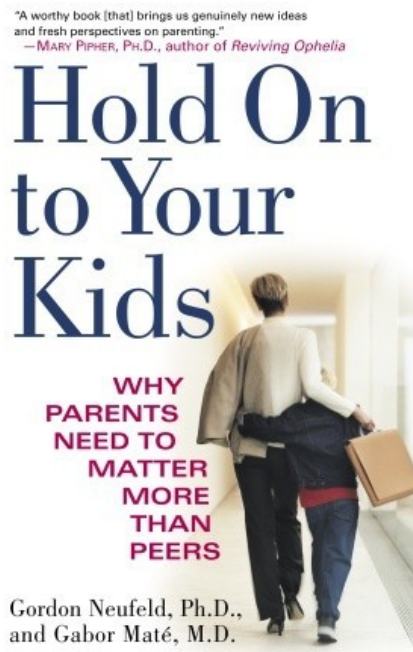




Hold On to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers

Gordon Neufeld , Gabor Maté

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Hold On to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers Gordon Neufeld , Gabor Maté International authority on child development Gordon Neufeld, Ph.D., joins forces with bestselling author Gabor Maté, M.D., to tackle one of the most disturbing trends of our time: Children today looking to their peers for direction—their values, identity, and codes of behavior. This “peer orientation” undermines family cohesion, interferes with healthy development, and fosters a hostile and sexualized youth culture. Children end up becoming overly conformist, desensitized, and alienated, and being “cool” matters more to them than anything else.

Hold On to Your Kids explains the causes of this crucial breakdown of parental influence—and demonstrates ways to “reattach” to sons and daughters, establish the proper hierarchy in the home, make kids feel safe and understood, and earn back your children’s loyalty and love. This updated edition also specifically addresses the unprecedented parenting challenges posed by the rise of digital devices and social media. By helping to reawaken instincts innate to us all, Neufeld and Maté will empower parents to be what nature intended: a true source of contact, security, and warmth for their children.

Hold On to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers Details

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From Reader Review Hold On to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers for online ebook

Erin says

I make an attempt at trying to read a few books that are also related to the teaching profession. My colleagues and I have attended Gordon Neufeld's talks and we have participated in professional development workshops on Anxiety and Aggression. So, you could say that we have readily accepted and have "attached" ourselves to his line of thinking. The audience is largely targeted to parents, but often references teachers and is certainly relatable to the classroom environment.

Like Neufeld, I should state that there are so many books out there on attachment theory and this one isn't meant to be taken as the holy grail. I can only speak for myself and my colleagues that we do feel that what he says about attachment has greatly enhanced our relationships with students and parents.

Heidi Thorsen says

I thought the first part of the book where the author gives examples of the horrors that can result when kids are "peer oriented" went on a bit too long, but did find the chapters where he eventually got around to explaining concrete steps to take to maintain parental attachment while avoiding or reversing peer attachment to be useful.

Before reading this book, I thought kids would "attach" to their parents based largely on the sheer quantity of time they spent together, but the authors have explained that it is more complicated than that. It is easier than I supposed for kids to become "unattached" to their parents, but then on the flip side it shouldn't be too hard to get them back if you catch this early.

I also appreciated the chapter describing the ways peer orientation **seems** to be a good thing in young kids and that's why society pressures parents into getting their kids "socialized" at a young age. Although it may be too complicated to explain to people who disagree in a social situation where this would come up, the book does give the reader encouragement to be counter-cultural and foster parental attachment way beyond the time most parents in our culture have relinquished that role to peers.

Michael says

I definitely underestimated this book. This is why it languished on the shelf for a few years before I picked it up. I expected yet another underwhelming parenting book. Instead I encountered a revolutionary

interpretation of the role of attachment in the lives of our youngsters and an exploration of the implications of this on our culture and our role as parents. The basic neurodevelopmental role of attachment in the establishment of natural authority is explained and the toxic influences of modern attitudes towards parenting and peer interactions on this system were carefully looked at. The implications of this are not to be underestimated. I was floored! But the truth of what Mate and Neufeld lay out in very clear and easy to read language was apparent. I found myself rethinking many of my own ideas in clinical practice and my own family and I have to say I now feel very lucky to have read this book. I recommend it to anyone with kids of any age, or plans to have them.

Jeff Yoak says

"Even given the need to read this in paper, I think it will be worth it. I have no idea if it is any good or not, but it is the first book I've seen that formulates one of my biggest open parenting questions in the same way that I've personally formulated it, and that makes me think it is worth a read."

I wrote the above when I bought the paper copy of this book... gosh, it must have been a half decade or more ago. They eventually released it in audio, and I bought that and listened. This is certainly the best parenting book that I've read in a half decade, and may be the best ever. It warrants a fuller review and I don't have time now, but I hope to come back and explain what was so valuable about it.

