

Parenting Connection

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API's Eight Principles of Parenting

Attachment Parenting International (API) is a 501c3 non-profit organization founded in 1994 whose mission is to educate and support all parents in raising secure, joyful, and empathic children in order to strengthen families and create a more compassionate world.

API promotes parenting practices that create strong, healthy emotional bonds between children and their parents for life. API believes that when we strengthen families, we nurture and fulfill a child's need for trust, empathy, and affection and ultimately provide a lifelong foundation for healthy, enduring relationships. They can take those bonds with them into their adult lives and share them with their children, and their children can do the same, creating a life cycle of compassion and connection.

API's educational material and training workshops are rooted in attachment theory that has been studied extensively for over 60 years by psychology and child development researchers, and more recently, by researchers studying the brain. These studies revealed that infants are born "hardwired" with strong needs to be nurtured and to remain physically close to the primary caregiver, during the first few years of life. The child's emotional, physical, and neurological development is greatly enhanced when these basic needs are met consistently and appropriately. These needs can be summarized as *proximity, protection, and predictability*.

To help guide parents along their journey, API created *API's Eight Principles of Parenting*. The principles are intended to help parents better understand normal child development, to help parents identify their children's needs, and to aid parents in responding to their children with respect and empathy. By educating themselves about children's health and development, parents will become more conscious of and attuned to their children's needs when making decisions. API has also published a companion document addressing the preservation of attachments with older children.

Attachment Parenting is not a one-size-fits-all recipe for raising children. API recommends that parents use their own judgment and intuition to create a parenting style that fosters attachment and works for their family. API advises to "Take what works for your family and leave the rest."

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The following is a condensed version of *API's Eight Principles of Parenting*. If you would like complete descriptions of these Principles or how to apply them, please visit API's website: <http://www.attachmentparenting.org> or email info@attachmentparenting.org.

Prepare for Pregnancy, Birth, and Parenting

Become emotionally and physically prepared for pregnancy and birth. Research available options for healthcare providers and birthing environments, and become informed about routine newborn care. Continuously educate yourself about developmental stages of childhood, setting realistic expectations and remaining flexible.

Feed with Love and Respect

Breastfeeding is the optimal way to satisfy an infant's nutritional and emotional needs. "Bottle Nursing" adapts breastfeeding behaviors to bottle-feeding to help initiate a secure attachment. Follow the feeding cues for both infants and children, encouraging them to eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full. Offer healthy food choices and model healthy eating behavior.

Respond with Sensitivity

Build the foundation of trust and empathy beginning in infancy. Tune in to what your child is communicating to you, then respond consistently and appropriately. Babies cannot be expected to self-soothe, they need calm, loving, empathetic parents to help them learn to regulate their emotions. Respond sensitively to a child who is hurting or expressing strong emotion, and share in their joy.

Use Nurturing Touch

Touch meets a baby's needs for physical contact, affection, security, stimulation, and movement. Skin-to-skin contact is especially effective, such as during breastfeeding, bathing, or massage. Carrying or baby-wearing also meets this need while on the go. Hugs, snuggling, back rubs, massage, and physical play help meet this need in older children.

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Ensure Safe Sleep, Physically and Emotionally

Babies and children have needs at night just as they do during the day; from hunger, loneliness, and fear, to feeling too hot or too cold. They rely on parents to soothe them and help them regulate their intense emotions. Sleep training techniques can have detrimental physiological and psychological effects. Safe co-sleeping has benefits to both babies and parents.

Provide Consistent and Loving Care

Babies and young children have an intense need for the physical presence of a consistent, loving, responsive caregiver: ideally a parent. If it becomes necessary, choose an alternate caregiver who has formed a bond with the child and who cares for him in a way that strengthens the attachment relationship. Keep schedules flexible, and minimize stress and fear during short separations.

Practice Positive Discipline

Positive discipline helps a child develop a conscience guided by his own internal discipline and compassion for others. Discipline that is empathetic, loving, and respectful strengthens the connection between parent and child. Rather than reacting to behavior, discover the needs leading to the behavior. Communicate and craft solutions together while keeping everyone's dignity intact.

