

Children, like the young of any warm-blooded species, have an innate orienting instinct. They need to get their sense of direction from somebody. Just as a magnet turns automatically toward the North Pole, so children have an inborn need to find their bearings by turning toward a source of authority, contact, and warmth. Children cannot endure the lack of such a figure in their lives: they become disoriented. They cannot endure what I call an *orientation void*. The parent, or any adult acting as parent substitute, is the nature-intended pole of orientation for the child, just as adults are the orienting influences in the lives of all animals that rear their young.

It so happens that this orienting instinct of humans is much like the imprinting instinct of a duckling. Hatched from the egg, the duckling immediately imprints on the mother duck- he will follow her around, heeding her example and her directions until he grows into mature independence. That is how nature would prefer it, of course. In the absence of the mother duck, however, the duckling will begin to follow the nearest moving object -a human being, a dog, or even a mechanical toy. Needless to say, neither the human, the dog, nor the toy are as well suited as the mother duck to raise that duckling to successful adult duckhood. Likewise, if no parenting adult is available, the human child will orient to whomever is near. Social, economic, and cultural trends in the past five or six decades have displaced the parent from his intended position as the orienting influence on the child. The peer group has moved into this orienting void, with deplorable results. As we will show, children cannot be oriented to both adults and other children simultaneously. One cannot follow two sets of conflicting directions at the same time. The child's brain must automatically choose between parental values and peer values, parental guidance and peer guidance, parental culture and peer culture whenever the two would appear to be in conflict.

Are we saying that children should have no friends their own age or form connections with other children? On the contrary, such ties are natural and can serve a healthy purpose. In adult-oriented cultures, where the guiding principles and values are those of the more mature generations, kids attach to each other without losing their bearings or rejecting the guidance of their parents. In our society that is no longer the case. Peer bonds have come to replace relationships with adults as children's primary sources of orientation. What is unnatural is not peer contact, but that children should have become the dominant influence on one another's development. (8-9)

Paralleling the increase of peer orientation in our society is a startling and dramatic increase in the suicide rate among children, fourfold in the last fifty years for the ten-to-fourteen age range in North America. Suicide rates among that group are the fastest growing with a 120 percent increase from 1980 to 1992 alone. In inner cities, where peers are the most likely to replace parents, these suicide rates have increased even more. What is behind these suicides is highly revealing. Like many students of human development, I had always assumed that parental rejection would be the most significant precipitating factor. That is no longer the case. I worked for a time with young offenders. Part of my job was to investigate the psychological dynamics in children and adolescents who attempted suicide, successfully or not. To my absolute shock and surprise, the key trigger for the great majority was how they were being treated by their peers, not their parents. My experience was not isolated, as is confirmed by the increasing numbers of reports of childhood suicides triggered by peer rejection and bullying. The more peers matter, the more children are devastated by the insensitive relating of their peers, by failing to fit in, by perceived rejection or ostracization. (11)

If we get lost while on a hike, we will not pause to admire the flora and fauna, or to assess our life goals, or even to think about supper. Getting our bearings will command all of our attention and consume most of our energy. Our orienting needs are not just physical. Psychological orientation is just as important in human development. As children grow, they have an increasing need to orient to have a sense of who they are, of what is real; why things happen, what is good, what things mean. To fail to orient is to suffer disorientation, to be lost psychologically - a state our brains are programmed to do almost anything to avoid. Children are utterly incapable of orienting by themselves. They need help.

Attachment provides that help. The first business of attachment is to create a compass point out of the person attached to. As long as the child can find himself in relation to this compass point, he will not feel lost. Instincts activated in the child impel him to keep that working compass point ever close. Attachment enables children to hitch a ride with adults who are, at least in the mind of a child, assumed to be more capable of orienting themselves and finding their way.

What children fear more than anything, including physical harm, is getting lost. To them, being lost means losing contact with their compass point. Orienting voids, situations where we find nothing or no one to orient by, are absolutely intolerable to the human brain. Even adults who are relatively self-orienting can feel a bit lost when not in contact with the person in their lives who functions as their working compass point.

If we as adults can experience disorientation when apart from those we are attached to, how much more will children. I still remember how bereft I felt when Mrs. Ackerberg, the first-grade teacher to whom I was very attached, was absent: like a lost soul, cut adrift, aimless.

A parent is by far a child's best compass point- or another adult, like a teacher, who acts as a parent substitute. But who becomes the compass point is a function of attachment. And attachment, as we all know, can be fickle. The crucially important orienting function can be bestowed on someone ill-suited for the task - a child's peers, for example. When a child becomes so attached to her peers that she would rather be with them and be like them, those peers, whether singly or as a group, become that child's working compass point. It will be her peers with whom she will seek closeness. She will look to her peers for cues on how to act, what to wear, how to look, what to say, and what to do. Her peers will become the arbiters of what is good, what is happening, what is important, and even of how she defines herself. That is precisely what had occurred in Cynthia's case: in her emotional universe, her peers had replaced her parents as the center of gravity. She revolved around them - a complete subversion of the natural order of things.

Only recently have the psychological attachment patterns of children been well charted and understood. Absolutely clear is that children were meant to revolve around their parents and the other adults responsible for them, just as the planets revolve around the sun. And yet more and more children are now orbiting around each other. Far from being qualified to orient anyone else, children are not even capable of self-orienting in any realistic sense of that word. Our children's peers are not the ones we want them to depend on. They are not the ones to give our children a sense of themselves, to point out

right from wrong, to distinguish fact from fantasy, to identify what works and what doesn't, and to direct them as to where to go and how to get there (18-19)

The child seeks to be like those she feels closest to. She attempts to assume the same form of existence or expression by imitation and emulation. This form of attachment figures prominently in learning language and in the transmission of culture. It has been noted that since the Second World War the vocabulary of the average child has diminished significantly. Why? Because children now acquire language from each other.

Peer-oriented children model one another's walk and talk, preferences and gestures, appearance and demeanor. Another means of attaching through sameness is identification. To identify with someone or something is to be one with that person or thing.

One's sense of self merges with the object of identification. This entity may be a parent, a hero, a group, a role, a country, a sports team, a rock star, an idea, or even one's work. Extreme nationalism and racism are based on identifying one's sense of self with one's country or ethnic group. The more dependent a child or person is, the more intense these identifications are likely to be. In our society, peers - or the pop icons of the peer world- have become the focus of identification in place of parents or the outstanding figures of history and culture. (21-22)

A child's alienated stance toward his parents does not represent a character flaw, ingrained rudeness, or behavior problems. It is what we see when attachment instincts have become misdirected. Under normal circumstances the bipolar nature of attachment serves the benign purpose of keeping the child close to the nurturing adults. Its first expression occurs in infancy and is often termed *stranger protest*. The more strongly the infant bonds to specific adults, the more he will resist contact with those he is not attached to. When an infant wants closeness with you and someone he is not connected to approaches, he will shy away from the intruder and lean into you. It's pure instinct. Nothing could be more natural than distancing from strangers who come too close for comfort. Yet we have all witnessed parents already chastising their infants for this alienating gesture and apologizing to other adults for their child's "rudeness." Adults find these reactions even less palatable in toddlers and completely intolerable in older children. Peer orientation turns the natural, instinctual responses of stranger protest against the child's own parents. (27)

Society has generated economic pressure for both parents to work outside the home when children are very young, but it has made little provision for the satisfaction of children's needs for emotional nourishment. Surprising though it may seem, early childhood educators, teachers, and psychologists - to say nothing of physicians and psychiatrists - are seldom taught about attachment. In our institutions of childcare and education there exists no collective consciousness regarding the pivotal importance of attachment relationships. Although many individual caregivers and teachers intuitively grasp the need to form a connection with children, it is not rare for such persons to find themselves at odds with a system that does not support their approach.

