The Creation and Formative Evaluation of an Attachment-Based Parenting Education Website

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THE CREATION AND FORMATIVE EVALUATION OF AN ATTACHMENT-BASED PARENTING EDUCATION WEBSITE

by

April Steed

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

Marriage, Family, and Human Development Program

School of Family Life

Brigham Young University

August 2005
This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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ABSTRACT

THE CREATION AND FORMATIVE EVALUATION OF AN ATTACHMENT-BASED PARENTING EDUCATION WEBSITE

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While there are numerous websites discussing attachment parenting in infancy, there are currently no interactive research-based websites devoted to attachment parenting throughout early childhood. To fill this need the author developed the Foundations of Parenting website (http://www.foundationsofparenting.org). Evaluation, a tool so far under-utilized by parenting education websites, is necessary for both quality control and improving websites. Thus, in addition to development of the website, the author also formatively evaluated the Foundations of Parenting program by using website-utilization tools and visitor feedback through an online survey to analyze utilization and visitor satisfaction. The website was well-used (674 unique visitors and 189 return visitors with a visitor page depth of 6.7 pages over a 23 day period) for a
newly-created website, as can be seen by an examination of traffic rankings of small websites at www.alexa.com. The quantitative survey items assessed the usefulness of the website, the attractiveness of the website, ease of use of the website, whether the website met the participants needs, how interesting the content was, whether the website led them to reconsider former attitudes and made them aware of new things, and whether the participant had decided to do things differently due to the website. A MANOVA procedure was used to identify distinctions in these items in association with selected demographic variables, while the open-ended questions invited the survey participants to elaborate on their quantitative answers. The majority of survey participants, 75 percent, agreed or strongly agreed with the above quantitative survey items, and 87.6 percent felt that the website was useful or very useful. Thus, a large majority of users indicated that the website was useful, attractive, easy to use, interesting, helped them reconsider former attitudes, helped them become aware of new things, and influenced them to decide to do something differently. MANOVA analyses revealed website ratings varied only by ethnicity. Reports compiled by SuperStats tracked the amount of website usage as well as visitor pathways through the website, visitor page depth, the amount of time spent on the website, which pages were most popular, as well as the page depth of the most popular pages. These reports revealed that users tended to search for information they were looking for and leave instead of reading through website content from beginning to end. Participants provided helpful suggestions and feedback to improve the website. Implications of this feedback for website improvement and ideas for further research are discussed.
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I. INTRODUCTION

Parenting education programs have been based on many different theories, most commonly on cognitive and behavioral modification theories (Fine, 1980) or Adlerian theories (Gilbert, 1986). The attachment theory provides a promising avenue for parenting programs. The quality of attachment to the primary caregiver affects emotional (Stevenson-Hinde & Vershueren, 2002), cognitive, social (Parke, Simpkins, McDowell, Kim, Killian, Dennis, Flyr, Wild, & Rah, 2002) and moral development (Berkowitz & Gryche, 1998). A secure attachment style is generally considered to be a strong protective factor in these areas, while insecure attachment styles are risk factors for pathological development (Stevenson-Hinde & Vershueren, 2002, Thompson, 2000).

Secure and insecure attachment styles are highly correlated with primary caregiver behaviors. Secure attachment is associated with a sensitive, responsive caregiver (Weinfield, Sroufe, Egeland, & Carlson, 1999). People generally find securely attached people to be charming, cheerful, and more socially competent and likable as compared to their insecurely attached peers (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Securely attached people rate high in their beliefs in the reliability of others and their self-worth (Feeney, 1999). They believe that other people are reliable, dependable, supportive, and available in times of need, and they use their attachment figure as a secure base to explore the world (Fraley, Davis & Shaver, 1998). Beliefs about self and others intertwine, as is shown by the fact that securely attached individuals believe themselves to be worthy of the attention and supportiveness of an attachment figure (Feeney, 1999).

Insecure attachment patterns include avoidance, ambivalence, and disorganization. Avoidance has been associated with a rejecting caregiver, ambivalence
with an inconsistent caregiver, and disorganization with fear of the caregiver (Kobak, 1999). Since attachment styles of children are formed in large part through interactions with primary caregivers, an attachment-based parenting program becomes a logical extension for increasing protective factors to encourage normative development among children.

Despite the possibilities inherent in an attachment-based parenting program, the attachment parenting education programs that have been created focus on changing the mother’s sensitivity to her infant (Bakermans-Kranenburg, van Ijzendoorn, & Juffer, 2003) which is merely one aspect of many attachment parenting behaviors.

Additionally, there are no parenting programs based primarily on attachment principles targeting parents of children ranging in ages from birth to age eight. According to a comprehensive Internet search dated October 16, 2004, attachment parenting on the web targets parents with infants, with little mention of attachment parenting in early childhood beyond admonishments to maintain a positive parent-child relationship. This search was accomplished through the use of multiple search engines, primarily Google, using a wide variety of search terms applicable to both attachment and parenting. For example, a search using the term “attachment parenting” yields 306,000 results. Further refining this search to “attachment parenting” “older children” and principles reduced the search results to 497. The term “principles” was added to reduce the number of websites that simply mentioned that attachment can extend into later childhood. An examination of the last search result yielded the finding that few websites mention what parents can do to help maintain a secure attachment with their children beyond infancy. Of those websites that do discuss the topic, such as
basic parenting advice is given, such as making sure your child feels loved. Little or no direction is given on how to accomplish these tasks.

Since the measurement of a child’s attachment style is less common after the Strange Situation becomes unusable due to children’s growing representational strategy, the literature has focused on infant attachment. Accordingly, there are no descriptions of or evaluations in the literature of web-based, attachment-based parenting programs targeting parenting beyond infancy. Fortunately, there is a growing body of literature relying on alternative methods of testing attachment in childhood (Solomon & George, 1999). These studies demonstrate that while attachment in infancy remains a critical period, events in the parent-child relationship beyond infancy can change a child’s attachment style (Thompson, 1999).

The purpose of this study is to create and formatively evaluate the website utilization and visitor satisfaction of a web-based, interactive attachment-based parenting program, titled *Foundations of Parenting*. The program incorporates the attachment principles of sensitive and responsive caregiving, warmth, validation, consistency, and open communication (Kobak 1999). It also includes three attachment-related areas: kindness, teaching through consequences, and induction that are designed to help parents provide an environment conducive to maintaining a secure attachment throughout early childhood. The principles chosen for use in this program are foundationally-oriented. For example, this program could teach basic methods of increasing social competency or ego resiliency in order to improve a child’s social development. Instead, attachment and attachment-related principles were chosen because the use of these principles in parenting
will affect social competency and ego resiliency, which will in turn improve social
development (Parke et al., 2002). Thus, the principles taught in this program target the
roots of development.
II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the researcher will discuss prevention as a means of intervention, the role of family life education (FLE) generally, and attachment-based parenting education programs specifically in prevention. Next, the usefulness of the Internet as an educational tool will be examined. Then, the theoretical basis of Foundations of Parenting will be explained as well as the goodness of fit between the program and general parenting needs. Finally, FLE website evaluation will be discussed using the Jacobs (1988) framework.

Intervening through Preventative Education

Two general types of intervention exist in family science: therapy and prevention. Prevention interventions seek to maximize protective factors while minimizing risk factors in order to encourage normative developmental outcomes in children (Dumka, Roosa, Michaels, & Suh, 1995). Both types of intervention have been shown to be effective (Broberg, 2000). But scholars debate whether or not the type of intervention makes a difference in the desired outcome, which is in this case normative child development. The “dodo’s verdict” is a theoretical position that describes all types of interventions as having an equal effect on outcomes. There is some research that suggests the dodo’s verdict does not apply to psychosocial interventions (Reid, 1997; Bakermans-Kranenburg, van Ijzendoorn, & Juffer, 2003). In other words, the type of intervention employed makes a difference in effectiveness of the program.

FLE is taking on an increasingly important role in prevention efforts (Hughes, 1994). A variety of preventative FLE programs have been evaluated and found effective in producing positive changes in relationships, such as Active Parenting and Active
Parenting for Teens (Mullis, 1999), Self-PREP, (Halford, Sanders, & Behrens, 2001), and Couple Communication (Butler & Wampler, 1999).

The general aim of FLE is to “strengthen and enrich individual and family well-being” (Thomas & Arcus, 1992, p. 4) in the areas outlined by the Framework for Life-span Family Life Education, one of which is education about parenthood. Attachment parenting programs cover several subtopics of education about parenthood, such as responsibilities of parents, teaching life skills to children, and parent-child communication (Arcus, 1987).

Even though an attachment-based parenting education program clearly falls under the category of FLE, the question remains if FLE parenting programs based on attachment theory is effective. To demonstrate the efficacy of attachment-based family life education, the researcher will first give a brief description of the development of a child’s attachment style in order to illustrate one possible prevention point, after which the researcher will discuss the types of FLE based on attachment parenting that have been tested as well as best practices for delivering an attachment-based parent education program.

One Prevention Point: The Development of a Child’s Attachment Style.

Infants are primed for attachment relationships from the moment they are born. Certain situations, such as hunger, discomfort and fear, activate the attachment system and the infant makes an effort to gain the attention of the primary caregiver to receive comfort. As an infant, the main goal of the attachment system is to maintain proximity to the primary caregiver. This is considered to be an evolutionary function that enhances the odds of survival for the infant (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall 1978).
The attachment style of the infant - secure, ambivalent, or avoidant - grows out of thousands of interactions between the caregiver and the infant (Kobak, 1999). In this stage of development, a child’s attachment is primarily relationship oriented, that is, the child’s attachment orientation depends upon how the caregiver treats the child. If there is a change in this treatment, there will most likely be a change in the attachment orientation (Kobak, 1994). If the caregiver is consistent and responsive to the attachment needs of the infant, then the infant will most likely develop a secure attachment style. If the caregiver is somewhat inconsistent in responding to the needs of the infant, then the infant will tend to develop an ambivalent attachment style, characterized by high anxiety and low avoidance. Infants who adapt to their environment by adopting the ambivalent style learn that protest is needed to get consistent care from their caregiver. As a result, infants who adopt the ambivalent attachment style have a hyper-activated attachment system in order to maintain proximity to their caregiver. If the caregiver is unresponsive to the needs of the infant, then the infant will learn that the caregiver is unreliable, and over time the child will learn to bypass or dampen down the attachment system (Cassidy, 1994; De Wolff & van Ijzendoorn, 1997).

While it is convenient to think of attachment in terms of categories, the attachment styles can also be viewed on a continuum (Fraley & Waller, 1998). For example, while 70 to 80 percent of children fall into the secure category of attachment, not all of these children are equally secure (NICHD, 1997). Many of these secure children almost qualify as having an avoidant or ambivalent attachment style. In other words, children may be highly secure or moderately secure and still qualify as “securely attached.” These moderately secure children may also be mildly avoidant or ambivalent.
While the infant adopts an attachment style in response to the environment, this attachment style eventually resembles a stable personality trait as the child globalizes the experiences with the original caregiver to general expectations of how other people will react to them (Kobak, 1994). Since attachment styles of children are formed in large part through interactions with primary caregivers, an attachment-based parenting program focusing on parent-child interaction becomes a logical place to increase protective factors to encourage normative development among children. While infant-parent interactions are crucial to the formation of a secure attachment style, the continued parent-child interaction influences whether or not a child remains securely attached or whether the child adapts a new attachment style in response to parent-child relationship events (Thompson, 1999).

**Types and Best Practices of Attachment-Based Interventions**

According to a meta-analysis of seventy studies done by Bakermans-Kranenburg, van Ijzendoorn, and Juffer (2003), the majority of attachment-related interventions have focused on changing two variables: the mother’s sensitivity and the mother’s internal working model of herself and others. FLE in this area generally attempts behavioral change of the mother’s sensitivity, while cognitive therapy is used to change the mother’s internal working model. Fathers are rarely included in either intervention type. Children may be included in the intervention, since the parent-child relationship is reciprocal (Stern & Smith, 1999). For example, a child’s temperament may influence how the parent responds in attachment situations to the child (Vaughn & Bost, 1999). Even though this relationship is reciprocal, parents tend to carry more influence in the relationship, making them the optimal intervention point.
Bakermans-Kranenburg, van Ijzendoorn, and Juffer (2003) found that short-term attachment interventions were more successful than long-term interventions in increasing a child’s attachment security. (Attachment interventions comprising five sessions or less ($d = 0.44$) were equal in effect size to interventions ranging from six to fifteen sessions ($d = .38$). Interventions were less effective when interventions were sixteen sessions or longer ($d = .21; Q =14.11, p < .001$).) Interventions that focused on changing the parent’s behavior (FLE) were more successful than interventions that changed the parent’s internal working model (therapy). Interventions that included both parents ($d = 1.05$), as compared to mother-only interventions ($d = .42; Q =8.67, p = .003$) were significantly more successful in increasing parental sensitivity. Finally, interventions that did not use personal contact tended to show the largest effect sizes, ($d = 0.62, p<.05$). While the last finding may seem counterintuitive, it may be explained by Hennon and Peterson’s (1981) finding that 68 % of parents with young children preferred to receive FLE by reading, while 16 % prefer meetings and 4 % prefer audio tapes. Reading may be preferred by parents of young children because it does not require large blocks of time away from home, a scarcity for these parents.

The above findings suggest that a web-based, attachment parenting education program of moderate length, with a preference for reading material, that includes concrete suggestions for behavioral changes and offers both parents access to the information might be able to maximize the desired outcome: secure attachment in children.
Education through the Web

While the Internet has been used to transmit information since its inception (Webopedia), active Internet users now indicate that they turn to the web for information as part of a daily routine (Fallows, 2004). Active Internet users in the United States alone are estimated to be 135,423,830 people as of September, 2004 (Nielsen//NetRatings, 2004). Nearly seventy-five percent of Americans have access to the Internet in their homes as of February 2004 (Nielsen//NetRatings, 2004), with a global Internet usage estimate of more than 600 million people in 2002 (Nua, 2002; see also ETForecasts, 2002; United Nations, 2002). Additionally, according to one study, 70% of U.S. parents with a child age 18 or under use the Internet. Of these connected parents, 73% use the Internet to learn new things, while 22% reported that they used the Internet to find answers to personal problems (Allen & Rainie, 2002). Taken together, these findings indicate that the web has the potential to reach millions of parents, many of whom use the Internet to find ways to improve their family life.

FLE educators are attempting to fill the demand for parenting information on the web. Elliot’s (1999) landmark compilation of FLE resources on the web indicated that parenting education was one of the most popular FLE topics on the web, with 71 educational websites that were designed to enrich individual and family well-being. Yet a comprehensive search of the web by the researcher (as of October 16, 2004) shows that attachment-based parenting education web programs focusing on parents of infants through early childhood are nonexistent, even though research has demonstrated that parent-child attachment processes continue to be important throughout early childhood (Marvin & Britner, 1999).
Although Elliot (1999) catalogues a representative sample of FLE websites, neither he nor any other researcher has documented the best practices for delivering FLE to a web audience. Web-based FLE is a subtype of web-based education. This literature provides some guidance about best practices in the field in the area of design.

Barron (1998) describes several different design options for web-based training: page-based, frame-based, and screen-based websites. A page-based website has no frames. Frames are the menu options we often see to the left of a web that stay the same as an individual navigates within a website. The advantage of a page-based approach is that it is more accessible to a world-wide audience due to being created in basic HTML, and it does not require authoring system plug ins that the user may have to download. The disadvantages of this approach are the need to scroll down possibly long pages and the lack of static menus that facilitate website use.

The frame-based website allows one part of the web page to remain static, the menu, while the other parts can change or allow for scrolling. The main advantage of frames is the ability to allow the menu or other options to stay on the screen. The disadvantages of this approach are the greater difficulty in printing information, since only the active frame will print, and an increase in access time due to the transmission of multiple pages (Barron, 1998).

Screen-based websites use a plug in to allow the webpage to adapt to the screen resolution of the individual user (Barron, 1998). For example, for a user with a 768 X 600 resolution, the website would fill the screen. For users with a higher screen resolution, the web page would be centered on a background. This solves the problem of differential appearance on screens of varying resolutions, a concern in website delivery (Couper,
The advantage of this approach is the elimination of the horizontal scroll bar, a serious deterrent to user retention. The disadvantages of this approach are an increased download time as well as adding the possible download of a needed plug-in (Barron, 1998). The *Foundations of Parenting* website used a simulated frames-based approach, where each page was based on a template that included the navigation bar and menu, while the material unique to each page was placed in editable regions. The website was designed for a screen resolution of 768 x 600 pixels with an expandable background in order to allow the website to fit the screen of users with a higher screen resolution.

Additional general design recommendations made by Barron (1998) are (1) to use audio and video sparingly due to the large increase in download time caused by these media, (2) limit all images to 472 pixels in width so web-users with a low screen resolution will not have to use the horizontal scrollbar, (3) use a high contrast between the text and the background in order to enhance readability, (4) use descriptive words in links to allow users to identify whether the link leads them to a separate website or simply to a different page within the website, (5) graphic files should be as small as possible, with each file being no larger than 40K in order to limit download time, (6) provide a previous page, next page, and main menu button as part of the frame to help users navigate the website in the intended order, (7) the homepage should not exceed one screen so users will not have to scroll down to find their option, (8) pages after the homepage should be limited from one to three screen lengths, and (9) provide a printer-friendly option to prevent users from having to format the information themselves. The *Foundations of Parenting* website followed seven out of the nine recommendations above. The two recommendations that were not followed were including a previous page,
next page, and main menu button because a navigation bar was provided at the top of the page as a part of the template of each page. The other option not provided was a printer-friendly option, since the text retained its formatting when a simple copy and paste was used.

Barron (1998) emphasizes the importance of cognitive interaction in order to enhance web education. Possible methods of cognitive interaction that have been shown to be effective in engaging the participant are email, chatting (Barron, 1998), quizzes or problem sets (Huang, 2003), forums, and an “ask the expert function” where visitors can submit questions to be answered later in an email (Weingardt, 2004, 318). Thus, the Foundations of Parenting website will include a forum, quizzes or problem sets, and the “ask the expert function” in order to promote cognitive interactivity.

Creation of the Program

Hughes (1994) recommended that all FLE programs base their content on theoretical and research-based information. Foundations of Parenting is based on the attachment theory, and includes other parenting skills compatible with attachment, such as kindness, induction, and teaching through consequences. The theoretical and research-based content for each principle of the program will now be briefly discussed.

Theoretical and Research-based Content

Secure attachment tends to encourage normal or optimal growth in a child’s social, moral, cognitive, and emotional development, while an insecure attachment style is a risk factor for pathological development. Attachment theory hypothesizes that while the parent-child attachment relationship is interactive and reciprocal, parents have the greater amount of influence in the relationship (Ainsworth et al., 1979) and are therefore
a good intervention point for increasing secure attachment in infants and children. As such, the protective factors that are addressed in *Foundations of Parenting* are parental behaviors associated with increasing secure attachment in children, such as warmth, sensitivity and responsiveness, consistency, acceptance, and open communication. Other protective factors included are those that are hypothesized to support the attachment process in the parent-child relationship, such as kindness, induction, and teaching through consequences.

*Warmth.* Parental warmth is an essential component in creating an environment conducive to secure attachment because this behavior helps fill the universal need of a child to receive positive regard from their attachment figure (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002). Effective methods of showing warmth are smiling, reciprocal smiling, eye contact, appropriate touch such as hugs, holding, and snuggling, laughter, a positive tone of voice, soothing words, and singing (Levy, 2000). Additionally, parental warmth has been associated with high child self-esteem, and social and academic competence (Myers, Alvy, Arrington, Richardson, Marigna, Huff, Main, & Newcomb, 1992).

*Sensitivity and responsiveness.* Sensitivity and responsiveness to a child’s needs is essential in the process of creating a secure attachment (Kobak, 1999). Sensitivity is the parents’ ability to perceive the child’s signals accurately as well as their ability to respond promptly and appropriately to those signals, while responsiveness is defined as promptness or frequency of parental response to the child’s signals (Ainsworth et al., 1978; De Wolff & van Ijzendoorn, 1997). Before a parent can be sensitive and responsive to their children’s needs, they must first know what their child’s needs are. There are general needs each child has, such as the need for parental approval and
availability, structure, (Rothbaum, Rosen, Pott, & Beatty, 1995) parental affection, care, comfort, support, nurturance, and acceptance (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002). Yet each child is unique, which requires parental sensitivity in order to identify, and then fulfill, their child’s needs. Parental sensitivity to their child’s needs is a time-consuming process, since parents must get to know their children, a process that involves purposeful observation and time spent together.

Consistency. Parental behavioral consistency is implicit in the creation of a secure attachment style in a child. Since this creation involves thousands of daily interactions, a parent must be somewhat consistent in their application of other attachment principles, such as warmth, sensitivity, responsiveness, acceptance, and emotional communication. In order to identify how consistent is good enough, parents can refer to the marital interaction literature, where John Gottman (1993) has discovered that a stable marital relationship has five positive interactions to one negative interaction during conflict. While this finding is based on marriage research, or adult attachment relationships, the similarity between adult and children’s attachment styles support the generalizability of this aspect of consistency (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). The application of this finding to the parenting literature yields the conclusion that parents do not have to be perfectly consistent—they only need to be fairly consistent.

Acceptance. Parental acceptance-rejection is an important component of parent-child attachment, as can be seen by Mary Ainsworth’s use of this construct in her study of mother-child interaction when she first used the Strange Situation. This construct was one of six that allowed Ainsworth to account for 78 percent of the variation in the type of child attachment. (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978).
Definitions of parental acceptance vary in the literature, from equating acceptance with responsiveness (Rothbaum, Rosen, Pott, & Beatty, 1995) to defining acceptance as giving children positive regard, such as affection, care, comfort, support, and love (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002) but the importance of parental acceptance is well-documented. A groundbreaking meta-analysis demonstrating the effect of parental acceptance on child and adult psychological well-being made the seemingly well-founded claim that “it may not be inappropriate to conclude that perceived parental (maternal and paternal) acceptance-rejection is transculturally associated with roughly 26 percent (.512) of the variance in children’s self-reported psychological adjustment and with roughly 21 percent (.462) of the variance in adults self-reported psychological adjustment ” (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002, p. 51).

Open emotional communication. Open emotional communication is vital for maintaining a secure attachment relationship between parent and child. Open emotional communication allows a child to address directly and resolve a perceived attachment threat, while closed emotional communication encourages a child to keep concerns about attachment threats to themselves, thereby creating a situation where an attachment break could occur if parental behavior continues to confirm the child’s perception (Kobak, 1999). One possible method of maintaining open emotional communication is through emotion coaching.

Gottman, Katz and Hooven (1996) describe the concept of an emotion coaching philosophy, which conceptually is closely related with the concept of maternal emotional discourse: “(1) parents said they were aware of low intensity emotions in themselves and in their children, (2) viewed children’s negative emotions as an opportunity for intimacy
or teaching, (3) validated their child’s emotion, (4) assisted the child in verbally labeling their emotions, and (5) problem solved with the child, setting behavioral limits, and discussing goals and strategies for dealing with the situation that led to negative emotions” (p. 244).

Children who experienced emotion coaching from their parents, either mother or father, were able to regulate their physiological arousal during moments of high emotional intensity significantly better than children who did not experience parental emotion coaching. Additionally, the children who were able to regulate their physiological arousal had better peer relationships at age eight. These findings provide a possible mediating process for why secure children do better socially than their less secure counterparts (Stevenson-Hinde & Vershueren, 2002).

Kindness. Kindness is described by Lee, Burr, Beutler, Yorgason, Harker, and Olson (1997) as engaging in kind, loving acts that are characterized by an unselfish regard for the other. Lee et al.(1997) used the constructs kindness and unkindness in a self-administered family strengths questionnaire. Kindness and unkindness are separate constructs that cover separate behaviors. For example, the optimal outcome is comprised of low levels of unkindness and high levels of kindness. Unkindness had the strongest correlation with the outcomes of family satisfaction, substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, school achievement, family conflict, adult crime, and gang involvement. Kindness was also strongly correlated with these outcomes.

Kind acts include doing nice things for each other, giving compliments, sacrificing for each other, acts of compassion, and spending time with each other. Unkind
acts include rudeness, harsh criticism, cruelty, ridicule, and verbal abuse (Lee et al. 1997).

*Induction.* Berkowitz and Grych (1998) describe induction as explaining behavior in terms of its consequences for the child and for those around the child. Two essential characteristics of such a dialogue are respect for the child and the use of a line of reasoning. While induction is ideal for discipline, it may be used during a discussion of the day’s events (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998) or during story time (Smith, 1986).