Strive for Balance in Your Personal and Family Life

It is easier to be emotionally responsive when you feel in balance. Create a support network, set realistic goals, put people before things, and don't be afraid to say "no". Recognize individual needs within the family and meet them to the greatest extent possible without compromising your physical and emotional health. Be creative, have fun with parenting, and take time to care for yourself.



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Life Inside Series Tells Stories about Fathers and Incarceration

The Marshall Project's goal is justice, and journalism is their tool. Their reporting exposes injustice and examines solutions for the criminal justice system.

The Marshall Project is a nonpartisan, nonprofit news organization that seeks to create and sustain a sense of national urgency about the U.S. criminal justice system. They achieve this through award-winning journalism, partnerships with other news outlets and public forums. In all of their work, the Marshall Project strives to educate and enlarge the audience of people who care about the state of criminal justice.

In June 2019, the Marshall Project's website, www.themarshallproject.org, ran a special Life Inside series of essays about fathers and incarceration.

The essays in the series included:

- Father and Son, Next Door
Neighbors in Prison
- My First Father-Daughter Dance
Was in the Prison Gym
- I Thought I Knew My Father,
Then I Met Him in Prison
- My Cellie Was the Father
I Never Had
- After Prison, I Became a Better Dad



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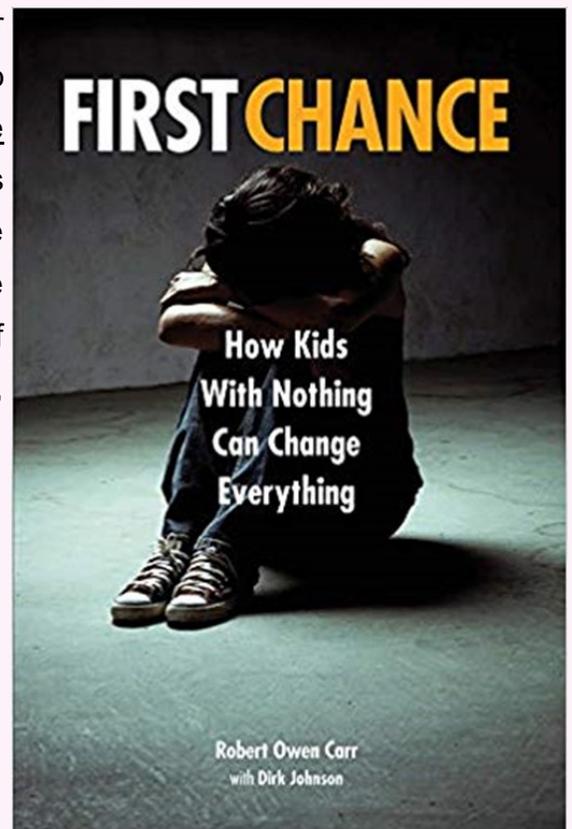
How Kids with Nothing Can Change Everything

After growing up in a volatile household himself, Robert O. Carr has made a mission of reaching out to young people who have known hardship.

After graduating from the University of Illinois with degrees in mathematics and computer science, Robert Carr founded Heartland Payment Systems, one of the largest debit and credit card transaction companies in America. Using some of his wealth, Mr. Carr founded the Give Something Back Foundation in 2003. Give Something Back is a public charity that provides scholarships and mentoring to students who have faced economic hardship and other adversities, such as foster care or the incarceration of a parent, so they can successfully graduate from college in four years, debt-free. Give Something Back is driven by the belief of investing in the minds and futures of smart, capable young people.

Robert Carr has teamed with Dirk Johnson, a former bureau chief for *The New York Times* and *Newsweek*, to author First Chance: How Kids with Nothing Can Change Everything. This book examines the remarkable triumphs of young people considered least likely to attain a college degree. Of the 500,000 who experience foster care annually, only 3% are likely to graduate from college. Of those who have experienced the incarceration of a parent, only 2% are likely to earn a college degree.

