How to Raise an Emotionally Healthy Child

A Webinar with Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.
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Three Parts to the Webinar:

Part 1: How We Influence Our Kids

Part 2: Identifying Patterns in Ourselves

Part 3: Changing to Become Better Parents
Part I: How We Influence Our Kids

Does our past influence our parenting?
How We Influence Our Kids

Two Programs:

Compassionate Child Rearing
Robert W. Firestone, Ph.D.

Parenting from the Inside Out
Daniel Siegel, M.D.
Compassionate Child Rearing
by Robert W. Firestone, Ph.D.

Focus on:

- Interaction between you and your child
- Becoming aware of how you were parented
- Making a coherent life narrative about your past
- Regaining feeling for yourself; then you can extend feeling to your children
- Changing attitudes and behaviors toward your children
Parenting from the Inside Out
Daniel Siegel, M.D.

Focus on:

• Interaction between you and your child

• Learning about yourself: feelings, thoughts and attachment patterns

• Understanding the brain and attachment theory

• Being mindful in your interactions with your children
Separation Theory
Robert W. Firestone, Ph.D.

- The concept of the Fantasy Bond
- The concept of the Critical Inner Voice
The Fantasy Bond

• You Extend the Fantasy Bond to Your Children

• You treat your children the way you were treated

• The voice is like the coach telling you what to do as a parent
Definition of the Voice

The critical inner voice refers to a well-integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward our selves and others. The “voices” that make up this internalized dialogue are at the root of much of our maladaptive behavior. This internal enemy fosters inwardness, distrust, self-criticism, self-denial, addictions and a retreat from goal-directed activities. The critical inner voice effects every aspect of our lives: our self-esteem and confidence, our personal and intimate relationships, our performance and accomplishments at school and work and especially our parenting.
Common “Voices” in Parenting

- You don’t know what you’re doing.
- You’re a horrible father.
- You’re just like your mother.
- Everyone sees what a bad parent you are.
- Your kids are out of control.
- They’re no good, because you’re no good.
- They are so mean and demanding.
- You never get a moment’s peace.
- Don’t you wish they’d just leave you alone?
- Having kids means giving up your life.
- Only a horrible person feels critical of their kids.
The “Should” Voices in Parents (The Negative Coaching)

- You should make them listen to you.
- You should be nice to them.
- Be different from your mother.
- Let them do what they want.
- You should point out everything they do wrong.
- You shouldn’t let them get away with that.
- You should make them eat healthy.
- You should make them behave.
Poll #1

How many of you have had any of these thoughts?
How Voices Pass From Generation to Generation
Where do voices come from?

Patterns of Attachment in Children

Category of Attachment

- Secure
- Insecure – avoidant
- Insecure- anxious/ambivalent
- Insecure - disorganized

Parental Interactive Pattern

- Emotionally available, perceptive, responsive
- Emotionally unavailable, imperceptive, unresponsive and rejecting
- Inconsistently available, perceptive and responsive and intrusive
- Frightening, frightened, disorienting, alarming
## From Parenting from the Inside Out

### Attachment Categories as Children and as Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHILD</th>
<th>ADULT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Securely attached</td>
<td>Secure (free or autonomous)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidantly attached</td>
<td>Dismissing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambivalently attached</td>
<td>Preoccupied or entangled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorganized attached</td>
<td>Unresolved trauma or loss/disorganized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What causes insecure attachment?

- Unresolved trauma/loss in the life of the parents statistically predict attachment style far more than:

  - Maternal Sensitivity
  - Child Temperament
  - Social Status
  - Culture
Implicit Versus Explicit Memory

- Implicit Memory
- Explicit Memory
How does disorganized attachment pass from generation to generation?

