

THE NUTURED HEART APPROACH

Our children need an industrial strength intervention to help them have their hearts filled with love rather than hate and to apply their intensity to successes rather than to provoke an ever growing trail of failures.

To create freedom from the anger, hurt and violence affecting the hearts of our children. To create freedom from the life of failure our children experience.

The world needs more nurtured hearts not injured hearts.

This approach is about strategically creating actual experiences of success for children within the context of their activities and their relationships. Success is powerful medicine.

TRADITIONAL PARENTING APPROACHES DO NOT LEND THEMSELVES TO SHOWING MUCH EXCITEMENT FOR POSITIVE BEHAVIORS OR SMALLER SUCCESSES. HOWEVER, AS A CULTURE, WE JUMP ALL OVER EVERY LEVEL OF FAILURE. CHILDREN ARE DRAWN IN WHEN WE SHOW UP IN MORE ENERGIZED WAYS, WHETHER THAT ENERGY IS POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE.

Conventional methods of parenting, unlike video games, respond in a low-key way to everyday events that are going well, but as soon as something goes wrong, the energy tends to really explode in the forms of lectures, warnings, consequences and punishments.

Intense children need to perceive that the container that is each new environment can hold them safely, competently, and fearlessly. Any consequent acting-out is a way of saying, "I need more structure. I need more structure!"

Positives in parenting: acknowledgment, recognition, affection, loving remarks and gestures, support, encouragement, modeling, education

Limit Setting: coaching, instructing, warning, admonishing, redirecting, administering consequences

Conventional parenting and teaching approaches consistently fail with the difficult child for two main reasons: efforts to provide positives and set limits are not well coordinated, and these efforts do not possess the intensity required for the job.

Desirable qualities such as a good attitude, responsibility, and self-control are better taught when they are in use rather than when they are lacking.

For intense, high-energy children, the tendency to stumble into a pattern of pulling for negative attention is significantly stronger than for children with an even temperament. Their need for relationship, connection and response is profound.

Intense children, who have a proclivity for impulsiveness and lack of inhibition, have a strong tendency to lead confusing lives because they often get more out of the world by acting out than by using good control.

Negative attention is like junk food. You can eat it all day long and still be hungry. It has no nutritional value. "Cut it out, Stop it, Quit it!" = Failure. The child's feelings of worth falter because his/her sense of self-esteem is centered around and tied to the experiences for which s/he is noticed most intensely.

Being noticed or recognized is much more powerful than one may initially imagine. Verbalize your awareness of feelings, behaviors or wishes.

To refuse to allow a child to pull you into a pattern of failure. An immovable resolve to refuse to resort to nonproductive, failure-laden responses – such as criticism, lecturing, admonitions, yelling or other ways of inadvertently energizing negative behaviors. Children who feel successful think and act successfully. Success is something that needs to be nurtured.

To convey: You are seen, you are worthy of recognition, I value, appreciate and enjoy who you are.

Most difficult children think rules stink because the only time they hear about the rules is when they are breaking them.

Do not give negative behaviors your energy. No lectures, reprimands, pleading, strong voice or threats of a consequence. Simply give the consequence as a result of a rule being broken. Get it over with and get back to successes as soon as possible.

Be *Ruthlessly Opportunistic* in finding the positive choices the child is making, no matter how microscopic. Remain calm and neutral when the child's behavior and emotion escalates. Notice the early signs of problem behavior and praise and appreciate the self-control being used, *before* the rule is actually being broken.

Focusing on and appreciating the positive steps the child has already taken, rather than focusing on what the child has not yet done, changes the nature of the interaction and the message to the child. Remember, most difficult children are unquestionably under the impression that more adult energy and emotion are available when they are not doing what they are asked or required to do.

The power of this technique is based in its ability to be in the moment with the child. Rather than pushing for finished products and the ultimate behaviors you want to see, you help shape the child's behavior in a beneficial direction by operating on the principal of partial credit and applause for smaller steps.