There are several different parental discussion styles that may be used in induction: a Socratic, operational, and informative style of discussion. The Socratic style of discussion, characterized by “eliciting the child’s opinion, asking clarifying questions, paraphrasing, and checking for understanding” (Walker & Taylor, 1991, p. 280) predicted the greatest moral development in children. The operational style, in which the child’s viewpoint is challenged and critiqued, and the informative style, where the parents simply offer their own opinions, have little affect on later internalization of moral behavior. In addition to an optimal cognitive approach, there is also an ideal affective approach that increases moral internalization when using the process of induction: support. A parent can express support to their child in the inductive process by using “humor, listening responses, praise, and encouragement to participate” (Walker & Taylor, 1991, p. 281). In contrast, an unsupportive affective environment would be created through the use of hostility, sarcasm, and threats (Walker, & Taylor, 1991).

*Teaching through consequences.* At first glance, this method of discipline does not seem to be related to attachment theory. But an important component of sensitive and responsive parenting is filling the child’s needs, of which structure is one (Rothbaum,
Rosen, Pott, & Beatty, 1995). Additionally, children need to feel safe and secure in their environment (Cassidy, 1999), and part of that security is derived from knowing their boundaries. As such, an important part of attachment parenting is to structure a child’s environment through the use of logical consequences (Gilbert, 1986) accompanied with explanations, or induction (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998).

To examine the completed program, see Appendix D for the lessons and Appendix E for the worksheets that build on the concepts in the lessons.

Parent Education Website Evaluation

Jacob’s (1988) has declared, “Evaluation is a necessary component to every program, regardless of its size, age, or orientation” (p. 49). All FLE programs should be evaluated to increase the fit between the program and the target population’s needs, identify effective programs, and to justify funding (Dumka et al., 1995, Jacobs, 1988). Evaluations ensure that interventions, including websites, do in fact benefit those who participate. While website utilization collects necessary information (Hughes, 2001), other aspects of web-based FLE deserve examination, such as website content, website delivery, and website usability (Hughes, 1999). Website rating may also vary by gender, race, and education level (Steimle & Duncan, 2004) and as such deserve attention when analyzing website rating by demographic variables.

*Jacob’s Five Tier Evaluation Model*

The Jacob’s (1988) five-tiered approach to evaluation is recognized as a valid model of program evaluation (see Bailey & Deen, 2002; Callor, Betts, Carter, Marczak, Peterson, & Richmond, 2000; Hughes, 1994; Small, 1990). Steimle and Duncan (2004) modified Jacob’s (1988) five-tier evaluation plan for web-based programs. This
modification provides the basis for evaluating the *Foundations of Parenting* website. The five tiers are (1) website pre-implementation, (2) website utilization, (3) visitor satisfaction, (4) progress-towards-objectives, and (5) website impact.

**Tier one: Website pre-implementation.** This tier involves identifying the needs of the prospective audience, and evaluating whether a proposed website addresses the identified needs. A review of needs assessments in the parenting literature indicates parents of juvenile delinquents are interested in gaining knowledge and skills to create family bonds and improve parent-child communication (Jackson, 1993), while single mothers are interested in learning about dealing with children’s problems and feelings, (Ludwig, 1988). One study found that fathers in prison are interested in learning about discipline, communicating with their children, and how to deal with their child’s emotions (Palm, 1996). In Mulroy, Goldman, and Wales (1998) study of affluent families, where the majority of parents surveyed were Caucasian women who had graduated with an undergraduate degree, parents were almost universally interested in nurturing family relationships, limit setting, discipline, understanding child development, and motivating their child’s learning. While the needs of affluent, educated Caucasian parents may differ from the general parenting population, Internet user statistics indicate an over-representation of white, educated, and affluent Internet users (Couper, 2000). Additionally, while these parental interests concern very different parenting populations, their similar interests suggest that a wide variety of parents have the same basic parenting needs that are addressed in *Foundations of Parenting*. Parent’s general interests, therefore, indicate a likely interest in and need for the information in this parenting
education program, *Foundations of Parenting*, although this program will not be so broad in scope as to cover specific parenting concerns beyond children’s early childhood.

**Tier Two: Website Utilization.** Website utilization involves identifying who is using the website, how often, and to what extent (Jacobs, 1988). The Internet provides useful, unobtrusive tools for collecting this data through programs such as SuperStats (see [http://www.superstats.com](http://www.superstats.com)) or StatsCounter (see [http://www.statscounter.com](http://www.statscounter.com)). These programs use cookies to collect information about the number of unique visitors, return visitors, page views, and a user’s trail through the website, the most popular pages, and amount of time per page view. This information can be supplemented through an online survey.

Smith (1999) and Wang and Bagaka (2003) both observe that Internet users can navigate through a webpage in multiple directions. In other words, Internet users do not have to start at the beginning and proceed through to the end, as do those who participate in traditional family life education. Often, the traditional FLE program sessions build upon each other to produce an overall, culminating positive effect on the participant (Smith, 1999). Will this pattern remain the same with web users? In other words, will visitors to a website simply find the information they need and leave to never return? Or will some users go through all of the information on a parenting education website? Are there distinguishing characteristics between such users? These questions can be answered through the online survey as well as by examining user trails provided by website utilization programs.

**Tier Three: Visitor satisfaction.** The purpose of this tier is to provide feedback for improvement early in the life of the program for the administrators of the website.
A researcher may collect information through an online survey that identifies the attractiveness of the website, visitor’s interest in the program’s content, and the ease of use of the website (Hughes, 2001). Low, or even moderate, scores on these questions indicate possible areas for website improvement.

By conducting a visitor satisfaction evaluation, program administrators identify extremely flawed websites that should be retired while at the same time justifying the maintenance and future evaluation of satisfactory websites. This type of formative evaluation, if acted upon, can lead to website improvement and further website evaluation, since a summative evaluation may take place once the formative evaluation is complete (Small, 1990).

**Tier four: Progress-towards-objectives.** Evaluation at the tier four level identifies whether the website is making progress towards accomplishing its goals. This type of evaluation identifies short-term objectives as well as indicators of those objectives. Data is then collected on whether or not the website meets these objectives. Websites that do meet these objectives may be considered for further evaluation. Those websites that fail to meet their objectives may need to be revised and go through the evaluation process again (Jacobs, 1988).

According to Steimle and Duncan (2004), website evaluation items may include website visitor perceptions of knowledge gains and attitude changes, as well as qualitative data indicating changes put into place due to the influence of the website information.

**Tier five: Website impact.** The final evaluation tier employs an experimental or quasi-experimental design in order to identify short and long-term effects due to
experiencing the website program (Jacobs, 1988). These evaluations often last at least a year in length. The purpose of this type of evaluation is to evaluate the effectiveness of the website in achieving its short and long-term objectives, as well as contributing to the pool of scientific knowledge on effective prevention programs (Small, 1990). This evaluation of *Foundations of Parenting* addresses mainly tiers two and three. Tier one is not incorporated into this evaluation due to the fact that other researchers conducted a parental needs assessment that confirms parental interest in the information provided by the program. The evaluation begins to examine tier four when the respondents indicate whether or not they intend to change their behavior based on the information they learned. But a full evaluation involving tiers four and five belong in a summative evaluation that incorporates a longitudinal experimental design. Since this study is a formative evaluation, tiers two and three are primarily evaluated.

**Past Website Evaluations**

There are only five website evaluations in the FLE literature. Morris, Dollahite, and Hawkins (1999) conducted a qualitative study of six fathering websites where they examined whether or not the websites encouraged father responsibility, website utilization, website creators, the website structure, and the father-friendliness of the website. Father responsibility was a common theme on all six websites. The websites were created by a variety of individuals and institutions, and were established to cater to the online family life education audience and support themselves through advertising, produce change in the individual similar to traditional family life education, or to advertise services to an online audience. The websites were deemed to be father-friendly in the areas of promoting a strength perspective and building on father’s motivations to
establish closer relationships, A few websites allowed fathers to add to the website, but
the websites were largely unsuccessful in establishing a focus on the individual. Website
usage was listed as being between 250 and 150,000 hits per month. While the statistic
150,000 seems to indicate high usage, it is actually an inflated measurement of Internet
usage since a “hit” is a request to the server for a file on the website. Each page on the
website is made up of many files, since each graphic or button is downloaded in a
separate file. Therefore, one page download could easily register as 20 hits.

Hughes (2001) conducted a web utilization examination of a website for family
life practitioners, (http://www.hec.ohio-state.edu/famlife) from October 1995 to May
1999. Hughes monitored the page views, unique visitors, the number of page views
requested per visitor, and the origin of the visitors. Each of these statistics grew
remarkably over the period of the study. The website, which originally consisted of 26
pages, grew to over 1000 pages by May 1999. In the first month of the website’s
existence, there were 464 pages viewed and 100 visitors, while there were 40,000 page
views and 8,000 monthly visitors in May 1999. Page views requested per visitor ranged
from three to ten, while visitors were primarily from educational and commercial
locations, with a minority of visitors from network, government, organization, and
international locations.

Hughes also conducted a path analysis of the newsletter portion of the website. In
April 1999, there were 1,666 unique pathways taken through this portion of the website.
Hughes does not report how many unique visitors were measured in this portion of the
website, but the number is most likely significantly smaller than the monthly visitors for
the website as a whole, which is just over 7,000.
Ebata (2003) performed a website utilization study of the website *Parent to Parent* ([http://p2p.uiuc.edu](http://p2p.uiuc.edu)). Ebata found that 30.4 percent of the visitors typed the URL into the browser to reach the website, while 61.4 percent were referred from other website links, 4.0 percent were referred from search engines, and 2.6 percent were referred from email links. The website link referrals were associated with the publicity campaign conducted by the creators of *Parent to Parent*, with the exception of the referrals from CYFERnet, a national Cooperative Extension System website.

Weekly website usage tended to peak on Thursdays, with a sharp decline on Fridays and Saturdays, followed by a gradual increase from Sunday through Thursday. Daily website usage tended to peak during work and late evening hours. The website tended to be used the least during the early morning and early evening hours. This statistic indicates the likely times a parenting website might be used, since most of the participants of this study were located in the Central time zone.

The *Parent to Parent* website had message boards that allowed parents to communicate with each other. This feature was under-utilized. Ebata suggests this may be the case because a registration and login was required, thus eliminating anonymity. Also, the parenting message board was not located on the home page, which required users to click on a link to this portion of the website, which may have deterred users.

Grant, Hawkins, and Dollahite (2001) carried out a website utilization analysis of the *Father Work* website ([http://fatherwork.byu.edu](http://fatherwork.byu.edu)); they also gathered both quantitative and qualitative feedback from visitors in the areas of content usefulness, and factors that increased their motivation and commitment to be responsible fathers. About 100 people visited the *FatherWorks* website per day, and those fathers who visited and responded to
the website feedback indicated that they had been impacted positively by the website in that they had new ideas to improve their fathering, they were motivated to take more action in their parent-child relationships, and their sense of responsibility as fathers grew, and they were affected emotionally by the website.

Finally, Steimle and Duncan (2004) completed a website utilization study on the Forever Families website (http://www.foreverfamilies.net), and analyzed visitor feedback according to demographic variables, the first study of its kind. During the two months of the study, this Forever Families website received 24,250 unique visitors and 5,837 return visitors, with 92,185 page views. The participants of the study rated the website positively in the areas of website usefulness, the attractiveness of the website, ease of use of the website, whether the website met the participants needs, how interesting the content was, whether the website led them to reconsider former attitudes and made them aware of new things, and whether the participant had decided to do things differently due to the website. Additionally, the participants ethnicity and education level were significantly associated with the website ratings. Non-White participants were more likely to say that the website led them to reconsider former attitudes, while the participants with at least a bachelor’s degree were less likely than their less-educated counterparts to say that the website led them to reconsider former attitudes or to decide to do something differently as a result of the information they gained at the site. Thus the site appeared to be especially beneficial for less educated and non-White visitors.

As of yet no study has analyzed website usage patterns in comparison to the traditional FLE program progression order (multidirectional versus a linear progression through the material).
Summary and Conclusions

In summary, traditional family life education is an effective means of prevention. FLE programs generally, and attachment parenting programs specifically, are considered effective interventions. The Internet is a valuable tool in disseminating FLE information to wider audiences than can be reached through traditional FLE efforts. Numerous FLE websites exist on the Internet, yet few formative evaluations of web-based FLE programs have been reported in the literature. There has been no evaluation of a web-based attachment parenting education program that targets parents of children ranging from infancy to age eight. Indeed, there are no attachment parenting programs on the Internet that target this group. There is a need for this type of program and program evaluation.

Additionally, due to the dearth of previous studies, many questions about the effectiveness and usability of FLE Internet programs continue unanswered. Accordingly, studies that examine website utilization, web-usage patterns, and whether a parenting website is useful in greater depth need to be conducted. Website utilization studies do not generally include the time visitors spent on the website, a page depth report, a visit depth report, a site path report, an examination of the most popular pages on the website, and participant reports of website usage. These analyses will allow FLE practitioners to design FLE websites that will fit the needs as well as the ways in which individuals use such a website, thus increasing the likelihood that individuals will both use the website and receive the maximum benefit from it.

While Grant et al. (2001) and Steimle and Duncan (2004) examined the possible impact of a web-based family life education program on participants, these findings could be replicated to ensure greater reliability of these findings with family life education.
audiences generally and the parenting audience specifically. The same is true for Steimle and Duncan’s (2004) finding that their website met the needs of their audience.

This researcher sought to add to the literature by creating and formatively evaluating a web-based attachment parenting program, *Foundations of Parenting*, targeting parents of children from birth through age eight. The formative evaluation, guided by Jacob’s (1988) model, examined website utilization, web usage patterns, visitor satisfaction, along with conducting a preliminary impact assessment. This study examined the following research questions:

1. To what extent has the website, *Foundations of Parenting*, been utilized? In other words, how many unique visitors, return visits, and page views have there been?
2. Do visitors use the website in ways similar to those experiencing traditional family life education? Specifically, do Internet users go through the web program from the beginning to the end, or do they simply identify the information they are looking for and leave? In other words, which pages are most popular, and what is the page depth of each of those pages? What are the most common site paths? How much time do visitors spend on the site? How many pages does the average visitor view? And what are participants’ reports of site usage?
3. What are the visitor’s reports of knowledge gains, interest in content, usefulness of content, attractiveness, ease in using website, reconsidering former attitudes, intention to make changes, and that the site met their parenting needs? Do these reports differ by various characteristics of the visitors, including gender, education level, marital status, parental status, religion, and ethnic group?
4. Overall, in what ways could the website be improved, as described in the open-ended responses?
III. METHOD

Procedures and Measures

The procedures and measures in this section were modeled after Steimle and Duncan’s (2004) analysis of the Forever Families website, sponsored by the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University.

Recruitment of Participants

Visitors were recruited in a variety of ways. First, the website was submitted to the major search engines, such as Google, Lycos, Ask Jeeves, and Yahoo. Announcements were placed in the community section of the Salt Lake Tribune, the Daily Herald, and the Deseret News. All parents known to the researcher were emailed an announcement of the website as well as an invitation to fill out the online survey. These parents were asked to forward the email to parents they knew, and so forth. This emailing effort was designed to create a snowballing recruitment. Fliers were also posted in neighborhoods in Provo with a high concentration of young parents, and fliers were sent home to parents through five elementary schools in the Provo School District.

Website Utilization

Website utilization was assessed through a website use tracker, SuperStats (see http://www.superstats.com). Tracking is accomplished through the use of javascript. When a visitor downloads a webpage into their browser, a bit of html code, provided by SuperStats and embedded in the webpage, sends their public domain information, such as their IP address, location, screen resolution, browser, the referring page, and the current webpage and title, to the website’s SuperStats account. The javascript placed on each page then sends information about the visit to a database on the SuperStats website.
personal identifying information is, or can be, recorded by the javascript. SuperStats then conducts statistical analyses for the web host. Web use statistics relevant to the present study were number of page views, unique visitors, return visitors, and most popular pages. Additionally, site path reports that analyze the depth, path, and direction of web users’ behavior on the site were used. A limit of this approach is that it does not permit utilization data to be broken down by the demographic variables assessed in this study, namely race, gender, education level, marital and parental status, and religion.

**Number of page views.** The page view measure counts the number of times each page in the website was viewed by web users. Since this measure counts only page views, it is not an accurate reflection of the number of visitors to a page, since one visitor may view a page many times.

**Number of unique visitors.** Instead of a simple page counter that identifies only the number of page views, this measure uses the unique IP address to identify how many unique visitors come to a web site. This measure prevents inflation that may occur with a simple page counter due to return visitors.

**Number of return visitors.** This measure is composed of two statistics: return visitors and return frequency. The return visitors statistic measures how many of those unique visitors return to the site each day or month. The return frequency statistic measures the time it took for people to return to the website after their initial visit. For example, SuperStats may report that 2,500 people returned to the website within a day, along with the percentage this number reflects out of the total return visitors population. For the *Foundations of Parenting* website, return visits by parents indicated that this website helps fill their need for parenting information.
Most popular pages. This measure identifies which pages on a website are viewed most often by web users. This statistic can help the web designer to identify which pages succeed in interesting the user, as well as identifying which pages need modification in order to retain the attention of the site users. In this study, this statistic helps identify which *Foundation of Parenting* lesson was most popular to visiting parents.

Site path reports. Site path report statistics that are relevant to this study are the site path, page depth, visit depth. The site path statistic demonstrates the popular paths visitors take through the website. The page depth statistic averages the number of pages in the website viewed before the page in question is viewed. The visit depth statistic reports how many pages on average each visitor viewed before leaving the website.

Some people may question the ethics behind tracking a user’s behavior as well as accessing the public domain information provided by the user’s computer. No personal or identifying information can be accessed by SuperStats. Additionally, this information gathering is not intrusive, since it is collected through automated computer subroutines. The information collected in this manner is highly useful, as it allows family life educators to improve the usability and appeal of the website, which will in turn facilitate greater dissemination of the information contained in the website.

*Ratings of the Website*

In addition to website utilization, an online survey was used to ascertain participant characteristics, participant reactions, changes produced in knowledge, skills, and aspirations (KASA) (see http://citnews.unl.edu/TOP/english/index.html) and qualitative feedback from the participant. Online surveys allow researchers to reach a
more diverse audience at a lower cost and in less time than traditional forms of surveys. The major limitation of this approach is the lack of control over administering the survey. For example, visitors could take the survey multiple times, thus skewing the data (Gay & Bennington, 1999).

Each visitor to the Foundations of Parenting website received an invitation to participate in an evaluation of the website via a redirection to a consent form on the third page of the visit. The number three was chosen because an examination of traffic reports at www.alexa.com for the top 500 websites of the 8,058,044,651 websites in existence (www.google.com, May 31, 2005) show that many of those sites average less than 3 page views per visit, let alone a newly created website. Also, a link to take the survey was placed in the main navigation bar and links were placed in different locations on each web page in order to provide the maximum amount of opportunities for the visitors to take the survey.

Several steps were undertaken to help participants feel comfortable disclosing personal information over the Internet, a common concern of Internet users (O’Neil, 2001). Participants were given an explanation of the purpose of the study and they were assured that their responses would remain confidential. The consent form was created so as to be clearly associated with the Foundations of Parenting website to lend credibility to the invitation. In order to accomplish this, the same color scheme present in the website was used in the invitation to participate in the study. The title of the website appeared in the title bar of the consent form. No advertisements were permitted on the website, and contact information was provided.
The survey used was adapted from the survey used by Steimle and Duncan, (2004) in their formative evaluation of the *Forever Families* website. This survey was based on Hughes (1999) recommendation that website evaluation include assessments of program content, deliverability, and usability. Steimle and Duncan (2004) also devised questions falling within the framework of Bennett’s impact assessment hierarchy: participant characteristics, participant reactions, and changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, and aspirations (Bennett & Rockwell, 1995). Through these latter questions, a brief, preliminary examination of the impact of the site on the user was ascertained.

Participant reaction items included both quantitative and qualitative questions. The survey measured user demographics, changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, and aspirations, as well as rating the usefulness of the website, reporting their web usage patterns, and identifying whether or not the website fills their needs. Participants were also asked in an open-ended question to give their feedback about the website. Two questions were added to ascertain participant usage patterns. One question asked participants to select the usage pattern that fit them the best. Answers ranged between reading one lesson, but completing no exercises to completing all of the lessons and exercises. The second question asked the participants who had not completed all of the lessons and exercises to indicate their intentions. Participants could choose one of three answers: no intention to complete all of the lessons, intending to complete the lessons but not the exercises, and intending to complete both the lessons and the exercises. The actual survey can be found in Appendix B.
After participants completed the survey, they were directed to click the “Submit” button, which sent the survey to a secure database. Participants’ browsers were then automatically directed to a web page thanking them for their time and effort.

Multiple survey submissions by the same individual were a concern. Individuals could not submit multiple surveys by clicking the submit button several times, since the information was wiped from the survey after the first “submit” was clicked. If an individual wanted to submit multiple surveys, they would have had to fill in the survey multiple times. There was no way to separate out individuals submitting multiple surveys on one computer from different individuals in a family submitting surveys on the same computer, since the only identifying information that could be used would be the IP address of the computer. The researcher did examine new survey entries in the database on a daily basis to identify whether or not identical answers were submitted in surveys, but no identical or near identical surveys were found.

Participants

*SuperStats Participants*

Each visit by a computer to *Foundations of Parenting* was monitored by SuperStats. In this way, each individual visiting the website became, indirectly, a participant of this study. Reports from SuperStats indicate that there were 674 unique visitors from the first date the website opened, April 19, 2005, till the end of the study, May 11, 2005. This time period was selected because it fit the restraints imposed by the schedules of the coders for the qualitative data. Visitors were from the United States, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Brazil, and Italy. Languages acknowledged by the visiting computers were English, French, German, Portuguese,
Italian, Bulgarian, and Japanese. Additionally, one survey participant was from Haiti, which was not picked up by SuperStats. Although it is possible that this participant lived in France but acknowledged Haiti as their country of origin.

SuperStats also generated reports about visitors’ cookies, monitor resolutions, monitor color depths, and browsers. Surprisingly, 67.5 percent of the visitors had disabled their cookies. Over half of the visitors, (55.2 percent) had a monitor resolution of 768 x 600 pixels. The rest of the visitors had a higher screen resolution. Almost eighty percent of the visitors had a 16 million color depth, while 19 percent had a 65,536 color depth. In regards to browsers, 80.2 percent of visitors used Microsoft Internet Explorer 6.0, while 14.5 percent used Mozilla Seamonkey (Firefox) and 2 percent used Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.5. These characteristics all come into play when designing a website, and will be discussed later for the benefit of others who create family life education websites.

There was no pre-selection of visitors in order to identify natural visitation patterns of parents on the Internet.

*Online Survey Participants*

Of the 674 unique visitors to the website, 212 participants from four countries and 24 US states completed the online survey, despite the fact there was no monetary incentive. The response rate, 31.5 percent, is high compared to the response rate reported by Steimle and Duncan (2004) in their online survey (4%). The high response rate is attributed by the researcher to the snowballing email announcements, which included a personal invitation by each person to their friends and families to visit the website and to
complete the survey. The response rate was most likely increased by the word-of-mouth recommendation from someone the visitor knew.

The mean age of the participants was 30.29 years ($SD = 11.75$) with a range of 17 to 72. The participants were 69.9 percent female, 87.6 percent were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (who will be referred to as LDS or Latter-day Saints from now on), 91.4 percent were White, 41.1 percent were single, while 55.5 percent were married, 55.7 percent had no children, and the average number of children per participant was 1.14. The sample had a high education level, where 46.7 percent of the participants had a bachelor’s degree or higher, 49.4 percent had some college education or an associate’s degree, while only 3.9 percent of the sample had a high school diploma or less. Also, more than half of the participants had a gross family income of $40,000 or above. See Table 1 for a complete summary of the demographic characteristics of the study participants. This sample seems demographically similar to the Internet population in the United States, with the exception of the high rate of females and Latter-day Saint participants (United States General Accounting Office, 2001)

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<th>Variable</th>
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### Parental Status

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### Number of Children

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### Religion

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<td>Other</td>
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<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>91.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian / Alaskan Native</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial/Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30.29</td>
<td>11.75</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Family Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $5,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5,000 - 14,999</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000 - 24,999</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 - 29,999</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000 – 39,999</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>$40,000 – 49,000</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>$50,000 – 74,999</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 – 100,000</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $100,000</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Percentages may not be equal to 100 percent due to rounding*
Analyses

The analyses of the information gained from SuperStats as well as the online survey were modeled after Steimle and Duncan’s (2004) analysis of the Forever Families website.

The first research question, “To what extent has the website, Foundations of Parenting, been utilized? In other words, how many unique visitors, return visits, and page views have there been? What were the most popular pages? What was the average page depth, visit depth, and time spent on the website?” were analyzed using frequency reports of the SuperStats statistics. The second research question, “Do visitors use the website in ways similar to those experiencing traditional family life education? Specifically, do Internet users go through the web program from the beginning to the end, or do they simply identify the information they are looking for and leave?” were answered through the use of frequency and descriptive statistics on questions nine and ten of the survey, as well as an analysis of the site path report.