- Implicit memory of terrifying experiences may create:
  - Impulsive behaviors
  - Distorted perceptions
  - Rigid thoughts and impaired decision making patterns
  - Difficulty tolerating a range of emotions
The Brain in the Palm of Your Hand

Daniel Siegel, M.D. – Interpersonal Neurobiology

1. Place your thumb in the middle of your palm as in this figure.
2. Now fold your fingers over your thumb as the cortex is folded over the limbic areas of the brain.
Poll #2

Can you recall a time when your parents “flipped their lid” with you?
9 Important Functions of the Pre-Frontal Cortex

1. Body Regulation
2. Attunement
3. Emotional Balance
4. Response Flexibility
5. Empathy
6. Self-Knowing Awareness (Insight)
7. Fear Modulation
8. Intuition
9. Morality
Division of the Mind

Parental Ambivalence
Parents both love and hate themselves and extend both reactions to their productions, i.e., their children.

Parental Nurturance  Parental Rejection, Neglect Hostility
Prenatal Influences

Disease/Trauma

Substance Abuse/ Domestic Violence
Birth
Trauma

Baby

Genetic
Structure
Temperament
Physicality
Sex
Parental Nurturance

Self-System
Unique make-up of the individual; harmonious identification and incorporation of parent’s positive attitudes and traits; and the effect of experience and education on the maturing self-system.
Personal Goals

Needs
- Food
- Thirst
- Sex
- Safety

Wants
- Affiliation
- Achievement
- Activity

Meaning
- Love
  - Compassion for Others
- Generosity
Personal Conscience

- Moral Principles
- Ethical Behavior
- Integrity
Parental Rejection, Neglect, Hostility
Other Factors: accidents, illnesses, death anxiety

Anti-Self System
The Fantasy Bond (core defense) is a self-parenting process made up of two elements: the helpless, needy child, and the self-punishing, self-nurturing parent. Either aspect may be extended to relationships. The degree of defense is proportional to the amount of damage sustained while growing up.
# Anti-Self System

## Self-Punishing Voice Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice Process</th>
<th>Behaviors</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Suicidal injunctions – suicidal ideation</td>
<td>Actions that jeopardize, such as carelessness with one’s body, physical attacks on the self, and actual suicide</td>
<td>Parents’ covert and overt aggression (identification with the aggressor).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Anti-Self System

## Self-Soothing Voice Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Voice Process</strong></th>
<th><strong>Behaviors</strong></th>
<th><strong>Source</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a) Aggrandizing thoughts toward self.</td>
<td>Verbal build up toward self.</td>
<td>Parental build up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b) Suspicious paranoid thoughts towards others.</td>
<td>Alienation from others, destructive behavior towards others.</td>
<td>Parental attitudes, child abuse, experienced victimization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Overtly Violent thoughts</td>
<td>Aggressive actions, actual violence.</td>
<td>Parental neglect, parents’ overt aggression (identification with the aggressor).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 2:

Identifying Patterns in Ourselves
Identifying the Moments When You “Lose It” With Your Kids

What triggers you?

- **Examples:**
  - Running late
  - Inappropriate public displays
  - Tantrums
  - Our own stress

*Parenting from the Inside Out*
Identifying the Moments When You “Lose It” With Your Kids
Poll #3

Does it sometimes feel like your child is dictating to you?
Can you recall a time when you “flipped your lid” with your children?
Reflect on times when you have entered low-road states with your children. **Knowing your triggers and being able to recognize when you are entering the low road are the first steps toward changing.**

Are there particular interactions with your child that frequently bring you into a low-road state? **What themes act as a trigger and brings you to the edge?**
Poll #4

What situations cause difficulty between you and your child?

- Bedtime
- Homework
- Getting dressed
- Public displays
- Mealtimes
Some parents mistreat their children emotionally, with little or no awareness of how this hurts a child’s feelings. Do you recall your parents harshly criticizing you or unjustly accusing you of something you didn’t do? How did you feel at these times?

In your original family, did you experience a lack of respect for your personal boundaries? How?

Did your parents ever threaten to abandon you or send you away to boarding school or military school?
Exercises from
The Compassionate Child Rearing Parent Education Program

• Do you feel that your parents or teachers stifled your curiosity or excitement about learning?