Because caring for the young is undervalued in our society, day care is not well funded. It is difficult for a nonrelative to meet an individual child's attachment and orienting needs fully, especially if several other

infants and toddlers are vying for that caregiver's attention. Although many day-care facilities are well run and staffed by dedicated albeit poorly paid workers, standards are far from uniformly satisfactory. For example, the State of New York demands that no more than seven toddlers be under the care of any one worker- a hopelessly unwieldy ratio. The importance of adult connection is not appreciated. Children in such situations have little option but to form attachment relationships with one another. (33)

Children do not internalize values - make them their own - until adolescence. Thus the changes in a peer-oriented child's behavior do not mean that his values have changed, only that the direction of his attachment instinct has altered course. Parental values such as studying, working toward a goal, the pursuit of excellence, respect for society, the realization of potential, the development of talent, the pursuit of a passion, the appreciation of culture are often replaced with peer values that are much more immediate and short term. Appearance, entertainment, peer loyalty, spending time together, fitting into the subculture, and getting along with each other will be prized above education and the realization of personal potential. Parents often find themselves arguing about values, not realizing that for their peer-oriented children values are nothing more than the standards that they, the children, must meet in order to gain the acceptance of the peer group. (71-72)

A final warning. A child's desire to be good for the parent is a powerful motivation that makes parenting much easier. It requires careful nurturance and trust. It is a violation of the relationship not to believe in the child's desire when it actually exists, for example to accuse the child of harboring ill intentions when we disapprove of her behavior. Such accusations can easily trigger defenses in the child, harm the relationship, and make her feel like being bad. It is also too risky for the child to continue to want to be good for a parent or teacher who lacks faith in her intention to be good and thinks, therefore, that she, the child, must be tempted with bribes or threatened with sanctions. It's a vicious circle. External motivators for behavior such as rewards and punishments may destroy the precious internal motivation to be good, making leverage by such artificial means necessary by default. As an investment in easy parenting, trusting in a child's desire to be good for us is one of the best.

Many current methods of behavior management, by relying on externally imposed motivations, run roughshod over this delicate drive. The doctrine of so called natural consequences is one example. This disciplining method is meant to impress upon the child that specific misbehaviors will incur specific sanctions selected by the parent, according to logic that makes sense in the mind of the parent but rarely in the child's. What the parent sees as natural is experienced by the child as arbitrary. If consequences are truly natural, why do they have to be imposed on the child? Some parents perceive trust as having to do with the end result, not with the basic motivation. In their eyes trust is something to be earned rather than an investment to be made. "How can I trust you," they may say, "if you don't do what you said you would do or if you lied to me?" Even if a child was never able to measure up to our expectations or realize his own intentions, it would still be important to trust in his desire to be good for us. To withdraw that trust is to take the wind out of his sails and to hurt him deeply. If the desire to be good for us is not treasured and nurtured, the child will lose his motivation to keep trying to measure up. It is children's desire to be good for us that warrants our trust, not their ability to perform to our expectations. (72-73)

We may believe, for example, that our child is stubborn or willful and that we have to break him of his defiant ways. Yet young children can hardly be said to have a will at all, if by that is meant a person's capacity to know what he wants and to stick to that goal despite setbacks or distractions.

"But my child is strong willed," many parents insist. When he decides that he wants something he just keeps at it until I cannot say no, or until I get very angry."

What is really being described here is not will but a rigid, obsessive clinging to this or that desire. An obsession may resemble Will in its persistence but has nothing in common with it. Its power comes from the unconscious and it rules the individual, whereas a person with true will is in command of his intentions. The child's oppositionality is not an expression of will. What it denotes is the absence of will, which allows a person only to react, but not to act from a free and conscious process of choosing.

It is common to mistake counterwill for strength on the part of the child, as the child's purposeful attempt to get his own way. What is strong is the defensive reaction, not the child. The weaker the will, the more powerful the counterwill. If the child was indeed strong in her own self, she would not be so threatened by the parent. Instead of being the one doing the pushing, it is the child who feels pushed around. Her brazenness does not come from genuine independence but from the lack of it.

Counterwill happens to the child rather than being instigated by her. It may take the child as much by surprise as the parent and is really the manifestation of a universal principle, that for every force there is a counterforce. We see the same law in physics where, for example, for every centripetal force there has to be a centrifugal one. Since counterwill is a counterforce, we invite it into being every time our wish to impose something on our child exceeds his desire to connect with us.

The best reason for children to experience counterwill is when it arises not as automatic oppositionality, but as a healthy drive for independence. The child will resist being helped in order to do it herself; will resist being told what to do in order to find her own reasons for doing things. She will resist direction in order to find her own way; to discover her own mind, to find her own momentum and initiative. The child will resist the "shoulds" of the parent in order to discover her own preferences. But, as I will explain, that shift toward genuine independence can happen only when a child is absolutely secure in his attachment to the adults in his life (see Chapter 9) [pg. 110-126].

A five-year-old safely grounded in his relationship with his parents might react to a the sky-is-blue kind of statement by retorting adamantly that it is not. It may seem to the parent that the child is blatantly contrary or trying to be difficult. In reality, the child's brain is simply blocking out any ideas or thoughts that have not originated within him. Anything that is alien to him is resisted in order to make room for him to come up with his own ideas. The final content will most likely be the same- the sky is blue- but when it comes to being one's own person, originality is what counts. (78-80)

The problem with seeing our children as having power is that we miss how much they truly need us. Even if a child is trying to control us, he is doing so out of a need and a dependence on us to make things

work. If he was truly powerful, he would have no need to get us to do his bidding. Faced with a child they perceive as demanding, some parents become defensive and move to protect themselves. As adults, we react to feelings of being coerced much as children do- balking, resisting, opposing, and countering. Our own counterwill is provoked, leading to a power struggle with our children that becomes really more a battle of counterwills than a battle of wills. The sad part about this is that the child loses the parent she desperately needs. Our resistance only multiplies the child's demands and erodes the attachment relationship that is our best and only hope.

Taking counterwill for a show of strength both triggers and justifies the use of psychological force. We strive to meet perceived strength with strength. Our demeanor inflates, our voices rise, and we up the ante with whatever leverage we can command. The greater the force we impose, the more counterwill our reaction will provoke. Should our reaction trigger anxiety, which serves as the child's psychological alarm that an important attachment is being threatened, preservation of closeness will become her foremost goal. The frightened child will scurry to make it up to us and to get back into our good graces. We may believe we have attained our goal of "good behavior", but such capitulation is not without cost. The relationship will be weakened by the insecurity caused by our anger and our threats. The more force we use, the more wear and tear on the relationship. The weaker the relationship becomes, the more prone we are to being replaced - nowadays, most often by peers. Not only is peer orientation a major cause of counterwill, but our reactions to counterwill can foster peer orientation. (82-83)

Peer-oriented children are not devoid of culture, but the culture they are enrolled in is generated by their peer orientation. Although this culture is broadcast through media controlled by adults, it is the children and youth whose tastes and preferences it must satisfy. They, the young, wield the spending power that determines the profits of the culture industry - even if it is the parents' incomes that are being disposed of in the process.

