

# REACH

Resource • Education • Advocacy • Crisis Intervention • Hope

Aspiranet and State of California Post-Adoption Support



Hello Families,

This newsletter focuses on the topic of attachment. Attachment is a term that describes the quality of an individual's long-term emotional bond to another person. Attachment is 'person specific,' meaning that attachment bonds are unique within each relationship we have.

Sometimes our children's early attachment experiences are beyond our control; however, the good news is that it is never too late to start a new attachment story. By exposing children to consistent positive experiences, those experiences will create internal change! There is hope in healing through a consistent, attuned, and nurturing caregiver. Rituals are one way to create space designated for togetherness, to rebuild connection, and develop secure attachments. Rituals are delightful interactions and games that parents can play with children that send the message of unconditional and complete presence. Because secure attachments are created by the quality of parent-child interactions, moments of connection do not require you to carve out substantial blocks of time. Rituals that communicate, "I love you" can exist in the little moments and are reminders to children that they are loved and they matter.

We hope you find the information in this newsletter to be helpful and educational for your parenting journey. If you would like additional resources on attachment or practical skills to build attachment, please contact a REACH social worker and we will be happy to assist you.

Best,

The REACH team



We would like to take this opportunity to thank the owner of Madera's Galaxy Dance Academy, Michelle Harvey-Magana, for providing her studio for our holiday gathering. Michelle, along with her Academy members and families give back to the community in a variety of ways, including donation drives for food, socks, and books. She has classes for children ages 3 and up, including classes for children with special needs. If you would like more information, please take a look at her website [here](#).

## State Spring 2023

### Inside This Issue

1. Greetings
2. TBRI®'s Connecting Principle
3. Kids, Trauma, and School
4. Attachment Activities
5. Book Review
6. Support Group Calendar
7. REACH Services

## Your REACH Support Team

**Sandra Genova, LCSW**  
Core Program Director  
[sgenova@aspiranet.org](mailto:sgenova@aspiranet.org)

**Tara Soria**  
Social Worker  
[tsoria@aspiranet.org](mailto:tsoria@aspiranet.org)

**Griselda Santillan Mejia**  
Social Worker  
[gsantillanmejia@aspiranet.org](mailto:gsantillanmejia@aspiranet.org)

151 E. Canal Dr.  
Turlock, CA 95380  
Ph: 209.669.2577  
Fax: 209.669.2593  
[aspiranet.org](http://aspiranet.org)

[reachadoptionhelp.org](http://reachadoptionhelp.org)



## TBRI®'s Connecting Principle

By Fernando Aquino, MSW

**“When you connect to the heart of a child, anything is possible.” —Dr. Karyn Purvis**

Curated by Dr. Karyn Purvis and Dr. David Cross, TBRI®, or Trust-Based Relational Intervention, is designed to meet the needs of vulnerable children. TBRI® incorporates the principles of Connecting, Empowering, and Correcting to identify and break down “fear-based behaviors.” This model is utilized to aid in healing relational trauma through practical skills and tools.

Attachment is seen in healthy children as having their own “secure base” for exploring the world and their surroundings. Children from hard places lack this secure base. This makes the idea of “felt safety” critical when we can understand that children may be safe in their environment, but still need to feel safe emotionally and mentally. Children need a connection with healthy and safe adults to build secure attachments. This will lead to children becoming healthy, well-functioning adults.

TBRI®'s Connecting principle includes two strategies: engagement and mindful awareness. Mindful awareness focuses on a parent's awareness of their own attachment style, emotional state, and emotional availability. This can be a challenge as parents must reflect on their history and what they bring to the relationship with their child. Mindful awareness also includes self-awareness of triggers and limits, and being able to center yourself back to responsive parenting.

Engagement includes skills you can do with your child to develop a sense of felt safety and connection. This can include: behavior matching, instead of standing over the child, sit on the floor with them; or utilizing eye contact, connecting with the child through acknowledgment of eye color and providing a warm familiar face. Healthy touch techniques allow for boundary setting, which can come in handy if a child has experienced harmful touch in the past. Parents can be mindful of safe touch and ask for permission to hold their child's hand or arm. Connection is critical in healing relational trauma and rebuilding attachment for children. Connection can lead to understanding our children better and decrease the need for correcting when it comes to challenging behaviors.

