

REACH

Resource • Education • Advocacy • Crisis Intervention • Hope

Adoption Support Services for Fresno County



Hello REACH Families,

With the end of Spring, we celebrate the start of Summer! Days become longer, temperatures rise, and nature is in full bloom. Summer is a time to shift daily routines, as children are often home from school, and provide opportunities for experiencing other environments, through exploring local sites and the possibility of traveling. Summer is a time of opportunity and connection! Let's embrace it!

Families often begin to engage in Summer activities, spending time together outdoors, taking vacations, and attending family events. This change may also prompt adjustments in lifestyle, from clothing choices to food preferences, and lighter meals, such as fresh fruit. It is a time that creates opportunities for social interaction, creativity, and togetherness.

We're delighted to bring you this edition of the REACH newsletter, focused on relational parenting, a dynamic approach that emphasizes the importance of connection, communication, and understanding in raising children. This model fosters partnership and healthy family relationships.

Be sure to check out the calendar page of this newsletter, which highlights REACH activities this quarter. If you are interested in learning more about REACH services in Fresno County, please call 559.222.4969.

Take care,
The REACH Team

Fresno County Summer 2025

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Developing a Healthy Parent-Child Relationship

By: Griselda Santillan-Mejia, MA

A strong parent-child relationship is developed when parents are responsive, versus reactive, to their children's needs. Relationships are fostered when children can rely on their parents for guidance and support during difficult times. A good, strong bond is critical for a child's emotional, social, and cognitive development. It can also impact a child's self-esteem, confidence, and resilience when challenges arise. A healthy parent-child relationship can help foster an open line of communication, mutual respect, and trust.

Here are recommendations on how to foster a healthy parent-child relationship:

- Children learn from observing their parent's behavior and interactions; this is why parents need to model healthy communication, conflict resolution, and emotional regulation.
- Demonstrating love and affection to children will help build a strong relationship. Parents can express their care and support for their children through words, gestures, and actions.
- An open line of communication leads to trust in parent-child relationships. Encourage your children to speak about their feelings or concerns and listen without judgment.
- It is natural that the parent-child relationship will change and evolve. The relationship will go through different transitions, requiring parents to be ready to adapt their parenting style to meet their child's needs during these transitions.
- Parents play an important role in encouraging their children to be independent; give them opportunities to make their own choices and learn from their own mistakes as they grow.
- Setting boundaries helps a child understand expectations and learn self-regulation. Clearly communicate these rules so children understand the consequences if the rules or boundaries are crossed.

Adapted from:

<https://www.familyservicesnew.org/news/8-ways-to-strengthen-a-parent-child-relationship> and <https://news.gallup.com/poll/548381/quality-parent-child-relationships-families.aspx>

Activity

By: Tara Soria, MA

Relational parenting helps children develop a sense of security and trust, which is crucial for their emotional well-being. Here are some unique and meaningful ideas for parents to build a strong, loving relationship with their children- ideas that help lay the foundation for positive behavior and healthy development:

"Emotion of the Day" Jar: Create a jar with different feelings written on slips of paper (for example, proud, frustrated, excited, nervous, sad). Each day, pick one together and share a memory or example of when you felt that way. This builds emotional vocabulary, empathy, and connection.

"Love Notes": Hide small notes in lunchboxes, shoes, pillowcases, or clothing pockets with positive affirmations or simple "I love you" messages. Unexpected affirmations reinforce that your love is constant and unconditional.

Parent-Child Journal: Pass a notebook back and forth where you can both write or draw your thoughts, questions, and feelings. This practice encourages reflection, non-verbal communication, and deepens trust.

"Kindness Missions": Plan acts of kindness to do as a parent/child team, such as baking cookies for a neighbor, writing a kind note to a friend or family member, or donating toys to charity or pet supplies to a rescue organization. Tasks such as these build compassion, collaboration, and a shared sense of purpose.

Teach Them Something Sacred to You: Share something you deeply value, whether it is how to plant something and nurture it, how to make a favorite family recipe, or share in creating music or art. Sharing your talents with your child fosters respect, identity, and intimacy. Showing your child what is important to you can lead to a shared love for a healthy outlet that also serves as a way to bond for years to come.