Advertisers know subtly well how to exploit the power of peer imitation as they make their pitch to ever-younger groups of customers via the mass electronic media. In this way, it is our youth who dictate hairstyles and fashion, youth to whom music must appeal, youth who primarily drive the box office. Youth determine the cultural icons of our age. The adults who cater to the expectations of peer-oriented youth may control the market and profit from it, but as agents of cultural transmission they are simply pandering to the debased cultural tastes of children disconnected from healthy adult contact. Peer culture arises from children and evolves with them as they age. (88-89)

The culture created by peer orientation does not mix well with other cultures. Because peer orientation exists unto itself, so does the culture it creates. It operates much more like a cult than a culture. Immature beings who embrace the culture generated by peer orientation become cut off from people of other cultures. Peer-oriented youth actually glory in excluding traditional values and historical connections. People from differing cultures that have been transmitted vertically retain the capacity to relate to one another respectfully, even if in practice that capacity is often overwhelmed by the historical or political conflicts in which human beings become caught up. Beneath the particular cultural expressions they can mutually recognize the universality of human values and cherish the richness of

diversity. Peer-oriented kids are, however, inclined to hang out with one another exclusively. They set themselves apart from those not like them. (92)

True universality in the positive sense of mutual respect, curiosity, and shared human values does not require a globalized culture created by peer-orientation. It requires psychological maturity - a maturity that cannot result from didactic education, only from healthy development. As we will next discuss, only adults can help children grow up in this way. And only in healthy relationships with adult mentors -parents, teachers, elders, artistic, musical and intellectual creators -can children receive their birthright, the universal and age-honored cultural legacy of humankind. Only in such relationships can they fully develop their own capacities for free and individual and fresh cultural expression. (93)

Before discussing the reasons for the increased fragility and emotional stiffening of peer-oriented children, we need to clarify the meaning of the phrase defended against vulnerability and its near synonym, fight from vulnerability. We mean by them the brain's instinctive defensive reactions to being overwhelmed by a sense of vulnerability. These unconscious defensive reactions are evoked against a consciousness of vulnerability, not against actual vulnerability. The human brain is not capable of preventing a child from being wounded, only from feeling wounded. The terms defended against vulnerability and flight from vulnerability encapsulate these meanings. They convey a sense of a child's losing touch with thoughts and emotions that make her feel vulnerable, a diminished awareness of the human susceptibility to be emotionally wounded. Everyone can experience such emotional closing down at times. A child becomes defended against vulnerability when being shut down is no longer just a temporary reaction but becomes a persistent state. (99)

It is attachment that matters: as long as the child is not attached to those who belittle him, there is relatively little damage done. The taunts can hurt and cause tears at the time, but the effect will not be long lasting. When the parent is the compass point, it is the messages he or she gives that are relevant. When tragedy and trauma happen, the child looks to the parent for clues whether or not to be concerned. As long as their attachments are safe, the sky could collapse and the world fall apart, but children would be relatively protected from feeling dangerously vulnerable. Roberto Benigni's movie, *Life Is Beautiful*, about a Jewish father's efforts to shield his son from the horrors of racism and genocide, illustrates that point most poignantly. Attachment protects the child from the outside world.

One father told me how he had witnessed the power of attachment to keep a child safe when his son, whom we'll call Braden, was about five years old. "Braden wanted to play soccer in the local community league. On the very first day of practice, some older kids gave him a rough time. When I heard their voices taunting and ridiculing him, I quickly turned into a protective father bear. I had every intention of giving these young bullies an external attitude adjustment when I observed Braden face off with them, stretching himself to his full height, putting his hands on his hips and sticking his chest out as far as it would go. I heard him say something like, I am not a stupid little jerk! My daddy says I'm a soccer player'. And that seemed to be that." Braden's idea of what his father thought of him protected him more effectively than the father ever could have by direct intervention. His father's perceptions of him took precedence. He could deflect the insults of peers. By contrast, a peer-oriented child who no longer looks to adults for his sense of self-valuation has no such protection.

There is a flip side to this dynamic, of course. To the degree that this boy's attachment to his father protects him against hurtful interaction with others, it also sensitizes him to the father's own words and gestures. If he, the parent, belittled him, shamed him, poured contempt on him, Braden would be devastated. His attachment to his parents renders him highly vulnerable in relationship to them but less vulnerable in relationship to others. There is an inside and an outside to attachment: the vulnerability is on the inside, the invulnerability on the outside. Attachment is both a shield and a sword. Attachment divides the world into those who can hurt you and those who can't. Attachment and vulnerability - these two great themes of human existence - go hand in hand. (100)

The most impressive of these studies involved ninety thousand adolescents from eighty different communities chosen to make the sample as representative of the United States as possible. The primary finding was that teenagers with strong emotional ties to their parents were much less likely to exhibit drug and alcohol problems, attempt suicide, or engage in violent behavior and early sexual activity. Such adolescents, in other words, were at greatly reduced risk for the problems that stem from being defended against vulnerability. Shielding them from stress and protecting their emotional health and functioning were strong attachments with their parents. This was also the conclusion of the noted American psychologist Julius Segal, a brilliant pioneer of research into what makes young people resilient. Summarizing studies from around the world, he concluded that the most important factor keeping children from being overwhelmed by stress was "the presence in their lives of a charismatic adult- a person with whom they identify and from whom they gather strength." As Dr. Segal has also said, "Nothing will work in the absence of an indestructible link of caring between parent and child."

Peers should never have come to matter that much -certainly not more than parents or teachers or other adult attachment figures. Taunts and rejection by peers sting, of course, but they shouldn't cut to the quick, should not be so devastating. The profound dejection of an excluded child reveals a much more serious attachment problem than it does a peer-rejection problem.

In response to the intensifying cruelty of children to one another, schools all over this continent are rushing to design programs to inculcate social responsibility in youngsters. We are barking up the wrong tree when we try to make children responsible for other children. In my view it is completely unrealistic to believe we can in this way eradicate peer exclusion and rejection and insulting communication. We should, instead, be working to take the sting out of such natural manifestations of immaturity by reestablishing the power of adults to protect children from themselves and from one another. (103)

To shut down emotions is to lose an indispensable part of our sensory apparatus and, beyond that, an indispensable part of who we are. Emotions are what make life worthwhile, exciting, challenging, and meaningful. They drive our explorations of the world, motivate our discoveries, and fuel our growth. Down to the very cellular level, human beings are either in defensive mode or in growth mode, but they cannot be in both at the same time. When children become invulnerable, they cease to relate to life as infinite possibility, to themselves as boundless potential, and to the world as a welcoming and nurturing arena for their self-expression. The invulnerability imposed by peer orientation imprisons children in their limitations and fears. No wonder so many of them these days are being treated for depression, anxiety, and other disorders. (109)

One repeated situation particularly disturbed Sarah's parents. They would extend themselves to make possible some fervently expressed desire of hers, only to find that she bolted at the first moment of frustration or failure. She quit her figure skating class at the end of her second lesson after they had carefully saved the money for the fees and arranged their schedules to accommodate her timetable. [...]

As we mature, our brain develops the ability to mix things together, to hold different perceptions, senses, thoughts, feelings, and impulses all at the same time without becoming confused in thinking or paralyzed in action. This is the capacity I called "integrative functioning" when, just above, I mentioned the preschooler syndrome. Reaching this point in development has a tremendous transforming and civilizing effect on personality and behavior. The attributes of childishness, like impulsiveness and egocentrism, fade away and a much more balanced personality begins to emerge. One cannot teach the brain to do this; the integrative capacity must be developed, grown into. The ancient Romans had a word for this kind of mix: temper. That verb now means "to regulate" or "to moderate", but originally referred to the mingling of different ingredients to make clay. Both Sarah and Peter were "untempered" in experience and expression. Being untempered -unable to tolerate mixed feelings at the same time- is the hallmark of the immature. (110-112)

How do young human beings mature? One of the most significant Breakthroughs of developmental theory came in the 1950s when scientists found that there is a consistent and predictable order to the process of maturation, whenever and wherever it occurs. The first phase involves a kind of splitting, or differentiation, followed by a second phase which brings ever increasing integration of the separated elements. This sequence holds true whether the organism is plant or animal and whether the domain is biological or psychological and whether the entity is a single cell or the complex entity we call the self. Maturation proceeds first through the process of division, teasing things apart until they are distinct and independent. Only then will development mix these same distinct and separate elements together. It is simple and, at the same time, profound -a process we see even at the most basic level. The embryo first grows by dividing into separate cells, each one with its own nucleus and distinct boundaries. Then, once the individual cells have separated sufficiently so that they are not in danger of fusing, the focus of development becomes the interaction between them. Groups of cells become integrated into functioning organs. In turn, the distinct organs develop separately and then become organized and integrated into body systems -for example, the heart and blood vessels form the cardiovascular system. The same pattern is followed with the two hemispheres of the brain. The developing brain regions at first function quite independently of each other physiologically and electrically, but then become gradually integrated. As they do, the child exhibits new skills and behavior? This process continues well into the teenage years and even beyond. (113)