### **Engagement Strategies:**

- Eye contact
- Getting to child's level
- Full attention when speaking to child
- Tone of voice
- Playful engagement
- Healthy touch
- Behavioral matching



## Kids, Trauma, and School

By Katia Hawkins, BSW, MS

Often, adopted children have suffered from ongoing abuse or neglect and chronic trauma. These experiences affect the way they act in the classroom. They can frequently become good at hiding their pain, and the pain instead reflects as misbehavior or even ADHD. Trauma may teach kids not to trust adults, so they struggle to connect with teachers, refusing to ask for help or being jumpy or distracted. Those with more severe behaviors of acting out seem to be punished more quickly by the schools. As a parent, you can advocate for your child and help them by naming the feeling you see them expressing. If you use the wrong feeling to name what they are experiencing, the child may correct you; it's okay to be incorrect. Advocate and communicate.

Remember, these children likely didn't have an adult to soothe them and teach them self-regulation when they were very young, so they may not know how to calm themselves. Parents and teachers can work together to help the child learn coping skills. It's common for traumatized children to have "glass half empty" personalities. Often, they are waiting for the worst, mentally preparing, living their lives on "red," and being hypervigilant. They will need your help to see they are good kids who deserve to do well and deserve to be loved.

So how do we help our teachers better understand, support, and teach our children? Start by helping the teacher identify the symptoms of trauma, which may

manifest as behaviors. Create a plan between yourself, the teacher, and the child. Work as a team to help the child feel safe and to speak up when they need help. You can create a plan that addresses the most common obstacles to learning that traumatized children experience:

- Trouble Forming Relationships with Teachers—How to show and teach the child that I, as the adult, am safe? How do I provide a safe place for them?
- Poor Self-Regulation—We are not born with self-regulation skills; we are taught. How do we help the child learn coping skills so they can be effective self-regulators?
- Negative Thinking—Practice positive talk. How can we say that positively?
- Hypervigilance—How do I create a safe space? Can I make a "safe corner" where the child can retreat when overwhelmed and hypervigilant?
- Executive Function Challenges—For the child who has difficulties with memory, paying attention, and planning. How do we address these functions, so the child does not feel like a failure? Can we do a checklist? Where do we tape the checklist?

To learn more about how you can help your child with mental health struggles or learning challenges, please visit [www.childmind.org](http://www.childmind.org).



## Attachment Activities

By Tara Soria, M.A.

Playing together is one of the most effective tools for building strong relationships with your child. Through play, children learn to trust others and feel safe. By making a conscious effort to incorporate humor and play into your daily interactions with your children, you can improve the quality of your relationships and connect on a deeper level. Here are a few ideas on how to have fun while connecting with your child and maybe even create some family rituals to enjoy for years to come:

- ♥ Enjoy a hot cocoa party in front of the fireplace before bedtime
- ♥ Create a family secret handshake, fist bump, or “I love you” sign
- ♥ Read a silly book together and share some laughs
- ♥ Pack a picnic dinner for your living room and eat on the floor
- ♥ Play a game as a family (“Pie Face!” by Hasbro is fun for all ages)
- ♥ Make up a song with your child’s name in it or find a song that honors them and can be “their song”
- ♥ Squirt a whipped cream mustache on their face for dessert
- ♥ Host a dance party in your living room complete with songs you love and an inexpensive disco ball
- ♥ Put on a family talent show
- ♥ Celebrate “unofficial holidays” that are meaningful or humorous to your family (examples: Grilled Cheese Day is on April 12, Talk Like Yoda Day is on May 21)
- ♥ Create family artwork, such as colorful handprints, and hang the masterpiece on a wall in your home
- ♥ Using a long roll of butcher paper, have your child lie on the paper, and trace their outline. Your child can then fill in their outline with crayons, markers, and craft supplies- or for older children they might want to write their thoughts, hopes, questions, and dreams within their outline.

Play and laughter perform an essential role in building strong, healthy parent-child relationships by bringing you closer together and building a positive bond. There are so many wonderful ways to create fond memories with your children that they will treasure for the rest of their lives!

Source: Family Exchange Center



## Book Review:

### ***Attachment Play: How to Solve Children's Behavior Problems with Play, Laughter, and Connection***

**By Aletha J. Solter, PH.D.**

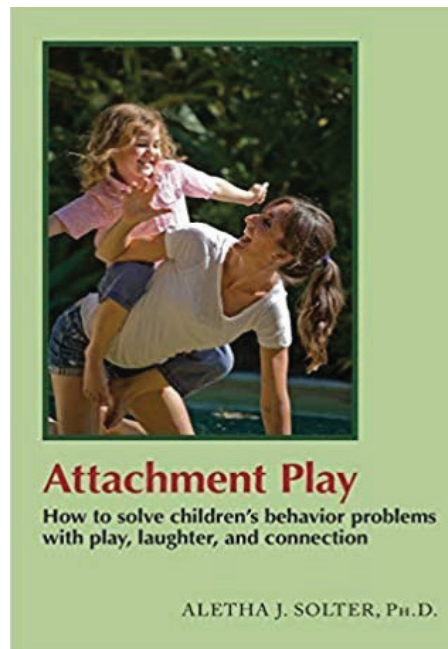
By Beth Hurlbert, LMFT

Attachment Play discusses the importance of attachment and play in addressing behaviors that children exhibit. The book takes a different look at changing behaviors by using play rather than a punitive or authoritarian approach. By using playful activities, you are reducing stress, strengthening attachment, and solving behaviors while laughing with your child.

