep. Sometimes Mom would go with both me and my sister, sometimes it was just me and Mom, but it was a connection point for us.

When I was 4, my parents bought a cabin and we would go up there every weekend. It was our family time—time with everybody together, to play together, to work together, another connection time.

My mom had a way of knowing what to do. When I was 7, I ran my bike through a stop sign and there as a police officer who saw me. I think I scared him as much as he scared me, but he apparently wanted to make an impression and turned on his lights and yelled at me to slow down and watch what I was doing. He scared the daylight out of me! I came home really upset. Mom knew something was going on but didn't know what, and I wasn't talking. So she sat down with me and encouraged me to talk about it.

When I experienced major emotions, I would just shut down. My mom would sit with me for hours and wait for me to talk.

When I was a teenager, I had a negative view on life, and was difficult to be around. But every day, my mom and I would have afternoon tea. I didn't have to drink the tea or eat cookies, but I couldn't get up from the table until I talked about what was going on. If I had a rough day, she helped me to look at the positives and to stop dwelling on the negatives. That was her way of teaching me without making me feel worse.

It felt so good to talk and be listened to. I grew up learning that when you have a hard time, you talk about it. It's so simple and yet the very last thing we think about.”

Evolution of Parenting

Margie Wilson-Mars, mother of 8, began practicing Attachment Parenting when her oldest, now 27, was a newborn. She describes the next generation of parents:

“Even though we still have little ones at home, seeing our daughter with her children—just wow! She's the best mother, so instinctive and giving. Our oldest son is a newly single dad and so intensely bonded to his son. The evolution of parenting, seeing them working so hard to correct the mistakes we made and become even better, closer parents to their children: It's a beautiful thing to see.”

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Attachment Parenting is parenting with empathy

Attachment Parenting International’s Third Principle of Parenting—Respond with Sensitivity—is the common thread throughout each of the Eight Principles of Parenting. Many parents refer to this Third Principle as the foundation of Attachment Parenting.

For some parents, there is a question as to what “respond with sensitivity” means? In short, Attachment Parenting can be described in this way: Parenting choices that are warm and affectionate, that trust in the child’s ability to communicate his or her needs, that are empathetic.

Empathy is a cornerstone of Attachment Parenting. Yet, “empathy” is a word that is not heard much in western society and can be a difficult concept for some people to grasp. We are much more likely to hear the term “sympathy.” Sympathy occurs when someone is sad for another person, without having experienced the same situation. Empathy, on the other hand, happens when someone imagines themselves in that other person’s position and “experiences” the same situation by imagining the feelings he or she would’ve felt.

Through the close connection we develop through Attachment Parenting, we are able to empathize with our

child. At times, we may remember a similar situation from our own childhood. At other times, we may need to imagine ourselves in our child's position. This can take practice. Dionna Ford, mother of 2, offers this exercise in empathy:

- Get a mirror, a piece of paper and a pen. Using your non-dominant hand (the hand that you usually do not write with), make a 10-item to-do list. Here's the catch: You may only look at the mirror while writing. You are not allowed to look at your hand or the paper.
- Now, try doing the same thing with someone standing over you, telling you what you're doing wrong. Or how to do it correctly. Or telling you that you only have 5 minutes to complete the task. Or demanding that you not be frustrated.

Dionna continues with this introduction to empathy:

"Now, imagine this scene: Your child is trying to master a new task. Her face is scrunched up in concentration. Her fingers are fumbling to get it right. She tries again and again. This goes on for days. Maybe she is trying to dress herself, tie her own shoes, hit a ball thrown to her.

With each new attempt that does not produce the results she wants, the frustration grows. Often, she dissolves into tears or tantrums, literally collapsing with heavy feelings of defeat and frustration.

And while your child is breaking down, you are there dealing with your own emotions. Perhaps you feel helpless, wishing you could deposit the necessary motor skills or knowledge into her brain. Sometimes you feel annoyed, because she's taking so long and you have places to go. Often you just want to take over, to end the crying.

Grown-ups sometimes forget what it is like to be little. Children have to rely on us for so many things that they wish they could do themselves. And learning to do those things is often a tough process.

I find that whenever I am feeling frustrated with my child's behavior or actions, it helps to put myself in his shoes—to think of a situation where I have felt similar emotions. Empathizing with my children is a key component to my practice of 2 of Attachment Parenting International's Principles of Parenting: Responding with Sensitivity and Practice Positive Discipline.