More fundamentally, a sense of self first needs to separate from inner experience, a capacity entirely absent in the young child. The child has to be able to know that she is not identical with whatever feeling happens to be active in her at any particular moment. She can feel something without her actions being necessarily dominated by that feeling. She can be aware of other, conflicting feelings, or of thoughts, values, commitments that might run counter to the feeling of the moment. She can choose. Both Peter and Sarah lacked a relationship with themselves because this prerequisite division had not yet occurred. They were not given to reflecting on their inner experience, agreeing or disagreeing with themselves,

approving or disapproving of what they saw within. Because their feelings and thoughts were not differentiated enough to withstand mixing, they were capable of only one feeling or impulse at a time. Neither of them was given to statements like "Part of me feels this way and part of me feels that way!" Neither of them had "on the other hand" kind of experiences, nor felt ambivalent about erupting in frustration or about avoiding things. Without the capacity for reflection, they were defined by the inner experience of the moment. They immediately acted out whatever emotions arose in them. They could be their inner experience but they could not see it. This inability made them impulsive, egocentric, reactive, and impatient. Because frustration did not mix with caring, they had no patience. Because anger did not mix with love, they showed no forgiveness. Because frustration did not mix with either fear or affection, they lost their tempers. In short, they lacked maturity. (114)

Ways have to be found to convey the unacceptability of certain behaviors without making the child herself feel unaccepted. She has to be able to bring her unrest, her least likable characteristics to the parent and still receive the parent's absolutely satisfying, security-inducing unconditional love. A child needs to experience enough security, enough unconditional love, for the required shift of energy to occur. It's as if the brain says, "Thank you very much, that is what we needed, and now we can get on with the real task of development, with becoming a separate being. I don't have to keep hunting for fuel; my tank has been refilled, so now I can get on the road again." Nothing could be more important in the developmental scheme of things.

The father of eleven-year-old Evan, a friend of my cowriter, had just completed a weekend seminar on family relationships and was now, on a Monday morning, walking with his son on the way to school. He had been pressuring Evan to continue with his karate class, an activity the boy was resisting. "You know, Evan," the father said to him, "if you stay in karate I'm going to love you. And you know what else? If you don't stay in karate I'm going to love you just as much." The child didn't say anything for a few minutes. Then, suddenly, he looked up at the overcast sky and smiled at his father. "Isn't it a beautiful day, Dad?" he said. "Aren't those beautiful clouds up there?" After a few more moments of silence, he added, "I think I'll get my black belt." And he has continued with his martial arts studies. (118)

To be sure, some kids are psychologically set to become bullies before ever being peer-oriented. In such cases, peer orientation, even if not the cause, provides ample opportunity for the child to act out his impulses to bully. Sometimes the drive for dominance can be traced to a painful experience while the child was in a dependent role. When a parent or caregiver has abused her position of responsibility by lording over the child, by trampling on his dignity, by hurting him, it is not surprising that he would develop a wish to avoid a dependent position at all cost. In any new attachment situation, he will instinctively seek the top spot. As a young boy, Frank had lived with a stepfather who beat him regularly. When peers replaced parents as the attachments that mattered to him, this twelve-year-old was desperate to come out on top. He emulated exactly what was done to him. In this way, and not through genes, can bullies beget bullies. (144)

Another way of achieving dominance is to intimidate. By provoking fear, the bully gains the upper hand. He is therefore preoccupied with alarming others through threats, dares, stories, and scare tactics. To consolidate his position, the bully must never be seen as being afraid of anything. Some adolescents go

to ridiculous lengths to prove their fearlessness, burning or cutting themselves and showing their scars to prove they are not afraid. The power of these instincts must not be underestimated. (146)

Yet another way of attaining dominance is to demand deference, the bully's signature behavior. Children perceive the bully as having to get her own way and stopping at nothing to achieve this end. What makes bullies so demanding? Again, we need to look to the dynamics of attachment and vulnerability. Although they are not aware of it, bullies are full of frustration because of the loss of their attachments with adults and their impoverished attachments with peers. Too psychologically defended to know the reason for their discontent, they make demands that are far removed from the sources of their frustration. They are trapped. They can never demand what they truly need ~ warmth, love, relationship. Deference, or the external trappings of it, is a poor substitute. Thus, whatever bullies receive in response to what they demand - no matter how fully their demands are met - can never satisfy the fundamental hunger for emotional nourishment. Their attempts to fulfill their craving are fruitless, but since they cannot permit themselves to experience the true futility of it all, they cannot let go. The bully's demands are perpetual. (147)

In place of imitating the ones she secretly wishes to pursue, she mocks and mimics others. Emotionally too frozen to open up to those who count, bullies keep secrets from those who don't count to them- or will even create secrets about them. Thus emerges the personality of the bully: distancing one person to get close to another, pouring contempt here to establish a relationship there, shunning and ostracizing some people to cement a connection with others. There is danger in loving but none in loathing, risk in admiration but not in contempt, vulnerability in wanting to be like someone else but none in mocking those who are different. Bullies instinctively take the least vulnerable route to their destination. Those on the receiving end of this instinct-driven behavior are often at a loss to make sense of it.

"Why me?" "What did I do to deserve this kind of treatment?" "Why does he pick on me when I'm trying to mind my own business?" No wonder they're confused and bewildered. The truth of the matter is that it is rarely about them. The targets are only a means to an end. Someone has to serve that purpose for the bully. It is nothing personal; it rarely ever is. The only prerequisite for being picked on is to not be someone the bully is attaching to. Unfortunately, when the unwitting pawns in this attachment strategy take such treatment to heart, their psychological devastation is all the greater. It is difficult to keep some of the children targeted by bullies from assuming that something must be wrong with them personally, or that they are somehow responsible for how they are being treated. If the children targeted are not shielded by strong attachments to adults, they are at great risk of being emotionally wounded, for a deeply defensive emotional shutdown, for depression or worse. (150)

Children don't want to be bullies, nor do they even need to learn how, for bullying can arise spontaneously within any culture. It is a mistake to believe that a bully's aggressive behavior reflects her true personality. Bullies are not simply bad eggs but rather eggs with hard shells, eggs that parents and teachers have been unable to hatch into separate beings. Bullying is the outcome of the interaction between the two most significant psychological dynamics in the emotional brain of human beings: attachment and defendedness. These powerful dynamics camouflage the child's innate personality.

If we are to rescue the bully, we must first put the bully in his place- not in the sense of teaching him a lesson, punishing him, or belittling him but in the sense of reintegrating him into a natural hierarchy of attachment. The bully's only hope is to attach to some adult who in turn is willing to assume the responsibility for nurturing the bully's emotional needs. Underneath the tough exterior is a deeply wounded and profoundly alone young person whose veneer of toughness evaporates in the presence of a truly caring adult.

"I once asked a bully how it felt, having everyone afraid of him." a middle school counselor told me. " I have many friends," he replied, but really I have no friends at all.' And when he said that, he just began to sob." When a bully no longer feels bereft, no longer has to fend for himself to satisfy his hunger for attachment, bullying becomes redundant. (151)

The only way to unmake the bully is to reverse the dynamics that made her in the first place: reintegrate the child into a proper attachment hierarchy and then proceed to soften her defenses and fulfill her attachment hunger. Although this may be a daunting task, it is the only solution that offers the possibility of success. Current methods that focus on discouraging bullying behavior or, alternatively, on exhorting children to behave toward one another in civil ways miss the root of the problem: the lack of vulnerable dependence on caregiving adults. Until we see bullying as the attachment disorder it truly is, our remedies are unlikely to make much difference.