There are nine forms of attachment play introduced: nondirective child-centered play, symbolic play with specific props or themes, contingency play, nonsense play, separation games, power-reversal games, regression games, activities with body contact, and cooperative games and activities. Each type of play has an example and a description of the play.

Using these nine types of attachment play, different behaviors are addressed by looking at the underlying cause and feelings. Then the book delves into how attachment play will explore those feelings differently, and let them be expressed and released positively. Behaviors

such as “bad” language, anger and aggression, lying, cheating, and doing homework are all explored with attachment play. Examples are given of how play is used for behaviors and specific forms of play are identified for each.



Attachment play can also be helpful to children when they are going through difficult times. Anxiety and stress can be reduced by using attachment play when facing parental divorce, natural disasters, and school challenges. Through play, children are supported by their parents and learn skills that will be beneficial to them throughout life.

If you are looking for a different way to parent, if you are not feeling productive in your parenting, or if your relationship with your child is stressed, this book may be for you. You can look up specific behaviors you are dealing with and get suggestions for fun ways to address them. Bring the laughter

and joy back into your relationship with your child while connecting with them and teaching them the life skills they need.

# Virtual Parent Education and Support Groups

## Parent Education and Support Group in Madera (English)

**April 27, 2023 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

**May 25, 2023 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

**June 22, 2023 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

Please RSVP to Tara Soria (tsoria@aspiranet.org) for location information.

## Parent Education and Support Group (Spanish)

**April 26, 2023 from 9:30-11:30 a.m.**

**May 24, 2023 from 9:30-11:30 a.m.**

**June 28, 2023 from 9:30-11:30 a.m.**

This group is held on Zoom. Please RSVP to Griselda Santillan Mejia (gsantillanmejia@aspiranet.org) for the Zoom link.

## Parent Cafe on Zoom (English)

**April 20, 2023 from 10-11:30 a.m.**

**May 18, 2023 from 10-11:30 a.m.**

**June 15, 2023 from 10-11:30 a.m.**

Flyers will be emailed prior to the Parent Cafe. Please RSVP to Tara Soria (tsoria@aspiranet.org) for the Zoom link.

## The Adoption Preparation Training Series is in progress!

Here are the dates for this quarter:

**Module 5: Correcting Discipline - April 3, 2023**

**Module 6: Cultural Competency - April 10, 2023**

**Module 7: Birth Family - April 17, 2023**

**Module 8: Normative Adoption Issues/Stuck Spots - April 24, 2023**

**Module 9: Self Care and Supports - May 1, 2023**

Register using the link [here](#).

Some groups are being held via Zoom at this time.

Flyers will be sent out prior to each group with details to join.

If you'd like to be added to the invite list, please contact us!





NON PROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Stockton, CA  
PERMIT NO. 451

Mailed From:  
151 E. Canal Dr.  
Turlock, CA 95380



**California Department of Social Services**  
**Fresno Regional Office**  
1330C E. Shaw Ave., Fresno, CA 93710  
(559) 243-8200  
[www.childsworld.ca.gov](http://www.childsworld.ca.gov)



## REACH Post-Adoption Support Services

**REACH offers services in Madera, Mono, Mariposa & San Benito Counties:**

**Monthly Educational/Support Groups** – Monthly meetings where families are able to receive education/training and meet other adoptive families in the community. Please check with each respective site to learn if licensing or certification hours are provided.

**Quarterly REACH Newsletter** – Quarterly newsletters filled with adoption articles, local trainings, book reviews, on-line resources and more.

**Educational Workshops and Trainings** – A variety of workshops and trainings are made available in Madera and San Benito Counties.

**REACH Library** – The REACH library is open and available for book review and check outs during the monthly support groups or by appointment.

**Case Management** – REACH clients are provided with information, resource referral or other assistance as needed. Although Case Management Services are generally provided via telephone, special arrangements for face to face case management can be arranged.

**Crisis Counseling** – Crisis intervention is available. Please contact our REACH staff for this support.