"Thankful for You": At bedtime or dinner, share one specific thing you appreciate about your child from that day. This reinforces their positive behavior and builds self-esteem through love-centered feedback.

Source: connectedfamilies.org



Relational Parenting

By: Fernando Aquino, MSW

Pillars of relational parenting in adoption encompass connection, attachment, communication, and acknowledgement of the adopted child's unique history and needs. Children from trauma often require a different approach to parenting due to their early beginnings. Their attachment may be hindered, felt safety askew, and they may require more support to obtain a sense of self. In this article, we share some of the ways these pillars can be reinforced.

- **Encourage and build felt safety in the home** - Felt safety is the difference between being safe and feeling safe. It can be difficult for adopted children to verbalize the emotions they are feeling. Reaction can be fear-based due to previous experiences. For example, a child may find it difficult to use the restroom alone because that was where their abuse occurred. It is important to remain curious about children's behaviors and try to piece together triggers.
- **Express unconditional love** - Along with felt safety, relationships with children from trauma are strengthened by expressions of love that are both verbal and non-verbal. Offering unfaltering safety, love, and acceptance is important for children to hear. This can sound like, "no matter what you do or say, it won't make me love you any more or less" (Kindred Families).

- **One-on-one connection** - Be curious about your child's interests and set time aside to share in that collaboratively with your child. This requires being curious and observant of your child's interests. Being able to lean into your child's interest conveys, "I'm interested in you, I see you, and I love spending time with you" (Kindred Families). This also builds a child's sense of self-worth.
- **Arguments and discord will arise, but modeling and sharing in resolution can help create a map for open dialogue** - Collaboratively working on solutions with young children builds healthy dynamics. This also helps increase communication and sets firm boundaries between parents and youth, putting the relationship over power struggles. Working in collaboration can be challenging, but tackling the problem together builds trust in each other and limits the "you versus me" dynamic.

Sources: <https://adoption.com/felt-safety> and <https://www.kindred-families.com/blog/the-ten-pillars-of-relational-parenting>

Attaching Through Love, Hugs and Play: Simple Strategies to Help Build Connections with Your Child

Written by: Deborah Gray

Book Review by: Beth Hurlbert, MA

"Attaching Through Love, Hugs and Play: Simple Strategies to Help Build Connections with Your Child" by Deborah Gray is a practical guide for parents of children who may struggle with attachment. She offers simple, actionable strategies to build stronger connections between parent and child. The book also provides in-depth information on attachment and what stress does to the brain. The book focuses on the joys and benefits of fostering secure attachments through everyday interactions like love, hugs, and play. The book provides both immediate crisis response ideas and long-term strategies to help children develop coping skills.

When talking about bonding and attachment, Gray gives suggestions like skin-to-skin contact, mealtimes together, and games that can be played to build a connection with your child. She also gives ideas on how to start with a low-level connection, looking into their eyes, building to higher levels of connections, and snuggling.

The book explores that for parents to be good at attachment, they need to be balanced themselves. Gray encourages parents to set boundaries not only with their children but also with outside obligations, family, and friends. If we don't set aside time for taking care of ourselves, our other relationships suffer.

Gray emphasizes the importance of teaching children self-regulation skills in clear language that is easy for parents to understand. The book has practical tools to try, which include learning to regulate ourselves, finding self-control in daily routines, and how to set limits for ourselves and our children.

The book also explores how to build higher-level thinking while considering the strengths and deficits of the child. It discusses how dysfunctional thinking from a child can affect parents and gives strategies on ways to address these issues to help develop executive functioning.

There is even a chapter that explores rewards and limits. There are suggestions and guides about what rewards to give and the amounts. Then there are tools for dealing with difficult behaviors such as lying, arguing, stealing, and helping children to get on the right behavioral track. The book not only



addresses issues of attachment with young children but also has a chapter for promoting attachment with tweens and teens.

While giving suggestions for immediate responses to behaviors, the book explores building positive, engaging interactions with children, highlighting the joy of bonding. The book also gives different scenarios relating to topics such as adoption, divorce, or other difficult experiences that may occur during a lifespan.