Give Something Back has turned the focus of its college scholarship program toward these often forgotten and neglected kids. *First Chance: How Kids with Nothing Can Change Everything* examines the challenges facing kids who have endured foster care or the incarceration of a mother and their triumphs against all odds. The authors



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hope that readers acknowledge the great and often untapped talents of kids who have overcome adversity, economic hardship and family woes, and the power of a helping hand and pivotal guidance, as Carr has proven with the remarkable success of his college scholarship and mentoring program.

As the inspiring stories in First Chance reveal, students who have faced immeasurable obstacles and have the smarts and drive are able to compete with peers from more comfortable backgrounds. The authors argue that these young people can draw on their special and painful insights to forge powerful change, provided society acknowledges them — and extends a first chance. First Chance is an account of triumph after trouble — a testament to the power of a lending hand.

To date, the Give Something Back Foundation has pre-paid for over 1,500 scholars to go to college, an upfront investment of over \$35 million. Give Back alumni are succeeding. They have a 91% college graduation rate and a 100% employment rate. Many have become doctors, attorneys, executives, and teachers. Over 50% have returned to become mentors with the Give Something Back organization.

Need Help?

Do you have any questions or need some advice on starting or improving your parenting classes, parent/child literacy program, or parent support group for offenders?

We have an email list of experienced parenting educators who are eager to help. Just send an email to jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com with your question or request and I will forward it to our email list. Then wait a few days and the helping responses will be sent to you.

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How Do I Help this Kid Adjust?

Current estimates suggest that over five million youth, or one in every 14 children, in the United States have lived with a parent incarcerated at some time point in their childhood. Due to disproportionate rates of incarceration, children of color, children in poverty, and children residing in rural areas are more likely to experience this particularly stigmatizing form of parent-child separation.

Research has found strong associations between the exposure of parental incarceration and a host of negative social, economic, and health outcomes in youth. Multi-level community and family supports for those exposed to parental incarceration are encouraged, yet research is limited on the experiences of the youth service providers that would be tasked to help support these youths.

These facts have led Andrew Axelson of Rice University and Kelly Kelleher, Deena, Chisolm, and Samantha Boch of the Abigail Wexner Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital at the Ohio State University College of Medicine to embark on research to learn from the perspectives of youth service providers with the hope of improving interventions designed to support youth exposed to parental incarceration.

Their research culminated in a "How do I Help This Kid Adjust to What Real Life is for Them?: Youth Service Providers' Experiences on Supporting Children with Incarcerated Parents" article that appears in the March 2020 issue of *Children and Youth Services Review*. It may be accessed at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740919312952>.



The researchers' study sought to obtain a snapshot of the experiences and recommendations of youth service providers who have worked with or currently work with youth exposed to parental incarceration.

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Trained research personnel conducted 20-30-minute, semi-structured, telephone interviews with a total of 30 youth service providers (including teachers, behavioral health specialists, counselors, and youth mentoring personnel) in order to obtain insight and detailed accounts of their experiences working with children exposed to parental incarceration. The interview guide explored a wide variety of in-depth information from youth service providers with questions focused on experiences, barriers, current strategies, and recommended supports the providers might identify as helpful in the development of future interventions for youth exposed to parental incarceration and their caregivers.

Provider experiences working with children exposed to parental incarceration were grouped by the phase of incarceration of the parent: upon arrest, during incarceration, and upon re-entry into the community. Three primary themes were identified for the child for each phase of incarceration: justice contact needs, social and economic needs, and communication needs.

Upon arrest of the parent

The interviews highlighted the need for a rigorous system to identify, educate, screen, and track youths exposed to parental incarceration upon the arrest of the parent. While barriers and challenges were primarily discussed, youth service providers also cited numerous strategies and offered recommendations to help support children exposed to parental incarceration.