• Did you have a teacher, parent or relative who made a practice of ridiculing or teasing you, or who made sarcastic remarks, then told you that you were “too sensitive” if you showed that your feelings were hurt?

• Have you noticed yourself reacting to your children in ways you feel might hurt their feelings? How have you begun to change those reactions?
Poll #5

Do you recall a time when your parents:

• harshly criticized you?
• showed a lack of respect for your personal boundaries?
• threatened to abandon you or send you away?
• stifled your curiosity or excitement?
• ridiculed or teased you?
Questions for Parental Self-Reflection
Adapted from the Adult Attachment Interview

• What was it like growing up? Who was in your family?

• How did you get along with your parents early in your childhood? How did the relationship evolve throughout your youth up until the present time?

• How did your relationship with your mother and father differ and how where they similar? Are there ways in which you try to be like, or try not to be like, each of your parents?

• Did you ever feel rejected or threatened by your parents? Were there other experiences you had that felt overwhelming or traumatizing in your life, during childhood or beyond? Do any of these experiences still feel very much alive?
Questions for Parental Self-Reflection

• How did your parents communicate with you when you were happy and excited? Did they join with you in your enthusiasm? When you were distressed or unhappy as a child, what would happen?

• Was there anyone else besides your parents in your childhood who took care of you? What is it like for you when you let others take care of your child now?

• If you had difficult times during your childhood, were there positive relationships in or outside of your home that you could depend on during those times?
From Parenting from the Inside Out

Questions for Parental Self-Reflection

• How did your parents discipline you as a child?

• Do you recall your earliest separations from your parents?

• Did anyone significant in your life die during your childhood, or later in your life?
Think of three words that describe your relationship with your child. Do these words resemble those that you would use to describe memories of your childhood experiences with your own parents?
Poll #6

How many of you are familiar with the term “helicopter parent?”
Emotional Hunger

• Can you recall your parents being overprotective or intrusive?

• Did your parents try to get comfort from you when you were a child?

• Did your parent or parents insist that you perform for friends and relatives?

• Did your parent or parents brag excessively to their friends and relatives about your accomplishments (as though your achievements or talent were theirs)?
Poll #7

Did your parents ever:
- act overprotective or intrusive?
- try to get comfort from you when you were a child?
- insist that you perform for friends and relatives?
- brag excessively about your accomplishments?
Part 3:

Changing to Become Better Parents
Exercises from Parenting From the Inside Out

• Write in your journal when your emotions are reactive and heating up. For now, just notice them—don’t try to change your response yet, just observe.

• Think of an issue in your life that is impairing your ability to connect flexibility with your child. Focus on the past, present, and future aspects of this issue.
Exercise 9.1
The Firestone Voice Scale for Parents

Circle the frequency with which you experience the following critical inner voices:
0 = Never  1 = Rarely  2 = Once in a While  3 = Frequently  4 = Most of the Time

0  1  2  3  4 You don’t know how to comfort your baby. You can’t make him/her feel better.

0  1  2  3  4 You don’t know the first thing about being a parent.

0  1  2  3  4 You’re so impatient with kids.

0  1  2  3  4 Your child is so demanding, so needy, so clingy.

0  1  2  3  4 Your child is supposed to fit into your life, not disrupt it.

0  1  2  3  4 Your child is always crying. You must be doing something wrong.
Exercise 9.1
The Firestone Voice Scale for Parents

Circle the frequency with which you experience the following critical inner voices:
0 = Never   1 = Rarely   2 = Once in a While   3 = Frequently   4 = Most of the Time

0 1 2 3 4 Your children are misbehaving in public again. See how bad they’re making you look!

0 1 2 3 4 See how unhappy your child looks. It’s all your fault.

0 1 2 3 4 You’re such an angry parent. You lose your temper all the time.

0 1 2 3 4 He(she) is too old for you to hug or hold him/her all the time.

