

Parenting After Crisis  
Online Course Participant  
Workbook

**Trauma Informed  
Parenting**



Trueinsightparent.com

True Insight Parenting Strategies

Better Insight = Better Parenting



# Welcome to the trauma informed parenting skills development and education series.

Welcome to a parenting group like no other. This group is specifically crafted to the needs, demands, heart-aches, and joys of parenting a child who has experienced a life disruption. I want to take just a moment and say thank you for taking the time to learn better ways to parent children who have experienced life challenges, trauma, or other factors of change that they did not choose. It was Gandhi who suggested that our culture and our very civilization are best assessed by treatment of its most vulnerable members. Parenting children who have experienced trauma, confusion, lack of predictability, and broken promises will have its share of challenges and unique moments. It is our hope that you will find tools and plans that will make life easier for your child while also boosting your sense of effectiveness and confidence as a parent.

I encourage you to come into these weeks with openness and a mindset to grow. Some of the things we cover may be old news. If so, take those moments to let the information sink in a little deeper, or even as a moment to rest and feel secure that you have already learned so much about this journey! Other topics may provide new and even challenging ideas. It is our constant effort to explore all of the best, research-based practices for caring for children who have been through trauma. It is our hope to share these great techniques and findings with anyone who will give us the time to share. You will get the opportunity for quite a bit of self-reflection during the groups, and will also have the opportunity to engage in optional weekly action steps which are intended to be practical and encouraging to your parenting. These will also offer moments to capture examples of your attempts to try new things in your parenting, which I hope you will bring back to the group to share! There may be other parts of these lessons that stir up old memories, trauma, or discomfort. If you find yourself in that position, please take care of yourself. Engage your own support systems if you have them. Also feel free to contact the parenting education staff at CAFA who may be able to help you work through what may be going on for you.

It is my hope that as you complete these video lessons you will grow in your knowledge and will have moments to implement the tool and strategies. Document your growth and progress! Write notes, share stories, or even post to social media to share your growth and progress. Each chapter will include some space to create your own plans for parenting and activities to try. This will work best as you model and practice these ideas with others. I am wishing you all well in your journey. You can do it!

With greatest of hopes,

Corey Jackson MA, LPC

TIPS Parenting Coordinator

# True Insight Parenting Strategies

## Trauma Informed Parenting

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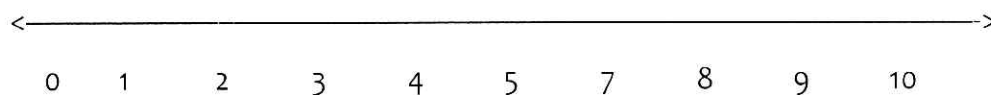
# Parenting Mindfulness Moment 1

## “The Butterfly Hug”

(Adapted from Kennard, 2018)

This practice utilizes bilateral stimulation (BLS) to help connect right and left hemisphere of the brain across the corpus callosum by means of tapping right and left sides of your body alternatively. This movement across the midline of the brain can assist in connecting the right (emotional) hemisphere with the left (logical) generating an increased feeling of calm and relaxation. This can be used during moments of stress in order to find calming and grounding, when preparing for an upcoming event, or during daily times of distress. This is a great technique for people of all ages. Parents can use this as a grounding moment to regain clear, calm thinking necessary to interact well with children. Children who learn this technique can use it with an adult or by themselves for self-regulation.

**Step 1:** Call to mind the event, situation, or task at hand that is generating stress. Notice where you feel the stress in your body. Pay attention to any tension, tightness, or unusual sensation. Rate the level of stress you feel on a SUDS scale (Subjective Units of Distress measuring 1 to 10 where 0= no distress at all, to 10= most distressed you have ever felt).



**Step 2:** point hands towards each other in front of you (fingertips towards each other). Let one hand slide in front of the other linking thumbs to form your “butterfly.”

**Step 3:** Place the butterfly over your heart and let each of your outstretched fingertips rest on your right and left collarbones.

**Step 4:** Begin lightly tapping your collarbones alternating left and right. Repeat this motion as long as it feels comfortable. Or until you notice reduction of stress and improved relaxation.