The third research question, “What are the visitors reports of website usage patterns, knowledge gains, interest in content, usefulness of content, attractiveness, ease in using website, reconsidering former attitudes, intention to make changes, and that the site met their parenting needs? And how do these variables interact with the various characteristics of the visitors, including gender, education level, marital status, parental status, religion, and ethnic group?” were analyzed using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). A significance level of .05 was used in all statistical tests.

The fourth research question, “Overall, do visitors find an attachment-based approach to parenting useful? And in what ways could the website be improved, as
described in the open-ended responses?” was assessed using a method similar those used by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1994), Patton (1987, 2002), and Bogdan and Bilken (1992). First, three researchers, the current researcher and two faculty members, read through the open-ended response questions to gain a general understanding of the responses. Then, each researcher separately categorized and subcategorized the open-ended responses. The three researchers then came together to create a categorization system that was representative of the data provided by the responses. They modified Steimle and Duncan’s (2004) coding system, since the open-ended responses were based on their survey. Due to the large subpopulation of singles, the subtheme “Pre-parents” was added to the “Plans for use” theme. Also, the researchers included a “Reasons for returning theme” in addition to the “Reasons for not returning” theme.

The coding scheme used to classify the open-ended responses into themes and subthemes (shown in parenthesis) was as follows: website appearance (attractive, suggested improvements), website organization (well-organized, suggested improvements), website functionality (strengths, weaknesses), website features (positive comments, suggested additions), website content (strengths, weaknesses, suggested additions), overall website (positive comments), plans for use (personal application, share with others, and pre-parents), reasons for planning to return to the website, reasons for not planning on returning to the website, and comments about the survey.
IV. RESULTS

Website Utilization

The SuperStats reports, as indicated in Table 2, show that there were 354 unique visitors in April, while there were 320 unique visitors in May. There were a 189 total number of return visits, which demonstrates that 28 percent of the unique visitors returned at some point, although some of those return visits may be from users returning multiple times. Additionally, there were 3,204 page views in April and 2,521 page views in May, which translates into 8.5 pages viewed per unique visitor, which is well above the Internet average of 3 pages.

Table 2  
*Website Traffic Frequency*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traffic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unique Visitors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2005</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2005</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>674</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Return Visits    |           |
| April 2005       | 98        |
| May 2005         | 91        |
| Total            | 189       |

| Page Views       |           |
| April 2005       | 3,204     |
| May 2005         | 2,521     |
| Total            | 5,725     |

Website Path Analyses

An examination of the SuperStats most popular pages report (shown in Table 3) gives a brief overview of how visitors used the website. The *Foundations of Parenting* home page was the most popular page, with 1,307 page views, or 22.8 percent of the total number of pages viewed, as would be expected for the entry page of a website.
Surprisingly enough, the consent form was the second most popular page viewed, although this statistic could be inflated due to the fact that visitors were taken to the consent form once they reached the third page on the website. An examination of the page depth report (see Table 4) shows that 111 out 823, or 13.5 percent, page views were due to this invitation to take the survey.

While there were 823 views of the Consent Form, only 401 visitors, or 48.7 percent, chose to move on to the Online Survey. (For a better understanding of the flow of the website, see Appendix C, the *Foundations of Parenting* Site Map.) Of the 401 individuals who viewed the consent form, only the Online Survey Processing Form was used only 226 times. This number is reduced to 212 when taking into account the empty surveys submitted when participants clicked the submit button multiple times. Since there were only 674 unique visitors to the website, some visitors were invited more than once to take the online survey. An examination comparing the page depth report for the Online Survey Processing Form and the Consent form indicates that 65.5 percent of those who completed the survey did so after they had viewed six or more pages of the website in that visit. In contrast, 63 participants, 27.9 percent, went directly from the home page to take the survey. Presumably, these were return visitors who had already explored the website, since natural website exploration patterns make it unlikely that first-time visitors would immediately take a website survey. At most, only 11 participants, 4.9 percent, took the survey as a result of the automatic invitation issued once the visitors reached the third web page of the site.

The lessons and discussion forum were the third and fourth most popular features of the website, respectively. (The Attachment Styles Lesson was the default page visitors
were taken to when they clicked “Lessons” on the navigation bar.) The page depth report indicates that users who visited the lesson and discussion forum feature most often went directly from the home page to these web features.

Of the 678 visitors who viewed the discussion forum home page, only 394, or 58.1 percent, chose to view a forum. Some of the visitors may be counted multiple times in the “394” statistic. Of those who clicked on one of the forums, only 224, or 56.9 percent, chose to view a topic. Those who chose to post a message were even fewer, with only 60 message posts, or 26.8 percent of those who chose to view a topic and 15.2 percent of those who chose to view a forum.

Also, the page depth reports yields a greater insight into how visitors used the discussion forum. Although 40.2 percent of those visiting the discussion forum did so on their second page view, the majority of those who viewed a discussion forum or topic, 74.9 and 79.9 percent respectively, did so after six or more pages into their exploration of the website. The large majority of the posting on the forum, 90 percent, was done six pages or later into the visit, as was the case with 73.2 percent of the page views of the member profiles of the discussion forum. This suggests that visitors looked over the discussion forum home page, left it to explore other parts of the website, while those who were interested came back later in their visit to explore the forum in depth. This conclusion is corroborated by the page depth reports of those who chose to post on the discussion forum as well as those who examined the forum’s member profiles.

The rest of the popular pages, Parenting Links, About Us, Tell a Friend, and the rest of the lessons were accessed most often six or more pages into a visit, as can be seen in the page depth report. Only 58.1 percent of those who visited the lesson default page
went on to read one other lesson. This statistic is most likely inflated because some
visitors most likely viewed more than one additional lesson. An examination of the site
path report (see Table 5) shows the most common site path was going from the home
page to the lesson default page, after which the visitor left the *Foundations of Parenting*
page entirely. This comprised 82 of the visitors, or 27.9 percent of those who chose to go
straight to the lesson feature from the home page. The discipline lesson garnered more
attention than the other lessons, excluding the attachment lesson, since there was almost
double the amount of interest in the discipline lesson than in the next most popular
lesson, teaching.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Page Views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home Page</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>1,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consent Form</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson: Attachment Styles</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Forum</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Forum: Viewing a forum</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey form processing page</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Forum: Viewing a topic</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting Links</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About Us</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson: Discipline</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson: Teaching</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson: Warmth</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Forum: Posting a message</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Forum: Member Profile</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson: Validation</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson: Communication</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form: Tell a friend about this website</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson: Kindness</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson: Sensitive Responsiveness</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processed: Told a friend about this website</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( ^{a} \) Only pages with thirty or more page views are shown here

\( ^{b} \) Note: Percentages may not be equal to 100 percent due to rounding.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Page Depth of the Most Popular Pages</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Page Views</th>
<th>Total Page Views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home Page</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>853</td>
<td>1,306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth page or more viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>246</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consent Form</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>272</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>111</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth page or more viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>294</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesson: Attachment Styles</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>294</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth page viewed by visitor</td>
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<td>5.7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth page or more viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>251</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discussion Forum</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>272</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>111</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth page or more viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online Survey</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth page viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth page or more viewed by visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>164</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Discussion Forum: Viewing a forum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Viewed</th>
<th>Visitor</th>
<th>Pages Viewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>0.3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second page</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third page</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth page</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth page</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth page or more</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Online Survey form processing page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Viewed</th>
<th>Visitor</th>
<th>Pages Viewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First page</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second page</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third page</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth page</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth page</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth page or more</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Discussion Forum: Viewing a topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Viewed</th>
<th>Visitor</th>
<th>Pages Viewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First page</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second page</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third page</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth page</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth page</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth page or more</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Parenting Links

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Viewed</th>
<th>Visitor</th>
<th>Pages Viewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First page</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second page</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third page</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth page</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth page</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth page or more</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### About Us

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Viewed</th>
<th>Visitor</th>
<th>Pages Viewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First page</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second page</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third page</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth page</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth page</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth page or more</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Lesson: Discipline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Viewed</th>
<th>Visitor</th>
<th>Pages Viewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First page</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second page</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third page</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth page</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth page</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page Viewed by Visitor</td>
<td>Lesson: Teaching</td>
<td>Lesson: Warmth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First page viewed by visitor</td>
<td>4.5 3</td>
<td>9.5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second page viewed by visitor</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>3.2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third page viewed by visitor</td>
<td>16.4 11</td>
<td>23.8 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth page viewed by visitor</td>
<td>1.5 1</td>
<td>7.9 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth page viewed by visitor</td>
<td>4.5 3</td>
<td>4.8 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth page or more viewed by visitor</td>
<td>73.1 49</td>
<td>50.8 32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fourth page viewed by visitor 3.9 2
Fifth page viewed by visitor 7.8 4
Sixth page or more viewed by visitor 70.6 36

**Form: Tell a friend about this website**
First page viewed by visitor 0 0
Second page viewed by visitor 42.1 16
Third page viewed by visitor 0 0
Fourth page viewed by visitor 7.9 3
Fifth page viewed by visitor 5.3 2
Sixth page or more viewed by visitor 44.7 17

**Lesson: Kindness**
First page viewed by visitor 0 0
Second page viewed by visitor 11.1 4
Third page viewed by visitor 16.7 6
Fourth page viewed by visitor 0 0
Fifth page viewed by visitor 13.9 5
Sixth page or more viewed by visitor 58.3 21

**Lesson: Sensitive Responsiveness**
First page viewed by visitor 2.9 1
Second page viewed by visitor 0 0
Third page viewed by visitor 14.3 5
Fourth page viewed by visitor 5.7 2
Fifth page viewed by visitor 14.3 5
Sixth page or more viewed by visitor 62.9 22

**Processed: Told a friend about this website**
First page viewed by visitor 0 0
Second page viewed by visitor 0 0
Third page viewed by visitor 33.3 10
Fourth page viewed by visitor 0 0
Fifth page viewed by visitor 3.3 1
Sixth page or more viewed by visitor 63.3 19

---

*a* Of visitors who viewed the home page, 65.3 percent viewed the home page first.

*b* Note: Percentages may not be equal to 100 percent due to rounding.

There are 306 unique pathways recorded by SuperStats for the 863 visits to this relatively small website, as can be seen in Table 5. Since SuperStats tracked the site path of each visit only through the first five pages, while each visit had an average visit depth of 6.7 (see Table 6), there are likely more site paths than 306.
Table 5

*Top Five Site Paths*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path Taken</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Visits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. → Home Page</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>← Lesson: Attachment Styles&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. → Home Page</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consent Form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>← Online Survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. → Home Page</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consent Form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>← Online Survey Processing Form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. → Home Page</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>← Consent Form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. → Home Page</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson: Attachment Styles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>← Home Page</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 301 other paths&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>651</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> The → symbol indicates the entry page of the site path. The ← symbol indicates the exit page of the visit.

<sup>b</sup> The site path report only tracked the visitors’ path through the first 5 pages of the visit.

<sup>c</sup> Note: Percentages may not be equal to 100 percent due to rounding.

Since the SuperStats visit depth report (see Table 6) demonstrates that 17.7 percent of the visitors left after visiting one page, presumably the home page, while 15.9, 17.2, and 16.9 percent of the visitors left after viewing two, three, and four pages respectively. In contrast 32.3 percent of the visitors left after viewing five or more pages.
Table 6
*Visit Depth*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Views Per Visit</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Visits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visits with 1 page viewed</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits with 2 pages viewed</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits with 3 pages viewed</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits with 4 pages viewed</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits with 5 or more pages viewed</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Visit Depth 6.7 pages

*Note: Percentages may not be equal to 100 percent due to rounding.*

A large minority of visitors, 27.8 percent, left the web site in less than a minute (see Table 7). These visits were most likely comprised of those individuals who visited one or two pages. Another large minority of visitors, 33.0 percent left the site between one and five minutes into their visit. On the other hand, 16.1 and 18.5 percent of individuals spent five to ten and ten to thirty minutes on the website, respectively. Finally, 3.8 and 0.9 percent of the visitors stayed on the website for thirty to sixty minutes and one to two hours, respectively.

Table 7
*Time Spent on Website*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Interval</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Visits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 minute</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 minutes</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 minutes</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-30 minutes</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-60 minutes</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 hours</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Percentages may not be equal to 100 percent due to rounding.*

The participants largely reported reading one, a few lessons, or all lessons, but completing no exercises: 38.2, 31.6, and 6.1 percent respectively (see Table 8). A minority reported reading a lesson, a few lessons, or all the lessons along with completing...
the accompanying exercises: 7.1, 16.0, and 0.9 percent respectively ($M = 1.48$, $SD = 1.35$).

While a majority of the participants reported no intention to read all of the lessons, 52.8 percent, a significant minority intended to complete all of the lessons and exercises at some point, 37.7 percent, while 9.4 percent of the participants intended to complete all of the lessons but not the exercises ($M = 0.85$, $SD = 0.95$).

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Usage of the Foundations of Parenting Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How site was used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One lesson but no exercises completed (score = 0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One lesson and exercise completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few lessons but no exercises completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few lessons and exercises completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the lessons but no exercises completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the lessons and exercises completed (score = 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor intentions for using site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No intention to read all lessons (score = 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intend to complete lessons but not exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intend to all complete lessons and exercises (score = 3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Percentages may not be equal to 100 percent due to rounding.*

Participant Ratings of Website

Only 31.5 percent (212) of the unique visitors to the website chose to fill out the online survey. While this response rate would be inadequate for a summative evaluation, it is adequate for a formative evaluation, where the feedback will allow the website and content creator to improve the design, appearance, functionality, and content of the website to make it more effective (Steimle & Duncan, 2004).
Participants generally rated the website positively, as shown in Table 9. The endogenous variable rated the highest by participants was “The content is interesting.” Ninety-three percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while almost six percent were neutral and one percent disagreed ($M = 3.26, SD = 0.61$). Forty-one percent stated that the web site was very useful, while forty-seven percent believed it was useful, nine percent said it was somewhat useful, and four percent said it was not useful at all ($M = 3.24, SD = 0.77$). Seventy-two percent of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that the site met their needs, while twenty-five percent were neutral and two percent disagreed or strongly disagreed ($M = 2.82, SD = 0.69$).

Eighty-eight percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that the website is attractive, eight percent were neutral, and one percent disagreed ($M = 3.33, SD = 0.68$). Ninety-three percent agreed or strongly agreed that the website was easy to use, while six percent remained neutral and one percent disagreed ($M = 3.27, SD = 0.63$).

Seventy-seven percent of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that the website had made them aware of new things, while nineteen percent were neutral and five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement ($M = 2.89, SD = 0.75$). Fifty-four percent agreed or strongly agreed that the website had led them to reconsider former attitudes, while forty-two percent were neutral and five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed ($M = 2.61, SD = 0.80$). Forty-five percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that they had decided to do something different, while forty-seven percent stayed neutral and eight percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement ($M = 2.48, SD = 0.79$).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The content is interesting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree (score = 0)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree (score = 4)</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How useful is the website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not useful at all (score = 1)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat useful</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Useful</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The site met my needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The website is attractive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The site is easy to use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The site has made me aware of new things</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The site has led me to reconsider former attitudes  2.61  0.80
Strongly disagree  2  0.9
Disagree  8  3.8
Neutral  88  41.5
Agree  86  40.6
Strongly Agree  28  13.2

I’ve decided to do something differently  2.48  0.79
Strongly disagree  1  0.5
Disagree  15  7.1
Neutral  100  47.2
Agree  74  34.9
Strongly Agree  22  10.4

*Note: Percentages may not be equal to 100 percent due to rounding.

Participant Ratings by Demographic Characteristics

A 2x2x2x2x2x3 MANOVA was conducted on 8 dependent variables: participant responses of website attractiveness, interest in content, ease of website use, reconsidering former attitudes, deciding to do something different, awareness of new things, needs met by the site, and website usefulness. The independent variables were gender (female, male), parental status (parent, non-parent), marital status (married, not married), ethnicity (White, not White), religion (LDS, non-LDS), and education level (less than high school through high school diploma, some college not currently enrolled through associates degree, and bachelor’s degree through completed graduate or professional degree). See Table 10 for the complete results. Ethnicity significantly impacted the combined dependent variables $F(8, 204) = 3.26, p < .002$ when using Wilk’s criterion.

When ethnicity was further examined for its effect on the dependent variables, ethnicity was found to significantly affect two dependent variables. White participants found the website more attractive than did non-White participants ($M_{\text{white}} = 3.38; M_{\text{non-white}} = 2.72$), $F(1,204) = 14.684, p < .000$. White participants were also more likely to
decide to do something different because they visited the website ($M_{\text{white}} = 2.51$; $M_{\text{non-White}} = 2.11$), $F(1,204) = 4.74$, $p < .031$.

As seen in Table 10, some additional independent variables were significantly associated with the dependent variables at the univariate level of analysis but are not included in the discussion above. These relationships cannot be viewed as significant because their associations were not substantial at the multivariate level.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MANOVA: Relationships between Independent and Dependent Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IVs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website attractiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content is interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site is easy to use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Led me to reconsider former attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve decided to do something different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site has made me aware of new things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site met my needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Usefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website attractiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content is interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site is easy to use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Led me to reconsider former attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website attractiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content is interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site is easy to use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Led me to reconsider former attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve decided to do something different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site has made me aware of new things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site met my needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Usefulness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>8, 204</th>
<th>3.259</th>
<th>.002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Website attractiveness</td>
<td>1, 211</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content is interesting</td>
<td>1, 211</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site is easy to use</td>
<td>1, 211</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Led me to reconsider former attitudes</td>
<td>1, 211</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>.393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve decided to do something different</td>
<td>1, 211</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site has made me aware of new things</td>
<td>1, 211</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site met my needs</td>
<td>1, 211</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Usefulness</td>
<td>1,211</td>
<td>.432</td>
<td>.512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8,204</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>.170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website attractiveness</td>
<td>1,211</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content is interesting</td>
<td>1,211</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>.852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site is easy to use</td>
<td>1,211</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>.678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Led me to reconsider former attitudes</td>
<td>1,211</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>.520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve decided to do something different</td>
<td>1,211</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>.454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site has made me aware of new things</td>
<td>1,211</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>.598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site met my needs</td>
<td>1,211</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>.106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Usefulness</td>
<td>1,211</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16,808</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>.124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                       |        |       |       |
| Website attractiveness| 2,211  | 1.10  | .337  |
| The content is interesting | 2,211  | 0.60  | .548  |
| Site is easy to use   | 2,211  | 0.50  | .607  |
| Led me to reconsider former attitudes | 2,211  | 1.40  | .250  |
| I’ve decided to do something different | 2,211  | 2.46  | .089  |
| Site has made me aware of new things | 2,211  | 0.75  | .472  |
| Site met my needs     | 2,211  | 4.55  | .012  |
| Website Usefulness    | 2,211  | 0.77  | .463  |

**Open-ended Responses**

The response rate to the qualitative survey questions was quite high, with 86.3 percent, 183 participants, responding to at least one question. Since comments about the
survey do not reflect the participant ratings of the website, this theme will not be discussed. The themes and subthemes are discussed in the following section.

*Website Appearance*

**Attractiveness of website.** Of the participants who commented on the appearance of the website ($n = 43$), many stated that they found the website attractive ($n = 7$) and professional ($n = 3$); they also approved of the background ($n = 6$) and graphics ($n = 6$). One participant stated, “(The website is) visually pleasing, not jumbled with a bunch of junk,” while another stated “It is very attractive and professional looking.” Another participant appreciate the “heart-warming pictures.”

**Suggested improvements.** Many participants suggested changing the color scheme ($n = 7$) or the background ($n = 6$), while one individual made the astute observation that the resolution of the main navigation buttons needed to be increased in order to eliminate their grainy quality. One individual commenting on the background as well as the font style said, “What's unattractive about the website is the clip art picture used in the background and the font used on the titles and links. When you use the same resources that most people already have on their computers, it looks amateur.”

*Website Organization*

**Well-organized.** Seventeen individuals responded with comments about the website organization. Of those, seven stated that the website was well-organized. One individual said “It's logically organized and easy to navigate from one section to another. There is no frustration associated with trying to find something or finding the wrong things in a search. It's all right where you need it!”
Suggested improvements. Five individuals commented that the Parents’ Stories tab takes them to the same place as the Discussion Forum tab. (Parents’ Stories are a forum on the discussion forum home page.) One participant made the following suggestion to fix this problem, “A small recommendation is to set the link to Parent's stories to open such that the location to submit the stories is at the top of the page. As it is, both the forum link and Parent's stories link open to the exact same location. This could cause a small amount of confusion.” Three participants suggested adding a site map to make the organization clear to those who wish to view it, while another individual suggested, “Bread-crumbs are nice to have on web-sites so the user knows where they are within the site at any given time.” (Bread crumbs show the path the user followed to read the current page, with links to take the user back to each level.)

Website Functionality

Strengths. Many participants commented on the website functionality (n = 54). Of those almost half (n = 25) observed that the website was user-friendly and easy to navigate. Several participants said that the information was easy to find on the website (n = 2), it had a good design that facilitated web-usage (n = 5), and it had a fast download time (n = 2).

Suggested improvements. Six participants commented that the lesson scrollbar needed to be enlarged, taken out, or that the lessons need to be put in sound bites, thus eliminating the need for a scroll bar. One individual said, “One complaint I had was the use of scrolling fields to contain the content; it would have been more convenient had the information either been all on one long page, but not in a field, or, ideally, split up into more ‘bite-sized’ chunks, each on separate pages and connected with hyper-links.” Three
individuals suggested a search bar in order to enable parents to find the desired information faster, while three other participants requested that navigation through the website be made simpler.

Website Features

Positive comments. Many participants commented on the features of the website in their responses ($n = 63$). By far the most mentioned feature was the discussion forum ($n = 24$), but the lessons were also discussed ($n = 8$), as were the parents’ stories ($n = 5$), and the worksheets ($n = 4$). One individual observed, “I really enjoy the forum. I feel like I can ask any number of questions I want to, and there will be real people to answer with their ideas and experiences. I like learning things to help my family from books/web sites, etc., but what a bonus to have interaction in the learning as well!” Yet several participants stated that they appreciated both the lessons and discussions ($n = 3$).

Suggested additions. The most common suggestion for improvement in the website features was a request for more people to use the discussion forums ($n = 11$). Two people suggested adding a print function, so users can easily print out the lesson, while one individual pointed out a bug where visitors lose their place in the lesson if they visit the worksheet.

Website Content

Strengths. A large number of people commented on the content of the website ($n = 130$). Many participants appreciated that the information presented was useful ($n = 21$), easy to understand ($n = 9$), research-based ($n = 8$), applicable to parents in different ages and stages ($n = 6$), and streamlined ($n = 5$). Four participants appreciated the variety of examples and suggestions in the lessons, while six people mentioned the accepting
atmosphere of the lesson. One individual stated, “I loved the tone that the lessons were written in. I felt like each lesson was a private tutorial with a real person. I had confidence that each lesson had accurate information, but I did not feel threatened or overwhelmed by any of the information. I think it was presented in a user-friendly way.” Additionally the content of two lessons was mentioned as being helpful: the Attachment Styles lesson ($n = 3$) and the Disciplining Your Child lesson ($n = 3$).

**Suggested additions.** Despite the relatively large number of comments in this subtheme ($n = 46$), there was little agreement between the participants on additions to the content. Six participants mentioned that the website needs to be updated as new research comes out, five individuals requested the lessons be subdivided into sound-bite sections with a summary, four participants stated that the lessons need more examples and explanations, and three participants requested a greater variety of content. Three participants requested additional information about exceptions under the attachment theory, such as an online attachment test, attachment in third world countries, and children with attachment disorders.

**Weaknesses.** Five participants noted minor grammar, punctuation or spelling mistakes in the lessons and worksheets, while three participants noted that the content was too technical. One individual commented, “official terminology…(is) a little scary if you don’t think in those terms and just want to discuss realistically about your kid.”

**Overall Website**

**Positive comments.** Many participants gave statements about the overall website ($n = 76$). Many of these comments were broad statements that the website was great ($n = 23$), the website was good ($n = 12$), enjoyable ($n = 2$), and interesting ($n = 4$). Other
comments were more specific when the individuals said the website was a wonderful resource \((n = 5)\), helpful \((n = 7)\), and fills a need \((n = 6)\). One husband stated, “The Internet is becoming an information hub. I appreciate that you provide information like this to help my wife and I become better parents. Many members of her family suffer from Anorexia. Both of our families have major emotional problems spawned from the lack of good parenting. This is great.”

