



# **Teaching Children Inner Bonding**

## **Fostering Openness to Learning in Children**

By Dr. Margaret Paul

**As parents, grandparents and teachers, we can foster openness to learning in children by focusing on their effort rather than on their abilities or achievements.**

What makes one child excited, and another fearful about trying new experiences?

What makes one child put forth extensive effort toward something, and another give up easily in discouragement?

What makes one child intensely curious, and another closed down to new learning?

It is their set of beliefs - their way of thinking - that determines their behavior and outlook. Their beliefs determine their frame of mind, their approach to life, their attitude about themselves and their abilities.

### **Beliefs That Promote Learning, Beliefs That Promote Fear**

What kind of beliefs foster openness to learning, and what kind of beliefs create a sense of fear and limitation?

Surprisingly, beliefs such as "I am smart," "I am talented," or "I am gifted" tend to create limitation, rather than an open intent to learn. When children are told, "You are so smart" or "You are so talented," they have a tendency to get attached to the approval of being smart or talented and may become fearful of failure. They may decide that if they put forth great effort toward learning something and then fail, this will prove that they are not as smart or as talented as their parents or teachers believe them to be. They may learn to attach their worth to being smart or talented and may see themselves as a failure if they fail at something.

On the other hand, children who are praised for EFFORT, rather than ABILITY (see "Mindset" by Dr. Carol Dweck), learn to value themselves for their openness to learning and their efforts toward their goal, rather than for achieving the goal itself. These children get excited by the process of learning itself and experience a sense of worth in the effort, growth and learning, rather than their sense of worth being attached to the outcome.

## **Enjoying the Challenge or Being Attached to Outcomes**

Children who enjoy a challenge receive a sense of self-validation from the effort itself, while children who are attached to outcomes receive a sense of worth mainly through the approval of others.

There is a huge difference between children who believe "The harder I work, the smarter I get," or "The more I practice, the better I get," and children who believe, "I am smart, so I don't have to work hard," or "I am talented, and I can just fall back on my talent." Research indicates that raw intelligence or talent is not enough.

It's always been accepted that through hard work, training and exercise, it's possible to develop intellectual faculties or an intellectual mastery well above the average. We know very well that there are people who are exceptionally gifted intellectually. We also know very well that those exceptional gifts will yield nothing unless cultivated by intensive training and daily practice.

~The Monk and the Philosopher, by Jean-Francois Revel and Matthieu Ricard p. 45

Likewise, we need to make sure that we do not limit our children by telling them they are stupid or untalented. A child who believes "I'm stupid, so why bother putting in any effort?" or "I'm not musical, so why bother practicing the piano?" will never make the effort needed to grow.

## **Fostering Openness to Learning**

As parents, grandparents and teachers, we can foster openness to learning in children by focusing on their effort rather than on their abilities or their achievements. A statement such as "Wow, I can really see how hard you've worked on this!" can motivate a child far more than "Wow, you are so smart!" or "Wow, you are so talented!"

It is wonderful to see children curious, open and excited by learning. It is wonderful to experience children who are self-motivated and receive joy and a sense of intrinsic worth through their own efforts. Let's foster this in our children, by teaching them that their intelligence and abilities are not fixed at birth - that their intelligence and abilities grow with effort and practice.

The more children enjoy the process of learning, the more open they are to learning about themselves, and learning how to take responsibility for themselves. This intent to learn is essential for children to learn Inner Bonding.

## **Teaching Inner Bonding to Children**

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**Imagine how much different your life would be if you had been taught as a young child to self-nurture and to access and trust a higher, personal source of love and wisdom. As parents, you have the opportunity to offer your children the gift of Inner Bonding.**

"Can kids really learn Inner Bonding?"

"How old does a child need to be to learn Inner Bonding?"

"How can a child develop an Adult when he or she is still a child?"

These are some of the questions that the parents I work with have asked me.

It is quite easy to teach Inner Bonding to children. Young children use their imaginations all the time, so imagining a guardian angel, an imaginary wise friend, or a fairy godmother is easy for them. Older children have little difficulty in imagining an inner coach, an inner teacher or mentor, or the oldest and wisest part of themselves. It gives children great comfort to open to their Guidance and know that they are never alone.

# TO: Mommy

DEAR MOMMY WE WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU WE WILL ALWAYS  
GIVE YOU UNCONDISHANLE LOVE. IF YOU ARE FEELING SAD  
AND YOUR INNERCHILD NEEDS HELP THAT YOU CAN'T FIX  
REMEMBER THERE IS SUCH THING AS A HIGHER GUIDENS  
SO YOU CAN USE YOUR DIALOG AND REMEMBER I CANT  
HELP YOUR INNERCHILD EVEN IF I TRY THE BEST THAT I  
CAN I CAN'T DO IT. I LOVE YOU, YOU LOVE ME WER A HAPPY  
FAMILY WITH A GREAT BIG HUG AND A KISS FROM ME TO YOU  
WON'T YOU SAY YOU LOVE ME TO. LOVE LAUREN & AMANDA.

P.S. Last 2 sentences come from "Barney's song" that we sing at  
closing of our family meetings.