In his book, *Nonviolent Communication*, the late Marshall Rosenberg describes empathy as 'a respectful understanding of what others are experiencing. Empathy is simply being with a person, non-judgmentally as they are without offering advice, validation, or solutions.'

The exercise above is meant to be one that facilitates empathy. To give you a concrete experience to reflect on the next time your child struggles to master a

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seemingly simple task. Having this memory tucked away will enable you to sit patiently with your child as a compassionate and supportive presence.”

Empathy and Discipline

That’s a good explanation of what empathy in parenting looks like, but it can still be difficult for parents new to Attachment Parenting to envision how empathy and discipline go together. It important to realize that with Attachment Parenting, discipline is not separate from the warm, trusting, empathetic relationship that we strive for in Attachment Parenting International’s Third Principle of Parenting: Responding with Sensitivity. In the Attachment Parenting approach, nurturing and discipline are very much intertwined. Tamara Parnay, a mother of 2, explains it like this:

“Our children model our behavior. When surrounded by people who love them and respond to them sensitively and empathetically, they learn to respond this way to others.

In my view, Attachment Parenting International’s Third Principle of Parenting—Responding with Sensitivity—best illustrates the concept of Attachment Parenting. I may or may not adhere to all of the other Principles of Parenting from Attachment Parenting International, but if sensitive responsiveness does not permeate my parenting, then I question whether I can cultivate a strong bond with my children.

What if I am consistently emotionally responsive to my family, but I don’t make the effort to regularly model sensitivity to others outside my family? I can’t help wondering how this impacts my children’s emotional and moral development.”

What does empathy look like? Generally, healthy and adjusted people are capable of empathy. Empathetic individuals I know will stop, take off their sunglasses and sit down to fully focus on the person with whom they are communicating. They relate well interpersonally, because they have the capacity to gain insights into the motives, behavior and feelings of others. Furthermore, empathetic people verbalize, or mirror back, other people’s feelings so that the other person feels understood. Empathetic people help others feel good about themselves. We gravitate to them. They are good friends to have around.

Not only are they excellent communicators, the empathic people I know feel enriched when surrounding themselves with those who hold different viewpoints and come from different backgrounds. They cherish diversity. They value other people’s experiences.

Yet, they seek to find common ground. They reach out to others in an attempt to connect. They seek communion. They look for compromise. They strive to identify with others by giving them the benefit of the doubt, being flexible and open-minded, and looking for ways to agree with them. They listen well—listen a lot—and speak a lot less.

Furthermore, these perceptive people have the ability to see themselves

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through the eyes of others. This lets them be self-aware—not self-conscious—and therefore cognizant of how their words and actions impact others. They can even take this a step further, viewing a situation from that ‘third place’ outside themselves and others. This additional perspective helps minimize conflicts and misunderstandings. Of course, if they do inadvertently hurt someone’s feelings, they are able to proffer an apology free from any defensiveness.

Empathic parenting involves all of the above. To maintain a close bond with my children, I strive to be consistently empathic in my interactions with them.

They need to feel that I relate well to them, that I can put their thoughts and feelings into words for them, that I am able to feel what they are feeling and anticipate their reactions and their needs. I need to stop, get down on their level, look them lovingly in the eyes, and listen to them with my full attention. I have to be flexible and willing to adjust my language and thoughts, to stay I am sorry when I’m wrong. I need to be able to step back and reflect on the events of the day, acknowledge what I did well and note what I can improve upon as their parents.

Empathic parenting is Attachment Parenting. My children rely on my ability to connect—and reconnect—with them. They know that their coping abilities—even their survival—depend on a strong connection with me. My daughter knows when my mind is elsewhere. She commands, ‘Talk to me, Mama, talk to me.’ What she means is, ‘Mama, listen to me. Engage yourself in what I’m saying. Mirror back what I’m telling you so I know you understand what I’m saying.’

Empathy is a cornerstone in gentle discipline. It’s not that I would avoid responding to my children with what they don’t want to hear. There are times I need to draw the line on a behavior or action, redirect my children’s focus, set a boundary, turn down a request. Sometimes I do upset my children with what I have to say. It’s how I go about it that matters. The goal is to gently and empathetically discipline my children. Children need guidance and limits.”