**Suggested improvements.** Two individuals stated that the website needed a more clearly written purpose or mission statement, which would ideally be put on the home page. Another individual recommended putting the information about those responsible for the website on the home page, instead of in the About Us page, while another individual suggested explaining the importance of the attachment theory on the home page to hook visitors.

**Plans for Use**

**Personal application.** Many participants discussed their plans for using the information they obtained on the website \((n = 135)\). Numerous parents discussed various principles and skills they wanted to use or behaviors they would change \((n = 28)\). One individual reported, “I already learned something and implemented it! I asked a question on the forum and someone responded with a suggestion for making my plan better. I tried their idea, and it worked!” Other participants stated that they planned to learn the principles on the website \((n = 8)\).

**Share with others.** Many participants stated that they were going to share the website or the information on the website with the children or grandchildren \((n = 6)\),
other parents \((n = 11)\), a family member \((n = 2)\), and friends or others \((n = 5)\). One teacher shared,

“As a teacher of first grade, I am seeing a drastic change of attitude, lack of discipline, and many children caught up in the "me" attitude. When discussing a child's behavior in and out of the classroom, many parents ask for suggestions and ideas. I am seeing many parents with a lack of understanding of how to parent a child, because they have never had a good role model. This website has many valuable suggestions and explanations for many types of behavior, and is an excellent resource for many of my parents. I intend to recommend it to parents.”

Another individual stated, “I've very much enjoyed this website and plan to tell others about it.”

Pre-parents. While many of the participants who were not parents stated that they had no plans to apply the information because it was not applicable to them \((n = 17)\), a larger portion of this group stated their interest in returning and learning the information on the website when they became parents \((n = 29)\). A small number of pre-parents stated their interest in learning the information now to prepare for being a parent in the future \((n = 5)\).

Reasons for Returning

Over half of the participants stated a reason why they would return to this website \((n = 115)\). A large portion of these respondents stated they would return because the content was interesting \((n = 43)\), while others would return when they became a parent \((n = 18)\), and to finish reading the content \((n = 20)\). Only nine individuals said they would return because of the discussion forum, while an additional five participants stated they would return to look for updated information. One individual said, “I found several items that were thought provoking and would like to visit again for updates and further information.”
Reasons for not Returning

The individuals who stated they were not going to return \((n = 39)\) gave the following reasons: they were not a parent \((n = 17)\), time constraints \((n = 4)\), the needed information had been found \((n = 2)\), and there was no new information on the website \((n = 3)\). One individual stated, “I have no plans on it because I felt I got what I needed too. But if I have an issue while parenting in the future I may be back.”
V. DISCUSSION

Summary and Discussion of Findings

The findings of this formative evaluation reveal important information regarding the utilization, site navigation, usage patterns and the influence of *Foundation of Parenting* on participants. The first research question addressed the extent *Foundations of Parenting* had been used in the areas of unique visitors, return visitors, and page views per unique visitor. While the number of unique visitors was relatively small in comparison to some of the larger parenting websites (Steimle & Duncan, 2004), the number is reasonable for a recently created website. The initial website attendance points both to the success of the promotion of the website as well as the interest and need for parenting information. While the rate of return visitors is small, 28 percent, the open-ended survey responses suggest that this rate could increase as the discussion forum becomes used more and as the number of topics covered increases. While Hughes (2001) does not have a return visitor measure, this study supports the concept that as FLE content grows, so does the number of visitors to the website.

Although each unique visitor viewed only slightly more than eight pages, this is perhaps to be expected since many parents of young children tend to measure spare blocks of time in minutes instead of hours (Hennon & Peterson, 1981). On the other hand, people can be encouraged to stay by making the website more attractive and user-friendly (Steimle & Duncan, 2004). Although it would be ideal to have visitors view more pages, *Foundations of Parenting* visitors viewed significantly more pages than did those who visited the *Forever Families* website (4 pages) and Hughes’ (2001) website (5 pages).
The first part of the second research question identified the different ways participants used the website. Many conclusions can be drawn from the website path analysis. According to the most popular page report and the page depth of the most popular pages, visitors seemed to be attracted almost equally to the lessons and the discussion forum, and they often chose these website features as their first place to visit on the website.

Additionally, since the lesson and discussion forum feature received the largest portion of their viewership on the visitor’s second page view, this suggests a bifurcation of the needs or values of the visitors. A large proportion chose to visit the lessons first: a feature based on scientific knowledge and advice. A nearly equal proportion of visitors chose to visit the discussion forum first, which indicates a preference for interactivity or the common sense advice based on the experience of the lay participant.

Finally, the large number of visitors lost between the discussion forum home page, the forum, and the forum topics may be due to the small number of posts in the discussion forum. Users may have left the forum since it appeared “dead” or they may have left because their topic of interest had not already been addressed. Ebata (2001) also had this problem with Parent to Parent’s message boards. Ebata hypothesized that users may have been less inclined to post messages since this process required registration and a password, which causes viewers to lose the security experienced through anonymity. Although participants of the Foundations of Parenting discussion forums could have participated as a visitor, visitors were most likely unaware of this fact unless they were familiar with discussion forums in general. Creating an announcement to communicate
this fact to discussion forum viewers may help alleviate the concern of anonymity and encourage forum participation.

As indicated by the participants’ qualitative answers, participants were enthusiastic about the concept of the discussion forum, but they wished that more parents participated. Additionally, since most of the visitors chose to read instead of participate, it is reasonable to assume that many parents would simply browse the discussion forum for a topic that discusses their area of interest instead of choosing to be an active participant.

This suggests that visitors looked over the discussion forum home page, left it to explore other parts of the website, while those who were interested came back later in their visit to explore the forum in depth. This conclusion is corroborated by the page depth reports of those who chose to post on the discussion forum as well as those who examined the forum’s member profiles.

Greater insight into how visitors used the website can be gained from the site path report. An examination of this report suggests that the lesson feature could be changed in order to retain more visitors. Eighty-two visitors, or 12.2 percent of the unique visitors to the website, left after viewing two pages: the home page and the lesson default page. While many of these visitors may leave so soon simply because they decided that the website might not fit their current parenting needs, many may leave for design reasons that could be changed. Possible design changes that may help in visitor retention are suggested by the qualitative feedback from the survey participants, which suggests that the lesson scrolling bar should be removed, additional parenting topics could be added to encompass a broader variety of parent interests, and the lessons should be split up into manageable bite sizes, since many users are intimidated by reading large amounts of
information in one sitting. Additionally, changing the titles of the lessons to reflect hot button topics addressed within the lesson could help attract the attention and interests of the visitors. The data seems to support this conclusion, since the discipline lesson was accessed almost twice as often as the next most popular lesson.

The site path report also yielded valuable insights into methods of inviting visitors to participate in an online survey. An examination of the paths visitors took to fill out the online survey yields the conclusion that the automatic invitation was largely unsuccessful in encouraging people to take the survey. The automatic invitation may have served to keep the possibility of taking the survey in the forefront of the visitors’ minds though, which could have resulted in a decision to take the survey later.

Several SuperStats reports were combined with participants’ reports of web usage behavior to answer the second part of the second research question and identify whether or not visitors used websites in ways similar to those who experience traditional, classroom based FLE. As demonstrated in the site path analysis (Table 5) as well as the average visit depth statistic (6.7 pages), the pathways taken by the visitors are so varied as to be almost unique to the visitor. Hughes (2001) also reports a large number of unique visitor pathways (1,666) taken through the newsletter portion of the website. This suggests that individuals who seek family life education on the web search for the information they are looking for and leave. This conclusion is supported by the survey results, where the majority of individuals indicated that they had only read one lesson.

The visit depth report supports the search, find and leave approach as well, since 67.7 percent of visits involved an examination of four pages or less. The majority of users, 76.9 percent, spent less than ten minutes looking at the website. This finding also
supports the hypothesis that most Internet users search for the information they are looking for and then leave, instead of progressing through the website from the beginning to the end. Participants’ qualitative responses, indicating an interest in search functions as well as specific parenting topics, reinforces this view. These findings suggest that visitors tend towards searching for a specific sound-bite of information to fill their specific need, after which they left.

This search, find a sound-bite of information, and leave behavior is once again demonstrated by the survey results, where 75.9 percent of the participants indicated that they read one or more lessons, but completed no exercises. The exercises may increase the interaction of the individual with the information, but is a process which is perhaps accomplished with more ease in a traditional classroom setting.

Yet the use of exercises, common in a traditional classroom setting, cannot be ruled out due to complete lack of use. A small percentage of visitors, 4.9, spent more than thirty minutes on the website. This statistic does not include those individuals who chose to print out the lessons and exercises. Also, a significant minority of participants in the survey, 37.7 percent, indicated an intention to complete all of the lessons and exercises at some point in time. Finally, the average visit depth was 6.7 pages, which most likely indicates that a minority of visitors viewed numerous pages and skewed this statistic in the direction of a larger average visit depth, since 67.7 percent of visits involved viewing four pages or less.

The first part of the third research question was answered through the frequency and descriptive statistics of visitors’ reports of knowledge gains, interest in content, usefulness of content, attractiveness, ease in using the website, reconsidering former
attitudes, intention to make changes, and whether the website met the visitors needs. The participants of the survey rated the website quite positively. Although the statement “This website is attractive” had the highest mean, the percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, the dependent variable “The content was interesting” was greater, at 93% versus 88%. This finding supports the open-ended responses, since the website content theme was mentioned proportionately more often. The general feel of this theme is that the users valued the content and wanted more, with a few tweaks thrown in here and there.

The items measuring whether the participants learned new things, changed attitudes, or made a decision to change a behavior were rated significantly lower. This is perhaps not surprising, since many of the survey participants were single. Yet this result is also encouraging when compared with the open-ended responses, which make it clear that many parents chose to change their behavior. This finding suggests that change is possible through a web-based family life education program, even as users appear to take a sound-bite approach, where they seek for desired information and leave the website.

Additionally, the fact that 92.9 percent of the participants agreed that the website was easy to use when an interactive discussion forum was added in indicates that the discussion forum was not too difficult for the participants to figure out. This is encouraging for family life educators who wish to increase the interactivity of their website without sacrificing ease of use.

The second part of the third research question addressed whether the participants’ quantitative responses measured in the first part of the third survey question were affected by the demographic characteristics of gender, education level, marital status,
parental status, religion, and ethnic group. There were few significant associations between participant ratings of the website and demographic characteristics. This study found that White participants were more likely than non-White participants to find the website attractive. White participants were also more likely to decide to do something different because they visited the website. Perhaps non-White participants found the website less attractive because the web designer used design suggestions based on the dominant American culture, although multicultural pictures were used in an attempt to help non-White participants feel welcome.

An explanation for why Whites may have been more likely to decide to do something different may be found in the nature of the research used in the lessons. The research for the lessons was based largely on studies that used White, American populations. Therefore, the resulting lessons would have been more applicable to White visitors. Indeed, one of the open-ended content responses asked for a lesson explaining how attachment operates in third world countries, or different cultures.

The fact that there were no significant differences found in the participant ratings of the website by gender, parental status, marital status, religion, and education, suggests that these audiences rated the website as equally interesting, useful, easy to use, the website met their needs, increased their awareness of parenting topics, helped change attitudes and led to a decision to change behavior. Since the open-ended responses suggest that the non-parents found the website less useful, their ratings of the website may perhaps reflect their feelings on the general usefulness of the website, instead of its personal usefulness to them. Another significant finding is that males found the content equally interesting. Although only 30 percent of the survey respondents were male,
indicating that females still tend to visit FLE websites more than males, this may simply be an artifact of this particular study. Steimle and Duncan (2004) had a 42 percent male survey respondent rate, which is much closer to the nearly equal ratio of Internet-using males to females (United States General Accounting Office, 2001). It is often difficult to get males to come to traditional family life education (Meyers, 1993), so targeting this population through the Internet may be ideal.

Suggestions for Needed Improvements to the Foundations of Parenting Website

The fourth research question, ways in which the website could be improved, was addressed through the open-ended survey responses. Many helpful suggestions were made for improving the website in the areas of appearance, organization, functionality, features, and content. The researcher attempted to reconcile the suggestions with the purposes of the website in order to identify which suggestions should be implemented.

Appearance

While the appearance of any website can be expected to be attractive to some and unattractive to others, several suggestions were made that could be incorporated. The background garnered a significant amount of attention in the reviews. Some participants loved the color green while others hated it. Some people enjoyed the wallpaper while others did not. The researcher will change the background wallpaper for the simple reason that the purpose of a background is to provide an atmosphere, not to draw the visitor’s attention.

Whether to change the color green is a difficult question. Since each monitor displays each color differently, care has to be taken in choosing colors that look good across the spectrum. For example, the color green looks professional when it’s dark, but
is less than professional when it is a mint green. Colors that look good across the spectrum while still looking professional are blues and browns. Expert advice on the website’s color scheme will be sought.

Organization

The most pressing organization item that needs to be changed is the target of the Parents’ Stories button. Parents’ Stories is one forum of several in the discussion forum. Yet the purpose of putting the button on the navigation bar was to point out to the visitors that the option was there. The web developer is uncertain if this will be possible since the forum is an open source program. Another option would be to change the parent’s stories to a web blog, where users could post stories while other people comment on the story.

A site map will also be created, to allow visitors easy access to all parts of the site. Additionally, a breadcrumb function will be created that will map out where the visitor is in the website at all times, with links to allow the visitor to return to any level of the website they have been to previously.

Functionality

The lesson scrollbar will be taken out since it makes viewing the material more complicated. Eventually, the lessons will be rewritten to make them into a sound-bite sequence with a summary and a jump menu to allow individuals to easily access any portion of the lesson. A search bar will also be added to each page in order help the users locate information quickly. The navigation in the lessons will be improved. Eventually, the lesson navigation bar will be switched from a top navigation bar to a side navigation bar with collapsible menu options.
Features

Each lesson will eventually have a format for printing function, so individuals will not have to copy and paste the material into an editor in order to print it. Also, the worksheets will be directed to pop up in a separate browser so individuals will not lose their place in the lesson. Finally, users will be encouraged to participate in the discussion forum through further advertising. First, a basic forum user group will be established to help the forum look well-used. Therefore, a collaboration with a local parenting support group needs to be formed. Then, a national news release would increase the number of visitors to the site, some of which will choose to become an active part of the forum. Third, visitors will be directed through links from other websites. One possibility is submitting the website to CYFERnet, the national Cooperative Extension website. The Parent to Parent website received 12.4 percent of their visitors through this route (Ebata, 2001). Finally, Google advertising will be continued if funding permits, since this route brings about 50 visitors per day, for a cost of about three dollars per day.

Content

All current content will be revised once again to make the language less technical and to identify punctuation, spelling, and grammar mistakes. For example, the attachment lesson will be made less technical by creating a layman’s term for each attachment style, as well as reducing the 12th grade reading level to a 9th or 10th grade reading level. The website will be regularly updated and all new content will be created in sound-bite format. New lessons will be prepared addressing the special cases of attachment, after which content will be created that focus on broader parenting topics, such as working with teenagers.
Practical Implications for Web-based FLE

The results of this study suggest that web-based FLE may be a valuable delivery method in prevention. Many individuals indicated that they had changed behaviors due to the website or were planning on changing. Only two other website evaluations studies have attempted to formatively measure change variables. Steimle and Duncan (2004) found that participants of the Forever Families online survey tended to agree with the statement that website led them to reconsider former attitudes and that the participant had decided to do something differently due to the website. In the Grant et al. (2001) Father Work evaluation, fathers indicated that they had new ideas to improve their fathering and that they were motivated to take more action in their parent-child relationships. These findings taken together strongly suggest that web-based FLE could be an important prevention tool.

While traditional, classroom-based FLE most likely has advantages that web-based FLE does not have, there are distinct advantages to web-based FLE as well. Users who seek out the website seem to generally be looking for information to help them with a specific problem or situation. While the visitor may not stay long at a website, they seem likely to change once they find the information they are looking for. In other words, those who seek out web-based FLE and classroom-based FLE both have the motivation to change. Since the web-based FLE can reach a wider population and takes less time, more people may choose to turn to this route for help.

The discussion forum, if well used, could provide an excellent web-based support group that simulates a classroom-based support group. Also, the discussion forum can cover any topic, such as which diaper brands are the best, which is not covered often in
basic parenting classes. Yet these practical details of parenting most likely need to be taken care of before parents can be freed up to focus on the emotional and cognitive challenges of raising children.

This approach follows Doherty’s (2000) recommendation to encourage parents to produce FLE in addition to consuming it. Duncan and Goddard (2005) noted that the lived experience of other parents is a vital method of learning. In support of this concept, parents visiting *Foundations of Parenting* seemed as excited to get common sense advice from other parents as they were to read research-based lessons.

**Study Limitations**

Several limitations of the study should be noted. One major limitation is the lack of a random or representative sample. Instead, this study employed a convenience “snowball” method of sampling. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized beyond participants in the study. Additionally, the researcher was unable to measure how many people were invited to visit the website and chose not to. This sample is most likely skewed in the direction of individuals who are interested in family life education or parenting prior to the invitation to visit the website.

Another weakness of the study is due to the fact that this website was recently created. This meant that there were few users in the discussion forum, which most likely caused fewer people to use the discussion forum, as can be seen by looking at the reasons people listed for returning. While many people were enthusiastic about the concept of the discussion forum, few people mentioned it as a reason to return to the website, while many people mentioned returning because of the lessons.
Although MANOVA was the statistical procedure of choice because of its ability to minimize Type I error occurring due to conducting multiple one-way analyses, its conservative nature may have suppressed what may otherwise have been significant differences. It is also possible that given a larger sample, these variables may have become significant. Therefore their possible importance cannot be ruled out in future studies.

Finally the sample had a large percentage of single, non-parents. Since this website focused on parenting, the results for the quantitative survey results may have been skewed in a negative direction since the website was less applicable to single non-parents.

**Directions for Future Research**

The findings of this study indicate several areas in which research is needed. Little is known about visitor behavior on FLE websites. Replication studies are needed to further assess the areas of pages viewed per visit, time spent on the website, most popular pages, page depth of the most popular pages, and the site path in order to identify general FLE web usage patterns. Once these patterns are identified, FLE websites can be designed to retain visitors as well as facilitate visitor usage patterns, which could increase the effectiveness of those websites.

While this formative study suggests that web-based FLE can promote change in individuals, summative, experimental research needs to be conducted to confirm this finding. Additionally, further examination of the role sound bites play in promoting change through web-based FLE needs to be explored. For example, is sound-bite family life education on the Internet effective in creating change? Does the amount of exposure
to Internet sound-bite FLE increase the amount of change? If individuals who are exposed to Internet FLE sound bites tend to change one thing here and there, will an exposure to a high amount of Internet sound-bite FLE produce large amounts of change measurable by standard wellness tests? How much Internet sound-bite FLE does an individual have to be exposed to in order to get the same benefit as traditional, classroom FLE? Sound-bite FLE where an individual was motivated to find the information by themselves could be compared to sound-bite FLE that an individual happened to run into. By examining these issues, researchers will be better able to understand if the Internet is a viable source of prevention, since many Internet users seem to seek out sound-bite FLE.

Another question that is yet unanswered is how an attachment-based parenting website compares to other website parenting approaches, such as the Adlerian or behavioral parenting methods.

Finally, this study stands with five other evaluations of FLE websites. Each of those websites target different FLE audiences, with the exception to the *Parent to Parent* and *Foundations of Parenting* website. Since the target audiences of each website is so different, little is known about the various FLE needs of Internet users. For example, users of *Foundations of Parenting* seem to be searching for specific parenting information. While an examination of the open-ended survey responses yields some understanding of the general types of information parents are looking for, the specific information parents are seeking is still a mystery. Before the *Foundations of Parenting* can fill commonly held parenting information needs, the web designer must first know what they are. Future studies could simply keep a log of search terms used in the search
function by the FLE audience to identify the specific information the target population is looking for.

Recommendations for Future FLE Websites

The results of this study as well as Hughes’ (2001) website evaluation seem to suggest that a large majority of visitors to FLE websites tend to search for a desired piece of information and leave once the information is found. The author thus recommends that future FLE websites be created with the sound-bite approach in mind, with an easy-to-use navigation system and a search engine to allow visitors to search the website for the information they are looking for. Since the quality of the navigation system varies between FLE websites, the author advises the FLE web developer to first create a navigation system on the drawing board before creating the website. Once the website is created, changing this aspect often requires changing the layout of the entire website.

Few FLE websites have search functions simply because they are difficult to create and can be unreliable if not created well. Since Internet users do not want to spend large amounts of time sifting through a website for the desired piece of information, a search function will help users find the information they need before the visitor gives up and moves to a different website. One possibility for the FLE web developer is to use javascript to send the information entered into the search form to the Google search engine, which will give the visitor results to the FLE website only. This can be done for free. Another simple possibility is to allow Google to place a search bar on the website. The downside to this approach is that the search bar comes with Google advertisements.

Since a minority of users seem to take the traditional approach of reading the information presented from beginning to end, the author recommends that FLE web
developers facilitate this approach by having numbered lessons. Each lesson can be comprised of sound bite sections that are connected in a logical order to allow the traditional FLE user to progress through the lesson in a way that is comfortable to him or her.

There are several design issues FLE web developers need to consider as well. The website should be no more than 768 pixels wide, since half of the visitors to *Foundations of Parenting* had a monitor resolution of 768 x 600 pixels. If the website is more than 768 pixels wide, half of the users will have to scroll horizontally, something that will cause many visitors to leave the site. Also, employing a sound-bite information approach in the lessons will minimize vertical scrolling as well, since this is a deterrent to users as well.

Although 80 percent of the users had a 16 million color depth for their monitor, the optimal color depth for displaying gradients in graphics, the other 20 percent had a 65,536 color-depth, which can cause the gradients to be grainy or jerky. The vast majority of visitors used a version of Microsoft Internet Explorer and Mozilla Firefox, so web developers should test the website in each browser to find bugs or unacceptable changes from browser to browser.

Finally, there are many open source programs with support forums that make installing these programs relatively easy with basic coding knowledge. The discussion forum on this website used the software that can be downloaded for free at [www.phpbb.com](http://www.phpbb.com). The licensing agreement on these programs are fairly open in that users are basically only prohibited from making money by selling copies of the program. Another excellent data management and communication open source software can be found at [www.drupal.org](http://www.drupal.org), although the installation of this program requires an
intermediate programming skill level. Open source programs such as these have great potential in opening up new avenues for family life education on the web.
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New York: Guilford Press.


Please complete our feedback survey about *Foundations of Parenting*

The purpose of the survey is to learn your impressions of the site, with an eye to making it better. With your help we can make this website better fit the needs of all parents. Participation in this survey is strictly voluntary, and you may exit the survey at any time by using the navigation buttons above. This formative evaluation study is being conducted by Dr. Stephen Duncan, Professor in the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University and his graduate student April Steed. You were selected for participation in the study because you are one of many visitors to the website whose views on the site are very important to us.

Your participation in the study involves your taking 10 minutes to complete the simple survey that follows. It will ask you what you liked about the site as well as what you think we can improve. In addition, there are some background questions we would like you to answer so we can better understand for whom the site is most useful. After you complete the survey, click "submit."

There are minimal risks for participating in a study such as this. You may experience some discomfort as you attempt to change your relationships based on the principles presented. There is always some discomfort in any change. We believe you will benefit from helping us improve a website that is designed to help strengthen marriages and families worldwide.

Participation in the research is voluntary. However, all responses will remain anonymous; the information you provide to us will never be connected with your name.

*If you have any questions regarding this research, you may contact Dr. Duncan at the School of Family Life, 1041 JFHB, 801/422-1796. In addition, if you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in a research project you may contact Dr. Renea Beckstrand, Chair of the Institutional Review Board, at 822 SWKT, 801/422-3873, or renea_beckstrand@byu.edu.*

If you are willing to complete the on-line survey, click here:

**I agree**

If not, click here:

**No Thank You**

**I Have Already Taken The Survey**
Appendix B – Online Survey

1. We would like to know your impressions of the *Foundations of Parenting* website. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The <em>Foundations of Parenting</em> website is attractive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The content is interesting.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The website is easy to use.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The website led me to reconsider former attitudes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of this website I've decided to do some thing(s) differently.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This website made me aware of thing(s) I didn't know before.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This website met my needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments:

2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Useful</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Somewhat Useful</th>
<th>Not Useful At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate the usefulness of the <em>Foundations of Parenting</em> website?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. What improvements would you recommend to the website to make it more useful?

