

The Power of Relationship

The Beyond Consequences stress model is all about relationship. The book and the parent training focus on how your relationship with your child is the most powerful tool that you have. Whereas other models focus on authoritarian control and modifying behavior, the BCI stress model focuses on love relationship and healing.

Bruce Perry says that the heart of humanity lies in our relationships. Everything we learn, we learn from relationship. We are neurobiologically designed to be in community and relationship. We are designed to respond, to reach out, and to seek other relationships. Without relationships we are physiologically at risk. If we are not in relationship we die.

The attachment and bonding process is essential to developing secure relationships. According to Dr. Alan Shore, joy is the key to attachment. During the attachment and bonding process the parent joins with the child. The parent and child are interactively regulating at very high levels of positive emotion. This attachment relationship is an interactive mechanism for generating high levels of positive affect. Their body systems are linked by the monotonic nervous system and therefore the regulated person has the ability to step into the relationship to co-regulate the dysregulated child. This is the responsibility of the parent.

All of this information comes from the latest brain research and from experts in the area of child development and neuro-psychology. I find it very interesting that medical science and research continues to prove what is already stated in the Bible. God is all about relationship. It began in the Garden when God created man to be in relationship with Him. When that relationship was broken by sin, man started to die. I've studied the stress model and incorporated it into my counseling and my personal life. I am also becoming more aware of its connections to Biblical truths.

I am not a theologian or Biblical scholar. My common sense tells me that if God created us for relationship, then that must be important. The stress model gives us a road map to develop relationships. It tells us that if we are in a loving, emotionally regulated relationship with our children, we can help them heal. The stress model also says that it is the parent's responsibility to love the child and to teach the child to love. Parents are to move into a loving relationship with children to help them heal. Isn't that what our Heavenly Father does for us?

Our relationship with God is possible because He first loved us. His loving relationship with us created positive influence. Through that influence we then become obedient to Him. Like our children we have a choice to not be obedient. The stronger the relationship, the greater the love. The greater the love, the greater the obedience. Our love relationship with our children strongly influences them as opposed to controlling them to be obedient. Parents constantly tell me that they want their children to be obedient. However, parents usually go about it backwards. They demand obedience. When that doesn't happen they shift into control and fear based behaviors. God's model is that He loves us first so we can become loving. Then as parents we must love our children so they can become loveable and obedient. It is imperative that we focus on our vertical relationship with God so we can then have a similar horizontal relationship with our children.

Parents seem to have an expectation of immediate and without flaw obedience. They may say "kids will be kids" but when they are, parents react in anger and use fear tactics with the

expectation to regain obedience. I challenge parents to honestly search how many times a day they are not completely obedient to their Heavenly Father. Does our God reject us for disobedience? That is what we do to our children when we react in anger. God loves us where we are. We need to be able to do the same for our children.

What I have just described may seem insurmountable or at least nearly impossible. This is true whether you come from the stress model perspective or the Biblical perspective. I get that reaction from many parents who participate in the Beyond Consequences Parent Training and parents I work with in therapy. The stress model gives us the “how to”. So does the Bible.

The “how to” comes from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our counselor and comforter here on Earth. What is that “interactive mechanism for generating high levels of positive affect”? My understanding is that it comes from the Holy Spirit. This is how God designed our bodies and minds to experience each other in relationship. The Holy Spirit is living within us. The Holy Spirit is our fuel. He is our positive energy and the healing power source that keeps us going. The Holy Spirit gives us an invigorated life, a life that is full of energy and enthusiasm. In the flesh our body systems are linked by the autonomic nervous system. Watch the emotional, neuro-physiological dance between care giver and child. You see the positive energy generated. The mother and child are both smiling. The child usually becomes more animated and excited. The mother feels joy and love inside. The child feels contentment warmth and security. When we are in relationship and fellowship with our Heavenly Father we experience that same joy and energy.

Through out Jesus’ ministry he demonstrated his love and healing power. These miraculous healings continue to happen today. He demonstrated changing lives through relationship. The power of Jesus’ love and healing turned the world upside down. So why can’t the power of love and healing extinguish negative behaviors demonstrated by our children? Oh the power of relationship.