Similarly, the best way to protect the victims is also to reintegrate them into depending on the adults who are responsible for them so they can feel their vulnerability and have their tears about what isn't working for them. It is most often the children who are too peer-oriented to lean on adults who are at greatest risk. (152)

For teachers who value curiosity, invite questions, and give the child's interests the lead, emergent learners are a delight to teach. For such children, the best teachers are those who serve as mentors, fueling their interests, igniting their passions, putting them in charge of their own learning. If emergent learners don't always perform well in school it is probably because, having their own ideas for what they want to learn, they experience the curriculum imposed by the teacher as an unwelcome intrusion.

Curiosity is a luxury, developmentally speaking. Attachment is what matters most. Until some energy is released from having to pursue safe and secure attachments, venturing forth into the unknown is not on the developmental agenda. That is why peer orientation kills curiosity. Peer-oriented students are completely preoccupied with issues of attachment. Instead of being interested in the unknown, they become bored by anything that does not serve the purpose of peer attachment. Boredom is epidemic among the peer-oriented.

There is another problem regarding curiosity. Curiosity makes a person highly vulnerable in the peer world of "cool." The wide-eyed wonder, the enthusiasm about a subject, the questions about how things work, the originality of an idea - these all expose a child to the ridicule and shame of peers. The flight from vulnerability of peer-oriented children snuffs out their own curiosity, as well as inhibiting the curiosity of those around them. The peer orientation of our children is making curiosity an endangered concept. (167)

For self-motivation, it helps to have an integrative mind -that is, a mind capable of processing contradictory impulses or thoughts. In a child with a well-developed integrative capacity, not wanting to go to school evokes concerns about missing school, not wanting to get up in the morning triggers an apprehension about being late. Lack of interest in paying attention to the teacher is tempered by an interest in doing well, resistance to doing what one is told mitigated by awareness that disobedience has unpleasant consequences.

For integrative learning, a child must be mature enough to tolerate being of two minds--of harboring mixed feelings, generating second thoughts, experiencing ambivalence. For the presence of the tempering element- the component that would counteract impulses that undermine learning -the child also needs to be attached appropriately. She must be able to feel deeply and vulnerably. For example, a child needs to be attached enough to care what adults - his parents and teachers --think, to care about their expectations, to care about not upsetting or alienating them. A student needs to be emotionally invested in learning, to be excited about figuring something out. Not being vulnerable - not caring paralyzes learning and destroys teachability. (168)

PEER ORIENTATION JEOPARDIZES ADAPTIVE TRIAL-AND-ERROR LEARNING

Most learning occurs by adaptation, by a process of trial and error. We attempt new tasks, make mistakes, encounter stumbling blocks, get things wrong- and then draw the appropriate conclusions, or have someone else draw them for us. Failure is an essential part of the learning process, and correction is the primary instrument of teaching. The flight from vulnerability evoked by peer orientation deals three devastating blows to this main pathway of learning.

The first blow strikes the trial part of the process. Trying new things in volves taking a risk: reading out loud, offering an opinion, stepping into unfamiliar territory, experimenting with an idea. Such experimentation is a minefield of possible mistakes, unpredictable reactions, and negative responses. When vulnerability is already too much to bear, as it is for most peer-oriented children, these risks seem unacceptable.

The second blow hits the peer-oriented child's ability to benefit from error. Before we can learn from our mistakes, we have to recognize them and acknowledge our failure. We have to assume responsibility if we are to benefit from our errors and we need to welcome help, advice, and correction. Again, peer-oriented students are often too defended against vulnerability to become mindful of their mistakes or to take responsibility for their failures. If the mark on a test is too poor for such a student to tolerate, he will blame the failure on something--or someone -else. Or he will distract himself from facing the problem. The brains of children who are defended against vulnerability tune out anything that would give rise to feeling it, in this case the admission of mistakes and failure. Even being mildly corrected by a teacher or parent may threaten such a child with a sense of inadequacy and shame, the sense that "something is wrong with me." Pointing out what they did wrong will evoke from such children brazenly evasive or hostile reactions. Adults often interpret these responses as rudeness, but they really serve the function of keeping these kids from feeling their vulnerability.

The third strike against trial-and-error learning is that the futility of a course of action does not sink in when a child is too defended against vulnerability. As I pointed out earlier, frustration must turn into feelings of futility for the brain to figure out that something does not work (see Chapter 9) [pg. 110-126]. Registering futility is the essence of adaptive learning. When our emotions are too hardened to permit sadness or disappointment about something that didn't succeed, we respond not by learning from our mistake, but by venting frustration. In the case of students, the external target will be the "idiotic" teacher, the "boring", assignments, the lack of time. The internal target may be the self, as in "I'm so stupid." Either way, the mad doesn't turn to sad, the emotion associated with truly experiencing futility does not rise to the surface. Work habits are not changed, learning strategies are not modified, and handicaps are not overcome. Children stuck in this mode do not develop the resilience to handle failure and correction. They are locked into whatever doesn't work. In my practice I see increasing numbers of children who do the same things over and over and over again, despite repeated failure. (169-170)

Given that peer orientation is devastating our educational system, one would think that we would be alarmed, seeking ways to reverse the trend or at least slow it down. On the contrary, we as educators and parents are actually aiding and abetting this phenomenon. Our "enlightened" child-centered approach to education has us studying children and confusing what is with what should be, their desires with their needs. A dangerous educational myth has arisen that children learn best from their peers. They do, partially because peers are easier to emulate than adults but mostly because children have become so peer-oriented. What they learn, however, is not the value of thinking, the importance of individuality, the mysteries of nature, the secrets of science, the themes of human existence, the lessons of history, the logic of mathematics, the essence of tragedy. Nor do they learn about what is distinctly human, how to become humane, why we have laws, or what it means to be noble. What children learn from their peers is how to talk like their peers, walk like their peers, dress like their peers, act like their peers, look like their peers. In short, what they learn is how to conform and imitate. (174)

As children get older or become resistant to contact, the challenge changes from getting in their face in a friendly way to getting in their "space" in a friendly way. Although the task is more difficult, we must always focus on the objective of collecting [i.e. positively interacting to establish a bond with] the child. "It's true," admitted David, the father of a fourteen-year-old. "When I look at how I speak with my daughter, most of the time it's to get her to do something, or to teach her something, or somehow to change her behavior. It's rarely about just being together and enjoying her." (181)

It is undoubtedly this act of collecting a child that sets the master teacher apart from all the others. I will never forget my experience with my very first teacher, Mrs. Ackerberg. After my mother deposited me in the doorway of my first-grade class, and before I had a chance to be distracted by another child, this wonderful smiling woman came gliding across the room and engaged me in a most friendly way, greeting me by name, telling me how glad she was that I was in her class, and assuring me what a good year we were going to have. I am sure it took her very little time to collect me. After that, I was all hers and rather immune to other attachments. I didn't need them; I was already taken. I was not collected by a teacher

again until fifth grade. The in-between years were a wilderness experience as far as my education was concerned. (183)

Tam often asked by teachers how they are to cultivate connection these days, now that physical contact is such a controversial issue. Touch is only one of the five senses and the senses are only one of six ways of connecting. (For the six modes of attachment, see Chapter 2) [pg. 15-30]. Although touch is important, we need to keep in mind that it is certainly not the only way to connect with children. For children who are emotionally defended against attaching in one of the more vulnerable ways, one may have to focus on less vulnerable offerings - like conveying a sense of sameness with a young person or finding an opportunity to demonstrate some loyalty by being on his side. In my work with young offenders, this was almost always where I started. Sometimes it would be as simple as noticing that we both had blue eyes or that we shared a similar interest and had something in common. Above all, an adult has to give something before the child will hold on. The ultimate gift is to make a child feel invited to exist in our presence exactly as he is, to express our delight in his very being. There are thousands of ways this invitation can be conveyed: in gesture, in words, in symbols, and in actions. The child must know that she is wanted, special, significant, valued, appreciated, missed, and enjoyed. For children to fully receive this invitation -to believe it and to be able to hold on to it even when we are not with them physically- it needs to be genuine and unconditional. In Chapter 17 [pg. 235-253], where I'll discuss effective discipline, we will see how damaging it is when separation from the parent is used punitively against the child. To engage in that oft-advised but damaging technique is to say, in effect, that the child is invited to exist in our presence only when he or she measures up to our values and expectations- in other words, that our relationship with them is conditional. Our challenge as parents is to provide an invitation that is too desirable and too important for a child to turn down, a loving acceptance that no peer can provide. In holding on to our gift of unconditional love, the child will be holding on to us emotionally- just as the infant held with closed fist the parent's finger.