4. Do you plan on visiting the website again?
   - Yes
   - No
   Why or why not?

5. What do you like best about the *Foundations of Parenting* website?
6. Do you plan to use any of the information you have learned from the website?
   - Yes
   - No

7. If you selected yes in question 6, please tell us about your plans:

8. Please give us any additional comments about the website:

9. Please select one of the following options that best describes how you have used this website:
   - I read all the material from beginning to end and completed all of the exercises.
   - I read all the material from beginning to end, but I didn’t complete the exercises.
   - I read a few lessons and did the exercises on the areas I was most interested in.
   - I read a few lessons in the areas I was interested in but I didn’t complete the exercises
   - I read one lesson and did the exercises on the area I was most interested in.
   - I read one lesson in the area I was most interested in, but I didn’t complete the exercises.

10. If you haven’t completed the all of the lessons and exercises, please select one of the following intentions.
    - I intend to complete all of the lessons, but not the exercises.
    - I intend to eventually complete all the lessons and exercises.
    - I don’t intend to complete all of the lessons.

11. How frequently do you use the Internet? (Select the best answer.)
    - Daily
    - More than once a week
    - Weekly
    - Less than once a week
    - Monthly
    - Less than once a month
    - Yearly

12. How frequently do you use the Internet to learn about marriage or family issues? (Select the best answer.)
    - Daily
    - More than once a week
    - Weekly
    - Less than once a week
    - Monthly
    - Less than once a month
    - Yearly
13. How did you hear about this website?
   - A link from another website (Please Specify) ______________
   - Search engine
   - Friend
   - News article
   - Magazine
   - Other (Please Specify) ______________________

14. Where do you live?
   - What country? (Select one)
   - If in the U.S., what state? (Select one)

15. How old are you?

16. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female

17. What is your religious affiliation? (Select one)

18. What is your race or ethnic group?
   - American Indian / Alaskan Native
   - Asian
   - Black, non-Hispanic
   - Hispanic
   - Pacific Islander
   - White, non-Hispanic
   - Multiracial Other (please specify) ________

19. What is your marital status?
   - Single and never married
   - Married, first marriage
   - Remarried
   - Divorced
   - Widowed
   - Other _____________
20. Please select the number of children you have in each category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2 years old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-12 years old</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13-18 years old</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18 or older</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

How many of these are stepchildren?

How many of these are adopted?

If no children, are you or your partner pregnant?

  - Yes
  - No

21. Is this your first time visiting the *Foundations of Parenting* website?

  - Yes
  - No

22. What is the total amount of time you estimate that you have spent at the *Foundations of Parenting* website, adding together all of your visits? (Also count time you have spent reading materials from the website that you printed or downloaded.) (Select the best answer.)

  - Less than 30 minutes
  - 30 minutes to 1.5 hours
  - 1.5 hours to 3 hours
  - 3 hours to 5 hours
  - More than 5 hours

23. What is the highest level of education that you completed?

  - Less than high school
  - High school equivalency (GED)
  - High School Diploma
  - Some college, not currently enrolled
  - Some college, currently enrolled
  - Associate's degree
  - Bachelor's degree
  - Graduate or professional degree, not completed
  - Graduate or professional degree, completed
24. What is your family's gross yearly income before taxes and deductions?
   - Less than $5,000
   - $5,000 - $14,999
   - $15,000 - $24,999
   - $25,000 - $29,999
   - $30,000 - $39,999
   - $40,000 - $49,999
   - $50,000 - $74,999
   - $75,000 - $100,000
   - More than $100,000

25. Are you willing to have us contact you for further feedback on the website?
   - Yes
   - No

If yes, what is your email address?
Appendix C – Website Map

Foundations of Parenting Page Layout

Home Page

Lesson: Attachment Styles*
Discussion Forum*
Links*
About Us*
Feedback*
Tell a friend about the website

* These pages can be reached from anywhere on the website since these buttons are on the navigation bar, with the exception of discussion forum, which is connected to the rest of the website only through a link back to the home page
Discussion Forum Home

View a Forum

View a Thread

Post Reply

New Topic

Login*

Frequently Asked Questions*

Search*

Profile*

Usergroups*

Register*

Member List*

* These items are available on every page of the discussion forum
* Only individuals who made it to this page actually submitted a survey.
Tell a friend about this website form

Telling a friend about this website processing page*

* Only individuals that made it to this page actually sent an email to a friend about the website.
Recognizing Attachment Styles

A Brief Definition of Attachment

People talk a lot about attachment, but what exactly is it? Simply put, when children feel threatened, they look to an attachment figure for reassurance, safety and security. Children also look to this attachment figure to fill their needs, an important part of feeling safe. Children with a secure attachment style trust their parent to consistently help them feel safe and to fill their needs. Children with an insecure attachment can’t trust their parent to consistently help them feel safe and to fill their needs.

Benefits of a Secure Attachment

Scientists have found that children develop better in every major area of development if they have a secure, instead of an insecure, attachment style. The major areas of development are social, intellectual, moral, and emotional development. Secure attachments are important in helping a child:

- to learn basic trust and reciprocity, which serves as a template for all future emotional relationships.
- to explore the environment with feelings of safety and security (“secure base”), which leads to healthy cognitive and social development.
- to develop the ability to self-regulate, which results in effective management of impulses and emotions.
- to create a foundation for the formation of identity, which includes a sense of competency, self-worth, and a balance between dependence and autonomy.
- to establish a prosocial moral framework, which involves empathy, compassion, and conscience.
- to generate the core belief system, which comprises cognitive appraisals of self, caregivers, others, and life in general.
- to provide a defense against stress and trauma, which incorporates resourcefulness and resilience.

Numerous studies have shown that securely attached infants and toddlers do better later in life with self-esteem, independence and autonomy, enduring friendships, trust and intimacy, positive relationships with parents and other authority figures, impulse control, empathy and compassion, resilience in the face of adversity, school success, and future marital and family relationships. Every parent wants to give these things to his or her child, and the lessons on this website will help you to do so.
Risks associated with insecure attachments

An insecure attachment style, on the other hand, is a risk factor. In other words, children who have an insecure attachment style are more likely to develop a wide range of problems. The following list is a small sample of problems insecure children are more likely to experience:

- anorexia
- bulimia
- drug abuse
- loneliness
- anxiety
- depression
- low self-esteem
- poor ways of coping with negative emotions
- antisocial behaviors
- over-dependent behaviors
- passive-aggressive behaviors
- obsessive compulsive behaviors
- borderline personality disorder (these individuals have an unstable sense of self and others)
- consistent cruelty to others
- narcissism (an obsession with oneself)

More About Attachment

John Bowlby, the scientist who created the attachment theory, declared that attachment is a need present from the “cradle to the grave.” Not only that, attachment is considered by many scientists to be an innate need at the same level as other basic survival needs, such as food, water, sleep, and maintaining warmth.

This may seem to be a drastic statement, but the purpose of the attachment system, for infants, is to maintain physical closeness or nearness to the parent. This serves two purposes: to protect the child from danger in the environment and to allow the parent to identify and fill the infant’s needs. A common example is an infant’s fear of strangers, which begins around 8 months of age. The infant, when confronted with a stranger, will fuss and cry till the parent draws the infant close and comforts them. Infants will also cry to draw the parent’s attention and nearness when they have a need that isn’t filled, such when they are hungry or have a dirty diaper.

In other words, you, as an attachment figure, provide safety and security by noticing and responding to your child’s needs. This sounds fairly simple, and perhaps you are wondering what all the fuss is about. Well, during the thousands of interactions that take place between parent and child, some basic powerful messages are sent to your child. By
your actions in these situations, your child learns that (1) he or she is worthy of having his or her needs met, and (2) other people are reliable and can be counted on. When parents do not notice or respond appropriately to their child’s needs, they send the opposite message to their child. These basic beliefs about self and others form the building blocks for development in the areas of intellectual, social, moral, and emotional development. In other words, how you respond to your child’s attachment needs sets the stage for how well they develop into responsible, happy adults. This is a big responsibility.

It might not seem obvious at first why beliefs about self and others have such a dramatic impact upon development. If a child holds the belief that they are not worthy of having their needs met, they make the conclusion that something must be wrong with them. When these children are confronted with the challenges of development, they are more likely to give up because they believe they are broken. If these children have difficulty learning to read, they might conclude that it’s because something is wrong with them, and give up. Also, if these children are not accepted fairly quickly into the social circles of their grade, they’ll once again make the assumption that other children don’t want to be around them because something is wrong with them.

The same is true of children who believe that other people cannot be counted on. A child’s moral development is based on a child’s connection with other people. Children must believe that other people have needs and feelings just like them. When a child believes that other people cannot be trusted, a protective wall goes up between that child and the people surrounding him or her. This wall, while helping the child remain independent, also makes it more difficult to see that other people are real, and have thoughts, needs, and feelings too. When children see other people as being real and like themselves, they are less likely to do things that hurt others, and more likely to do things to help them.

The Four Types of Attachment

There are four major types of attachment: secure, avoidant, anxious/ambivalent, and disorganized. The last three types are all insecure types of attachment.

Secure attachment: The key element of a secure attachment is trust; trust that the adult will be there to fill his or her needs and to protect the child. Secure attachment develops as a result of thousands of daily interactions in which the caregiver is emotionally in tune with the child, eventually becoming a secure base from which the child can tackle new tasks and new relationships with the consistent expectation of being successful and loved.

Characteristics of Secure Attachment: Some or all of these characteristics may be present. Each child will be different.

- Views others as trustworthy
- Views others as dependable
- Views self as lovable
- Uses parent as a secure base from which to explore the environment. In other words, these children will explore the environment when the parent is present, and return to the parent when they feel afraid or threatened.
- Are resilient and adaptable in a wide variety of situations
- Show self-regulation appropriate to their age

**Avoidant Attachment:** Avoidant infants, children, and adults are generally those people who were *consistently* rejected by their caregivers. They learned that they couldn’t rely on their caregivers to provide for some or all of their needs. As a result, these children become independent and self-sufficient and they try to minimize and ignore the negative emotions associated with attachment needs.

**Characteristics of avoidant attachment:** Although every child demonstrates these behaviors at sometime or another, children with avoidant attachment will consistently demonstrate these behaviors. Some or all of these characteristics may be present, and each child will be different. Some may be mildly avoidant, while others are extremely avoidant. A child may even show characteristics of both secure attachment and avoidant attachment, since the primary caregiver may fill some needs while (unknowingly) rejecting the child by not filling other needs.

- intense anger and loss
- hostile
- critical of others
- sensitive to blame
- lack of empathy
- views others as untrustworthy
- views others as undependable
- views self as unlovable or "too good" for others
- relationships feel either threatening to one's sense of control, not worth the effort, or both
- compulsive self-reliance
- passive withdrawal
- low levels of perceived support
- difficulty getting along with peers, and often preferring to work alone at school
- work, or achievement in sports or other hobbies may provide a good excuse to avoid personal relations
- fear of closeness in relationships
- avoidance of intimacy
- tendency toward self critical depression

**Anxious/Ambivalent Attachment:** Ambivalent infants, children, and adults are generally those whose needs were *inconsistently* met by their primary caregivers/attachment figures. These children have a heightened awareness of their
negative emotions because they use their negative emotions to attract the attention, and thus the close proximity, of the caregiver. All children engage in attention-getting behavior, but ambivalently attached children experience a heightened fear that the caregiver won’t be there to take care of their needs.

**Characteristics of anxious/ambivalent attachment style:** Although every child demonstrates these behaviors at sometime or another, children with anxious/ambivalent attachment will consistently demonstrate these behaviors. Some or all of these characteristics may be present, since each child is different. A child may show characteristics of both secure attachment and ambivalent attachment, since the primary caregiver may have consistently filled some needs while inconsistently filling other needs. One of the main underlying causes of these characteristics is a lack of trust that the caregiver will be there consistently to fill their needs. Ambivalently attached children often desire relationships, but once they get to a certain point in the relationship, attachment fears are triggered and they consciously or subconsciously sabotage the relationship.

- compulsive caregiving
- feel over-involved and under-appreciated in friendships
- rapid friendship breakups
- idealizing of others
- strong desire for parent to reciprocate in relationship
- desire for extensive contact and declarations of affections
- over-invests his/her emotions in a relationship
- heavy reliance on parent
- views parent as desirable but unpredictable (sometimes available, sometimes not)
- perceives others as difficult to understand
- relationship is primary method by which one can experience a sense of security
- unlikely to view others as altruistic
- sensitive to rejection
- discomfort with anger
- extreme emotions
- jealous
- possessive
- views self as unlovable
- suicide attempts
- mood swings

**Disorganized Attachment:** this style of attachment occurs when a child is extremely neglected or abused. When the attachment system of a child with disorganized attachment is activated, the child is put in a dilemma. The very thing the child needs most, the comfort of the caregiver, is also the thing that causes the most fear, due to previous experiences. Parents might observe actual physical shaking or behavioral paralysis when this occurs.
How Attachment Forms

Understanding how your child forms his or her attachment style with you is the first step in influencing the type of attachment style your child forms. The attachment style of the infant (secure, ambivalent, avoidant and disorganized) grows out thousands of interactions between the parent and the infant. In this stage of development, a child’s attachment is primarily relationship-oriented; the child’s attachment style depends upon how the parent treats the child. If there is a change in this treatment, there will most likely be a change in the attachment orientation.

If the caregiver is consistent and responsive to the attachment needs of the infant, then the infant will most likely develop a secure attachment style. If the caregiver is somewhat inconsistent in responding to the needs of the infant, then the infant will most likely develop an ambivalent attachment style, characterized by high anxiety and low avoidance. Infants who adapt to their environment by adopting the ambivalent style learn that protest is needed to get consistent care from their caregiver. As a result, infants who adopt the ambivalent attachment style have a hyper-activated attachment system in order to maintain proximity to their caregiver. If the caregiver is unresponsive to the needs of the infant, then the infant will learn that the caregiver is unreliable, and over time the child will learn to deactivate the attachment system entirely.

While the infant assumes an attachment style in adaptation to the environment, this attachment style eventually resembles a stable personality trait as the child generalizes the experiences with the original caregiver to general expectations of how other people will react to them.

While parenting is a major factor in the attachment style of the infant, it is not the only factor. The following is a list of experiences and risk factors that could predispose an infant to become insecurely attached:

- Premature birth
- In utero trauma such as exposure to drugs or alcohol
- Unwanted pregnancy
- Separation from birth mother
- Postpartum depression in mother
- Severe abuse and/or neglect in the first years of life
- Multiple caretakers
- Hospitalizations
- Unresolved pain
- Painful or invasive medical procedures

Keep in mind that many of the items on the above list cause problems by making it more likely that a parent will be insensitive. For example, a premature birth may lead to an infant that is more high maintenance than usual. It takes an extra effort by a parent to be sensitive when their infant has been screaming for the majority of the day.
Detachment and Attachment Injuries

While we all wish we were perfect parents, we aren’t. So it is important for you to be able to identify when your child is shifting from a secure to an insecure attachment style. Children make this transition through a process called detachment. If you see your child going through the stages of the detachment process, it should be a red flag that causes you to stop, identify what need isn’t being filled or what event caused an attachment injury, and do your best to remedy the situation. If your child makes it all the way through the detachment process, you’ll have a much harder time helping them to shift back into a secure attachment style.

The Process of Detachment. When a child is physically separated from their attachment figure, three phases of detachment result. The first phase, protest, is designed to re-engage the attachment figure. The primary emotions that accompany the individual’s efforts to reestablish emotional contact with the attachment figure are fear, anger, and distress. The next phase, despair, is characterized by no efforts to reestablish emotional contact with the parent. This phase is characterized by a lack of hope and mourning the loss of the attachment figure. The final phase is detachment, where apathy and neutrality are the primary emotions displayed.

The Creation of Attachment Injuries. When a child, or an adult, has gone through the three phases of detachment, they have experienced an attachment injury. While inattentive, unresponsive, and rejecting caregivers/attachment figures create attachment injuries and a negative working model of others, the shift from a secure to an avoidant attachment style can also be event-related. Any major betrayal of trust of a child may cause an attachment break that leads to a negative working model of others.

For example, Theodore J. Kaczynski, the Unabomber, was hospitalized at a young age with a severe allergic reaction to a medication. His parents were allowed to visit him infrequently and they were never allowed to hug or hold their son. When Ted Kaczynski came home from the hospital, he was never the same. He went from a bright, bubbly, sociable toddler to a withdrawn, unresponsive, and irritable child. This dramatic personality swing, accompanied as it was by a long separation from Ted’s attachment figures, indicates that he experienced an attachment injury. He shifted from a secure to an avoidant attachment style.

My Child is Insecurely Attached. What Do I Do?

All is not lost if your child has developed an insecure attachment style. While you can’t change your child, you can change how you parent, thus encouraging them to gradually switch over to a secure attachment style. I am sure you have noticed that consistency in filling your child’s needs and trust are central components in creation of an attachment. Read the other lessons on this website to gain an understanding of what secure attachment parenting consists of before following the guidelines below.
1. Evaluate your parenting style. Be honest. What are things that you have done that have contributed to your child’s attachment style?
   - Changing Attachment Styles Step 1 Worksheet

2. Evaluate your child’s environment. Have you set firm boundaries and established routines that allow your child to feel safe and secure? Many parents are so busy that they let slide establishing a daily routine for their child. Routines help children know what to expect, and this helps them feel safe. A typical routine might include a set time for breakfast, lunch dinner, and bedtime. Your child might know that they are expected to do chores after breakfast and their homework before dinner. Try to keep to your routines, but be flexible. Life does happen, after all.
   - Changing Attachment Styles Step 2 Worksheet

3. Evaluate your child for characteristics that might prevent him or her from easily establishing a secure attachment. For example, your child might be hyperactive or easily upset. Parents of these children will have to make a larger effort to remain patient and consistent than would other parents.
   - Changing Attachment Styles Step 3 Worksheet

4. Work to understand your child. Make sure you know what they need. This will involve spending quality time together and much thought on your part.
   - Changing Attachment Styles Step 4 Worksheet

5. Work on changing your parenting style to create a relationship environment in which your child will feel safe in establishing a secure attachment with you. This involves using the attachment parenting principles described in the other lessons, and being consistent and gaining your child’s trust. This will not be easy. You won’t see results at first, so don’t be discouraged. Most people take at least three weeks to be convinced that a change is “for real.” In other words, your child must first believe that you won’t fall back into old patterns of behavior.
   - Changing Attachment Styles Step 5 Worksheet

6. Work on creating an open line of communication. Your child will hopefully start coming to you when they have problems or need someone to listen to them. If not, try to encourage this by spending one-on-one time together and asking your child questions that invite them to confide in you. Make sure you are validating and accepting, or your child may not make the attempt again.
   - Changing Attachment Styles Step 6 Worksheet

You can do wonderful things in your child’s life if you choose to help your child have a secure attachment! Don’t be discouraged if this takes a long time. This is not an easy fix. It will take much work on your part. But if you do, you will have a happy, satisfying relationship with your child and the joy of knowing you’ve done all you could to help your child become a happy, successful, and responsible adult.

References


http://www.attachmenttherapy.com


First two items on the list can be found in this reference:


The rest of the list can be found in this reference:


http://www.attachmenttherapy.com/ad.html

Warmth

Showing warmth is a powerful tool parents can use every day. Warmth, simply put, is showing affection or combining a feeling of love, friendship, well-being, or pleasure without actions. Warmth is important because it helps fill the universal need of a child to receive positive regard from their attachment figure. Warmth not only helps your child feel secure because you are filling his or her need, it also helps build your child’s self-esteem, and academic and social competence.

Warmth can be shown in many ways. The following list describes ways of showing warmth that research has found effective.

- Smiling is an easy way to show warmth. Smiling is especially effective when you and your child are smiling at each other.
- Eye contact, when combined with a smile can be a powerful form of warmth. Try to do this daily.
- Appropriate touch, such as hugging, holding, and snuggling.
- Laughter when shared together or not directed at your child.
- Tone of voice. A soft, soothing tone of voice can communicate warmth, as can soothing words. On the other hand, a sharp tone of voice can indicate anger or contempt. Parents often do not pay attention to their tone of voice, yet this can be a powerful communication tool.
- Singing, especially to infants, can demonstrate warmth. If a parent is singing, a child knows they are most likely happy, and not angry.
- Rocking or movement is also especially effective for infants. This may be due to the fact that when in the womb, infants were rocked as their mothers walked. So rocking and movement is associated with safety and warmth.
- Use the Can You See Warmth worksheet to help you identify warm and cold behaviors in your every day relationships.

Keep in mind that each child is different. Some methods of showing warmth may be more effective than others. Find those methods of showing warmth that your child seems to respond to the most, and use these on a daily basis.

Also, try to keep a mildly pleasant look on your face as you are interacting with your child. Often, a neutral look can be interpreted as negative simply because your child can’t read the emotions behind a neutral look. A lack of warmth is often seen as a rejection. It may take practice to have a pleasant, instead of neutral, expression, but the effort will be well worth it as your child assumes that you are feel positively towards them as a general rule.

- Complete the Becoming Warmer To Your Child worksheet to help you make warmth a parenting strength.
References


Lesson

Validation

Introduction

Everything you say and do to your child carries and underlying message to your child. Children absorb these messages and use them to form the basis of their opinions of themselves and others. This is why it is vital for you as a parent to know and control what those underlying messages are. Too often we unwittingly send messages to our children that they are unimportant and have no worth.

The underlying messages of validation say, “You, my child, have value in and of yourself, separate from what you do. And since you have value, so do your thoughts, feelings, and needs.” Validation, or the communication of these underlying messages, is one type of acceptance or rejection. Accepting your child is an important part of creating a secure attachment in your child. While acceptance has many definitions, such as responding to your child’s needs or giving love, affection, care, comfort, and support, research is clear that acceptance has a large impact on a child’s well-being.

Parents can communicate validation in many different ways, such as through their body language, tone of voice, words, and actions. For example, if a parent is physically turned away from their child and answers with the minimal responses when their child is trying to tell the parent about their day at school, the child could easily conclude that the parent is not interested in what happened at school. This sends the underlying message, “What happens to you is not important to me.”

First, examine your own behavior with your child. See if you can identify the underlying messages you send to him or her in every interaction. This may be difficult at first. You may need to practice identifying underlying messages first. Do this while you are watching television or a movie. Choose one of the four ways underlying messages can be sent, such as through actions. Then, for the next five minutes, write down the actions of the characters and try to identify what messages they are sending to each other. Continue practicing each area till you feel like you can identify underlying messages.

- Use the Identifying Validating Behaviors worksheet to help you complete this activity.
- If you are having trouble identifying validating behavior, or would simply like more practice, use the What Helps You Feel Validated worksheet.

Next, look back on your day and examine how you interacted with your child. Write down each interaction you can remember. Out to the side of each interaction, write down the underlying message that you sent to your child. Once you identify the positive and negative messages you send to your child, make an effort to replace the negative
messages with positive messages. Here are a few ways you can show validation to help get you started:

- **Show respect for your child’s thoughts and feelings.** This is perhaps the most crucial form of validation. By listening to and understanding your child you show that you believe his or her thoughts and feelings are valid. Try to avoid correcting your child’s thoughts and feelings as much as you can. Some opinions children will simply grow out of as they grow older and need no correction. For example if your child expresses a dislike of orange juice, you could ask why, listen attentively, and say they you see where they are coming from. It won’t hurt your child to have apple juice in the mornings instead of orange juice. Chances are, the dislike of orange juice will fade as your child grows older. Consistent correction sends the message, “You are wrong. Your thoughts and feelings are wrong.” This is the same as saying that those thoughts and feelings have no value.

- **Fill the needs of your child.** Not filling your child’s needs consistently communicates the message that their needs are unreasonable. Children internalize this as, “I am unlovable and responsible for this mistreatment.”

- **Attention**, such as attentiveness while they are talking. This sends your child the message, “What you say has worth to me”

- **Spending time together.** This sends the message “You are worth something valuable, my time.”

- **Appreciation** for the good things they do or the good character traits they have. This sends the message, “I see things of worth in you.”

- **Support** your child in their efforts to develop their talents. Be there for their recitals, games, and contests. If you can’t be there, do your best to have someone record the event, and talk with your child afterwards. This sends the message, “Your efforts are worth the time needed for me to see them.”

Choose two or three of the ideas listed above that fit you the best. Decide how you will incorporate these activities into your life. Try to do at least one thing on a daily basis. If it helps, keep a journal of the progress you make and your child’s responses. Don’t be disappointed if your child doesn’t respond at first. It often takes children a couple of weeks to believe that you are “for real.”

- Use the [Validating Your Child worksheet](#) to help you become more validating towards your child.
References


The Art of Emotion Coaching

Introduction

During the last few decades, researchers have increasingly come to understand how important it is to understand our emotions and handle them in a healthy way. The term "emotional intelligence," introduced by Daniel Goleman in a book by the same name, has become common in both research literature and books written for the general public.

Emotional intelligence is learned, and a child's first teacher about emotions is his or her parents. You can help your child develop emotional intelligence by "coaching" him, using principles researchers have found work well. "Emotion coaching" can help you avoid common pitfalls as you guide your children toward becoming successful, happy adults.