Coordinated service supports commonly identified as essential for youths exposed to parental incarceration include:

- Sensitive screenings designed to identify and track youths exposed to parental incarceration in order to link the family to support services
- Assistance with navigating the child or children through court procedures upon arrest
- Social information data exchanges between health and community support organizations to mitigate further harm and trauma from incarceration of the parent.
- Safe housing placement due to housing instability and household churning
- Trauma-informed approaches and building trust through informal activities and non-authoritarian methods
- Maintaining consistency, not breaking promises or missing appointments, and giving children space as necessary, in order to maintain their trust

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During incarceration of the parent

A critical problem revealed by this study was the difficulty, and at times complete inability, in obtaining parental consent for education and mental health support services for youth exposed to parental incarceration. This difficulty was often attributed to the physical barriers of retrieving the consent or the caregivers' desire to protect the child.

The interviews with providers revealed areas of assistance needed by children of incarcerated parents:

- Navigation required for a child to visit or speak with the incarcerated parent
- Assistance in obtaining parental consent required to access timely education and behavioral health support services
- Help in finding resources and coordinating data sharing between social services systems
- Resources to assist the family in traveling to the institution
- More family-friendly spaces within correctional institutions.
- Preparing the child before and debriefing the child after the visit
- De-stigmatizing communication strategies to best communicate the incarceration of a parent with a child of various developmental stages

Upon re-entry of the parent back into the community

Of the provider discussions that focused on re-entry, most centered on the need for parenting education classes before release, and the need for family therapy or family reunification supports upon re-entry back into the community. Youth service providers advocated for the expansion of parenting classes and other services geared towards assisting the parents' return to society. Providers mentioned the need for child care so the parent can continue to attend personal therapy or drug rehabilitation services if the child was able to and decided to live with the parent upon release. Providers indicated that there was a need to help foster the parent-child relationship before the parent is released from prison.

The need for communication and resource guides upon release of the parent from incarceration was also indicated. Dissemination of the *Coping with Incarceration* resource kits and caregiver-child

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communication strategies developed by Sesame Street were well received and perceived as useful by community-based and clinical providers.

The social and economic need for a coordinated hub of supports was identified upon re-entry and the difficulty of the returning parent to gain employment, housing, and economic aid was exposed.

Providers also cited the difficulty of communicating about and balancing the child's perceptions of a positive reintegration and seamless transition of the incarcerated parent back into the household. The importance of preparing the child with 'what if' scenarios and the importance of leveraging the caregiver relationship was also evident.

Throughout the interviews, teachers recommended preparing the child upon their parents' release, utilizing communication resource guides, and employing developmentally-appropriate explanations to guide caregiver beliefs throughout each phase of incarceration.

Conclusion

The "How do I Help This Kid Adjust to What Real Life is for Them?" article is the first study to elucidate detailed accounts of youth service providers' experiences working with children exposed to parental incarceration. The study's results underscore the imperative need at the beginning, throughout, and upon cessation of the parent's sentence for timely and sensitive screening for youth exposure to parental incarceration, resource guides on how to communicate and navigate the justice system, and a coordinated hub of social services to support economic and housing stability for the child and/or family

If you would like to further discuss this study, address your correspondence to:

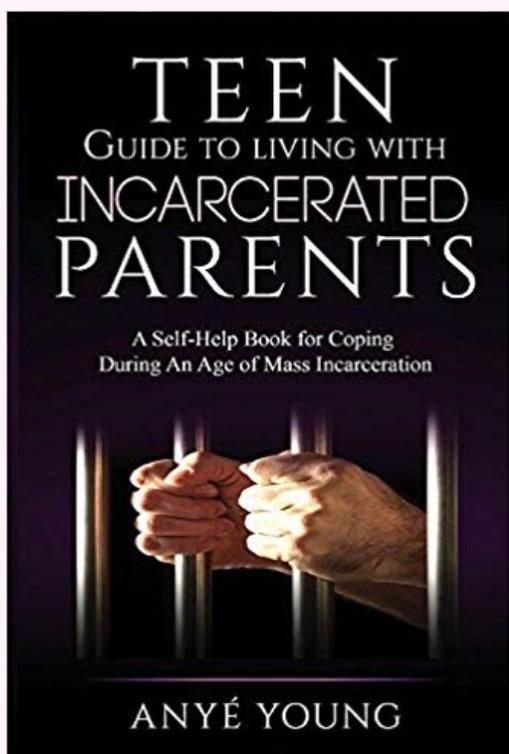
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Teen Author's Guide to Living with Incarcerated Parents

At 16 years of age, Anyé Young, a high school senior in Maryland, offers a glimpse into her life as a teenager coping with life while her father is serving a prison sentence for theft. Her father isn't scheduled to be released for another six years, when Anyé may be graduating college.