The child must perceive our offering to be spontaneous for connection to work. It may seem counterintuitive to say this --and I'll explain my reasons shortly- but we cannot collect a child by giving what is expected, whether it be part of a ritual or as a birthday gift or as reward for some accomplishment. No matter how much fuss we may make, what we give under such circumstances will be associated with the situation or event, not with the relationship. Such giving never satisfies. A child may enjoy gifts, whether physical or emotional, that are expected, but her attachment needs cannot be satiated by them. (184-185)

Nor can one collect a child or offer him something to hold on to by showering him with praise. Praise is usually about something the child has done and, as such, is neither a gift nor spontaneous. Praise originates not in the adult but in the achievements of the child. A child cannot hold on to praise because it is subject to cancellation with every failure. Even if he could hold on to the praise, he wouldn't be holding on to the praise giver but the achievement that produced it. No wonder praise backfires in some children, producing behavior counter to what is praised, or causing the child to back out of the relationship in anticipation of falling short. Are we saying that children should never be praised? On the contrary, it is helpful, compassionate, and good for the relationship—any relationship -when we acknowledge others for some special contribution they have made or for the effort or energy they have

expended in making something happen. What we are saying is that praise should not be overdone, that we should be careful that the child's motivation does come to depend on the admiration or good opinion of others. The child's self-image should not rest on how well, or how poorly, she succeeds in gaining our approval by means of achievements or compliant behaviors. The foundation of a child's true self-esteem is the sense of being accepted, loved, and enjoyed by the parents exactly as he, the child, is. (186)

To invite dependence in the baby is to say, in effect, "Here, let me carry you. I will be your legs. You can rely on me. I will keep you safe." To invite an older child to depend on us is to convey to the child that she can trust us, count on us, lean on us, be cared for by us. She can come to us for assistance and expect our help. We are saying to her that we are there for her and that it's okay for her to need us. But to proceed without first having gained the child's trust is asking for trouble. This is true for the parent as well as the day-care worker, the babysitter, the teacher, the foster parent, the stepparent, or the counselor.

Here our new-world preoccupation with independence gets in the way. We have no problem inviting the dependence of infants, but past that phase, independence becomes our primary agenda. Whether it is for our children to dress themselves, feed themselves, settle themselves, entertain themselves, think for themselves, solve their own problems, the story is the same: we champion independence - or what we believe is independence. We fear that to invite dependence is to invite regression instead of development, that if we give dependence an inch, it will take a mile. What we are really encouraging with this attitude is not true independence, only independence from us. Dependence is transferred to the peer group. (187)

We have forgotten that we are not alone -we have nature as our ally. Independence is a fruit of maturation; our job in raising children is to look after their dependence needs. When we do our job of meeting genuine dependence needs, nature is free to do its job of promoting maturity. In the same way, we don't have to make our children grow taller; we just need to give them food. By forgetting that growth, development, and maturation are natural processes, we lose perspective. We become afraid our children will get stuck and never grow up. Perhaps we think that if we don't push a little, they will never leave the nest. Human beings are not like birds in this respect. The more children are pushed, the tighter they cling- or, failing that, they nest with someone else.

Life comes in seasons. We cannot get to spring by resisting winter; in winter plants are dormant - they will burst into bloom when spring comes. We cannot get to independence by resisting dependence. Only when the dependence needs are met does the quest for true independence begin. By resisting dependence, we thwart the movement to independence and postpone its realization. We seem to have lost touch with the most basic principles of growth. If we tried to pull our plants to make them mature, we would endanger their attachment roots and their fruitfulness. Disrupting children's attachment roots only causes them to transplant themselves into other relationships. Our refusal to invite them to depend on us drives them into the arms of each other! To push children to handle separation before they are ready, whether it is at bedtime or outside the home, is to initially evoke panic and greater clinging, not less. Children who are unsuccessful in keeping the parent close may replace the parent with a substitute. This transference of dependence is often confused with true independence. By encouraging such false

independence -or independence our children are not yet mature enough to handle - we are aiding and abetting peer orientation.

Teachers should be inviting dependence as well. In fact, it is usually those teachers who encourage their students to depend upon them who are more likely to be effective in fostering independence in the end. A master teacher, rather than pushing pupils toward independence, supplies them instead with generous offerings of assistance. A master teacher wants her students to think for themselves but knows the students cannot get there if she resists their dependence or chastises them for lacking maturity.

Her students are free to lean on her without any sense of shame for their neediness. There is no shortcut to true independence. The only way to become independent is through being dependent. Resting in the confidence that getting children to be viable as separate beings is not entirely up to us - it is nature's task - we will be free to get on with our part of the job, which is to invite their dependence. (188-189)

Another part of the problem is that peer orientation has robbed our children of the trigger that would, under more natural circumstances, activate our instinct to orient them -that look of being lost or confused. Those who wear this look, even as adults, can provoke orienting responses even from complete strangers. (My cowriter Gabor, a physician, claims he has honed this look of helpless disorientation to a fine art, especially around hospital nursing stations.) Although peer-oriented children have less of an idea than anyone of who they are or where they are going, the effect of peer orientation is to take away that sense of being lost or confused. The child embedded in the culture of cool does not look vulnerable, in need of orienting assistance. Proximity with her peers is all that counts. That is one of the reasons peer-oriented kids often appear to be so much more confident and sophisticated, when in reality they are the blind leading the blind. The net effect of not wearing their confusion on their faces is that our instincts to guide them remain dormant and our ability to collect them is diminished.

Despite the fact that our world has changed -or, more correctly, because of that fact--it is more important than ever to summon up our confidence and assume our position as the working compass point in our children's lives. The world may change but the attachment dance remains the same. We are pretty good at guiding our toddlers and preschoolers, probably because we assume that without us they would be lost. We are constantly informing them of what is going to happen, where we will be, what they will be doing, who this person is, what something means. It is after this phase that we seem to lose our confidence and this crucial collecting instinct becomes dulled.

We have to remember that children are in need of being oriented, and that we are their best resource for that, whether they know it or not. The more we orient them in terms of time and space, people and happenings, meanings and circumstances, the more inclined they are to keep us close.

We must not wait for their confused look, but confidently assume our position in their life as guide and interpreter. Even a little bit of orienting at the beginning of the day can go a long way in keeping them close: "This is what we're doing today", "This is where I'll be, what is special about this day is..." "What I have in mind for this evening is," "I would like you to meet so and so," "Let me show you how this works," "This is who will be taking care of you," "This is who to ask if you need help," "Only three more days until..." And of course, orienting them about their identity and significance: "You have a special way

of..." "You are the kind of girl who," "You've got the makings of an original thinker," "You have a real gift in..." "You have what it takes to..." "I can see you're going to go far with..." Acting as a child's compass point engages the attachment instincts and is an awesome responsibility. With our own child, orienting reactivates the child's instincts to keep us close. When collecting another's child, orienting is an essential step to cultivating a connection. The secret is for the adult, be it teacher or stepparent, to take advantage of any orienting voids the child is experiencing by offering himself as a guide. If you can arrange situations that render the child or student dependent on you to get his bearings, so much the better for priming an attachment. (190-191)

The positive and natural alternative to separation is connection. Connection is the source of our parenting power and influence and of the child's desire to be good for us. Connection should be both our short-term objective and our long-term goal. The trick is to be mindful of connection before a problem occurs instead of imposing separation afterward, to head off future problems rather than reacting punitively after our child's behavior gets out of line. The basic parenting practice that derives from this shift in thinking is what I call "connection before direction." The idea is to collect the child - engaging the child's attachment instincts along the lines discussed in Chapter 14 [pg. 179-195]- in order to give guidance and to provide direction. By cultivating the connection first we minimize the risk of resistance and lessen the chances of setting ourselves up for our own negative reactions. Whether with the uncooperative toddler or the recalcitrant adolescent, the parent first needs to draw near the child, reestablishing emotional closeness before expecting compliance.