What Is Emotion Coaching?

Emotion coaching is helping children understand the different emotions they experience, why they occur, and how to handle them. In the simplest terms, you can coach your children about emotions by comforting them, listening and understanding their thoughts and feelings, and helping them understand themselves. As you do this, your children will feel loved, supported, respected, and valued. With this emotionally supportive foundation, you will be much more successful at setting limits and problem solving.

Emotion coaching helps children gain skills that will help them love and serve, including becoming comfortable with their own feelings and learning to express their emotions in constructive ways.

How Emotion Coaching Benefits Your Child

The better you are at emotion coaching your children, the better you can prepare them to become happy and healthy adults. Researchers have found that children who feel love and support have more friendships and live healthier, more successful lives. They also are at lower risk for youth violence, antisocial behavior, drug addiction, premature sexual activity, and adolescent suicide.

According to John Gottman, author of the book Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child, "Researchers have found that even more than your IQ, your emotional awareness and your ability to handle feelings will determine your success and happiness in all walks of life, including family relationships" (p. 20).

Learning How to Emotion Coach

While emotion coaching may seem complicated at first, as you practice you'll find that it becomes second nature.
Step 1: Understand how you deal with feelings. Before you can become an emotion coach, you must first understand your own approach to emotions. Some parents, for example, are uncomfortable with their child's negative emotions. If a child feels sad, you might think that if you fix the problem that created the sadness, the sadness will go away. You might be uncomfortable with your own anger because it makes you feel out of control, and in turn you discourage anger in your children.

- Many people are unaware of their emotions from day to day. You must first be aware of your emotions before you understand how you deal with them. Use the Emotion Log worksheet to help you identify and understand your emotions.

Gottman suggests several questions you can ask yourself to discover why you feel the way you do about emotions.

- Did your parents treat sad and angry moments as natural occurrences?
- Did your parents lend an ear when family members felt unhappy, fearful, or angry?
- Did your family use times of unhappiness, fear, or anger to show each other support, offer guidance, and help each other solve problems?
- Was anger always viewed as potentially destructive? If so, what did this teach you about how to handle your anger? Are you taking this same approach with your children?
- Was fear looked on as cowardly? If so, how did you learn to handle fear?
- Was sadness seen as self-pity in your family? What ways were you taught to handle sadness?
- Were sadness, anger and fear shoved under the blanket or dismissed as unproductive, frivolous, dangerous, or self-indulgent?
- Use the Understanding Yourself worksheet to help you answer these questions.

Research has shown that parents who have become good at emotion-coaching believe the following about emotions:

- Their child's feelings are important.
- Their child's feelings and wishes are okay, even if their actions aren't.
- Experiencing negative emotions, such as sadness, anger or fear, is important.
- Negative feelings are a chance for parents and children to grow closer.
- Understanding what causes their child's feelings is important.
- Negative feelings are an opportunity for problem-solving.

Step 2: Believe that your child's negative emotions are an opportunity for closeness and teaching. Reasoning away your child's emotion with logic rarely works. Parents who try to do this usually end up arguing with their child. Instead, a child's negative feelings are more likely to go away when children talk about them, label them, and feel understood. When children feel understood by their parents, they feel closer to them.
James, a college freshman, came home one evening frustrated and bewildered, announcing long and loud that he didn't understand material in one class. "Everyone else gets it and I don't!" He declared. Initially Dad told his son to calm down and stop obsessing so much, but this only made matters worse. Eventually Dad realized that his son needed to vent the negative feelings and have his concerns understood. This area of study was one that Dad knew well, so after understanding, Dad helped James work through some exercises until he understood the principles and was making good progress on the assigned work.

When James felt understood, he was open to receiving some guidance from his dad. And James felt closer to his dad because he understood and took the time to help him.

**Step 3: Listen with empathy and understanding, then validate your child's feelings.**

In the book *Between Parent and Child*, psychologist Haim Ginott discusses his belief that children need to be understood before they can accept correction. If you want to understand your child, you need to put yourself in his or her shoes. Empathetic listening can help you do this. Empathetic listening is the heart of emotion coaching. John Gottman says empathetic listeners do the following:

1. Use their eyes to identify physical evidence of their child's emotions, such as a suddenly reduced appetite.
2. Use their ears to hear the underlying messages behind what a child is saying.
3. Use their imaginations to put themselves in their child's shoes to understand how they're feeling.
4. Use words to reflect back what they hear, see, and imagine in a soothing, nonjudgmental way. These words also help the child label the emotion.
5. Use their hearts to feel what their child is feeling.

Once your child feels understood, let her know that her feelings and wishes are okay, even if her actions aren't. The following tips will help you listen empathetically and validate your child's feelings:

1. Share simple observations. Say what you see and hear rather than ask probing questions. Children often don't know what they're feeling or why they're experiencing a feeling. For example, six-year-old Elizabeth is much quieter then usual. She eats her afternoon snack with little enthusiasm before trudging off to her room. Her mother silently notices all this, and then makes the observation, "Elizabeth, you seem quiet today." When Elizabeth hardly responds, her mother offers a second observation. "Often when I'm quiet, I'm worried about something." Elizabeth then opens up to her mother and confides her worries about her friends at school.
2. Avoid questions you already know the answer to. When you ask questions like "Who muddied the carpet?" - knowing very well the answer - you create an environment of mistrust. Instead, be direct: "You muddied the carpet; I'm disappointed."
3. Share examples from your own life. This helps children feel that what they're experiencing is normal.

**Step 4: Label your child's emotions.** Children often don't know what they're feeling. If you label an action - observe aloud that they seem "angry" or "sad" or "disappointed" - you can help your child transform a scary, uncomfortable feeling into something identifiable and normal. Researchers have shown that the simple act of labeling an emotion has a soothing effect on the nervous system, which helps children recover more quickly from an upsetting experience.

Often a chance to label an emotion comes up when you're listening empathetically. Keep in mind that it's easy to fall into the trap of telling your child how he ought to feel instead of what he's feeling. For example, four-year-old Jared announces that he hates his friend Billy because Billy took his toy, then hit him when Jared tried to get his toy back. His mom, instead of telling Jared that he doesn't hate Billy and that he actually likes Billy because they are friends, says, "It sounds like you're pretty angry that Billy took your toy and hit you."

**Step 5: Set limits while exploring possible solutions to the problem that caused the negative emotion.** John Gottman describes several parts to this step.

Set limits. Even though it's important to validate your child's feelings, you don't have to validate their actions. Once you set a limit on inappropriate behavior and its consequences, follow through and be consistent. The ideal time to use emotion coaching is right after your child misbehaves and before you deal out the consequence. For example, a parent might say, "You're mad that Danny took that game away from you. I would be, too. But it's not okay for you to hit him. What can you do instead?"

1. Identify goals. After you've followed through on consequences for inappropriate behavior, identify the goal your child was trying to reach with his or her behavior. Simply ask your child what he was trying to accomplish.
2. Think of possible solutions. Allow your child to think up solutions to a problem situation before you offer suggestions. This helps your child develop problem-solving skills. Don't shoot down his solutions if they're not workable. Instead, ask questions that will help him see the outcome of his solutions.
3. Evaluate the proposed solutions based on your family values. When your child suggests solutions, ask questions like:
   - "Is this solution fair?"
   - "Will this solution work?"
   - "Is it safe?"
   - "How are you likely to feel? How are other people likely to feel?"
4. Help your child choose a solution. If your child comes up with an unworkable solution, it's okay to go forward as long as it's harmless. Let her learn from seeing the consequences of her choices. Just leave the door open to rework the solution if it doesn't seem to be working. Also help your child come up with a plan of action to accomplish the solution.
Complete the following Emotion Coaching: Using the Five Steps worksheet to help you use this new skill.

For more information on emotion coaching, check out Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child: The Heart of Parenting by John Gottman. For more information on how to listen with empathy and validate your child, read Between Parent and Child, by Haim Ginott.

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References


Sensitive Responsiveness

Introduction

Sensitive responsiveness is the cornerstone of successful attachment parenting. A parent who is sensitively responsive to their child first notices their child’s needs and then fills that need as soon as possible. 
This is easier when your child is an infant. By spending time with your infant, you soon recognize your child’s signals that tell you when your child is hungry, sleepy, or uncomfortable. Once you identify what’s wrong, it’s fairly straightforward to fill these physical needs.

When a parent fills their infant’s needs, the infant learns several things: (1) their parent can be trusted to fill their need, (2) the infant is worthy to have his or her needs filled, and (3) the infant is safe around this parent. This trust is based on the belief that their parents will be there to protect and comfort them, and to consistently provide for their physical, emotional and developmental needs. By filling your infant’s needs with sensitive responsiveness, as well as with promptness, parents lay an important foundation of safety, self-worth, and trust with their infant.

When infants grow into toddlers and little children, you might find it harder to identify your child’s needs. Your child most likely will not cry whenever a need is not filled. Your child may start misbehaving and acting out in order to gain your attention, whether that attention is positive or negative. The following principles will help you become a sensitive responsive parent.

• **Take the time to get to know your child.** Just as you spent time getting to understand your infant’s signals, you must spend time with your toddlers and little children in order to understand them. Children change and grow, so parents need to consistently spend time getting to know their children. This task often drops by the wayside as parents’ lives become busy. These busy parents turn around one day to find that their child has become a stranger. It is much more difficult to get to know a stranger than it is to spend time with your child in positive ways each day and week. Needless to say, if you do not know your child and spend time building a positive relationship with him or her, disciplining your child will eventually become a difficult, if not impossible task. The following are ways you can spend quality time with your child.

  o **Be there when your child comes home from school.** If you catch children right when they come home from school, they generally talk up a storm about their day. Be a good listener, and make sure your hear from each of your children. This opportunity will be gone if you wait an hour or two, simply because children have moved on to other things. Their day at school isn’t all that important to them, so when you ask them later, you’ll get a short or nonexistent answer. Many parents work and can’t be there when their child comes home from school. While this opportunity is lost,
try to find others. For example, you could have your child call you when they get home from school or when they arrive at child-care.

- **Talk before bedtime.** Children don’t want to go to bed, and will do anything to stall. Use this fact to your advantage and spend 15 minutes of one-on-one time with your child. Your child will be much more likely to want to talk if they know they are delaying their bedtime.

- **Plan weekly or monthly activities.** Create a set time each week or month when you and your child can do something together one-on-one. Let this time be for your child. Let them choose what to do during that time. Your child may want to play a game with you, or simply go for a walk. Planning time to spend together may seem artificial at first, but it sends the message to your child that they are important enough for you to plan your schedule around them. Also, this planned time will ensure that when life gets busy, you won’t let your relationship with your child slide. Since relationships take time, the more often you spend time together, the more likely your child will feel close to you and confide in you.

- **Work together.** While it’s important for children to do their chores, most people don’t like to do housework alone. When you are cooking or weeding in the garden, invite your child to work beside you. Then make an effort to talk or interact with your child while you work together. If you can, begin this practice when your child is young. Little children want to work, since that’s what they see you doing. Find tasks that a little child can do. Take advantage of this to strengthen your relationship as well as helping your child enjoy working.

- **Run errands together.** If you need to make a quick trip to the grocery store in the evening, ask one of your children to come with you. Rotate the opportunity to run errands with you among your children. The time spent driving to and from the store can be good quality time for you and your child.

- Use the [Time Together worksheet](#) to get and create your own ideas on what to do with your child.

- **Understand your child’s needs.** Take the time to think about your child. Ask why they do what they do. If you notice your child is consistently unhappy, sad, quiet, bossy, always fighting, or angry, ask yourself “Why?” Search for a need that is not being filled. Too often, the unfulfilled need is for a parent’s love, acceptance, or attention. Note carefully how much time you spend with your child in positive ways. Make an effort to increase this positive time spent together when your child is not misbehaving, and see if your child’s misbehavior dies down. If it doesn’t, your child may be seeking the guidance and security of firm boundaries. You are in an ideal position to reinforce those boundaries once you have worked on creating a positive relationship with your child. Be consistent and firm in reinforcing your child’s boundaries and limits. Children feel safe and loved when they know what they can and cannot do. Or perhaps your child is struggling with a social problem at school. Your child may just need a listening ear. In this case, you may get to practice your [emotion coaching and problem solving skills](#).
• **Identify when to fill needs.** As a parent, it is your responsibility to identify not only how much you should fill a need, but also *when* you should fill a need. It is not effective to want to cuddle with your child when your child simply wants to run off and play with the blocks. In order to prevent the frustration that comes from being out of synch, parents should be able to read their children’s signals in order to identify when to fill a need. Before a parent can be responsive to a child’s needs and fill them, they must first **know what those needs are.**
  - Complete the Identifying Your Child's Needs worksheet to help you get to know the needs of your child.

• **Distinguish needs from wants.** Parents also need to learn to distinguish between a child’s wants and needs. A child needs acceptance, and thus support, from their parent. A child wants a candy bar in the grocery store, but does not need it. Parents often indulge their children in an effort to show their love. Unfortunately, giving a child everything they want keeps them from developing self-discipline. If children don’t learn to control their impulses at a young age, they won’t grow into happy successful adults. If you think about it, most of the things that make for a successful adult, such as a steady relationship and job, require self-discipline. A person with little self-discipline will quickly find these things slipping between their fingers. So, how do you give your child what they want, consistently, without harming them?
  - **Have your child work for a want.** If your child wants new brand name shoes, instead of non-brand name shoes you were planning on buying, point out that the nicer shoes cost more money. If they want the shoes, then they need to pay the difference between what you were going to buy and what they wanted to buy. (Or at least part of the difference, if they have no way to pay back the full difference.)
  - **Have the want be a reward.** Instead of paying for a want in work or money, your child is paying for it in good behavior of some kind. For example, if you tell your child they will get a candy bar if they behave well in the grocery store, then you will be rewarding them for self-disciplined behavior. Most good behavior for young children involves some type of self-discipline, so this is a good way to teach them this essential value.
  - **Negotiate with your child.** As your child turns four or five, you can start negotiating with your child. For example, if your child wants a new princess coloring book she saw at the store, you can give your child a choice: paying for it with a good behavior or by working for it. You can then negotiate on either the good behavior or the amount and type of work they will need to do. Keep in mind how much leeway you are willing to give. It’s okay to say no to your child’s offer, but try to work with it to make the offer acceptable. Negotiating will help your child feel like they have some control and choices in the matter. Remember, your goal is to help your child learn, not to control them.
  - **Randomly give them a want.** It’s okay for parents to be generous every now and then. Giving your child a want when they aren’t expecting it can
show your child that you have been thinking of them, and that you care about them.

- **Be prompt in filling your child’s needs.** Once you have identified *when* to fill your child’s need, it is important for you to fill the need as promptly as possible. To children, a small amount of time to an adult seems like a lot of time to them. When we delay to finish doing what we want to do, your child feels like you have decided not to fill the need at all! Promptly filling your child’s need sends the message that your child can trust you to fill their needs as soon as you can.

- **Be available to fill your child’s needs.** If you are not available to your child, your child will view you as a person that cannot fill their needs. This is partially why spending time together is important, since it let’s your child know that you are available. Many parents have to work full time, and thus have less time to spend being available to their children. These parents can do several things to assure their children that they are available. One option is allowing children to call work when they need to. Another option is carrying a cell-phone that children can call. A third option is for parents to frequently check their email, if they can, at work. If these options are not possible, as will be the case with many parents, simply make sure to set some time aside for your child when you get home from work. The important thing is to keep the lines of communication open and to make sure your child knows that you are available if he or she needs you.

- **Be consistent in filling your child’s needs.** Consistency in filling needs is a deciding factor in whether or not children become **securely attached**, **anxiously attached**, or **avoidantly attached**. Children who are securely attached have parents who always are there to fill a need. This sounds daunting to any parent. The good news is that parents don’t have to be perfectly consistent. **Actively try to do the best you can, and that should be enough.** Anxiously attached children have parents who sometimes responds to their needs, and sometimes not. These children tend to cry and protest more in order to get their parent’s attention. Avoidantly attached children have parents who consistently do not respond to their child’s needs. These children learn that they can’t rely on their parents, so they quickly become as independent as possible. **Use the Consistency Quiz worksheet to help you identify your strengths and weaknesses and make plans to improve.**

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Teaching Your Child

Introduction

A parent’s primary job is to teach. When you think about it, it’s an overwhelming job. You have to teach your children everything they need to know to be a successful, happy, responsible adult. The good news is that children learn by watching your example. So, your first task is to become the kind of person you want your children to be. Children will always follow your example over your words if they have the choice.

But what about those things you want to make sure they catch? There are good ways and bad ways of teaching your children. The good ways are teaching through consequences and moral reasoning. Moral reasoning is teaching through reasoning, with the main task of engaging your child in thinking things through and problem solving. Don’t just tell your child what’s wrong or how to fix things – get your child to tell you. When children reason things through for themselves, they understand and are more likely to believe. Moral reasoning is a method of guided self-discovery – and is much more than lecturing.

Benefits of Moral Reasoning

Children who experience moral reasoning on a regular basis have greater social skills, better-developed consciences and problem solving skills, are more likely to follow rules and regulations on their own, and show greater responsibility, independence, and confidence. These children also have greater empathy for others. Teaching your children through moral reasoning will help set your children ahead in life.

It’s one thing to tell you what moral reasoning is, and quite another thing for you to go out and do it. There are several ways of going about moral reasoning, some of which are as ineffective as yelling or doing nothing at all, which is why it is important for you to understand how to go about using moral reasoning.

What Parents Should Do

Parents should ask for the child’s opinion, ask clarifying questions, paraphrase, and check for your child’s understanding. These conversations need to take place in an environment of acceptance and respect (see Validation). Your goal is to listen and understand first, before guiding your child. Also, parents can do several things to create an environment in which their child is willing to engage in moral reasoning, such as using humor not directed at the child, listening responses (“Uh huh”), praise, and encouragement to participate.

What Parents Shouldn’t Do

When parents critique or challenge their child’s viewpoint (“You’re wrong, I’m right”) or simply lecture, the child will tune them out. Additionally, if the parent uses sarcasm, anger, or threats, all their hard work at moral reasoning will be wasted, or worse. Think
of how you feel when someone uses sarcasm, anger, or threats. You certainly don’t want to pay attention, do you? You feel angry and hurt, and want to do the same to them. Using these methods will not help your relationship with your child.1

Examples

Moral reasoning is not always a long involved process. Often times, it is simply a statement and a question. For example, you may say, “Mary, that little girl isn’t being very nice to her friends. What should she do instead?” Depending on what you want to teach Mary in this situation, you could ask several different questions, such as “What did she do that wasn’t nice?” “Why do you think that little girl wasn’t nice to her friends?” “What do you think she was trying to do by not being nice” and “What else could she have done to get what she wanted while being nice?” The questions you ask depend on what you want to teach your child.

The following example falls somewhere between what parents should and shouldn’t do.

Pat is walking home from school in a good mood. Along comes Jamie, who is carrying an art project. Jamie is very proud of the art project and is excited to show it to other family members. Pat’s mother is watching out the window. Suddenly, she sees Pat push Jamie into a big mud puddle. Jamie falls down and the art project lands in the mud puddle. Pat runs home. When Pat gets home, Pat’s mom says, “Pat, I saw you push Jamie into the mud puddle. I cannot believe you did that. I’m really disappointed in you. Just think about what you did and how sad and upset Jamie must feel. Now, I want you to go over to Jamie’s house and apologize. And when you get back, I want you to sit down and think about what you did and what you can do to make it up to Jamie. And the next time you think about doing something like that to someone else, I want you to stop and think about the other person’s feelings first, OK? 2

This mother attempts to use moral reasoning with her child, but her attempt comes out more as a lecture. Let’s rewrite this so it is a better example of moral reasoning.

When Pat gets home, Pat’s mom says, “Pat, I saw you push Jamie into the mud puddle.” (Pat’s mom pauses)

Pat looks down, fidgets, and tries to offer an excuse.

Pat’s mother continues, “I cannot believe you did that. I’m really disappointed in you. How do you think Jamie feels right now?”

Pat mumbles, “I don’t know.”
Pat’s mother says, “I want you think about what you did and how sad and upset Jamie must feel.” (She leaves for a time, then comes back.)

Pat’s mother asks, gently, “Pat, can you tell what you’ve been thinking about?”

Pat looks down and says, “Jamie’s art project was important to her, she must feel sad that it’s ruined.”

Pat’s mother nods and says, “You’re right, Pat. What do you think you can do to help her feel better?”

Pat thinks for a bit. “I can tell her I’m sorry.”

Pat’s mother says, “That’s a good start. What else can you do to make it up to her?”

Pat thinks again. “I don’t know. What should I do?”

Pat’s mother asks, “Well, what kind of things does Jamie like?”

Pat comments that Jamie likes drawing, so maybe she should give her something she can draw with.

Pat’s mother agrees that it’s a good idea, and points out that Pat will have to use her allowance to buy the gift. Pat agrees. Pat’s mother ends the discussion by saying, “And the next time you think about doing something like that to someone else, I want you to stop and think about the other person’s feelings first, OK?”

**What to Teach with Moral Reasoning**

As is shown in the previous example, Pat’s mother knew what she wanted to teach her. Often, it helps to make a list ahead of time of things you want to teach your child. Here is a list of things you might want to address to help you get started.

**Social Conduct:** whining and complaining, bossiness, bedtime, car behavior, chores, eating and table manners, choosing friends, getting ready for school, swearing, temper tantrums, TV watching, teeth brushing.

**Moral Values:** lying and dishonesty, stealing, cheating, hard work, respect for others, kindness, thoughtfulness, integrity, service, humility, chastity, taking responsibility for one’s own actions, fighting with a sibling.
When to Use Moral Reasoning

You can begin using moral reasoning with your child around age four, or earlier if they can think about and answer your questions. Start out with simple statements and principles. As your child grows older, you can use more complex reasoning and turn over more of the problem solving process to your child. Although you can’t use moral reasoning with toddlers, you can lay the foundation for the future through pre-moral reasoning.

In addition to using moral reasoning at the appropriate age for your child, there are some basic situations in which you can use this method, such as when watching television, reading stories together, observing others’ behavior, and praising or correcting your child’s behavior. It’s a good idea to use the behavior of other people, whether they are real or fictional, as often as you can. Some children will get it if you simply point out flaws and good things in other people’s behavior. These children generally need only gentle reminders for them to behave well. Other children will need more emphasis on their own behavior. But don’t wait till your child misbehaves before you teach them. Let others make the mistakes – not your child.

Before you Use Moral Reasoning

- Talk to your child on a regular basis. Listening and respect must be a component. You must take their thoughts and feelings seriously. If your child is not used to talking with you in other situations, you will have a hard time talking to them as you try to teach.
  - Use the Learning to Listen Worksheet to help you along.
- Identify the principle(s) you want to teach your child from the situation. For example, when your child hit’s another child, one principle you could teach is “We help people, we don’t hurt them.”
  - Use the What Are Your Rules? worksheet to help you list your rules and the reasons you have them.

How to Use Moral Reasoning

- Begin by asking them about the actions of the individual in question. For example, cartoon characters are often rude and sarcastic. You could ask your child, “What did Jenny (the fictional character) just say to her friend?”
- Ask them a leading question that points them in the direction of the principle you want to teach them. Using the previous example, you could ask your child, “How would that make you feel if someone spoke to you that way?”
  - Use the Learning to Ask Leading Question worksheet to help you develop this skill.
- Try not to always contradict or correct what your child says in response to your questions. If you do, your child will pretty soon not want to answer the question. Validate the response, and continue to use questions to point in the right direction. This will take practice. Use questions to teach the principle, or state the principle,
and ask how it can be followed through in the situation. Or, if reparation needs to be made, ask how this can be done. If you ask general questions, expect a variety of answers. But don’t ask obvious questions. Just like adults, children feel patronized if you do this.

- Continuing the above example, your child may not know how he or she would feel if someone was sarcastic or rude. If you get an “I don’t know,” you could then relate the question to your child’s recent experience. You could say, “Do you remember when your friend Johnny called you names? How did that make you feel?” When your child answers, you can then draw the parallel between the fictional experience with “Jenny” and your child’s past experience. Once your child understands the effects of the behavior in question, you can then move on to how “Jenny” can make things up to her friend.

- When problems solving, encourage brainstorming. Let the child select the solution. If the selected solution won’t hurt anyone, let him or her try it with the option of revisiting the problem if it doesn’t work. As they get older, encourage them to envision how well the solution will work. If necessary, explain why an option won’t work, and encourage them to choose another option.