To further illustrate how empathy and positive discipline go hand-in-hand, Tamara offers what she calls “The 3 E’s” in response to any child behavior that a parent feels warrants discipline:

- 1) **Encourage a solution**—Some children are better able to come up with their own solutions, particularly after the early childhood years. For children who need help coming up with solutions, the parent can help. For example, for a child who threw a toy that hit the lamp, the parent may ask: “Since you can’t throw your toy, what could you throw? And where could we go to throw it?” For a child who wants to visit a friend but it’s too late in the day: “Since it’s getting late, can you think of another time when you could see your friend?” For a child who wants another cookie when the parent said “no”: “You have already had a cookie.

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If you are very hungry, can you think of something healthier you could snack on before dinner?”

- 2) **Empathize with your child’s feelings**—If my child gets upset, I accept her feelings of anger, sadness and/or frustration and let her know I understand how she feels by putting her feelings into words: “I can tell you are feeling very [name the emotion]. It’s very frustrating when you can’t do what you want to do [or have what you want to have].”
- 3) **Explain your feelings**—I will let her know why I feel the way I do, which reinforces the fact that I am going to stand firm: “When you throw toys like that inside the house, I worry that someone might get hurt.” Or, “I’m afraid there won’t be enough time for you to play with your friend before you need to go to bed, and you need a goodnight’s sleep.” Or, “I’m concerned that you won’t be hungry for the dinner we’re going to have soon.”

5

Attachment Parenting predicts future relationships

The goal of Attachment Parenting is to establish and maintain a secure parent-child attachment. To a child, secure attachment is the feeling of confidence that his or her needs will be met consistently, sensitively and lovingly. It is the knowledge that he or she is loved and appreciated for who the child is, not on condition of behavior or other conditions of approval.

Learning about our own early attachment relationships with our parents can give us insight into our own adult relationships, and especially into our marital relationship. It can also shed light on how the relationship that we now strive to foster with our children will help to provide a solid foundation for their future adult relationships.

In most families, the primary attachment figure in the early years is the mother, but the father also has a critical role. Children who are securely attached to both parents grow up with an emotional advantage as they grow into adult relationships.

The father is a role model for his son and, in an innocent way, is also the first romantic figure for his daughter. The father is the first stepping stone to the outside world for his child, and his relationship with the child's mother is a powerful model for choices the child

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will make when picking a spouse. Adults who were securely attached as children are more likely to love, trust and open up to romantic partners. They feel comfortable depending on others and having others depend on them. They have a free range of feelings and memories, both positive and negative.

Secure attachment relies on interdependence with others. Attachment needs make dependence on another person an integral part of humanity. Self-sufficiency and independence are inconsistent with secure, healthy attachment. The essence of intimate contact is being vulnerable and putting contact before self-protection. In marital distress—and indeed family dysfunction—the opposite happens: Self-protection comes before contact.

Our needs in adult relationships are very similar to our needs in childhood—the need for eye contact, touching, stroking and holding give the same security and comfort we sought from our parents.

Yet, even if we do not have the best relationships with our parents, we are not condemned to repeat the past. As we integrate new experiences, and build secure relationships as adults, we can grow and change. Parenting our own children can be the most healing impetus for changing our old patterns.

We often find that Attachment Parenting provides amazing depth to our relationship with our spouse. As we educate ourselves to the long-term benefits of Attachment Parenting, we become motivated as a couple to overcome the short-term inconveniences that can sometimes occur when implementing this approach to parenting. Then, we grow in our marriage through shared adversity and challenges, as well as through our love and understanding.

Thank you to Barbara Nicholson, mother of 4 grown children and cofounder of Attachment Parenting International, for your contribution

6

Attachment Parenting can heal broken hearts

Attachment Parenting International encourages all parents to explore their childhood memories, identify any emotional wounds from their childhood and work toward healing of these wounds as part of the First Principle of Parenting: Prepare for Pregnancy, Childbirth and Parenting.

For many reasons, parents may not be able to heal their emotional childhood wounds before becoming parents. Attachment Parenting, guided by Attachment Parenting International's Eight Principles of Parenting, can help parents relearn ways of relating to both their children and their partner as well as to themselves. In many instances, parents have credited Attachment Parenting with changing the course of their lives and healing their hearts.

