



PARENT EDUCATION

Promoting connection, education, and well being

Serenity isn't freedom from the storm, but peace within the storm.

unknown

The goal of this newsletter is to provide education and to promote well-being and self-care for adoptive parents throughout Connecticut. Family life is busy and challenging in a world where we are bombarded with information. We hope to bring you highlights of information and topics of interest.

Connecting Parents

There are many support groups listed on the ACN website. If you are interested in starting a support group, please let us know so we can post it and perhaps help you find an educational speaker.

<http://www.ctadoption.org/resources/support.html>

Connecting Mind

Book Reviews

The Connected Child, For Parents Who Have Welcomed Children: From Other Countries and Cultures, From Troubled Backgrounds, With Special Behavioral or Emotional Needs

by Karyn Purvis, Ph.D, David R. Cross, Ph.D., and Wendy Lyons Sunshine

“Our intent is to see beyond maladaptive behaviors to the real child who has been holed up inside a fortress of fear. We use the term “real child” to refer to the core of highest potential inside a young person. It’s always our goal to free up and reveal this magnificent inner core and to enable the child to experience his or her full potential as a loving, connected, and competent individual.”
 p. 46 *The Connected Child*

This book is simply the best! It is relatively short, easy to read, and packed with things you can do that will make the adjustment of adding a new family member easier for you and your child. The authors take a positive and holistic approach to helping parents to help their children heal. Topics include the effects of institutionalization and early loss, attachment, difficult behaviors and how to handle them, helping your child to feel safe, teaching life values, establishing your role as parent, dealing with defiance, nurturing, proactive strategies and brain chemistry.

I have read literally dozens of excellent books (and many useless ones!) Not one has been as comprehensive, hopeful, affirming to the parents, and chock full of information as this one. From the book’s introduction, here is the authors’ approach to healing:

- Disarm you child’s fear response.
- Establish clear and sensitive parental authority.
- Provide a sensory rich environment.
- Teach appropriate skills.
- Support healthy brain chemistry.
- Help your child connect which his or her own feelings.
- Forge a strong emotional bond between you and your child.

p. 4 *The Connected Child*

Valerie Gillies



Buddhism for Mothers: A Calm Approach to Caring for Yourself and Your Children by Sarah Naphthali

This is not a parenting book, nor is it a book about religion. The author, Sarah Naphthali, simply and beautifully explains the philosophy of Buddhism and applies it to motherhood. I highly recommend this book for the open-minded individual who would like to develop or strengthen a mindset that is focused and compassionate in the midst of life with a family in a busy, pressured society.

Ms. Naphthali does not claim to answer all those “meaning of life” questions, but she does present an excellent perspective on how a calmer self will help people listen to others (like our own family members), notice how they are feeling, and help them. She gives an excellent argument for why it is important for us to nurture this compassionate mindful living within ourselves, our families and communities, in hopes of building a more connected and caring world.

I personally enjoyed this book, finding it to be refreshing and hopeful. I read it slowly, often thinking about what the author presented. I have it at my bedside and try to re-read about at the beginning of each day, for a good dose of wisdom.

Catherine Shannon

Catherine Shannon is the mom to four joyfully spirited children all adopted from Korea (ages 4-11 yrs). She has an BS in Nursing and Masters of Science Degree in Clinical Exercise Physiology. Catherine has completed the clinical training in Behavioral Medicine (Benson-Henry Institute/Mind Body Medicine at Harvard Medical School) and has applied this work in various clinical settings.

Valerie is mom to 5 children--4 of them bio and nearly grown up, her youngest child was adopted two years ago from China at age ten. She works very part time as a family therapist these days, as she finds flexibility is the key to what sanity she has left.

Connecting Body

Work it out!