"Attaching Through Love, Hugs and Play: Simple Strategies to Help Build Connections with Your Child" is a great book to consider for ideas when wanting to learn to attach or struggling with difficult behaviors with children of all ages. You can quickly find what you are looking for and try a suggestion without having to read the whole book. The book provides insight and logic into the science of why attachment helps our children's lives in so many different ways. This book is worth considering to see if you think it would be a beneficial resource to you and your family.

REACH *Event*

H I G H L I G H T

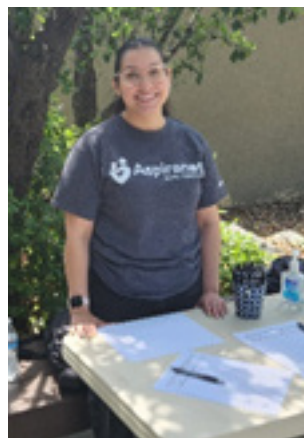


By: Katherine Frias, BA

California Living Museum (CALM)

The Kern REACH team was thrilled to host a heartwarming day of connection and fun at CALM this Spring! Families came together to enjoy the beauty of nature, explore animal exhibits, and build lasting memories in a

supportive, welcoming environment. Events like these remind us of the power of community and the joy of shared experiences for the children and families we serve. Thank you to everyone who joined us; your presence made it truly memorable!



Parents who attended shared their gratitude:

"We were able to bond with family and have a great time."

"We had fun, great bonding time."

"We loved the trip to the zoo. What a wonderful afternoon!"

"It let our family bond and connect in a fun way, and meet other similar families."

"It gave us one-on-one time with the little ones doing something they enjoyed."



Support Groups, Trainings & Events

July

8 Parent Café

6:30 – 8:00 pm – Zoom

16 Parent Support Group (Spanish)

9:30 – 11:30 am – Zoom

August

12 Parent Café

6:30 – 8:00 pm – Zoom

20 Parent Support Group (Spanish)

9:30 – 11:30 am – Zoom

26 Parent Support Group (English)

6:00 – 7:30 pm – In Person

September

9 Parent Café

6:30 – 8:00 pm – Zoom

17 Parent Support Group (Spanish)

9:30 – 11:30 am – Zoom

23 Parent Support Group (English)

6:00 – 7:30 pm – In Person

REACH Parent Support Group

In Person

Designed for adults thinking about adoption through foster care, families awaiting adoptive placement, and new and experienced resource and adoptive parents. Training hours provided. The REACH Parent Support Group is offered on the fourth Tuesday of each month, 6:00-7:30pm. Please join us to share your family's challenges and triumphs. To register, email Fernando Aquino at faquino@aspiranet.org.

Parent Café

Zoom

Based on the Five Protective Factors, Parent Cafe provides an opportunity for parents to explore their strengths and learn from each other's experiences. Training hours provided. Parent Café is offered on the third Thursday of each month, 10:00-11:30am via Zoom. To register for Parent Café, email Fernando Aquino at faquino@aspiranet.org and a link to the meeting will be emailed to you.

REACH Parent Support Group in Spanish

Zoom

Este grupo está diseñado para adultos que piensan en la adopción, padres que esperan colocación adoptiva, y padres de niños adoptados. Horas de entrenamiento impartidas. Los enlaces de Zoom y los recordatorios se enviarán mensualmente. El Grupo de Apoyo para Padres de REACH en Español se ven en el cuarto miércoles del mes. Para registrarse, comuníquese con Fernando Aquino llamando al número 559.222.4969 y preguntar por REACH o mandando email a faquino@aspiranet.org y se le enviara por correo electrónico un enlace a la reunión.



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Aspiranet REACH Adoption Support Services for Fresno County

Educational/Support Groups – Monthly meetings where families are able to receive education/training and meet other adoptive families in the community.

REACH Newsletter – Quarterly newsletters filled with adoption articles, local trainings, book reviews, on-line resources and more.

Educational Workshops and Trainings – A variety of workshops and trainings will be made available.

Lending Library/Resource Directory– The REACH lending library is open and available for book review and check outs for families. A resource directory of local providers is also available to families.

Case Management – Ongoing case management is provided. REACH clients are provided with information, resource referral or other assistance as needed.

Crisis Counseling – Crisis intervention is available. Please contact our REACH staff for this support.