Changing the Attachment Cycle

Leyani, mother of 2, explains how her daily choice of practicing Attachment Parenting is changing her family's legacy:

"I feel a lot of love in my house. But there are conflicts, hurt feelings and misunderstandings. I know we are on a journey together to love each other the best we can—to forgive and accept, and to challenge ourselves to feel our feelings without hurting others with our actions or words.

This is a big challenge for me, having grown up with a parental mandate to be happy. If I wasn't happy, my parents became annoyed or angry. So strong feelings went inside.

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I want my children to express their feelings—all of them—and I want us to be a family that shows respect and kindness. So how to manage the moments when the feelings come out and they are hurtful?

‘You gave me a broken lollipop!’ screams one child at the other. ‘Well, I didn’t know!’ the other yells back, tears welling up in both their eyes.

What do I do as a parent who wants to validate emotions, live in an environment where strong feelings are okay and model communication that is not hurtful?

My instincts from childhood direct me to snap at my children to shut down the yelling. I feel my anger rising in response to theirs. I just want them to be happy! I feel annoyed that they are not.

I have a moment of empathy for my parents. I am chilled, knowing how easy it is to repeat the cycles we grow up with even when we did not thrive in them and do not want to repeat them.

So I stop myself from saying anything in the moment. I pause and breathe.

My children are each sniffing in the back seat, one with her hands over her face and the other staring at a book. We are in the driveway, about to drive away from the house. I turn off the engine, and we just sit for a moment.

This is my chance to change the cycle. This is my chance to do it differently. If I really believe that how I deal with conflict helps them learn to deal with conflict, then this moment is important.

I take another breath and think about myself as a kid and what I would have liked my parents to say and do when I was angry, hurt and frustrated. And the answer? Hugs, empathy, help expressing my feelings, reassurance and a gentle, strong presence that told me it’s all going to be okay.”

A Gentler Way of Relating

Margie Wilson-Mars, mother of 8, describes how Attachment Parenting likely saved her life during a bout of postpartum depression:

“When my first baby Steven was born, we moved in with my parents because I was scared to death. When he was 2 weeks old, my older sister came upstairs into my bedroom and asked me what I was doing. Apparently I calmly answered, ‘I’m going to try and finish feeding this baby, and then I’m throwing him out the window and following.’

I honestly don’t remember how it happened, but I ended up at my mother-in-law’s house where she tucked me into bed for some much-needed sleep and took Steven. She would wake me up to feed him, keeping an eye on us, and then send me back to bed.

Her gentle manner just blew my mind, the total opposite from my family. Even the way she bathed him was so soft and stress free. No more watching the clock between feedings or freaking out because he didn’t poop that day.

My depression ran deep, and it took getting pregnant with my daughter Stephanie before it totally lifted. Being constantly reassured that listening to my instincts was not only OK, but good, made all the difference. I have no doubt that if I’d continued on the path I was on, I wouldn’t have made it.

There have certainly been huge bumps in the road since, but my mother-in-law set the tone for my parenting. No matter how rocky things got at times, our attachment was never affected. For example, when my daughter and I clashed

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through her teenage years, she told me she never felt like she couldn't crawl into bed with me and know that everything would be okay. Her grandmother is truly the one to thank for that."

Finding Healing in Attachment Parenting

Jessica Talbot, mother of 1, shares how learning about her own early attachment history filled in the blanks of her life after years of searching for an answer to her depression and how Attachment Parenting helped her to finally heal those childhood wounds:

"For most of my life I struggled with the sensation that there was a hole in my life, a loss of something vital. It felt as if there was a fuzzy-edged void somewhere inside, floating in my chest. I didn't understand where it came from, just that it was there from before I had words and that perhaps it had been there from the beginning.

When I was younger, I tried to block out the sensation with alcohol while I tried to fill the hole with boys. Then as I got older, I tried to fill it by helping others, and with more grownup boys. When I wasn't desperately trying to throw things into the hole to fill it up, I sank into the grey world of depression and resigned myself to loneliness.

With nothing to lose, and a glinting light of hope, I left. During the journey and the years that followed, I kept meeting other people who seemed to also be struggling with something similar. These people were searching, too, for the way to fill in the missing bits.

Most of these wanderers had lost important people in their lives, or were detached somehow from families back home. They were trying to find a place to belong in the world, a place where they could love and be loved.