2018: Interestingly, it didn't appeal to me nearly as much on a reread. I can't really explain why. I wish I had gotten around to that fuller review. :-)

Thystle says

Here is a copy of the review I did for API:

I will honestly state that I did not agree with large portions of this book and had a hard time finishing it. Because I did disagree with so much of it and knew I would need to do a review of it, I took lots of notes and I tried to analyze the authors claims and why I did or did not agree with them. So as a critical thinking exercise it was very enjoyable. It also sparked an interest in reading more scientific research directly on attachment theory (I've read entries in Wikipedia and am looking to read Handbook of Attachment). I liked considering the major ideas of why kids are drawn to peers, because I see the pattern even in young and old children in my community who I believe to be securely attached.

However, I don't think I can recommend this book for several reasons. The major one is that I disagree with the premise that peers are the reason for kids turning away from their parents. I don't disagree that kids become attached to peers but I believe the problem to be that parents hurt the relationship so kids look for attachment elsewhere. The authors, sometime allude that lack of parental attachment is the cause and other times will come right out and blame peers for causing the rift. So their message isn't consistent. I found there were many other instances of this type of doublespeak in the book.

Secondly, the reasoning that the authors use for making their argument and their theories on how to reestablish the attachment relationship reads like a parenting advice book, with lots of assumptions about the nature of parent-child relationships or peer culture. Yet scientific references are few and far between. I found I was not convinced by the case they made as they sounded more like opinions than ideas that would hold up

to rigorous scrutiny. They simply didn't jive with my world view on human nature so I had a hard time buying them.

I also found that the authors used fear based techniques to attempt to persuade the audience, citing horrific case examples and painting peer groups almost uniformly negative. They made children and parents into victims with peers being the perpetrators. I don't find it kind to communicate with someone where fear is used to motivate and thus found much of the book to be disagreeable. They also frequently implied that if your child is not behaving that your attachment connection is not strong enough, without disregard for individual personality or developmental stages. I would have a hard time recommending this to anyone interested in attachment parenting who might not have an easy going child who naturally likes to please, as it sets them up for lots of doubt and wondering what they are doing wrong.

Finally, the authors' tone frequently betrays a world view where not only is an adult more powerful but also right or correct or justified in manipulating children, aka adultism. They frequently come off as patronizing and ignoring the individual that each child is under the guise of parenting or worse, when attempting to reestablish the attachment connection. I found this most disturbing and disrespectful of an entire class of humanity.

About the only portion of the text that I did like and got something out of was chapter 17, "Don't Court the Competition." In this chapter they identify common beliefs in mainstream parenting, like not being fooled by early peer orientation, shyness as a negative sign, children learning social interaction skills, children needing friends, etc. Again, I didn't always agree with the why's of their theories around the ideas, but I think they are correct in bringing up these so called truisms for scrutiny. I might be inclined to recommend this chapter alone to parents, particularly those with small children who are trying to understand how kids get along or how preschool fits in or if they are worried about a shy child.

Genet says

My favorite parenting book of all time. While it is not extremely well-written (in a literary or organizational sense), I absolutely love and believe in the ideas presented in this book. Neufeld very clearly identifies the underlying problems in our culture that pull our children away from us. Children need to attach to parents, grandparents, and other adults who can help them develop a true sense of self. We are robbing our children (and ourselves) when we push them too quickly out into the world without giving them something to hold onto -- US!

reed says

I picked this up because I heard about the author's concept of counterwill - that innate human tendency to resist when someone tries to control you. But I was turned off by his "kids these days" rhetoric. Didn't make it past the first chapter.

Ruth says

This is probably the best parenting book I have ever read. It explains so much about peer-dominated culture,

why it keeps getting worse, and why kids succumb to it at younger and younger ages.

As our kids grow up, they are put into far too many situations where they are expected to develop dependent relationships on their peers rather than on mature adults. Classroom sizes are too big, parents are too busy with work or life stresses or only one parent is present, families are often isolated from extended family that used to have such a large role in raising children, and adults that children can develop meaningful relationships with are few and far between. Instead, our children develop dependent relationships with peers that are too immature to offer them the wisdom, guidance, and most importantly, the unconditional love and acceptance that their parents should be providing them with. Once a child has shifted his attachment from parents to peers, parenting power is lost and the parent's input is no longer valued. These kids then try to win the approval of their peers by conforming, bullying, rejecting adults, engaging in dangerous behaviors, seeking to form bonds through sexual experiences at younger and younger ages. They seek the unconditional love that other immature children cannot give them, and when they don't get it the results are anger, suicide, self-mutilation, alcohol and drug consumption, and just about every other ill that is plaguing the youth of today.

