

**GCCHM Leadership Certification
Level VI, Course #3**

**HOLD ON TO YOUR KIDS; WHY PARENTS NEED TO
MATTER MORE THAN PEERS**

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(Presenter's Notes)**

ATTACHMENT AND PEER PRESSURE

What Motivates Children To Come To Church?

- Parents – values and habits
- Recognition – feeling valued by opportunities to serve
- Beliefs – my relationship with God/Jesus is important
- Peers – huge influence

Why Do They Stop Coming?

- Church is boring.
- Children's programs have wrong priorities – entertainment.
- Parents lack conviction.
- Attitudes of church members are negative. In Scotland 10-14 year olds leaving church. – All rated the attitudes of other people as most significant.
- Peer pressure increases with age.
- Teaching methods may not encourage spiritual development.
- There are not enough good teachers.

What Do Kids Need?

- Well-trained children's leaders and teachers – quality teaching.
- Opportunities to serve and have meaningful genuine involvement at church.
- Church as a safe place where children feel supported in a loving and welcoming community.
- Faith mentors.
- Loving families who nurture and care and are equipped as disciple-makers

PEER-ORIENTATION

Gordon Neufeld, Ph. D & Gabor Mate, MD address a disturbing trend:

- Children today increasingly look to their peers for direction:
 - Values
 - Identity
 - Codes of behavior

Results of Such a Trend:

- Family cohesion undermined.
 - Healthy development disrupted.
 - Fosters present youth culture: hostility, aggression and over sexualization.
- Children become:
- Overly conformist; language, actions, attitudes.

- Desensitized.
- Being 'cool' matters more than everything else.

Stunts Growth in Significant Ways.

- The love and nurturance we have for our children cannot get through.
- Children feel more insecure and have high needs of approval and significance – insatiable.
- They cannot let go.
- Lack true sense of who they are and what they believe.

ATTACHMENT

Neufeld and Mate state the need for attachment.

- The drive or relationship characterized by the pursuit and preservation of proximity.
- The movement towards being close to another person.
- Attachment formed through senses – sight, smell, sound, touch.
- Identifying with someone and feeling close to them.
- Having warm and affectionate feelings.
- When they feel that they belong and matter to somebody.
- When they feel it is safe to share deeply.
- Children need to be attached to someone who is responsible, mature and who truly cares for them.
- Parenting is a relationship not a set of skills to be acquired.
- When attachment is strong, parents are able to provide direction, guidance and nurture.

Strong Parental Attachment

- Aids healthy development
- Buffers children from tragedy
- Less drug and alcohol problems
- Less suicide
- Less violent behavior
- Less early sexual activity
- Less “tough” attitudes brought on by peer betrayals, shunning mocking and bullying.
- “The love, attention and security that only adults can offer, liberates children from the need to make themselves invulnerable.”
- “Restores them to that potential for life and adventure that can never come from risky activities.”

How To Hold On

- The attachment we make with our babies needs to continue.
- Make it a habit to draw our kids close, daily and repeatedly, until they are old enough to function in late adolescence as independent beings.
- Get in their face or space – in a friendly way.
- Entice them to stay in a relationship with us – enjoy being together.
- Renew closeness after any time of separation.

*School

*Your work

*Television time

*Homework

*Emotional separation – e.g. After a night’s sleep, regularly start the day with talk, cuddles or stories

- Make sure the child knows that they are special, wanted, significant, missed, and enjoyed.
 - e.g. The warm greeting when you pick them up from school.
 - The twinkle in your eye and warmth in your voice
 - Many adults in counseling still grieve the lack of warmth in their childhood.
- Spend time helping your children build friendships with children who share your values.
- With children who recognize the importance of adult attachments.
- Many parents think that their child’s self esteem is based on their popularity and fear them being ostracized from the “Cool” group.
- Children need to know that you will keep them safe.
- That you are reliable
- Be the key person in your child’s life. Inform them of what is happening.
- Be the person that builds identity – “You have a special way of . . .

PREVENTIVE STRUCTURES

Put Some Restrictions on Things That Take Your Child Away From You

- Television
- Computer
- Internet
- Telephone
- Electronic games
- Extracurricular activities
- Sleep overs
- Text messaging

Create Structures and Routines That Help Build Connections

- The family sit down meal
- The greeting at the school gate
- The family walks
- Playing a game
- Cooking a meal
- Family holidays
- Bedtimes rituals
- Put energy into creating customs and traditions that connect our children to extended family.
- Put energy into helping your children build relationships with significant adults – different age groups – different generations.

What If My Kids Are Already Gone?

WIN THEM BACK

- Make it as easy as possible to return.
- Make it as difficult as possible for the peer group to hold them.
- Win back their hearts and minds, not just their bodies.
- Remember that they need us, even though they may not know it. Give them powerful affirmation.
- Sometimes we need to create an attachment void
 - *Separate them from their peers and put yourself in the void.

*Grounding works if it is seen as an opportunity to build parental connections.

*Serious peer-attachments may need serious strategies such as weekends away or holidays or even moving.

- Remember your relationship with your child should be the highest priority.
- Communicate to the child that they are more important than what they have done.
- Keep your patience
- Hold back critical words
- When you as a parent gets hurt – don't withdraw and allow yourself to be pushed away.
- Temporary breaks in the relationship will always happen, but these need not cause major problems if you are the ones to make an effort to rebuild.
- No matter how close the peer relationships are, parents should still be able to have a deeper intimacy.
- Create an intimacy that enables sharing at an emotional level.
 - One-on-one special times
 - *Regular outings
 - *Walking the dog

HOLD ON

"The relationship between child and parent is sacred. Faced with the challenge of the peer culture, we need to keep our children's attachments to us strong and to make these attachments last for as long as our children need to be parented." p196