It was during my long journey to find my 'home' that the floating hole filled up. I hope to help others prevent the same sensation from occurring in their children.

The journey was painful, but I learned many things. I saw how important connections and family are, how children are so much a part of everything, and just how much people, big and small, were touched and kissed and hugged daily.

I dived in, and it started to heal me. Now, I know just how necessary that nurturing touch is if we are to survive the harsh edges of life.

While creating a new family, I also made peace with my past and reconnected with my family. I had many talks with my mother and father. These conversations gave me what I needed to understand why I had always felt so detached and why I had never quite felt worthy enough. I finally saw what the 'little me' missed out on and what the 'big me' now had to create for myself.

I saw, too, what my parents were missing and how they tried to give me the solid base I needed, but were unable to for many reasons. The relief that came from understanding was amazing, and forgiveness came easily after that.

When I found out I was pregnant, I didn't rush into reading parenting manuals and books. I knew I would figure it out when the time came. I already knew how important attachment was from my training as a child psychologist and from the experience of having shaky foundation blocks. I wanted to trust my instincts.

After he was born, I realized it was way harder than I imagined! But I let

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things flow in the way that felt right for me, baby and family. Without even knowing about Attachment Parenting, I became an Attachment Parenting parent. I watched, I listened and I let him be as close as he wanted, for as long as he wanted.

And now I have a happy, independent, snugly, empathetic 5 year old as a result. When he's tired or worried about something, he still wriggles up very close and puts his hand over my heart. I feel it inside out and outside in. We all need nurturing touch.

I believe sometimes we need to go back, to mend things, so we can fly forward again. When you are freer from pain and anguish and anger, you can see more clearly around you and you can see what your children truly need.”

Attachment Parenting Brought My Daughter Back

Rita Brhel, mother of 3, reveals how Attachment Parenting healed her insecure attachment with her oldest child, now 8:

“I wasn't always into Attachment Parenting. I started off that way, but when my oldest child was about 10 months old, I bent to cultural pressure. For the next year, secure attachment wasn't my goal as much as early independence. It was a vulnerable time for me: I had no support as my husband struggled with depression, and I lived in a very rural area with no parenting resources.

When my oldest daughter was 22 months old, at about the time that I found Attachment Parenting International, I was finally able to break out of that cultural hold and I've never looked back.

But the damage to our relationship was profound.

It's true that all children are different and some are naturally more resilient than others. But, likewise, some are more impressible than others—they can be greatly impacted by certain parenting approaches in a more extreme way—and early experiences can be especially influential. I don't think any parent, or professional for that matter, will know which babies will be naturally more resilient or more negatively affected than others by, as in my oldest daughter's case, cry-it-out sleep training, physical punishment, frequent separations and almost no warmth or playful interaction.

My daughter withdrew into herself. She didn't seek comfort or reassurance or any kind of connection, during the day or the night. Looking back, I believe that she was depressed.

One of the most troubling signs for me was that she wouldn't seek out adult help at night when she was obviously not feeling well – for example, she just vomited or was starting to have an asthma attack.

She was very quiet, never volunteering to talk and rarely making eye contact. She was also unable to answer direct questions; the special education teachers I worked with said that she couldn't form the pictures in her mind required for her to answer questions, and although their testing revealed that she was extremely intelligent, the teachers said she appeared to have 'locked herself out of our world.' Testing teetered on the brink of autism.

Another troubling sign for me was that she never had a tantrum. She avoided her emotions and if I became the least bit unhappy with her, she would stop what she was doing immediately but without seeking reassurance. She would do anything I asked of her without question, and it would've been easy for

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someone to take advantage of that.

When I fully embraced Attachment Parenting when she was 22 months old, I began what would turn out to be years' worth of intense repair of our attachment bond. And it took, literally, years. There was a solid 2 years where I saw no improvement in either her mood or in our relationship, despite very loving and consistent care by me, her primary caregiver—what attachment research shows is required for a secure attachment bond to develop.

But I continued, on the blind faith that improving our attachment bond would “turn her around.” At age 4, I began to see improvement. At age 5, she was a completely different child than she was previously. She was very outgoing and friendly.

She regressed at age 6, I believe because of a new authoritarian-oriented teacher at her school who probably reminded her of me before Attachment Parenting. During summer vacation when she turned 7, she seemed to ‘come back,’ only to go away again for the first couple of months at the start of the school year. Gradually, she began to break out of that shell of insecurity and self-protection again. And then by the end of that school year, she was released from her special education program.