Anyé's book, The Teen Guide to Living with Incarcerated Parents: A Self-Help Book for Coping During an Age of Mass Incarceration, offers advice on how to deal with an incarcerated parent and how to thrive during those tough circumstances.



She shares personal stories along with tips and tricks she's learned while coping with the challenges of life away from her father and in a single-parent home. With this book, Anyé aims to motivate and inspire children who have parents in prison. She wants them to know that they can overcome the shame and embarrassment they may feel. She also aims to help the single parents and extended family members gain a better understanding of the challenges their children face. Anyé offers her book as a guide for teenagers like her who are determined to succeed in life no matter the circumstances.

Anyé hopes that by writing the book, she can help other teens and young people impacted by the criminal justice system. She also wants to draw attention to the intergenerational cycle that can lead to a daunting family legacy. In addition to her father, Anyé's grandfather was also incarcerated, and now her brother has ended up behind bars.

Trying to avoid that pattern of incarceration filled her with anxiety. "When I recognized this pattern, I felt a sense of pressure," Anyé said. "That's because I didn't see anyone else in my family going a different way. When you see that kind of pattern and are choosing to be the one to break that chain, it's really hard."

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Anyé says she never told anyone at school about her father — including her closest friends — because she felt a lot of embarrassment and shame about his incarceration. That stigma closed her off to some relationships. Anyé said. “I didn’t want to tell anybody what I was going through because I thought they would not like me anymore; I felt like they would stop being friends with me; I thought they would judge me. That really limited my friendships. I didn’t get to have that best friend bond. I didn’t have a bond with any of my friends.”

Thanks to the support of her mother, Anyé has learned to open up more and express herself, something that happened gradually during her adolescence.

Anyé is now thriving in high school. She’s getting good grades, with an eye toward continuing a newfound love of acting in college. Anyé is also an active member of her community, volunteering with several organizations. She sees her process of getting involved with her community as a critical part of healing.

Anyé believes that writing the book has helped her forgive her father. That’s something that she hopes society can share with those who are incarcerated and their families.



For past issues of this newsletter, parenting handbooks, program resources, and more go to www.ceawisconsin.org

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Editor's Message

Attachment Parenting International's *Eight Principles of Parenting* summarized in the cover article in this newsletter begins with a discussion of the importance that touching plays the forming of emotional bonds between infants and their parents.

The skin is the largest and most sensitive of our organs. It is our first medium of communication. In the evolution of the senses, the sense of touch was undoubtedly the first to come into being. An infant learns more through touch than any other sense.

In an era where we may have become overly concerned with the physical safety of the child and where parents have grown to rely heavily on time-saving devices to manage their hectic responsibilities, opportunities for touch contact with infants sometimes are neglected. Bottle-feeding, strollers, car seats and monitoring devices are often convenient and may keep the infant physically safe, but they are no replacement for skin-to-skin touching in meeting a baby's needs for physical contact, affection, security, stimulation, and movement.

- Jerry

"The loving touch, like music, often utters the things that cannot be spoken." --- Ashley Montagu

The Parenting Connection newsletter is a publication of the Wisconsin Chapter of the Correctional Education Association. The opinions herein are entirely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the CEA-Wisconsin executive officers or the CEA-Wisconsin membership as a whole.

Articles for publication in the Parenting Connection newsletter may be submitted to the Parenting Connection Newsletter Co-Editors: Jerry Bednarowski at jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com or Amanda Hillestad at Amanda.Hillestad@wisconsin.gov.

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