0 1 2 3 4 Children are born aggressive, greedy and selfish and have to be taught how to be civilized and unselfish.
## Exercise 9.2 What Do You Think When You are Angry at Your Child?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Angry thoughts toward my child</th>
<th>Critical inner voices similar to the angry thoughts I have toward my child</th>
<th>Similar angry statements that were said to me as a child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| *She is so spoiled.*           | *You’re so self-centered.*  
*She asks for everything.*       | *You can’t always get what you want. The whole world doesn’t revolve around you, you know?* |
Exercise 9.3 You as a parent: Your Critical Inner Voice/The Real You

My critical inner voice’s point of view about me as a parent

My realistic point of view of me as a parent

Example:
You’re so mean. You always lose your temper, and your kids will never respect you.

I may not be perfect, but I can control my temper and enjoy my kids. They care about me and admire me when I am at my best.
If you have already entered the low road, self-reflection may be very difficult. If possible, remove yourself from interaction with your children. **Move your body, stretch, walk.** Watch your breathing. As soon as you begin to calm, observe your internal sensations.
Consider the possibilities if changing the patterns of the past. When you are about to transition to the low road, be aware that an alternative pathway is possible. Take a breath. Count to ten. Stop and get a glass of water. **Remove yourself from the situation** by taking a time-out or “emotional break.” Now that you have created some distance, reflect on what was happening.
The goal is to make a coherent story:

- Dual focus of repair in the parent: on what you experience and what your child experiences from his/her point of view
- Getting on the same physical level as your child
- Make a non-intrusive, empathetic attempt at the repair process
- Respect your child’s style
- Be neutral, not blaming or judging
- Do not interrogate
- Be open to the child’s point of view and encourage him/her to express it
- Do not be defensive/ Do not invalidate your child’s experience
- Listen to your child’s experience before you share your own
- Reflect back the child’s experience
- Explain melt downs to your child - people do temporarily “lose their minds”
Poll #8

Do you feel you can now implement these repair techniques with your children?
From Parenting from the Inside Out

Practices of Integrative Communication

• Awareness. Be mindful of your own feelings and bodily responses and others’ nonverbal signals.

• Attunement. Allow your own state of mind to align with that of another.

• Empathy. Open your mind to sense another’s experience and point of view.

• Expression. Communicate your internal responses with respect; make the internal external.

• Joining. Share openly in the give-and-take of communication, both verbally and nonverbally.

• Clarification. Help make sense of the experience of another.

• Sovereignty. Respect the dignity and separateness of each individual’s mind.
From Parenting from the Inside Out
Knowing Minds

**Compassion**: The ability to feel with another; to be sympathetic, tenderhearted. Compassion is a caring stance toward the distressful emotional experience of another person. Compassion may depend on mirror neuron systems, which evoke an emotional state in us that mirrors that of another person, enabling us to feel another person’s pain.

**Empathy**: Understanding the internal experience of another person; the imaginative projection of one’s consciousness into the feelings of another person or object; sympathetic understanding. This is a cognitively complex process that involves mental capacities to imagine the mind of another. Empathy may depend on the capacity for mind sight, mediated by the integrated right hemisphere and prefrontal regions of the brain.
**Mindsight:** The capacity to “see,” or imagine, the mind of oneself or another, enabling an understanding of behavior in terms of mental processes. Other synonyms for this process are “mentalizing,” “theory of the mind,” “mind reading,” and “reflective function.”
The Healthy Mind Platter

SLEEP TIME

PHYSICAL TIME

FOCUS TIME

TIME IN

DOWN TIME

PLAY TIME

CONNECTING TIME

The Healthy Mind Platter, for Optimal Brain Matter

Source: http://drdansiegel.com/resources/healthy_mind_platter/
Resources: Books

Visit www.psychalive.org for resource links
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**Working with High-Conflict Couples**
Presenter: Dr. Lisa Firestone
CE Webinar- 3 Ces
Jan. 24 - 4pm – 5:30pm PST

**How to Improve Your Relationship**
Presenter: Dr. Lisa Firestone
Free Webinar
Feb. 7 - 11am – 12pm PST

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