**Step 5:** Notice any ways that the stress is reduced or changed. Even small changes are important. Rate yourself on the SDUS scale again after each set of taps. Repeat as long as improvements continue.





## GETTING TO KNOW YOURSELF

### Styles of Relating to Others

We all have a style of doing relationship that dates back to our first moments of life. A baby is born into the world with immediate needs for care, nurturing, and connection. How those needs are met start the process of how a person learns to express felt needs. The understanding and expression of these needs become more sophisticated throughout the lifespan, but the basic movement towards or away from others often remains fairly stable unless altered by life factors. A key piece of self awareness involves getting to know the different styles of relating to others and what tendencies you may have.

The truth is, everyone has aspects of each style at different times and in different situations, however one style or another tends to emerge as primary. Another truth is that no one asked for their style of attachment to emerge. The way a person orients to relational

closeness is largely dependent on the actions of significant people at key moments of development. That can be bad news if negative patterns of connection are part of a person's history. There is no need for self shaming or blaming as those people who impacted you were likely impacted by others in their early lives.

#### The good news

Although relationships may land a person in a less-than-ideal way of relating to others, relationships also help improve a person's sense of security and relational health. Positive trusting relationships that encourage give and take lead to an improved ability to express needs and connect with others. This concept is called earned security, and can be attained regardless of a person's current age or attachment history.

## THE ATTACHMENT STYLES

### Secure and Insecure Attachment

The British psychiatrist John Bowlby is credited with identifying and conceptualizing the idea of secure attachment and the three forms of insecure attachment. The idea is that the more people understand their own past relationships, the better equipped they are to understand present relational tendencies. Doing a bit of self reflection can help people figure out what their emotional triggers are and why these triggers may be there in the first place. Over time, these patterns of relating to others are what is known as attachment style.

#### These styles are as follows:

**Secure:** Leans into connection with others as a rule. Okay to give and receive help. Tends to be less offended by others' behaviors that may be confusing or hurtful, gives the benefit of the doubt and remains curious.

**Needs:** To share security with others, while understanding that others may feel less secure. A secure parent offers opportunity for children, who may lack security, to grow with them through positive attachment experiences.

**Avoidant:** Leans away from others as a rule. Tends to be self reliant and independent. Can tend to shy away from asking for help, and may tend to interpret others



needing help as weak or needy.

**Needs:** To trust others. Awareness can help a parent step over their patterns of avoidance in order to provide the secure attachment connections a child may need.

**Anxious/ Ambivalent:** Leans into dependence on others as a rule. Views connection as the highest need, but often feels inadequate or needy in relationships. This attachment style has learned to do whatever it takes to receive connection or attention from others, and can misinterpret independence from others as rejection.

**Needs:** To trust self and learn to self-soothe when feeling anxious. Awareness can help a parent identify anxious tendencies and step over these in order to take less offense when a child makes natural moves towards independence. A parent can learn to separate without anxiety

**Fearful Disorganized:** Leans into then pulls away from closeness. Often craves the closeness then once close may become fearful and anxious. Often results from relational trauma or abuse. Relationships can be confusing, painful and exhausting.

**Needs:** To understand triggers in relationships. Relational trauma may lead to fear and disorganization. Fearful, disorganized parents may need to become more aware and understanding of their experienced traumas in order to remain more present with their own child.

## RAISING SECURE CHILDREN

### Adult Security & Awareness

There is great hope for anyone raising children, even if their own attachment histories are less than secure. A research study was conducted to determine what factors contributed most to raising securely attached children. The research indicated that it was not having a secure attachment that was required to raise secure children, but instead it was a strong awareness of a person's own attachment style that predicted the best results. Parents who have a good self knowledge of their own ways of relating led to awareness of how their own patterns may be in conflict with their children's needs. This knowledge may lead to healthy self adjustment towards being able to meet their child's

needs.

### Examples of how awareness may help with security

For the sake of example, imagine a scenario involving taking a child to the park to play. The following scenarios outline how each attachment style may impact the experience and how a parent could moderate their tendencies for the sake of the child's needs.

#### **Avoidant:**

Parent may feel the need to detach from the child quickly and keep a distance from their play as this is what they would prefer. The child may feel rejected or fearful due to the distance. An aware avoidant parent may recognize this tendency and offer closeness and reassurance to the child which will allow the child to feel more secure in exploration and play.