↑  
purple  
diamond



Eight-year-old Lauren, who attended a private school in Manhattan Beach, California, created this letter and picture.

I've heard of children as young as two and a half learning to self-nurture. Even very young children can learn to identify their feeling self as opposed to their thinking self. They can learn to care about the baby or little child within them, who might be sad or mad or scared or hurting. Most young children can easily understand that a doll or stuffed animal can represent their feeling self. It is very easy for children to talk to their doll or teddy bear as if it was a part of themselves and then let the doll or bear answer. It's equally easy for them to talk with their spiritual Guidance.

A teacher at a private elementary school that teaches Inner Bonding to all their students told me of a seven-year-old girl who was upset because she was having some trouble reading. The teacher told her to work with her Guidance about being upset. After a while, the student came to the teacher beaming. "My Guidance told me that I'm upset because I'm judging myself, not because I can't read well. And she told me that it's easier to stop judging myself than it is to learn to read!"

All children, from the time they are born, are in the process of developing their Adult. They are developing their beliefs and their ability to think and reason. When they are three, they have a three-year old adult, and when they are seven, they have a seven-year old adult. The more they develop false beliefs about themselves, others and God, that come from fear and trauma, the stronger their wounded adult becomes. The more they develop their self esteem and their ability to love, care, and understand themselves and others, the stronger their loving Adult becomes. Their loving Adult grows as they learn to connect with and to trust their spiritual Guidance.

While a three-year-old only has three years of actual experience on the planet in this body, he or she has eons of experience as a soul. The more parents help their children to access and trust the wisdom of their own souls - their feelings - the more they help their children develop their loving Adult.

Children also learn easily by watching their parents. If you allow your children to experience your own Inner Bonding process, and they see the benefit you receive from practicing Inner Bonding, they are likely to use you as a role model and practice the process themselves. Children tend to learn to treat themselves in the way their parents treat themselves. If you role-model loving, respectful, accepting, non-judgmental behavior toward yourself and your children, the chances are your children will learn to treat themselves and others with love,

respect and acceptance. However, if you are accepting of your children, but judgmental toward yourself, your children may learn to be judgmental toward themselves as well.

## **Do You Want Your Children to Be Like You?**

By Dr. Margaret Paul

### **What are you role-modeling for your children?**

There is an old saying regarding children: "Do as I say, not as I do." Whoever coined this phrase didn't know much about children. Children often do not "do as we say." We are the role models regarding how our children learn to treat themselves and others. We are the role models regarding whether or not our children learn to take personal responsibility for themselves - physically, emotionally, financially, relationally, spiritually and organizationally.

Do you avoid responsibility for your own feelings, with substances or activities, or with shaming and blaming behavior toward yourself or others? Are you always late and is your desk a mess? Do you eat poorly and lack exercise? Are you always in major credit card debt? Do you lack a connection with a spiritual source of love and guidance?

If you want your children to be on time, then you need to be on time. If you want your children to be healthy and fit, then you need to be healthy and fit. If you want your children to be honest, then you need to be honest. If you want to raise happy and peaceful children, then you need to role-model how to be happy and peaceful. If you want your children to have high self-esteem, then you need to learn to treat yourself and them with kindness and caring. If you treat your children with caring and respect, but your children experience you shaming yourself and treating yourself as if your feelings and needs are not important, there is a good chance they will learn to disrespect themselves as well.

For example, Martin grew up in a family where both of his parents were high achievers and made a lot of money. But his mother was a highly judgmental woman and his father was always unhappy and worried about something. Is it any surprise that Martin does well

financially, yet is constantly judging himself and others, and is often agitated over minor things?

Angie grew up with a mother who was totally devoted to her. In Angie's mind, her mother was the ideal mother - kind, compassionate, and always ready to listen to Angie and help her with her problems. Her hardworking father was also a kind and caring person. Yet Angie has a hard time taking loving care of herself. She ignores responsibility for her own feelings, does not feed herself well, is often judgmental toward herself, and has a hard time getting things done. She is constantly seeking a man to fill her up and make her feel worthy. How did this happen with such loving parents?

While Angie's parents were loving to her, they were not loving to themselves. Angie's mother used food to avoid her feelings, and was always giving herself up to please others. In addition, she could never quite get organized and was always late. Angie's father spent his life working hard and using the TV to avoid his feelings. Neither of Angie's parents role-modeled personal responsibility for their physical and emotional health. Angie was shaped far more by how they treated themselves than by how they treated her. In fact, because they treated her so lovingly and treated themselves so unlovingly, Angie grew up believing that it was others' responsibility to love her and fill her, rather than her own responsibility. She grew up being needy and demanding, rather than personally responsible.

Do you want your children to be like you? As a parent, it is very important to take a look at what you are role-modeling for your children - not only regarding how you treat others, but how you treat yourself. If there are certain values that you want your children to have when they grow up, they are far more likely to have your values if they deeply respect you. And they will not respect you if you do not treat yourself with respect. It is highly important, if you want your children to be happy, healthy, and personally responsible, to be a role model of happiness, health and personal responsibility.

Doing your own consistent Inner Bonding practice is the surest way for your children to also practice Inner Bonding.