"A single example illustrates this simple principle. Eleven-year-old Tyler was in the backyard pool with his sister and a few friends. They were having a good time until Tyler got carried away and started hitting his playmates with a plastic noodle. The mother told him to stop, but he didn't. The father became angry, yelled at Tyler for disobeying his mother, and ordered him out of the pool. He refused to obey. The father finally jumped in, dragged him out, and, thinking to teach his son a lesson, sent him off to his room to think about what he had done. Tyler's behavior, the parents explained to me, was completely intolerable and must not happen again. They had, however, heard me speak about the risks of using separation to bring a child into line and wanted to know what they could have done differently.

Once the situation unraveled as it did, the parents probably needed to take a breather before proceeding. When in trouble, it is better to increase proximity rather than to decrease it. The will to connect must be in the parent before there is anything positive for the child to respond to. When the will to connect resurfaces in the parent, the first step is to restore the connection. Taking a walk together, going for a ride together, throwing a ball- the human connection must be intact before we are likely to get points across. In this case, what got the parents off on the wrong foot was what was missing at the beginning of their interaction. Tyler was completely engaged in what he was doing. In that mind-set, he was not orienting by his parents or tuned in to any desire to follow their bidding. Under such circumstances, reconnecting with the child is imperative before proceeding.

Attempts to connect might have included, "Wow, Tyler, are you ever having fun." With that, one would likely get a grin and a nod in agreement. Having the eyes, the smile, and the nod, the next direction from the parents would have been to bring the child near. "Tyler, I need to talk to you for a minute in private.

Come here to the side." Once the child is collected, the parent would be in a position of power and influence. He could provide some direction to calm things down and preserve the fun for all. Furthermore, the wear and the tear on Tyler's attachments would have been prevented, a point that is of greater concern developmentally than teaching Tyler a lesson. Instead of using separation at the tail end, Tyler's parents needed to use connection at the front end. It's not a complicated dance; in fact, it is surprisingly simple. The trick is the little attachment step at the beginning. (218-219)

There is another way to deal with immature children: rather than demanding that they spontaneously exhibit mature behavior, we could script the desired behavior. Following our directions will not make the child more mature, but it will enable him to function in social situations that otherwise she is not yet developmentally ready for.

To script a child's behavior is to provide the cues for what to do and how to do it. When children are not yet capable of getting along spontaneously, their actions need to be orchestrated or choreographed by someone the child is taking the cues from: "This is how you hold the baby," "Let's give Matthew a turn now," "If there is a hug in you for grandma, this would be the time to give it," "We pet the cat like this," "It's daddy's turn to talk now," "This is the time to use your quiet voice."

Successful scripting requires the adult to position himself as a cue-giver for the child. Again, we begin with the basics: we collect the child first in order to be able to work from within the relationship. It is very much like the mother goose with goslings; getting the offspring into line before bringing the behavior into line. Once a child is following us, we are free to take the lead. Of course, our ability to prescribe a child's behavior will be only as good as the child's attachment to us. It doesn't have to be particularly deep or vulnerable, only strong enough to evoke the instincts to emulate and to imitate.

For successful directing, the cues for what to do and how to be must be given in ways the child can follow. It doesn't work to give negative instructions because that does not actually tell the child what to do. In fact, for the immature and severely stuck, all that registers is often the action part of the command; The "don't" is often deleted from awareness, leading to the opposite behavior of what was desired. Our focus must be diverted away from the behavior that causes trouble and focus on the actions that are desirable. Modeling the behavior you want the child to follow is even more effective. Like a director working with actors or a choreographer with dancers, the end result is created first in the adult's mind. An example of scripting to get the desired behavior- one that we are much more likely to be intuitive about- is teaching a child to ski. In this case, we are quite cognizant of the fact that it is useless to say to a child, "Get your balance," "Don't fall," «Slow down," "Ski in control," "Make your turns." These will be the outcomes of properly scripted behavior, but they cannot be what we demand, at least not until the child learns to ski. Instead, we may show a child how to make a pizza wedge with his skis and then proceed to give cues that the child can follow- like "Make a pizza," "Step down on your right," "Touch your knees," and so on. The end result will be balance, breaks, and turns. It looks as if the novice skier knows how to ski; in reality the child is only following the cues until the actions become ingrained and, finally, self-generated.

Unlike in skiing, in human interaction we do not gain the capacity to generate from within the appropriate actions and responses until maturity. When it comes to social behavior, we must not focus on the relationships between children. This process of directing is one of the child following the adult. Scripting is not designed to teach a child social skills - generally an exercise in futility- but to orchestrate the social interaction until maturation and genuine socialization emerge. That is why the focus is not on the relationship between the children but on following the cues of the adult.

The following story was told to me by a close friend whose job involved supervising teachers. This incident happened when she was observing a second-grade teacher who had an outstanding reputation for her inspiring ways with students. A special-needs student had asked to leave the room to go to the bathroom. On his reentry into class, he exclaimed that this time he had been able to do it himself. He was quite unaware that his pants and underwear were still at his ankles. What happened next was amazing. Instead of the shaming laughter that one would expect on such an occasion, these students whirled around to look at their teacher. She applauded appreciatively and all the students followed suit.

The interaction was wonderfully civilized and amazingly gracious. To sense another's vulnerability and move to protect it takes both maturity and skill. The maturity and skill, however, were in the teacher, not in the students. In their case what looked like social competence was simply following cues. The answer was not in the relationships between the students but in the relationship of each student with his or her teacher. Immature beings should not be left to their own devices in social interaction. Many kinds of behavior can be scripted: fairness, helping, sharing, cooperation, conversation, gentleness, consideration, getting along. Although getting children to act mature will not make them more mature, it will keep them out of trouble until the underlying impediments to maturation can be addressed and their maturity catches up. (228-230)

To be sure, socializing plays a part in rendering a child capable of true social integration, but only as a finishing touch. The child must first of all be able to hold on to herself when interacting with others and to perceive the others as separate beings. This is no easy task, even for adults. When a child knows her own mind and values the separateness of another's mind then - and only then - is she ready to hold on to her sense of self, while respecting that of the other person. Once this developmental milestone is achieved, social interaction will hone the child's individuality and hone his relationship skills as well. The real challenge is helping children to grow up to the point where they can benefit from their socializing experiences. (242)

It's possible, despite my disclaimers earlier in this book, that some readers may have gained an impression that I'm against children playing with other kids or having friends, even if immature ones. That would hardly be possible and it would also be completely unnatural. Kids have always had playmates their age, in all societies throughout history, but in most of those societies there was no danger of peer contacts being transformed into peer orientation. Children's interactions occurred in the context of strong adult attachments. Today's parents also cannot be expected to isolate their children from peers, but they do have to be aware of the dangers.

