

EMPOWERED *To Connect*

Introduction

“From the moment of conception to the end of life, we each engage in a unique dance of connection.” – Bruce Perry, Born for Love

What is Empowered To Connect Parent Training?

Empowered To Connect (ETC) Parent Training is designed as an interactive learning experience specifically for adoptive and foster parents like you. ETC Parent Training was created by Michael & Amy Monroe and relies heavily on the Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI) model developed by Dr. Karyn Purvis and her colleagues at the TCU Institute of Child Development (www.child.tcu.edu). ETC Parent Training also incorporates the work and insights of other experts such as Deborah Gray, Dr. Curt Thompson, Dr. Dan Siegel, Jayne Schooler, and Carol Kranowitz.

ETC Parent Training is taught from a Christian perspective and reinforces the fact that we are made in the image of a loving, relational God who has created us to connect in relationship – both with Him and with others. This training is designed to equip parents like you with a holistic understanding of the needs and development of adopted and foster children, and empower you with tools and strategies to effectively meet those needs, build trust, and help your children heal and grow.

*God spoke: “Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature...God created human beings; he created them godlike, reflecting God’s nature.
Gen. 1:26-27 (MSG)*

ETC Parent Training takes a holistic approach by focusing on a wide range of topics and issues relevant to adoptive and foster parents. During the course of this training, you will gain greater understanding about the possible impacts of your child's history, what you yourself bring to the parent-child relationship, the importance of attachment (what it is, how it develops, and how you can change it), the role of fear, and the importance of meeting your child's sensory processing, nutritional, and other physical needs. ETC Parent Training integrates this holistic understanding with the insights and tools that you will need to effectively and consistently employ a balanced parenting approach that allows you to provide compassionate discipline that both connects and corrects.

ETC Parent Training is offered in two separate courses: the ***Prepare Course*** for couples and singles prior to placement of an adopted or foster child, and the ***Connect Course*** for couples and singles after placement. The Connect Course is taught over nine weeks in an interactive small group environment that meets weekly for about two hours.

The ***Connect Course*** includes the following nine sessions designed for those who are already adoptive or foster parents:

- Building a Foundation of Connection
- Understanding Your Child's History
- Examining What You Bring to the Relationship (Part 1)
- Examining What You Bring to the Relationship (Part 2)
- Exploring the Heart of Connection – Attachment
- Focusing on the Needs of the Whole Child
- Putting It All Together: Connecting While Correcting (Parts 1-3)

How is ETC Parent Training Organized?

Each session of the ETC Parent Training material is organized into the following three integrated parts, and each part is essential to the overall training experience:

- ***Learn.*** You will be asked to complete several assignments each week prior to the in-class session. These assignments include reading (articles or selected portions of certain books), watching some online videos, and answering a few questions about what you have learned to help you

process and better apply the information. It may sound a lot like “homework,” but we like to think of it as helping provide you with a solid foundation for the key concepts and critical insights that you will need to parent your child in a way that meet his needs and help him connect and grow.

- **Explore.** Each week you will meet for approximately two hours to explore important concepts and insights and to discuss these with other adoptive and foster parents. These in-class sessions will be led by an experienced adoptive/foster couple that not only understands the information, but has also been faithfully living it day in and day out. These sessions are a great mix of hearing, thinking, and discussing, and are an important element of the training. For this reason, we require that married couples attend the training (and participate in the assignments) together. If you are single, we encourage you to invite someone from your support team (e.g., a parent, friend, co-worker, etc.) to attend the training with you.
- **Apply.** Following the in-class session each week you will be asked to complete a few assignments that will allow you to apply and “put into practice” what you are learning. These assignments may include some additional reading or watching online videos, but will focus primarily on “at-home exercises.” This weekly practice is a critically important aspect of the overall training experience and is essential to help you make changes in the way you parent.

Starting Over & Moving Forward

It is undeniable that the children we love and serve have unique histories and needs. As a result, we as parents must be willing to learn how to love and parent them well. This requires that we take on some new ideas and new ways of relating, communicating, and offering discipline. It means that we must be open to new ideas and learn how to use new parenting tools that will be effective in helping our children heal and grow. But truthfully, this can actually be the easy part. What is often far more challenging is being willing and able to un-learn some of our old ways of parenting. Whether it is parenting strategies that were successful with your biological children, ways that you yourself were parented, or parenting approaches that others in your church or circle of friends are using,

letting go of the old and familiar ways of thinking and relating can often be the most difficult.



Learning & Un-Learning to Parent Your Child

<http://empoweredtoconnect.org/learning-unlearning-to-parent/>

Watch this brief video in which Dr. Purvis explains the need for parents to focus specifically on the child that God has called them to love and care for, and to parent that child in a way that can bring hope, healing, and joy.

Learn, Live, Repeat

Learning how to parent is hard work. So this begs the question: *what is the best way to tackle this difficult task of learning and, in some cases, un-learning how to parent well?*

What we have learned in teaching and training thousands of families with this material is that parents learn best not just in one way but through a variety of ways. If everything we needed to learn in order to parent well could simply be read in a book, then this training would consist of little more than reading. But we all know it doesn't work like that.