She hasn't regressed since and is now at the top of her class academically. She's able to answer quickly and learns especially fast. She can assert herself if she believes a she's receiving unfair treatment and work through conflict in a positive way.

And best of all, now she seeks me out if she needs extra help or reassurance. We have an especially close bond.

Our relationship is shaped around trust, empathy, affection and authenticity without either person feeling the need to control or coerce or punish. Together, we have learned how to listen actively, how to identify our emotions and communicate these in a way that gains understanding without putting the other person on the defensive, how to validate one another, how to forgive and how to problem-solve. She has blossomed into a happy, confident child who truly empathizes for others and is an excellent role model to her siblings.

Now, this is one child and one family and one circumstance, but it's one situation where parenting to control made a huge amount of difference in a child's development and not in a good way. And, where Attachment Parenting made another huge amount of difference in the course of a child's development and mental health, in a very good way. This story is the reason why Attachment Parenting means so much to me.”

Attachment Parenting can change the world

As parents who practice Attachment Parenting, we truly believe that there is nothing more precious than our children. We love them unconditionally and raise them to be kind, loving and compassionate towards others. We understand the importance of meeting our children's unique and individual needs, and we strive to treat them with respect and understanding.

Growing up we were taught to treat everyone equal: "Treat others in the same manner that you would want to be treated." Why? Because it is the right thing to do. But there is more to it than that.

The whole theory behind Attachment Parenting is that by raising our children in an empathetic manner, we will be raising a more empathetic generation of children who are aware of the needs and feelings of others. This type of chain reaction has the potential to impact society in a massively positive manner.

And many parents understand the potential that Attachment Parenting has of benefiting our society, beyond the family, into our communities. Jillian Amodio, mother of 1, continues to share:

"I teach my daughter to be kind to others regardless of their differences, not only because I want her to grow up to be a kind, compassionate member of society, but also because her peers will be right there alongside her as she grows.

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The way that children are treated now drastically impacts the way they will behave later in life. Children who are treated with kindness will generally grow to be kind individuals, while children who are bullied, teased and treated like outcasts have a far greater chance of growing up to be hardened, distrusting and aggressive. I would much rather my daughter grow to be surrounded by positive, empathetic and caring people than by people who have been conditioned to expect the worst.

In filling in for another daycare provider one week, I was faced with the task of explaining to several children the importance of being kind and patient to a child with behavioral issues. I explained to them that they needed to be understanding and accepting of his differences and to treat him the same way that they want to be treated.

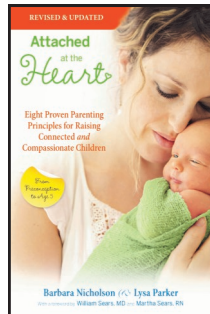
When this kind of acceptance is taught from an early age, it begins to shape the way that our children behave toward others. By raising our children to be kind and accepting, we are shaping a kinder and brighter future. And that's the kind of world we want our children to live in!

A simple act of kindness can go a very long way.”

Welcome to API

Attachment Parenting International (API) is the only organization of its kind, and therefore, we strive to bring you a well-rounded collection of resources designed to educate and support parents about the benefits and how-to's of building a healthy parent-child attachment bond:

- **AttachmentParenting.org** is our home base. From here, you can access all of API's resources as well as learn about the foundation of how parents can incorporate attachment-promoting practices into their childrearing styles: *The Eight Principles of Parenting*.
- **Attached at the Heart**, a book by API's cofounders, explains the Eight Principles of Parenting in detail.
- **API Support Groups** are the heart of what API provides. Led by parents who have completed API's leader accreditation process, local support groups give parents a community-based support network of like-minded families who can learn together through discussion and fellowship. All support groups have monthly in-person meetings, most groups offer a resource library, many have an online discussion group to answer questions between meetings, some have enrichment classes to learn more about specific Attachment Parenting topics and a few offer playgroups, book clubs and family fun activities. **API Leaders** are available in and out of meetings to offer support.
- **Attached Family** is a quarterly digital/print-on-demand magazine centered on timely themes. It's online extension, **TheAttachedFamily.com**, as well as API's blog, **APTly Said**, further explore a variety of Attachment Parenting topics. The **Parenting This Week** newsletter brings the latest of API's offerings, while the **API Links** monthly newsletter highlights Attachment Parenting news in and outside of API. **Parent Compass** is a bimonthly letter from API's cofounders examining Attachment Parenting in society. And soon to debut, the **Journal of AP** is an annual review of Attachment Parenting research.
- **AP Month** is held every October to celebrate Attachment Parenting in your communities and around the world. Every year, API chooses a theme to focus its online auction, communications, giveaways, teleseminars, and other activities.
- **API Teleseminars** provide parents an opportunity to hear from their favorite authors and other parenting experts in the comfort of their homes, via a phone call. And if parents are unable to be on for the call, their registration allows them to receive the recording after the event.
- **API Reads** is an online book club held through Goodreads. Parents read and discuss books selected specifically to help families embrace Attachment Parenting values.
- API also offers a **Professionals Program**, a parent-to-parent online **Forum** community, a **Warmline**, an active Facebook page, and campaigns on infant sleep safety and babywearing safety. Coming soon are API's Parent Education Program and custody legal support.



You need parenting support.

Which of API's resources offers you the best support?

Do you have a local API Support Group?

Local support groups, led by accredited API Leaders, offer in-person peer support in a group setting with like-minded parents. Some groups offer additional online support between meetings, and API Leaders are available to provide one-on-one support.

Join the API Forums...

API's Forums offer a virtual peer support community for parents without an API Support Group. All forum members share ideas moderated by trained volunteers, including API Leaders.

Search the API Website...

There is a plethora of information available through API, from magazine articles to forum threads to teleseminar recordings to book discussions to blog posts and much more. A few terms typed in the search function on API website turns out resource list tailored to your needs.

Consult an API Professional...

While API does not endorse professionals, the API Professional Associate Directory lists those who have committed to upholding API's Eight Principles of Parenting.

Connect with the API Warmline...

API's Warmline allows parents without an API Support Group to seek one-on-one API Leader support for urgent questions. Submit your question through info@attachmentparenting.org or 1-800-850-8320.

No

Seeking a fun opportunity to further API's cause? Join our volunteer staff!

API Support Group Leader

Communications Specialist

Development Director

ATTACHMENT PARENTING INTERNATIONAL

Attachment Parenting is an application of sensitive responsive parenting. Attachment Parenting is based in the practice of nurturing parenting methods that create strong emotional bonds, also known as secure attachment, between children and their parent(s). This style of parenting encourages responsiveness to children's emotional needs, enabling children to develop trust that their needs will be met. As a result, this strong attachment helps children develop the capacity for secure, empathic, peaceful and enduring relationships that follow them into adulthood.

Attachment Parenting International (API) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit member organization founded in 1994 to network with parents, professionals and like-minded organizations around the world.

API's mission is to educate and support all parents in raising secure, joyful and empathic children in order to strengthen families and create a more compassionate world.

API promotes parenting practices that create strong, healthy emotional bonds between children and their parents and as a result changes everything from the dynamic of a family to that of communities by improving school readiness to reducing violence.

It accomplishes this on a grassroots level through API Support Groups and accredited volunteer API Leaders around the world, as well as a broad network of member advocates and a number of partnerships.

API serves as a clearinghouse and community of practice for AP education, research and information dissemination.

Through education, support, advocacy and research,

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API's principal goal is to heighten global awareness of the profound significance of secure attachment—not only to reduce and ultimately prevent emotional and physical mistreatment of children, addiction, crime, behavioral disorders, mental illness and other outcomes of early unhealthy attachment, but to invest in our children's bright futures.

API's core ethos is really a frame of mind that we promote as a habit or practice of mind: respect, empathy, compassion and reflection in thought, speech and action toward all—self, other adults, youth and children.

We believe that parents who practice these habits of mind will tend to practice parenting in ways that resemble API's Eight Principles of Parenting. We believe that parents who practice the behaviors included in the API Principles are capable of practicing and maybe more likely to practice the API's ethos.

We believe that in practicing these habits of mind, we can experience greater personal wellbeing, family enjoyment and raise children who flourish and who also possess and promote this ethos.

As an extension of this ethos, API has explicitly organized itself to continuously promote this ethos.

We embed the ethos implicitly in our content and in our compassionate communications style based in NVC.