

Introduction

Greetings and welcome to our guide book to increasing the closeness between you and your children and helping your child's brain grow. We call that closeness "bonding and attachment." Bonding means the intense feelings of caring and love between a mom and her baby. Mother-child bonding begins upon conception and carries through birth and early childhood. While bonding happens early in the parent-child relationship, attachment is an extension of the bonded closeness between a mom and her child that lasts a lifetime. Even though bonding and attachment are often used to refer to the closeness between mom and child, bonding and attachment are also feelings that fathers feel.

The powerful feelings of closeness that are generated from giving birth, holding your baby and making eye-contact for the first time are moments that moms and dads will always remember. Actually, so will your baby. It's not happening on a conscious level with your baby like it does with adults, but the baby's brain is taking all these moments in through its senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell.

Parent-child bonding and attachment are absolutely critical for healthy brain development. When parents spend time holding, rocking, feeding, gazing, kissing, laughing, and talking to their child, the brain of the baby is taking in all these wonderful experiences and forming strong neurological networks. This is very good. During the first year of life, your baby's brain develops to 90% of its adult size and puts in place the majority of the structures and systems your baby's

brain will use for the rest of his or her life.

So, are you ready to work on helping your baby build a healthy brain and form a solid, fun and caring attachment between you both? We thought you might be.

This manual will help you do all those things. It has Five Chapters full of information and activities. Chapters One and Two address the importance of love and empathy. Make sure you read those. Chapters Three, Four and Five are full of time-tested activities that are fun, engaging, brain-building, goofy and silly. Choose the activities that are age appropriate and engage your children every day in making, building, knocking down, coloring, and painting, gluing and pretending. Make sure you supervise your children's use of art supplies and toys that can hurt them.

My colleagues at the Urban Child Institute in Memphis have a simple saying that will help you build a strong attachment with your child while you are helping your child's brain get stronger. So remember this saying: Read, Touch, Talk, and Play. Say it over and over every day: Read, Touch, Talk and Play as a reminder to engage your children in the wonderful world of childhood dreams and fantasies. Outstanding things will happen to you and your children.

Remember to enjoy your children's early years. Build good memories. The early years go by so very fast.

Our best to you and your family,

Stephen and Juliana

Chapter 1

Nurturing Parenting is Empathy, Love, Bonding and Attachment

Nurturing Parenting! For many people the term itself conjures up childhood memories of our parents and other adults caring about us with their compliments and their actions. We knew on some level that we were being nurtured when our parents told us they loved us, took time to listen to us and showed interest in our thoughts and feelings, comforted us when we were hurt or sad, laughed with us when we were happy or acting silly, played with us, and set rules and guidelines for us to make sure we would be safe from potential harm. Those were just some of the nicest, most secure times we experienced in childhood. We knew we were loved. We were being nurtured.



Love and Empathy

If you're a parent, there isn't a greater compliment that you can receive from your children than to hear them say "My parents really care about me. They really

love me. They are there for me through the good and bad times." That's what nurturing is: love, caring and steady support through the good and bad times. Lots of love given freely; No "I'll love you if ... or I'll love you when ...," just "I love you."

The best word to describe the feeling of caring is *empathy*. Empathy means to care about the needs of another and to act on helping the other person get their needs met. It's a way of showing how much you love someone. In fact, when we love someone, the importance of their needs and desires rises to the level of our own.

To love someone is to have empathy for the person. Love is empathy.

Understanding Nurturing

Nurturing comes from the old Latin word "nu-tri-tura" which means to promote, to nourish, and to nurse the growth of another person. As a parent, nurturing is the most important characteristic for a mom and dad to have in raising their son or daughter. Want to read something fun:

Human Beings are naturally born to be nurturing. Nurturing is caring. Caring is empathy. Empathy is love.

That's right. We are born pre-disposed to be nurturing, to be caring and to be loving. What that means is at birth we have all the tools to become loving and caring people and parents. All we need is for our mom and dad to model nurturing.

Positive and Negative Nurturing

But sometimes the education some children receive and the parenting models they observe are not always positive. Instead some children experience a lot of emotional and physical hurt and pain. We call this **negative nurturing**.



As it relates to parenting, abuse and neglect are examples of negative nurturing. Negative nurturing is a powerful and destructive force. An unhealthy outlook on life beginning in childhood generally results in a negative self-worth promoting a dreadful perception of one self and of others. It's the "I'm a nobody; my life is miserable; I'm miserable; I'm a failure" outlook on life.

Positive nurturing, on the other hand, nourishes and promotes the aspects of life that we want. Instead of using hurting touch like spanking, hitting and shaking a baby, parents who practice positive nurturing use gentle touch as a way of promoting bonding and healthy, secure parent-child attachments. Positive nurturing also includes the practice of massage as a part of a child's bedtime routine; telling your son and daughter

what wonderful people they are simply for being who they are or praising them for their accomplishments and efforts. We call this technique praise for being and praise for doing.

Positive nurturing is also about establishing empathic discipline that promotes a sense of personal dignity and family; the morals and values of cooperation; and a positive sense of self-worth and empowerment

And finally, nurturing parenting promotes fostering healthy brain development by having appropriate developmental expectations of children at different stages of growth; promoting fun and laughter through play, talking, singing and reading.



Positive Nurturing Parenting Practices Promote Safe, Secure and Trusting Parent-Child Relationships. These Practices form the Foundation of Healthy Bonding and Attachment.