

# Parenting- It's about *Relationship*

## We were wired for connection

Amazingly, God's design for relationship with our children starts before they are even born! **While still in utero, an inherent readiness and longing to connect is set in place, ready to be activated from the moment of birth.** In fact, all the most important aspects of child development are initiated by parent interactions. When you coo at him, make giggling and gurgling sounds to echo his own, and mimic his facial expressions, you are doing something vitally important: you are mirroring your baby.

The human brain contains what is called a mirror neuron system. Mirroring connects you to your infant and actually helps build neuropathways that determine how his brain will develop. **Mirroring helps determine neuroplasticity- the ability of the brain to learn, adapt, and change.** Research also suggests mirroring may be responsible not only for acquisition of language, but also for other cognitive functions such as emotion, thought, physical movement, as well as empathy development. **Through relationship we are intimately involved in building our babies' brains and as we connect, we remain bonded.**

## What determines how we parent?

**We are always parenting the best we can.** Yet, our parenting is automatically influenced by the way we were parented, whether consciously or not. Truthfully, **every new parent will experience times of being overwhelmed because parenting reacquaints us with the children we once were.** As a result, unresolved pain is often shaken loose and we respond to our own children in deep emotional ways we do not understand or intend too. However, with careful examination, our parenting inheritance can be consciously altered by keeping the best and changing the rest. Through this transformation journey, we will often be living in the gap between what we are learning and what we have actually put into practice. That's okay. As incredible as it might sound, with God's help these changes have the potential to impact our family dynamics for generations to come.

## Identifying and taming emotions

Most of us believe that if our children would just "behave," we could maintain our composure as parents. However, **parenting isn't about what our child does, but about how we respond.** The truth is that managing our own emotions and actions is what allows us to feel peaceful as parents. **In fact, the more emotional intelligence we acquire, the better equipped we are to help our children handle their emotions, as well.**

## How to connect more deeply with your child

Quality time is a myth because there is no switch to turn on closeness. We earn our child's trust with daily behavior: following through with promises we make to play a game, picking him up on time, offering understanding when he out of sorts. **You don't have to do anything out of the ordinary to build a relationship with your child. However, every interaction-good or not so good- creates relationship.** Interruptions and distraction has a way of eroding connection. In fact, to a young child, any time your attention is focused elsewhere is a separation. That's why they act up as soon as you answer the phone or start making dinner. Doing errands can be connection if we are focused on the child, but it will feel like separation if we use that time to return calls while driving, the list in our hand is priority, or the clerk has our focused attention instead. **Make sure your time with your child includes space for warmth and giggles, rather than just moving them through the tasks that have to be managed on his behalf.**

## Setting limits with roots of empathy

Children thrive when they feel connected and understood. **Parenting effectively depends above all on how connected we are to our children.** Period. Connected children operate within limits more easily because limits are not threatening to the relationship.

To learn about parent coaching or for more training on this topic,  
contact Erin Blain at [erin@solvingparentingpuzzles.com](mailto:erin@solvingparentingpuzzles.com)