#### **Anxious Ambivalent:**

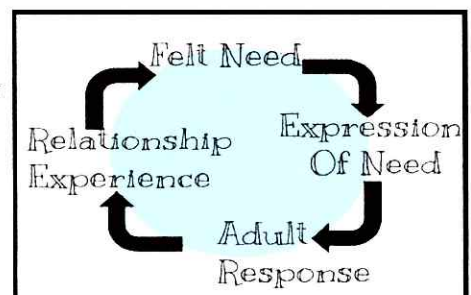
Parent may feel rejected when the child sees a friend and runs to greet them. The parent may feel the need to remain extremely close and hover around the child. An aware, anxious parent could recognize their insecurity and offer space for the child to play independently or with peers. The awareness helps a parent avoid taking the situation personally and focus on the child's natural need for exploration.

#### **Fearful Disorganized**

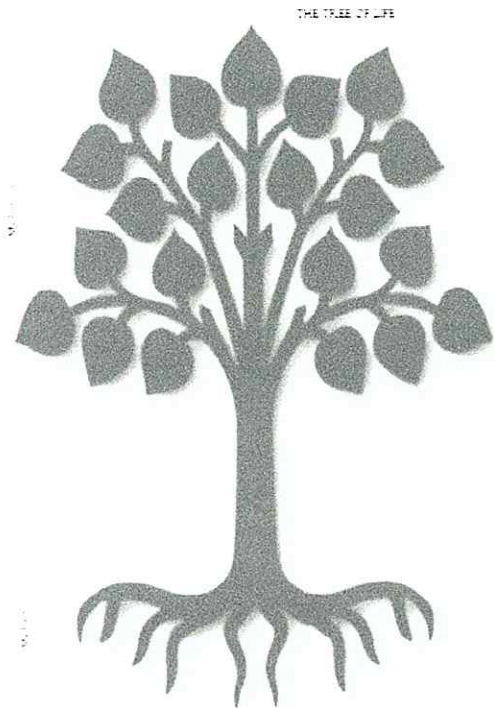
Parents may have intrusive memories about their own traumas which prevent them from being present with the child at the park. The parent may have to recognize their own tendencies towards anxiety or dissociation in order to remain present to attend to the child's needs. Parents who have experienced trauma can still be excellent and present parents, but may require personal work and skill development in order to attend to their child's attachment needs.

#### **Secure**

Secure parents may feel fine with the child staying close or going off to explore the park. Awareness of their own security involves being understanding that their child may experience the world differently, and offer their own security as a benefit to meet the child's needs in healthy ways.



# ACTIVITIES



**Leaves:** My current interest, hobbies, friendships, relationships :

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**Roots:** My past relationship with adults, hurts, triumphs, who was there for me, and times I felt supports. Times I felt alone,.

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### **Impressions From Your Childhood**

Take some time to reflect on these major themes from childhood recollections. These categories likely had either a positive or negative impression leaving you with the desire to repeat or not repeat certain practices in your own parenting. Taking time to bring these into your conscious thoughts may help you understand yourself more.

Think about how a child coming into your home for the first time, whose experience may be radically different (or radically similar) to yours might experience your home.

<b>Feelings</b>	
<b>Communication</b>	
<b>Touch</b>	
<b>Discipline Style</b>	
<b>Were Needs Met</b>	



# ACTION STEPS PART 1

Take some time over the next week to reflect on these questions relating to how attachment styles form. Dr. Dan Siegel suggests that this is one of the most meaningful and helpful things a parent can do in hopes of improving attachment for their children. It does not take a lot of money or expertise, just a parent taking the time to do some work to improve insight by exploring the past.

## Questions for Reflections on Attachment From *Brainstorm* (Siegel, 2015)

### Background

- o What is (was) it like growing up in your family?
- o Who is (was) in your family?
- o What is (was) your parents' philosophy about raising children?
- o What do (did) or don't (didn't) you like about being raised in your family?
- o Would you raise (are you raising) your own children in a similar way, or differently?