References


Pre-Moral Reasoning

Toddlers are not capable of following a line of reasoning. But you can begin to lay the foundation for future reasoning by making simple statements. Your simple statements generally state a reason for a rule. Keep both your rules and statements simple and use words your child can understand. For example, “If you only do what you want to do when playing with Johnny, he probably won’t want to play with you anymore. What things do you think he would like to do when you get together?” In addition to using a statement, this parent also included a basic problem-solving question.

Another way to begin pre-moral reasoning is to give your toddler choices. Give your child a choice of two options, since toddlers often have difficulty keeping three options in mind. For example, you can say, “Would you like to use the green glass or the red glass?” or “Would you like to leave the playground now or in two minutes?” These simple choices help your child feel like they have some control in their lives as well as teaching them beginning decision making skills.

The following are one preschool teacher’s examples of how she uses reasoning in her classroom:

**Instead of:**

Teacher: "No, don't run inside!"
Student: "But, my new shoes make me run fast. Wanna see?"

**Do:**

Teacher: "Uh-oh what happened to our walking feet? Where do we use our running feet?"
Student: "Outside. Look at my new shoes! I can run really fast now!"
Teacher: "Those are beautiful new shoes, they sure do look fast! Can you show me how fast you can run outside?"

**Instead of:**

Teacher: "No, don't hit your friends!"
Student: "But they hit me first!"

**Do:**
Teacher: "Why is your friend crying?"

Student: "cuz I hit him."

Teacher: "Why did you hit him?"

Student: "cuz he hit me first."

Teacher: "What kind of hands do we use with our friends?"

Student: "Soft hands."

Teacher: "What happens when we use our hard hands?"

Student: "It hurts."

**Instead of:**

Teacher: "No, don't yell across the room!"
Student: "But we are dinosaurs."

**Do:**

Teacher: "Are those outside voices I hear?"

When your child turns four, consider shifting to moral reasoning.

**References**

Disciplining My Child

Introduction

Discipline is a topic most parents are concerned about. Before we go any further, take a look at why this issue is such a concern. Do you discipline your child in order to help him or her become a responsible, happy, and successful adult? In other words, do you discipline your child for their benefit? Or do you discipline your child because you want to control them? Life does seem easier, at least on the surface, if you can control what your child does when he or she does it. But, unfortunately, children don’t like to be controlled any more than adults do. Yet children are unhappy if they don’t have firm boundaries that are consistently enforced.

So how do parents resolve this issue of control? Thankfully, children can sense our intentions. If we want to give them as much control as they can handle, they will be happy. (Though no child particularly likes the discipline involved when they test their boundaries, they will be happy overall.) Children become rebellious when too much control is exerted by parents for the purpose of simply controlling them. But if firm boundaries are not maintained, children will believe their parents do not love them enough to set those boundaries.

Here are some basic principles about control to help you navigate your way through this potential minefield:

- **Be eager to give control to your child when they can handle it.** For example, toddlers may not do the best job at picking out their clothes, but it is something they can do. And they will get better at it with time. How will they learn if they don’t do?
- **How do you know when your child is ready for more control?** Simply when they express interest in doing something for themselves. To continue the previous example, when a toddler expresses interest in picking his or her own clothes, you know that he or she is ready.
- **You might want to consider a training period for the bigger tasks.** For example, if your child is ready to make their own plans after school, you can first take their input into the planning session. You then gradually allow them to direct the planning session, until they are planning their day on their own.
- **Children will make mistakes.** Let them experience the consequences of their mistakes whenever possible! They won’t learn good decision making principles if you shield them from their mistakes. If you take away the consequences when your child is young, they’ll learn that their poor decisions have no consequences. This will be disastrous when your child becomes a teenager, and you can’t control whether or not they become involved in drugs, alcohol, cheating, stealing, vandalism, and becoming a teenage parent.
- **Exert more control when your child is young.** Find simple choices to give them. For example, “Do you want to get out of the bath now or stay in for 2 more minutes?” As your child’s capacity to make decisions grows, give them more
control. Children compare the amount of control they have currently to what they had in the past. If they have more in the present, they are satisfied. If the parent takes control away, they become angry and rebellious.

- Parents who treat their young children as fully-fledged adults find that their children become tyrants who do not want to give up their power. These parents are forced to take away privileges in an effort to control the tyrant. This, predictably, leads to anger and rebellion. These parents and children get locked in an unending power struggle.
- Parents who treat their young children as fully-fledged adults find that their children become tyrants who do not want to give up their power. These parents are forced to take away privileges in an effort to control the tyrant. This, predictably, leads to anger and rebellion. These parents and children get locked in an unending power struggle.

Take Our Control Quiz to see how you use control as a parent

A positive relationship with your child will reduce the amount of discipline you need to exert. Parents cannot simply be the disciplinarians. When this happens, parents find that children start acting out in order to receive attention. Use the other lessons on Foundations of Parenting to create a positive, loving relationship with your child. It is not enough for you to know that you love your child - your child must know too.

**Discipline Principles**

**Setting boundaries and limits:** Children need to have fixed boundaries and limits. They need these to feel safe and secure in their environment. Children receive the message that their parent’s don’t care about them when parents over-indulge their children and do not set or enforce the boundaries. This is true even if parents think they are being kind and generous by giving their child unlimited freedom. While children need fixed boundaries and limits, these limits must change as the child grows to allow them more freedom.

**Each child is different:** Each child is different, which means parents need to pay close attention in order to identify when a child is ready to accept more responsibility. Also, parents need to check the temperament of their child in order to appropriately respond to them. For example, a sensitive child might need only gentle reprimands and a loving relationship with their parent in order to ensure good behavior. You could also have a stubborn child who pushes the boundaries all the time. This child will need firmer boundaries than your sensitive child.

**Take the time to get to know your children.** If you don’t make the effort to get to know your child outside of discipline situations, you will not know what is best for your child when it’s time to discipline him or her.

**Use natural and logical consequences.** Whenever possible, let your child experience the natural consequences of their actions. If the natural consequence would harm the child, use a logical consequence. In other words, make sure the consequence has something to do with the offense. These are important learning experiences that will teach them necessary life skills. If you interfere, you may be crippling their chances of having a happy, successful life. It’s often painful for parents to allow their children to fall, but it’s far better for your child to make a mistake in a small matter than it is for them to blow their chances later in life.
When parents use natural and logical consequences, children learn that parents are serious. Children are smart. They won’t misbehave when the consequence is far worse than behaving. They also learn to think about their actions. They learn that there are consequences to their actions – a necessary foundation for successful decision-making. The following examples will help demonstrate natural and logical consequences.

**Natural Consequences**

- If your child consistently misses the bus, have him or her walk to school. (If it is unsafe, drive next to them.) The consequence of having to do far more work to get to school and being late should end this behavior quickly.
- If your child consistently forgets their lunch, don’t take the lunch to school for him or her. It doesn’t hurt a child to miss a meal every now and then. Just make sure that they have plenty to eat at the next meal or at snack time when they come home. While effective, having your child skip meals is something that shouldn’t be done often, since they are still growing. If your child persists in the meal-related behavior after two or three times, you will need to find a logical consequence to use instead.
- If your child forgets his or her homework, don’t take it to school for them. It’s much better for your child to learn responsibility in this area when they are young than when they are in high school and college, a time when consistently poor grades can have a lasting impact on their life.
- If your child leaves dirty clothes on the floor instead of in the laundry, then don’t wash their clothes. They’ll quickly learn that unwashed clothing is unpleasant and place the dirty clothes in the correct place.

**Logical Consequences**

- If your child throws a tantrum, calmly say, “You are hurting my ears. When you are prepared to speak in soft tones, you may come out.” And place them in their bedroom. When the child comes out, ask, “Are you ready to speak in soft tones?” If they’re not ready, calmly put them back in the bedroom. (After a while, they’ll often run back to their room if you ask them this question and they aren’t ready to speak softly.)
- If your child hits a baseball through a window, it may not be feasible to have them pay for the whole cost of the window. Instead, have him or her contribute their weekly allowance for a certain number of weeks or months. They may also complete chores around the house to earn money to pay for fixing the window. This may seem harsh for a moment of unrestrained fun, but children need to learn the lesson that actions sometimes have big consequences that take a long time to remedy.
- If your child hits another person, it’s not appropriate to hit them back. Instead, project the consequences of what this behavior will do if
continued in the future. People who hit other people go to jail. So, a logical consequence would be to restrict their physical movement somehow for a short time. This can be done in a variety of ways, but parents need to be careful to not be cruel to their children when administering consequences. Pick something that causes inconvenience, but not physical discomfort. One possibility for older children is that your child “loses” the use of the arm that was used to hit someone for a few hours. This can be ensured by having them remove their arm from their shirtsleeve and placing it inside their shirt.

To learn how to choose effective consequences, complete the Applying Consequences Worksheet

Consequences may take a good amount of time to think about as well as to implement, but the long-term benefits are tremendous. You will spend much less time disciplining once you have your system in place, and your children will be learning valuable life skills. Make sure that you use the following principles to make your consequences effective.

Be Consistent: Once a consequence has been established, follow through on it. If you are not consistent, your child will be tempted to play Russian Roulette in an effort to do what they want to do. Simply put, it will be worth the punishments when the parents do follow through if they can do what they want at other times. Also, inconsistency makes parents unbelievable. Children simply won’t believe that parents will follow through. For example, if your child is not eating their meal at a restaurant, you let them know that the family will be leaving in five minutes, whether or not the food is finished. Your child will not believe you’ll follow through, so you will be tested. Parents who are consistent in applying consequences to their child’s misbehavior will find that their children misbehave much less often than children with inconsistent parents.

Use Moral Reasoning: Get your child thinking about his or her actions. Don’t just tell them what the did wrong, They’ll learn far more if you get them involved in finding a different solution or in fixing what they did.

Don’t give warnings. Let your child know in advance what their consequences will be. But often, parents give warnings and then don’t follow through. This teaches your child that you aren’t serious. If children know that you often don’t follow through, they will gamble each time that you won’t follow through, since the remote possibility of punishment will be worth the chance to get away with their misbehavior. So how do you go about giving consequences?

- Follow through. If you say your child will receive a consequence to a misbehavior, follow through the first time they misbehave.
- Pick a consequence that you can follow through on. Don’t pick something impossible, like forcing them to eat their food.
• Pick a consequence you will follow through on. If a consequence is too hard for you to follow through on, then pick a different consequence.
• If you can’t think of a consequence when the behavior occurs, let your child know you are considering what consequence will be appropriate and that it will be administered at a later time, such as “When your father gets home!”

**Show empathy, not anger** when it comes time to let your child experience the consequences of their actions. If you show sincere concern, your child will be free to focus on the lesson being learned. If you show anger or delight when your child experiences consequences, your child will focus on the “enemy” (you) instead of learning the needed lesson.

**When can parents use anger?** Parents should always show empathy when their child experiences problems. But when your child does something that directly affects you, like destroying a tool, it’s okay to show your child that you’re a bit upset. But don’t demean your child when you’re angry by saying “You always destroy my things.” Instead, say, “I’m so angry right now because you destroyed my tool. I want you to think about what you did and how you are going to fix this.”

**Don’t try to control what you can’t control.** You can’t control when your child falls asleep. But you can control if they stay in their room. You can’t make your child eat his or her food. But you can control whether they stay at the dinner table or not. You can’t force your children to behave in the backseat of the car while you’re driving. But you can control whether the car is moving or stops, and whether or not the children have to walk to their destination (with supervision) or ride in the car.

**Say yes whenever possible.** For example, your child asks to go visit a friend, but they haven’t done their chores yet. You then say, “Yes, you can go to your friend’s as soon as you do your chores.” Your child might protest and say, “That isn’t fair!” or “Suzy gets to do her chores after dinner!” Simply agree, “That might be so,” and repeat your original statement, “You can go to your friend’s as soon as you do your chores.” Your child will soon get tired of playing this game.

**Show warmth and kindness** to your child outside of discipline situations. When children know you genuinely care about them, they are more likely to accept your guidance and instruction. Otherwise, they may see your efforts in a controlling manner if they think you exist simply to punish them.

**Poor Methods of Discipline**

Parents should avoid teaching using love withdrawal and power assertion. Love withdrawal involves communicating to your child, through word or body language, that you only love them when they are behaving well. The message this sends a child is “You are only lovable when you do what I want you to do.” While this may get results out of your child at first, it will eventually breed resentment for not being loved for themselves.
and rebellion. Not to mention how damaging this approach is on the security of your child’s attachment. 3

The second method of teaching is power assertion. In essence, you say, “Do this because I said so.” As a parent, opportunities come up for you to say this daily. Keep in mind that this approach teaches a child only that you have power over them. Eventually, children will want to rebel against such heavy-handed answers. If you can, try to give them a reason for what you do. There are some things that are hard to think up explanations to. You might want to consider using a soft explanation that explains why, in this situation, you can’t deal with certain behavior. For example, “I’m tired now, and it’s too much work for me to clean up the sand you are tracking in.” As a parent we might shy away from these “soft” explanations, but these are important. They teach children that parents are human too, and that some rules are there to accommodate other people. This is an important lesson to learn.

What about spanking? Click here to see what research has to say about this controversial issue.

You are not going to scar your children for life if you use love withdrawal or power assertion every now and then. Simply do your best and try to improve. Pick one of the principles mentioned in this lesson to work on at a time. This will make a seemingly impossible task manageable. Your child will be able to sense your efforts; and a knowledge of a parent’s love covers a multitude of mistakes.

References


2 Unless referenced otherwise, the material for this article came from:


Discipline Sub-lesson

What About Spanking?

This question is asked by many parents. Spanking is akin to playing with fire. It can be used safely in certain circumstances. On a cold winter’s night a fire is helpful. But strict rules have to be followed in order for fire to be used safely. When these rules are not followed, fire can be dangerous and harmful. Generally speaking, spanking has been found to encourage obedience in the short term, rebellion in the long term if used consistently, and an increased change of children learning that hitting people solves problems. The general trend of the research is that heavy spanking is harmful and should be avoided. There is a debate on whether or not light spanking, when used in controlled settings, is harmful. Keep in mind that the question being asked is whether or not light spanking is harmful. Other methods of discipline, such as using natural and logical consequences, may be far more helpful than spanking. In this light, spanking would only be useful in situations where children are in physical danger, such as crossing the road without an adult. In this situation, it may be appropriate to give the child a swat. This is an issue each parent needs to think about and decide for themselves.

If you decide to use spanking, follow these guidelines to ensure you don’t harm your child:

- Never spank your child in anger. This teaches your child that hitting other people when angry is an appropriate thing to do. Often times, spanking in anger is not discipline, but taking revenge or venting. This will not help your child in any way, shape or form.
- Use spanking only as a logical consequence in response to your child’s physical danger.
- Keep your spanking light. No bruising should take place. Also, limit the number of strokes to your child’s age. The exception to this rule is a two or three year old. One stroke may be plenty.
- Limit spanking to children ages two to six, the time when spanking has been found to be most effective.
- Use spanking as the last resort. Use every other discipline method in your tool box: natural and logical consequences, time out, taking away privileges, etc. before you resort to spanking. In this case, the only children who will be spanked are the ones that keep pushing their reasonable boundaries regardless of the discipline used. This last resort lets the child know that you are serious.

Using spanking as your first discipline attempt is couch potato parenting. When used frequently in this manner, children become use to the spanking and it has no effect, except to possibly promote rebellion.
References


Kindness: Essential Background Noise

Introduction

Kindness is an important way parents can protect their child. Not only does kindness nurture a child’s attachment to their parent, it also helps reduce chances that your child will engage in substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, adult crime, and gang involvement. As a bonus, children who have kind families do better in school. On the other hand, children from unkind families generally do not do as well in school, are more likely to use drugs, become juvenile delinquents, commit crimes as adults, and join gangs. Kindness, or unkindness, is a powerful tool in the hands of parents.

We all know what kindness is when we see it, but actively focusing on the virtue of kindness requires a definition: acts of kindness, simply put, build up other people. Kindness is seeing what can help or hurt someone else and consciously choosing to help, not hurt. As Randolph Ray, a reverend and author, once said “Kindness is tenderness. Kindness is love, but perhaps greater than love...Kindness is good will. Kindness says, ‘I want you to be happy.”

When parents show their children they want them to be happy, they are helping to create a secure attachment with their children. Children will not use parents as a secure base as they grow older if they think their parent will be unkind (ridicule or dismiss concerns, lecture at the drop of a hat, or simply show no support or involvement).

Parental Kindness

There are two important types of kindness for parents to master: habitual kindness and active kindness.

Habitual kindness is kindness that becomes second nature.

Show respect for others. Respect for the thoughts and feelings of others comes from a firm belief that each person’s thoughts and feelings are valid in their own right, regardless of whether we agree or not. People who believe this show understanding, (“Yes, I can see where you are coming from…”) and

Politeness and Common Courtesy. Respect is the foundation of politeness. Politeness sends a message of respect and personal value (“I respect you, you are important.”) This is why politeness and common courtesy are routinely used in the work place, with strangers and friends. Yet at home, with the people most important to us, we often relax and let this slip, assuming that our family understands the intention behind the rough communication. But often they don’t. Try seeing politeness as a chance to express your affection and appreciation, instead of seeing it as a tiresome mask to take off at the end of the day. Be kind, and make politeness and common courtesy a habit in your family life.
Active kindness takes effort. Parents need to be aware of their child’s feelings, needs, changing desires, and interests. This increased awareness can then be acted upon in compassionate ways.

Increase your awareness of your child’s emotions. Your child’s emotions will be your key to learning how to be effectively kind to your child. Use an emotion log to identify when your child feels an emotion and why. This will help you understand their hopes and desires and what helps or hurts them. By writing down your observations in an emotion log, you may be able to see patterns you couldn’t see before.

Restraint. Often a parent’s kindest act is what they do not do. The observant parent will see if their child is already beating themselves up over a broken rule or misbehavior and will not heap criticism on the child’s head. Instead, they will quietly enforce consequences and reassure the child of their worth in the parent’s eyes.

Fill a need. Kind acts vary greatly because what people need varies greatly. An observant parent may see the stress a teenager is under due to a heavy homework load and offer to help her finish her chores. Another parent might see a toddler eyeing his lemonade with envy and choose to share.

Give Compliments: Use specific statements, such as “You hit that ball hard!” instead of general, generic statements, such as “You’re a good ball player!” Praise your child’s specific strengths and let them draw the conclusions. Avoid “good or bad” terminology that implies comparisons. When children are told they are great ball players, they compare themselves to the child next door, who is inevitably better, and conclude that they are not good ball players.

- Use the Creating a Compliment worksheet to help you through those times where your mind goes blank.

Random Acts of Kindness. Surprise your child every now and then by baking their favorite cookies or by taking them to a coveted ball game.

CAUTION -- While children need to experience kindness from their parents, there is such a thing as too much kindness. Too much kindness results in the “Pushover Parent”. Children need firm boundaries and the opportunity to be challenged. Parents are kind to children when they have firm boundaries that help them feel safe and let them learn from the consequences of their actions. A good rule of thumb is to step back let children accomplish what they can for themselves. For example, let your child struggle a little longer before helping him with that math problem.

Teaching Kindness to Children

Children learn kindness from their parents mainly through example. If parents are consistently kind to each other and their children, then their children will likely follow their example. But teaching by example is not enough, especially when unkindness is a
main component of many cartoons and children’s shows. Here are some activities parents can use to teach their children kindness.

**Teach AWARENESS through moral reasoning.** Help your child become aware of other people’s feelings and needs by using stories, movies, and television shows. Ask your child questions such as “Is this person happy or sad? Why are they happy or sad? What could you do to help them feel happy?” while you’re reading or watching movies and television shows.

**Teach kindness through moral reasoning.** Point out kind and unkind acts in stories and movies you read and watch with your children. Ask them simple questions: “Was that kind (or unkind)? What could they have done differently? How do you think the other person felt?” Reinforce these lessons by pointing out kind and unkind acts in real life day-to-day situations.

- Use the [Teaching Kindness through Movies and Books list](http://www.people4peace.net/quotes/quote5.htm) to get you started.

**Declare a Kindness Week.** Pull names out of a hat to assign each person a secret family member to be kind to during the following week.

**A Family Mission Statement.** Consider adding kindness to family members, friends, and strangers as part of a family mission statement. A family mission statement is a statement that characterizes your family. Think of the values and goals that you hold as a family and make these a part of your mission statement. A mission statement, when agreed upon by the entire family, helps bring a sense of unity and belonging to each family member. Hold a family meeting to suggest the idea, and encourage your children’s participation in the creation of their family mission statement.

**Holiday Kindness Project.** At Thanksgiving time, organize a family meeting for the purpose of deciding on a holiday kindness project. This could be participating at a food kitchen, shelter, or in a Sub for Santa program. Encourage your children to take part in the decision-making and organization steps of the project as well.

**References**


2 [http://www.people4peace.net/quotes/quote5.htm](http://www.people4peace.net/quotes/quote5.htm)
Lecturing at the Drop of a Hat

Parents are supposed to teach their children, right? So what’s wrong with a good lecture that explains in depth why your child is wrong and what they need to do to be better? Simply put, how do you feel when you’re told over and over that you’re wrong and how to fix your mistakes? Most people do not take kindly to this approach, and neither do children. Resentment will get in the way of any learning that could take place. Before launching into a lecture, try a different approach first, such as moral reasoning. Involve your child in problem-solving and become a team. 1

References

Worksheet: Attachment Step 1

My Child is Insecurely Attached. What Do I Do?

**Step 1: Evaluate your parenting style.** First, evaluate how consistent you are in providing for your child’s needs by circling a number between 1 and 5 (1 being not consistent at all, 5 being always consistent) for each need listed in the first column. Since you know your child best, please add needs that are unique to your child in the space provided at the bottom of the list. (Some developmental needs were not included since these not filling these needs consistently may not directly affect the child’s attachment relationship with you. Don’t ignore those developmental needs though, since they are crucial in helping a child become a well-adjusted, happy, and responsible adult.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How consistently do you:</th>
<th>1 = Not consistent</th>
<th>2 = Rarely consistent</th>
<th>3 = Sometimes consistent</th>
<th>4 = Mostly consistent</th>
<th>5 = Always consistent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>For Infants</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Feed your infant when she or he is hungry?</td>
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<td>• Change your infant’s diaper when it’s dirty?</td>
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<td>• Comfort your infant when he or she is crying?</td>
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<td><strong>For Children</strong></td>
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<td>• Provide validation and acceptance?</td>
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<td>• Provide comfort and security when your child is under some type of stress (hungry, tired, scared)?</td>
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<td>• Provide fair rules and expectations that are clearly communicated and consistently enforced?</td>
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<td>• Provide opportunities for your child to be close to others, such as</td>
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<td>o appropriate touch, such as cuddling, hugging, snuggling, and tickling?</td>
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<td>o sharing feelings and experiences?</td>
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<td>o spending one-on-one time together?</td>
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<td>o sharing scarce resources, such as money or time?</td>
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<td>• Provide opportunities to achieve, and be special or outstanding in some way?</td>
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<td>• Provide opportunities to be alone.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide opportunities to be in some control of their lives?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide opportunities to learn how to constructively manage their emotions?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
If you circled a four or a five, congratulations! You are doing a good job on being consistent in providing for that need. If you circled three or below on any of the needs in the table above, this is an area you need to work on becoming consistent in. Please read the lesson **Sensitive Responsiveness** and use the **Consistency Journal worksheet** to help you in your efforts to become more consistent.

The following list of questions, while not comprehensive, is designed to get you started identifying what you may be doing that contributes to your child’s insecure attachment. Check yes or no in answer to each question. Remember, no parent is perfect. But a parent who tries to improve is truly admirable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do I allow my child to express negative emotions in appropriate ways?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do I withdraw, emotionally or physically, when my child expresses negative emotions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do I respond to my child only when they express positive emotions, such as happiness or cheerfulness?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do I wait a while before filling my child’s needs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do I fill my child’s needs promptly whenever I can?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Am I available to my child when:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. They want to talk to me?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. They want to share something with me?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. They are afraid and need soothing?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do I spend time getting to know my child on a regular basis?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do I show warmth often to my child?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do I show kindness to my child every day?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do I often get locked in control battles with my child?</td>
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</table>

If you responded yes to the following questions, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, then congratulations! You are helping your child tremendously. If you answered no to these questions, then simply realize that these are areas that you need to work on before you can help your child shift their attachment style.

If you responded with a no to the following questions, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 10, then congratulations again! You are helping your child to become or stay securely attached. If you answered no to these questions, then these are areas that you need to work on before you can help you child shift their attachment style.
**Plans for improving weak areas:** write down here your plans for improving the areas you didn’t score as highly in. If you need some ideas on how to improve, read the lessons on the *Foundations of Parenting* website (foundationsofparenting.org).
Worksheet: Attachment Step 2

**My Child is Insecurely Attached. What Do I Do?**

**Step 2: Evaluate your child’s environment.** The following questions will help get you started evaluating your child’s environment. While this list of questions is not comprehensive, it does point to some of the most common problems in the environment that could keep your child from developing a secure attachment.