When you have a spirited/reactive/hyper/exuberant child who sometimes needs calming, exercise is a great thing to try. I’ve always been allergic to such activities as jogging, having nearly failed gym in high school. So, it didn’t occur to me at first that a little run around the block might be exactly what our new daughter needed. Now I’m a convert. Many people who have experienced traumas, attachment difficulties, or early nutritional deprivation have neurological systems that are hyper sensitive. That means their agitation and explosion points are a lot lower than usual. Tantrums, shutting down, inability to think clearly, and fidgeting will all happen with relatively minor triggers. Children who are generally calm may look like poster kids for ADHD when they’re in an overstimulating environment. For the parent, this can be somewhat tiring. (That is known as a gross understatement.) John Ratey, at Harvard, has been researching exercise and ADHD. This is very interesting stuff. Go to his website and check it out: www.johnratey.com/newsite/index.html Bruce Perry (who’s done lots of research and written some great books including “The Boy Who was Raised as a Dog”) recommends dance, martial arts and swimming as especially calming to the nervous system. The elements of using both sides of the body, repetition and patterning may actually help the brain to rewire itself over time. Sure seems worth a try! Swimming also provides gentle sensory stimulation to the entire body, which can be calming. But there’s no need to limit your attempts to those sports. One mom I know sends her kids outside to run laps around the house when they start to get hyper. Another has a mini trampoline and a karate kick bag in the basement. Get that heart rate up! If you combine running with memory challenges, that might make it more engaging, and give the brain a better workout—“Go to the tree, jump up and down 6 times, walk backwards to the garage....” At a recent doctor’s appointment where my child’s anxiety was off the wall, I had her start doing jumping jacks and sit-ups. It worked like a charm!

Valerie Gillies

Connecting Mind-Body

Taking care of others begins with you. You are an active participant in your own sense of well-being and health.

The mind and body interact through our thoughts and the response of our body.

The “relaxation response” is *the skill* that is at the foundation of the mind-body connection and changing thoughts and behaviors. By eliciting the “Relaxation Response” one begins to calm the mind and quiet the self-talk that goes on in our own heads and eventually learn to change a behavior.

Practice this skill:

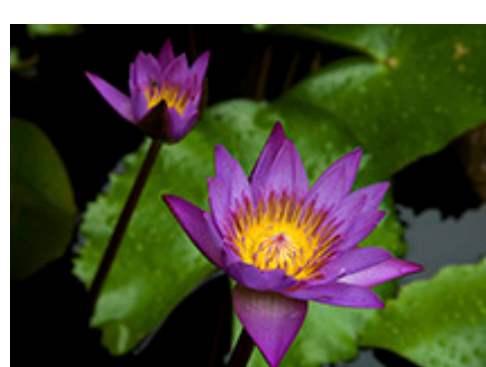
Steps to Elicit the Relaxation Response

The following is the technique reprinted with permission from Dr. Herbert Benson’s book *The Relaxation Response* pages 162-163

1. Sit quietly in a comfortable position.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Deeply relax all your muscles, beginning at your feet and progressing up to your face. Keep them relaxed.
4. Breathe through your nose. Become aware of your breathing. As you breathe out, say the word, “one”, silently to yourself. For example, breathe in ... out, “one”,- in out, “one”, etc. Breathe easily and naturally.
5. Continue for 10 to 20 minutes. You may open your eyes to check the time, but do not use an alarm. When you finish, sit quietly for several minutes, at first with your eyes closed and later with your eyes opened. Do not stand up for a few minutes.

6. Do not worry about whether you are successful in achieving a deep level of relaxation. Maintain a passive attitude and permit relaxation to occur at its own pace. When distracting thoughts occur, try to ignore them by not dwelling upon them and return to repeating “one.” With practice, the response should come with little effort. Practice the technique once or twice daily, but not within two hours after any meal, since the digestive processes seem to interfere with the elicitation of the Relaxation Response.

* or any soothing, mellifluous sound, preferably with no meaning, or association, to avoid stimulation of unnecessary thoughts.



All photos copyrighted by Catherine Jo Fisher
catherinefisherphotography.com