Instead, we believe that parents learn best through what we refer to as “spaced repetition.” For example, you may learn something (maybe by reading or watching a video), then you have a chance to think through how it might apply to you, then you have the opportunity to discuss it with others and understand it more fully, then you put it into practice. But the truth is that old habits (and ways of thinking) die hard for most parents. So most of us will need to go through this cycle of learning it, living it, and then repeating the learning and living many times over to ultimately experience the lasting changes we desire. We think this is not only healthy, we believe it is the best way to effectively learn and change – and ETC Parent Training is designed to help guide you through this process.

Easier Said Than Done

by Michael Monroe

People who make things look easy really get on my nerves. You know who I'm talking about. Have you ever watched one of those cooking shows on TV? You see them making some recipe in 10 easy steps and it always comes out looking hot, beautiful, and delicious. So you try it at home and all you end up with is a giant mess of something ugly and inedible. Or maybe you've watched one of those home improvement shows where the host can build, repair, or decorate just about anything and it turns out great, all on a shoestring budget. So in a fit of inspiration you make a trip to Home Depot, spend twice as much as you wanted, come home and four hours later all your spouse can say is "maybe we can call someone to come fix it tomorrow." Why does it seem to be so easy for some people? Why are so many things in life easier said than done?

I've found that parenting is often like that. You look around and it seems that other parents (you know the ones) have it all together. They say "stop" and their kids freeze, they say "no" and their kids instantly comply without a peep, and they say "jump" and their kids seemingly ask "how high?" You just know it can't be real; you know it can't *really* be that easy. But still, to watch and listen to them parenting is a piece of cake. And then, to add insult to injury, you come across a video of a parenting expert and he or she makes it sound so very easy. So you go home and give it a try with your child, but much like the recipe gone awry or the repair job that fails, all you end up with is a big mess. It was easy for them to say, but oh so very hard for you to do.

Well there is good news – you're not crazy and you're not alone. It turns out that many of these things are in fact 'easier said than done.' Experts have even given this reality a name: *the illusion of expertise*. In overly simple terms, this regularly occurring phenomenon describes how we often observe others explaining or demonstrating something and we mistakenly believe that we can replicate it with a similar level of mastery or competence, if not also ease. But therein lies the illusion. True expertise, true mastery only comes with consistent and quality repetition *and* with constructive feedback regarding mistakes. That's just a fancy way of saying that you have to practice. There is simply no substitute, and parenting is not exempt.

Practice is not a foreign concept to us parents. Our kids are involved in a bewildering array of sports, activities, and school performances. We have no problem pushing our kids to practice. Even homework can be thought of as practice. But practice our parenting? That sounds crazy.

Yet that is precisely what we need to do. Let's all admit it – parenting is hard. At times, it's downright impossible. And I am convinced that it is supposed to be, in no small part because through the hard and in the midst of the impossible God is at work in our lives to shape and mold us in ways that He can only do through the parenting journey. Dan Allender, in his terrific book *How Children Raise Parents*, puts it this way: "Parenting is the space in our lives where we are most open to the work of God to change us – if we will only allow our children to lead us into spiritual maturity."

So as we pursue a more holistic way of understanding and relating to our children; as we learn to love our children the way God loves us...let's not forget that we have the privilege and opportunity to put our faith and commitment into practice each and every day. There are no shortcuts – at least none worth taking. Giving your child voice, creating 'felt safety', connecting while correcting, giving choices, using playful engagement, implementing an effective time-in, repairing your mistakes...these all require practice. A lifetime of faithful practice and learning from our mistakes. And although practice won't make perfect (there's no such thing when it comes to parenting), God will use it to change us and our relationships with our children.

Source: <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/easier-said-than-done/>



Watch: Will Trust Based Parenting Work for My Child?

<http://empoweredtoconnect.org/will-trust-based-parenting-work-for-my-child/>

Parents often ask whether trust-based parenting – the term used by Dr. Karyn Purvis to describe the parenting approach that we teach in ETC Parent Training – will work for their child. Regardless of your child's age or the challenges she faces, we believe the answer is YES! Watch as Dr. Purvis answers this question, and explains why each of our children -- regardless of their age or stage of development -- need the same things from their parents.

Warning: This Training Will Change You

Parents who participate in ETC Parent Training are often facing very real problems and challenges. If this is you this training is a safe place to be open and honest. This training will equip and empower you to join with your children to face and overcome the challenges you encounter – but your children are not the only ones who will change as a result.

A significant focus of ETC Parent Training is helping you learn and grow...and heal. Let's be honest, there is no such thing as a perfect parent and the truth is that we all bring our own "stuff" into parenting. We're going to talk about some of our own stuff during this training, not to point fingers or lay blame, but to gain greater insight and understanding because what we bring to the parent-child relationship matters. In fact, many parents are surprised at just how much it does matter, and they are equally surprised about how much they can change once they have the knowledge and tools to pursue it.

So, be prepared – this training will change you. As you change you will be better able to help lead your child on a journey of hope and healing, as together you experience the joy and blessing that comes from being connected. Let's get started!

Our primary focus as parents should be not what to do with our children – which activities, what type of education, which discipline approach, not even their spiritual development – but instead discovering what it means to become a good parent. God intends to use our children to change, transform, and redeem our lives. -- Dan Allender, How Children Raise Parents

"I am making everything new." Revelation 21:5 (NIV)