When and under what circumstances should we encourage or allow children to be around one another? It is only to be expected that children will be around each other in day care, in kindergarten, on the playground, in school. But if we made sure that our children were deeply attached to us, we shouldn't have to fear them spending time together, although we do have to limit such times and we should make sure that a nurturing adult is close by and involved. The point is not that we ought to completely forbid peer interaction, but that we should have modest expectations: play time with other kids is fun, and that's it. After every play experience we should be sure to collect our kids. (247)

I would discourage reliance on technology when it comes to play, because it preempts originality and creativity. But we don't have to prescribe for our children how to play -children have always known how to play. We just have to make sure that their attachments to us are strong enough that their emergent, curious, motivated, imaginative selves are not shut down by peer orientation. (248)

Because peer-oriented children have difficulties growing up, they are far less likely to develop a sense of self-independence from the way others think of them. Their self-esteem will never become intrinsic, never rooted in a self-generated valuation. It will be conditional, contingent on the favor of others. Thus, it will be based on external and evanescent factors such as social achievement or looks or income. These are not measures of self-esteem. Genuine self-esteem does not say, I am worthwhile because I can do this, that, or the other. Rather, it proclaims, I am worthwhile whether or not I can do this, that, or the other.

If this view of self-esteem seems strange to some people, it's only because we live in a culture that indoctrinates an idea of self-esteem based on how we look to others. We all want to keep up with the Joneses, we all long to show off our new car or trophy boyfriend or girlfriend or spouse, and we all experience a rush of heady pride when others acknowledge or envy our achievements. But are we really esteeming the self? No, what we are esteeming is what others think of us. Is that the kind of self-esteem we want our children to develop?

The absence of an independent core to self-esteem creates a vacuum that must be filled from the outside. Trying to backfill this void of independent self-esteem with substitute material like affirmations and status and achievement is futile. No matter how positive the experiences, nothing ever sticks: the more praise one receives, the hungrier for praise one becomes; the more popular one gets, the more popular one strives to be; the more competitions one wins, the more competitive one becomes. We all know this intuitively. Our challenge is to use our influence with our children to break their dependence on popularity, appearance, grades, or achievement for the way they think and feel about themselves.

Only a self-esteem that is independent of these things is going to truly serve a child. For him to rely on his peers for something as important as his sense of significance could be disastrous. Built upon such shaky foundations, the higher a child's self-esteem, the more insecure and obsessed he will become. Kids are notoriously fickle in their relationships. They lack any sense of responsibility to temper their moods or any commitment to one another's well-being. To render a child dependent on such unpredictable evaluations is to sentence him to perpetual insecurity. Only the unconditional loving acceptance that adults can offer is able to free a child from obsessing over signs of liking and belonging.

Until children become capable of independent self-appraisal, our duty is to give them such powerful affirmation that they will not be driven to look elsewhere. Such affirmations go much deeper than positive phrases of love and praise - they must emanate from our very being and penetrate to the child's core, allowing her to know that she is loved, welcomed, enjoyed, celebrated for her very existence, regardless of whatever "good" or "bad" she may be presenting us with in any given moment. Under no circumstances is it in the child's best interests to focus on making him likable to his peers. The only way to get peers to matter less is for us to matter more. (250-251)

To clarify once more, the trouble is not in children playing with one another, but in being left to one another when their basic attachment needs have not been met by the adults in charge. [...] The more well-attached our children are to the adults who care for them, the less concerned we need to be about restricting their social play. But don't children need to play with one another? We have to see the difference here between what children want and what they need. The play that children need for healthy development is emergent play, not social play. Emergent play (or creative solitude) does not involve interacting with others. For young children, the closeness and contact with the person attached to must be secure enough to be taken for granted. That sense of security allows the child to venture forth into a world of imagination or creativity. If playmates are involved, they stem from the child's imagination, like Hobbes for Calvin or Pooh and friends for Christopher Robin. The parent is always the best bet for this kind of play, serving as an attachment anchor- although even the parent must not overdo it, lest the emergent play deteriorate into social play, which is far less beneficial. Children are not able to serve the function of an attachment anchor with one another, so their emergent play is almost always preempted by social interaction. Because of the strong emphasis on peer socialization, emergent play - play arising from the child's creativity, imagination, and curiosity about the world - has become endangered.

Again, I'm not saying that some social play will, by itself, harm a child's development, but it will not further it either. So, once more, it's not that children shouldn't spend time with one another, but we should not expect such play to meet their deepest needs. Only nurturing adults can do that. In our urgency for our children to socialize, we leave little time for our kids to be with us or to engage in the solitary, creative play I've called emergent play. We fill up their free time with play dates or with videos, television, electronic games. We need to leave much more room for the self to emerge. (252)

Many adults now in their forties or beyond recall childhoods in which the village of attachments was a reality. Neighbors knew one another and would visit one another's home. The parents of friends could act as surrogate parents to other children. Children played in the streets under the gaze of friendly, protective adults. There were local stores where one bought groceries or hardware or baked goods and many other items, and in these stores the merchants were more than faceless purveyors of mass-manufactured items in a chain-store setting. Much like Mr. Hooper on "Sesame Street," they were individuals one came to know and even cherish. The extended family- uncles, aunts, in-laws- would be in regular contact with one another and could also, if need be, spell the parents in the task of caring for children. Things were not ideal- they hardly ever have been in human existence - but there was a sense of rootedness, belonging, and connection that served as the invisible matrix in which children matured

and gained their sense of the world. The attachment village was a place of adult orientation where culture and values were passed on vertically from one generation to the next and in which, for better or worse, children followed the lead of grown-ups.

For many of us, that attachment village no longer exists. The social and economic underpinnings that used to support traditional cultures have vanished. Gone are the cohesive communities, where extended families lived in close proximity, where children grew up among mentoring adults who did their work close to home, where cultural activities brought together generations. Most of us must share the task of raising our children with adults neither we nor our children have previously met. The majority of children in North America leave their homes almost every day to go to places where adults with whom they have no attachment connection assume responsibility for them. Keeping our children at home, for most of us, would be not be feasible. If we wish to reclaim our children from peer orientation or to prevent them from becoming peer-oriented, we have only one other option: to recreate functional villages of attachment within which to raise our child. We may not be able to put Humpty Dumpty together again, and we certainly cannot refashion obsolescent social and economic structures, but there is much that we can do to make things easier for ourselves and our children.

I am often asked at what age a child is ready to handle the separation of a parent's going back to work or, perhaps, leaving the child to go on a holiday. My answer is almost always a question about the nature of their supporting cast. Only attachment can create a substitute for a parent; hence, we need to cultivate those attachments. Our social culture is no longer doing that job. Along with bringing a baby into this world now comes the responsibility of creating our own supporting cast. If we became conscious of attachment and assumed this role, we might overhear conversations like this:

"How are you getting along with finding a good babysitter for Samantha?" "We think we found someone who looks promising. Right now, they're in the kitchen together cooking up a storm. She seems to have Samantha's number. I want them to spend time together and for Samantha to be totally connected with her before I leave them on their own. After that, it should be a piece of cake."

Adult attachments are especially important in adolescence. When pushing away from parents, as maturing adolescents tend to do, having an alternative adult to turn to can keep the adolescent from turning to peers. If they are to serve this function, however, these relationships need to be cultivated long before the child reaches adolescence. If we are to be replaced, it would be much better with substitutes we had already handpicked. (258)

One of the most important tools is the introduction. An introduction is an opportunity to create friendly first impressions. It is also a natural way of giving our attachment blessing. We need to be seen by our child in friendly interaction with the person to whom we are about to pass the baton, whether that person is a preschool teacher, a day-care worker, a piano teacher, a ski instructor, the principal, or the classroom teacher. The trick is to seize the lead in becoming acquainted with the adult to whom we are entrusting our child and then to assume control of the introductions. It is a golden opportunity for matchmaking.

If we lived in a world in harmony with developmental design, parents and teachers would first establish friendly connections with each other, and then parents would assume their rightful role in making the introductions. School mixers, instead of bringing children together with their peers, would facilitate interaction among members of the adult attachment team. Structures would be in place to prepare passing our children smoothly from one adult to another. (259)