1. What rules and boundaries have you set? Do you consistently enforce these rules and boundaries? This question refers to the type of discipline and rules you have in your home. For more information, read the lesson *Disciplining Your Child.*

   a. Do you periodically reevaluate the rules and boundaries you have established to give more control to your child when they can handle it?

2. Have you established regular routines for
   a. Meal times
   b. Bedtime, rest time and/or naptime
   c. Chores
   d. Homework
   e. Other: _________

3. How flexible are you with the schedule mentioned in question 2? (circle the best answer below)
   a. Schedule, what schedule?
   b. Every now and then, we have regular mealtime, etc.
   c. We’re fairly consistent.
   d. We generally follow our routines, well, at least the approximate times we have decided on.
   e. I get stressed when we don’t do things at the exact, scheduled time.

   If you circled c or d, congratulations on having a flexible, yet consistent schedule. If you selected a, b, or e, you may want to consider working on the consistency (answer a or b) or the flexibility (answer e).

If you answer yes to the following questions, your child may require an increase in reassurance, time spent with the parent, or the child may need an open-communication line (a cell-phone or email) with a parent for a while. The purpose of this is to reassure them that you’ll be there for your child when he or she needs you.
1. Have you just moved to a new home?  
   - Yes  
   - No

2. Has your child just changed schools?  
   - Yes  
   - No

3. Has your child just changed child-care facilities?  
   - Yes  
   - No

4. Has a parent recently gone back to work?  
   - Yes  
   - No

What are your plans for changing your child’s environment to help them switch to a secure attachment style?
Worksheet: Attachment Step 3

**My Child is Insecurely Attached. What Do I Do?**

**Step 3: Evaluate your child for characteristics that might prevent him or her from easily establishing a secure attachment.** The following list, while not comprehensive, is designed to help you get started evaluating what past events may have be preventing him or her from shifting to a secure attachment style. Circle yes if your child has experienced the event, and no if they have not.

- Premature birth
- In utero trauma such as exposure to drugs or alcohol
- Unwanted pregnancy
- Separation from birth mother
- Postpartum depression in mother
- Severe abuse and/or neglect in the first years of life
- Multiple caretakers
- Hospitalizations
- Unresolved pain
- Painful or invasive medical procedures

If you circle yes to any of the items on the list above, take heart. While these events may have encouraged an insecure attachment, you should be able to encourage your child to switch over to a secure attachment style if you concentrate on consistently filling your child’s needs and being available and responsive. With children affected by the events on the list above, parents often need to be more consistent than the average parent, since it may be difficult for these children to trust that you’ll be there for them.

Write down your plan for dealing with past events that are interfering with your child’s shifting to a secure attachment:
Now list the things about your child’s personality that make it difficult for you to practice patient, kind, sensitive, and responsive parenting. Include those behaviors that make it difficult for you to see the value of your child, such as excessive tantrum throwing or rudeness. Then decide whether the behavior can or should be changed. For example, excessive tantrum throwing can and should be changed, but hyperactivity can only be managed, not changed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Can it be changed?</th>
<th>Can it managed?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
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</table>

Write down your plan for changing or managing your child’s behavior that’s interfering with shifting to a secure attachment style:
My Child is Insecurely Attached. What Do I Do?

Step 4: Work to understand your child. Do you understand why your child does what they do? Or are they complete mysteries to you? Before you can do anything to help your child, you must first understand them.

Write down what makes your child tick?

1. What are your child’s goals and dreams?

2. What does your child spend his or her time on?

3. What are your child’s hobbies and interests?

4. Who are your child’s friends?

5. What makes your child feel the way they do and why?
   a. Happy
   b. Sad
   c. Angry
   d. Afraid

6. What are your child’s likes and dislikes in the following areas:
   a. Food
b. Colors

c. Clothes

d. Books

e. School subjects

f. Television shows

g. Others________

7. Which siblings does your child get along with, and why?

8. Which siblings does your child not get along with, and why?

9. When you spend one-on-one time together, what does your child prefer to do?

10. What does your child think about him or herself?
Write down plans to get to know your child better. Since children change and grow, make sure you include a plant to regularly spend time getting to know your child.

Once you understand your child better, write down what makes your child tick:
Worksheet: Attachment Step 5

My Child is Insecurely Attached. What Do I Do?

Step 5: Work on changing your parenting style to create a relationship environment in which your child will feel safe in establishing a secure attachment with you. Create a concrete plan for implementing the following principles in your parenting style. Set a time, perhaps weekly, to evaluate your progress and your child’s reaction to your changes. If you need some ideas on what to do, read the other lessons on Foundations of Parenting. Keep in mind that it may take some weeks, or even months, for your child to believe that you are “for real.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week:</th>
<th>Your Plan</th>
<th>Your Progress</th>
<th>Your Child’s Reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warmth:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Validation and Acceptance:</td>
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<td>Sensitive Responsiveness:</td>
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<td>Discipline:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moral Reasoning:</td>
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<td>Kindness:</td>
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Worksheet: Attachment Step 6

My Child is Insecurely Attached. What Do I Do?

**Step 6: Work on creating an open line of communication.** You must first have your child’s trust before you can successfully create a line of open communication with your child (see Step 5). Create a plan for establishing an open line of communication with your child. Here are some questions to help you do just that:

What opportunities will you provide your child to talk with you?

How will you gently invite your child to share with you, if your child does not spontaneously share with you?

What questions will you ask?

**What will you do if your child declines your invitation to share?** (Don’t force your child to share what they think and feel, and what’s going on in their life – that will just make your child feel resentful.)
It’s important to be able to identify when you are warm and cold towards your child. The first step to doing that is identifying those same things in other people. Choose a TV program or movie where the characters interact a lot (a chick flick instead of an action movie). For 5 minutes, write down each example of warm can cold behavior that you see. For example, you could write, “Made eye contact and smiled” or “Frowned” or “Used angry tone of voice.” Then, write down the character’s response. Did the character get angry, hurt, or did they withdraw? Or was the character happy and the two people experienced a bonding moment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movie or TV Program:</th>
<th>Warm Behaviors</th>
<th>Cold Behaviors</th>
<th>Character’s Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>
Becoming a Warmer Parent

Select two or three of the following behaviors you would like to work on from the following list:

- Smiling
- Eye contact
- Appropriate touch
- Laughter when shared together
- Tone of voice.
- Singing
- Rocking or movement is also especially effective for infants.
- Pleasant facial expression

First, decide when and how you will implement these behaviors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>How you will implement the behavior</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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</table>
Then, evaluate your progress as well as your child’s progress at the end of each day for two weeks. Feel free to make changes in what you do as you go along. Keep in mind that it takes at least two weeks to firmly establish a habit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day</strong></td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Worksheet: Validation

**Identifying (In)Validating Behaviors**

Identifying when validation and invalidation occurs is the first step to helping your child feel accepted. Choose a TV program or movie that has many interactions between people. For five minutes, write down each example of validating and invalidating behaviors you see. These may be difficult to spot. Use your own reactions to point you in the right direction. For validating behaviors, chose those actions that would help you feel good about yourself if they were done towards you. For invalidating behaviors, include those actions that make you go “Ouch!”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movie or TV Program:</th>
<th>Validating Behavior</th>
<th>Invalidating Behavior</th>
<th>Character’s Response</th>
<th>Your Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>
Worksheet: Validation

**What Helps You Feel Validated?**

Once you understand what helps you feel validated, you will be better able to see and understand what helps your child feel validated. For one week, look back over your day and ask yourself, “What did other people do that helped me feel good (or poorly) about myself?” Look for experiences with validation and invalidation in conversations, actions, tone of voice, and body language. Record these experiences and identify the underlying message you received. Identifying the underlying message may take some though.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>The Event</th>
<th>Was this validating or invalidating?</th>
<th>Underlying message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Now, look back at your experiences during the week. Which methods of validation were most effective for you?

Which methods were least effective?

Which methods of invalidation were most effective for you?

Which methods were least effective?
Worksheet: Validation

Validating Your Child

Your child will have some types of validation and invalidation that will be more and less effective for him or her. Based on your experiences with your child, list the types of validation that are most effective for him or her.

If you aren’t sure, return to the Validation: What Helps You Feel Validated worksheet, and use the ideas written down there to experiment with different types of validation. Use the following log to keep track of your child’s reactions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Validating Behavior</th>
<th>Your Child’s Reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
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<td>Day 3</td>
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<td>Day 4</td>
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<td>Day 5</td>
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<td>Day 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Now record, based on past experience only, which typed of invalidation are most effective for him or her? Make sure you avoid doing these things? There are several ways to identify invalidating behaviors. Your child may have a hurt expression on their face, or they may cry. These are the simplest ways to observe invalidation. A more complicated way is observing when your child is angry. Most people, children or adults, get angry sometimes to cover up their feelings of hurt. If your child seems angry, ask yourself if something happened recently that could have hurt their feelings. Another, easy way to observe how invalidating behavior affects your child is to simply be a listening friend. If you do this, your child will go to you for comfort when other people do hurtful things towards him or her. If you find invalidating behavior that you do towards your child on a regular basis (most parents do so accidentally), then try substituting invalidating behaviors with validating, accepting ones.

In the table below, record invalidating behaviors that have a noticeable effect on your child, as well as your child’s reaction. Use the three middle columns only if you do the invalidating behavior as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invalidating Behavior</th>
<th>Do you do this regularly?</th>
<th>Replace with a validating behavior</th>
<th>How will you go about replacing the behavior?</th>
<th>Your child’s reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>
Understanding Your Approach to Emotions

Adapted from John Gottman’s *Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child: The Heart of Parenting*

It’s important to understand why you approach emotions the way you do. If you have found that you lean towards being a dismissive, disapproving, or Laissez-Faire parent, then exploring your family’s philosophy of emotion is an important first step to changing into an Emotion Coach.

1. Did your parents treat sad and angry moments as natural occurrences? If so, describe a common experience.

2. Did your parents lend an ear when family members felt unhappy, fearful, or angry?

3. Did your family use times of unhappiness, fear, or anger to show each other support, offer guidance, and help each other solve problems?

4. Was anger always viewed as potentially destructive? If so, what did this teach you about how to handle your anger? Are you taking this same approach with your children?

5. Was fear looked on as cowardly? If so, how did you learn to handle fear? Are you taking this same approach with your children?

6. Was sadness seen as self-pity in your family? What ways were you taught to handle sadness? Do you see yourself teaching these same methods to your children?
7. Or where sadness, anger and fear shoved under the blanket or dismissed as unproductive, frivolous, dangerous, or self-indulgent? If so, how did you learn to deal with these emotions? Do you encourage your children to deal with these emotions in the same way?
There are many different ways to develop a deeper awareness of your emotions, such as meditation, prayer, journal writing, and forms of artistic expression such as playing a musical instrument or drawing. An important part of learning more about your emotions is solitude. Find a few minutes here or there to be alone, if possible. The emotion log below can be a handy tool for keeping track of your emotions when you experience them. For each time you experienced an emotion, write down a key word to help remind you of the situation. You may wish to modify this chart to allow for the fact that you often experience an emotion more than once during a day. Also, in addition to using an emotion log, writing down your thoughts as these feelings occurred in a journal can be useful as well. Keeping track of the incidents and thoughts that trigger your emotions will help you understand better what causes your emotions and how you respond.

Week of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMOTION</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HAPPINESS</td>
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<td>AFFECTION</td>
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<td>INTEREST</td>
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<td>EXCITEMENT</td>
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<td>ANGER</td>
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Worksheet: Communication

**Emotion Coaching: Using the Five Steps**

**Step 1: Be aware of your child’s emotion**
What emotion did you notice in your child?

How did you feel when you noticed the emotion in your child? (e.g. “Here she goes again..”)

**Step 2: Recognize your child’s emotion as an opportunity for intimacy and teaching**
Did you recognize your child’s emotion as an opportunity for closeness and teaching?

**Step 3: Listen empathetically and validate your child’s feeling**
Describe how you listened empathetically:

How did your child react to your empathetic listening?

Describe how you validated your child’s feelings:

How did your child react to your validation?
Step 4: Help your child verbally label emotions
What labels did you put on your child’s feelings? Did you verbalize them to your child?

Step 5: Set limits while helping your child problem-solve
How did your child express their emotion? Did you need to set limits on their behavior? If so, how did you do that?

What goal did you and your child identify behind the behavior? Did you let your child try to figure it out first?

What solutions did you come up with? What solutions did your child suggest?

Did your solution violate any family values?

What solution did you and your child choose?
How is the solution being implemented? What help, if needed, are you giving your child in implementing the solution?
Worksheet: Sensitive Responsiveness

**Spending Time Together**

Choose several of the activities below, or create your own, and set a time and date to do them in the calendar below with your child. Try to do at least one activity with your child a week. Make sure this is one-on-one time.

- Do household chores together
- Pick a creative project to do, such as building a club house or painting a picture.
- Run errands together.
- Go to the library together
- Read a book out loud together
- Take a walk together
- Have a girls/boys night out.
- Choose a favorite sport to play together
- Cook a favorite dessert together.
- Go out for a meal together
- Play indoor games together, such as board games, card games, or video games.
- Play outdoor games together, such as riding bikes, jogging, or throwing a Frisbee.
- Set aside some time to talk together, such as right before bedtime.
- Follow a current event of interest to your child in the newspaper, such as a sports team.
- Make a fort or place space together in the house.
- Go on a ride in the car together
- Play musical instruments together
- Go to the zoo
- Go to the beach
- Go to the park
- Have a scavenger hunt
- Exercise together
- First make a kite and then fly it together
- Learn a new skill together, such as origami
- Take a class together at your local library
- Go swimming together in the summer
- Plant a garden together
- Plan a “Getting to know your family” time, where your read stories to your child from your family history
- Draw and color together
- Learn about history or a school subject your child is interested in together
• Play with chalk together on the driveway
• Give your time to your child and let him or her decide what they want to do with you
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Month:  
Year:  

176
Worksheet: Sensitive Responsiveness

**Identifying your Child’s Needs**

Since you need to know what your child’s needs are first before you can fill them, here is a worksheet to help you identify what your child needs. Put any needs that are unique to your child at the end of the list in the blank spaces.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Child’s Needs</th>
<th>Do they need a small, medium, or large amount?</th>
<th>How consistent are you in filling this need?</th>
<th>How prompt are you in filling this need?</th>
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<td><strong>For Infants</strong></td>
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<td>• Feed your infant when she or he is hungry?</td>
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<td>• Change your infant’s diaper when it’s dirty?</td>
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<td>• Comfort your infant when he or she is crying?</td>
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<td><strong>For Children</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Provide validation and acceptance?</td>
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<td>• Provide comfort and security when your child is under some type of stress (hungry, tired, scared)?</td>
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<td>• Provide fair rules and expectations that are clearly communicated and consistently enforced?</td>
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<td>• Provide opportunities for your child to be close to others, such as</td>
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<td>o appropriate touch, such as cuddling, hugging, snuggling, and tickling?</td>
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</table>
- Sharing feelings and experiences?
- Spending one-on-one time together?
- Sharing scarce resources, such as money or time?
- Provide opportunities to achieve, and be special or outstanding in some way?
- Provide opportunities to be alone.
- Provide opportunities to be in some control of their lives?
- Provide opportunities to learn how to constructively manage their emotions?
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Worksheet: Sensitive Responsiveness

**Consistency Journal**

Pick one parenting behavior you would like to improve your consistency in. Evaluate at the end of the day how consistent you were and any changes you need to make in your plan of action. Use this journal till you become consistent. Then move onto another parenting behavior.

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<th>Behavior:</th>
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<td><strong>Day of the Week</strong></td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
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<td>Saturday</td>
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<td>Sunday</td>
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</table>
Learning to Listen

Listening is an essential part of moral reasoning. You have to first understand where your child is coming from before you can guide them. Practice your listening skills. Once a day, choose a time or conversation when your child is simply to understand the other person. Ask questions that make sure you understand what the other person is thinking. Be accepting and non-judgmental. People will not open up if they think you are there to criticize them. Record below your experience with listening.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person I listened to</th>
<th>My understanding of what they said</th>
<th>What did you do to help them open up?</th>
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</table>
Worksheet: Teaching Your Child

**What Are Your Rules?**

Before you can use moral reasoning with your child, you must first know what your rules are, as well as why you have those rules. Write down as many rules as you can. Remember, every family has unspoken rules that are known, but never talked about. Try to include these as well. Then think of a reason why. Reasons can be difficult to think of. Keep in mind how the behavior affects you, the child, the family, and others. If you can’t think of a good reason for a rule, then consider being flexible in that area or changing the rule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rules</th>
<th>Reasons Why</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Be polite</td>
<td>“People feel upset when you are rude because you are telling them they aren’t worthy of respect. And everyone’s worthy of respect, although their actions may not be.”</td>
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Leading Questions

Learning how to ask leading questions, instead of lecturing, is perhaps the most difficult part of moral reasoning. Use your consequence forecasting skills you practiced in the Discipline: Applying Consequences worksheet.

Use the following guidelines to practice forming leading questions. Use a recent conversation you had with your child, perhaps from using the Moral Reasoning: Listening to your Child worksheet, to write down your answers to the following questions. When you follow these guidelines, you’ll find it hard to lecture, and you will be involving your child in thinking about and correcting their behavior. This is an essential skill your child needs to have as an adult!

1. **Listen to your child.** Where is your child coming from? What is he or she saying?

2. **What do you want to teach your child in this situation?** Use your answers from the Moral Reasoning: What are your Rules worksheet to help you if needed.

3. Do one of two things. **Relate your child’s feelings and experiences to a past experience.** For example, if your child is being rude to a teacher, ask your child how he or she felt in the recent past when someone was rude to them. **Or, ask yourself what would happen to your child in the future if they continued with their behavior.** Then once you know the answer to the question, ask your child, “What will happen if you continue to (be rude) to (your teacher)?” Give your child time to think out the answer to the question. You want your child to learn to think about the consequences of their actions. If they can’t figure out the answer, then step in to provide the answer. Use your validation skill to not make your child feel dumb for not knowing the answer.
Worksheet: Disciplining your Child

**Using Control in Appropriate Ways**

Take the following quiz to see if you use control to help your child grow. Check yes or no in answer to the questions.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are you eager to give control to your child when they can handle it?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Do you generally give control over an issue to your child when they express interest in doing something for themselves?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Do you try to control things you have no way of controlling, such as what your child eats or when they fall asleep?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>4. When your child makes a mistake with some newly-gained control, do you generally take that control away?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>5. Do you give your child a training period before you hand over control of larger tasks?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>6. Do you let your child experience his or her own mistakes?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>7. Do you exercise more control when your child is younger, and less as they grow older?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>8. Do you treat your young children like they are fully-fledged adults?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>9. When your child makes a mistake after you’ve given them some extra control, do you step in and fix everything?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>10. Do you find it difficult to give up control over your child’s behavior to your child as they grow older because you are afraid they won’t be able to handle it?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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If you marked yes to questions 1, 2, 5, and 7, congratulations – you are well on your way to exercising parenting control principles in ways that will help your child succeed.

If you marked yes to three or more of the following questions: 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, or 10, you may want to consider working on this area to make it into a parenting strength.
Worksheet: Disciplining your Child

Applying Consequences

Pick a behavior your child is consistently doing that causes problems for you and answer the following questions.

1. **What is the natural consequence of this behavior?** For example, if your child always leaves his or her seatbelt unbuckled, what could happen to them? He or she would get injured or die in an accident.

   - Ask yourself, “Will allowing my child to experience this consequence damage them?” If the answer is yes, skip to next section and choose a logical consequence. In the above example, the answer would be yes, since physical pain and death is unacceptable. If the consequence is simply not fun, hard work, embarrassing, or causes missed opportunities, let your child experience this. Natural consequences are among the best teachers.

   - If the natural consequence is extreme, but won’t harm your child, then consider taking away part of the consequence. For example, if a child breaks a $200 window, it is reasonable to have them pay for it. But if they pay for all of it, they will be working off the debt for years. Instead, have them put their weekly allowance towards the debt for a month. Have them do extra chores each Saturday for a month. The extra money they earn from those chores would also be put towards the window.

2. **Choose a logical consequence if you can’t allow your child to experience the natural consequence.** Make sure you tell your child the logical connection between his or her behavior and the consequence.

   - **How to decide logical consequences:**
     1. **First, forecast future consequences.** What would happen in the real world if your child did ___________ when they were adults? Or, what would happen in the worst-case scenario?
2. **Imitate the natural consequences as closely as possible.**
   For example, hitting is a physical assault charge and could cause the attacker to end up in jail. This is a loss of physical freedom. The logical consequence would be to lose the freedom of the limb the child used to hit in the case of an older child. A younger child might be required to stay in one spot for a certain amount of time in the designated “jail.” This is similar to a time out, but different because you explained the logical connection between child’s behavior and the consequence you give them.

3. **If you can’t imitate the natural consequence, look for other logical connections.** For example, “Only people who responsibly use their car privileges can keep those privileges.” Then you can cite the example of individuals who lose their license because they drive under the influence. And then you point out that you could hurt other people while you are driving because you are so concerned about your child’s behavior in the car, and conclude that your child needs to do their part in behaving responsibly in the car so no one gets hurt. The consequence would then be losing the privilege of riding in the car. They would have to stay home or walk, with adult supervision.

3. **Be consistent! If you say you give your child a consequence, then follow through on it! Children will not believe you unless you are consistent.**

4. **Make sure you show empathy for your child when you give them their consequence. Don’t be demeaning or degrading.** Your job is to let your child learn his or her lesson from the consequence – not from how you treat them.
5. **Try the consequence you’ve chosen.** If it doesn’t work after awhile, go through this process again to find a natural or logical consequence that is meaningful to your child.
Worksheet: Kindness

**Create a Compliment**

Sometimes it’s hard to think of new, unique compliments to give your child in the hustle and bustle of daily life. First, write down as many strengths of your child that you can think of. Then write out a compliment based on that strength. Then decide how you will deliver your compliments. Will you tell your child, or will you write it on a note for them to find? Or will you write a letter that describes all the good things you see in your child? Pick a delivery style that fits both you and your child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Child’s Strengths</th>
<th>Write out a Compliment</th>
<th>Delivery Method</th>
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Books To Teach Kindness With

You can simply take the opportunities that come along to teach kindness, there will be many of them. Or, you can choose some of the following books and movies to teach kindness. Add your own ideas to the end of the list. Keep in mind that examples of unkindness can be good teaching moments as you point out the consequences of those actions.

1. *The Mitten Tree*, by Candace Christiansen, illustrated by Elaine Greenstein, 1997. One winter day, elderly Sarah notices a young boy at the bus stop without mittens, so she knits him a pair and leaves them on a tree where he'll find them. She continues to knit (anonymously) and leaves mittens for the children who need them. One day, a large basket of yarn is left on her doorstep, enabling her to continue her work.

   Dewey Doo-it Feeds A Friend is a delightful children's story about helping others.

   This story is a tale about an old woman’s kindness to animals around her despite her poverty.

   Oolong, a young lad, learns a valuable lesson while on a great adventure (he is in search of Pickled Palamadora). He shares this lesson with those he encounters on his journey through the Dark Forest and onto the Village of the Grumpies.

   This tale describes what happens when Horton hears a tiny voice one day and discovers a whole other world existing on a small speck of dust. Despite incredulous kangaroos, jungle monkeys and an eagle named Vlad Vladikoff, Horton saves his microscopic friends and helps them get the respect they deserve. "Because, after all, a person's a person, no matter how small."

   Hunter loves playing with Stripe, his fellow Raccoon, and enjoys mimicking his entertaining antics. But one day Stripe's escapades aren't just fun and games: the mischievous boy acts up in class, disrupting story time, destroying his art project and causing general mayhem. Hunter joins in, but soon learns copying his friend's behavior has unpleasant consequences. The next day he decides whether to lead or to follow.

   Anti-social Mr. Hatch never smiles or acts friendly to anybody--so who sent him a huge box of chocolates for Valentine's Day? The answer surprises him--and the reader--and makes him more sociable.
Movies to Teach Kindness With

1. It's a Wonderful Life
2. Emperor’s New Groove
3. Cinderella
4. Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood, “Adventures in Friendship”
5. Beauty and the Beast
6. Follow Me, Boys
7. Annie
8. Wizard of Oz
9. E.T.
10. The King and I (The old movie)
11. Mary Poppins
12. A Little Princess
13. Anne of Green Gables
14. Charlotte’s Web
15. Lion, Witch, and the Wardrobe
16. Bambi
17. Pollyanna
18. Little Women
19. Sound of Music
20. Pinocchio
21. Dumbo
22. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
23. Pocahontas
24. Care Bears Movies
25. Strawberry Shortcake Movies
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