### Relationships

- o Do (did) you get along well with your parents and others in your family?
- o How do (did) your family members get along with one another?
- o How have your relationships in your family changed over time?
- o If you have two parents, how are (were) your relationships with each parent similar or different?
- o State a few words that reflect your relationship with each parent from your earliest years.
- o Are there ways you have tried to be like or not like each of your parents?
- o Are there any others in your life who have served as parenting figures to whom you feel attached? If so, please answer the above questions regarding that person or those persons.

### Separation

- o Can you remember your first time being separated from your parents? what was that like and how did it affect you and your parents?
- o Did you ever experience a long separation from your parents in your childhood? What was that like for you and for your parents?

### Discipline

- o What ways do (did) your parents respond to your behaviors to teach you how to behave?
- o Do (did) your parents use punishment in their discipline?
- o How have these strategies of being disciplined influenced your development?

### Fear and Threat

- o Have you ever felt threatened by your parents?
- o Have you ever felt rejected by your parents?
- o Have there been any other experiences that may have been overwhelming in your life? What were these, and how do you feel they have influenced your life?
- o Do any of these experiences feel like they are still very much alive now in your life?



### **Emotional Communication**

- o How do (did) your parents communicate with you when you are (were) happy and excited?
- o What happens (would happen) when you are (were) distressed, unhappy, injured, or ill?
- o Does (did) each parent respond with different patterns of connecting to you when your emotions are (were) intense?
- o How do you communicate with others now when emotions run high?

### **Loss**

- o Has anyone significant in your life died?
- o Has anyone significant in your life left?
- o What was the impact these losses had on you and your family?
- o How do these losses affect you now in your life?

### **Safe Harbor**

- o Are (were) there relationships you can (could) turn to, or places you can (could) go, that you can (could) rely on to help you feel comforted at difficult times? Did such a safe harbor exist when you were a child?
- o How do you feel those sources of a safe haven affect (affected) your life?
- o Do (did) you feel seen, safe, and soothed by your parents?

### **Launching Pad**

- o How do (did) your parents support your explorations away from them or outside the home?
- o How are (were) your interests supported by your parents?
- o Did you feel secure as a child to go out and explore the world?

### **Now**

- o What is your relationship like now with your parents?
- o Why do you think your parents act (acted) the way they do (did)?
- o Do you try not to do things because of how your parents treat (treated) you?
- o As you reflect on all of these experiences, how do you think they influence the ways you relate to other people?
- o How do you feel all of these things we have been exploring have influenced who you are now as a person and how you have come to be the way you are?

### **Future**

- o What would you wish for yourself in your future relationships?
- o How do you imagine the experiences from your attachment relationships and early childhood may shape the person you can become?
- o Are there any factors from your past that are restricting you in the present and limiting who you can be in the future?
- o What do you see as your “growth edge” for things you’d like to change in yourself so that you can become freed up to be the person you would like to be in the future?
- o Any other questions we should have covered or that you may have now?

## ACTION STEPS PART 2

In the next week try out a few of the concepts that you have explored in class this week. Below are a few suggestions. Take a moment to write down an example or two that you might like to share with others.

1. **Think about your attachment style.** Give examples of times you notice a tendency towards secure, anxious, avoidant, or disorganized attachment. When did you notice it? What thoughts or feelings did you have? What actions followed?

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2. **Work on security:** Who are the people in your life who contribute to a sense of relational security. What are some ways you can build more times of secure connection into your weekly routines? Take a moment to reflect on how you feel after spending time with someone who helps you feel relationally secure. How do you feel about yourself? How might this impact your role as a parent?

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3. **Exercise loving kindness towards yourself:** Remember that attachment styles are typically the results of relationships that you have or had

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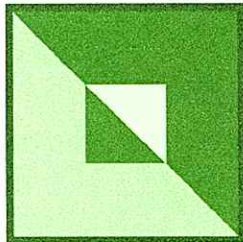
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# Positive TIPS

Understanding  
Yourself Attachment

Concept 1 Adult Attachment Styles

Continue working towards security in your own relationships. Strong marriages, friendships, social connections, etc...

Remember your motivation. You may be building a positive attachment narrative for the next generation.

Everyone has an attachment style and no one was able to choose their own upbringing. Be Kind to yourself and curious about how your attachment style works.

Reframe how you see yourself and others. People do well of they can. We may be missing skills, but people can always learn new things!