Kids who attach to other kids rather than mature adults are not free to develop their true selves. Peer-oriented kids are expected to conform, to hide their differences, to not seem too interested in anything that is not "cool," to spend all of their time trying to connect and manage unwieldy relationships with their friends, to stay on top of who is doing what with whom, all the while burying their vulnerable feelings, their curiosities, their unique ideas. These kids never have the ability to actually grow up, to embrace their true selves, to mature into a unique, confident individual. Now we have kids who have graduated from college with no idea who they are or what they are interested in. All of their energies during their formative years have been spent on fitting in with their peers. They have no self confidence, and are unable to behave like responsible adults. When adult influence is cut out of their lives at such a young age, it's no wonder that these young people have stunted maturity.

This book gives great advice on how to keep this from happening to your own kids, or for reversing it if it has already happened. We need to connect with our kids as the first part of any interaction we have with them. So often parenting turns into a management exercise rather than a relationship exercise. I am guilty of this myself. We need to be the pole that our children are magnetically drawn to, the safe place that they seek out when they are hurt or confused or need guidance. They need to feel loved, cherished, and accepted despite their shortcomings or even their behaviors toward us. We also need to encourage our kids to develop relationships with other children who have strong attachments to their own parents. We need to become more family oriented in our activities, rather than having parent-only and child-only interactions. Most of all, we need to give our children the attention and unconditional acceptance that they need in order to develop properly. If they don't get it from us, they will try to find it somewhere else - and the results might be disastrous.

Brandy says

This was one of the least helpful parenting books that I have ever read. It is partly an attachment parenting book and partly an "I miss the good old days" whine fest. To be fair, I know a LOT about attachment parenting. (I'm a foster mom and have parented kids with attachment disorder and had lots of classes, therapy sessions, and read many books on the topic. I get that I am a tough judge.). But really this book spends more time whining about modern America and romanticising pre WW2 America than providing helpful parenting tips. Honestly, what exactly was so great about the good old days? The racism? The sexism? The absentee dads who never lifted a finger at home? The Jim Crow laws? The ambition and career free wives? Clearly I am no nostalgia fan, but here's an idea. Let's raise our kids in the decade in which they are actually living.

Books that cover how to manage that task are much more helpful.

Jekaterina Dmitrijeva says

Š? ir viena no lietderīgākajām grāmatām par bērniem un to audzināšanu, ko esmu lasījusi. Tā fokusējas uz to, cik svarīga ir bērnu un pusaudžu drošā piesaiste (*secure attachment*) ar vecākiem (vai citiem pieaugušajiem), kā to izveidot un uzturēt. Bet galvenais grāmatas vadmotāvs ir - kas notiek ar mūsu bērniem, ja mēs šo piesaisti neveidojam/pazaudzam. Piesaistei ir jābūt, un ja tā nav ar vecākiem, tā rodas ar draugiem, kas veido situāciju, kad bērns audzina bērni. Grāmatā detalizēti aprakstītas sekas šādai situācijai sabiedrībā - vardarbība, apcēšana skolā (*bullying*), agrais sekss, emocionāls norobežošāns no pasaules, vecāku autoritātes zaudšana, grūtības un neieinteresētība mēģināt.

Klausoties to, man regulāri galvā bija "Klik, klik, klik" un vēl viens notikums bērnbē/pusaudža gados ir nostājies savā vietā. Vēl viena man pašai nesaprotamā mana rīcība vai uzvedība izskaidrota. Vēl viena kļūda skaidra (manis pašas vai vecāku), ko es varu saprast un tādēļ varu vieglāk piedot.

Nav viegli mainīt audzināšanas stilu un metodes, kas nāk no saviem vecākiem, sabiedrības uzskatiem un kādreiz iedomātām idejām. Bet šī grāmata ar savu spēcīgo pamatojumu un ļoti praktiskiem padomiem ir kā glābšanas rīķis - palīdz noturties arī tad, kad ir grūti.

Iesaku visiem vecākiem un ne tikai. Arī tiem, kuri grib saprast savus vecākus. Un arī sevi pašus.

Jen Holman says

Hands down one of the most important parenting books I have ever read. If you considered yourself an "attachment" style parent when your child was a baby, this philosophy is a perfect extension of that. The authors propose that we "let our kids go" too early, and therefore switching their natural attachment from their parents to their peers before kids have had the chance to benefit from our raising of them. Very interesting. The author discusses the extensive ramifications of this phenomenon - from the individual, the family, the school, and society at large.

Alanna Truong says

The only parenting book I've read cover to cover (though I've started at least half a dozen this year!)! My first child was a premie, and once I (finally!) got her home, she never left my side until I had to go back to work. I carried her in a wrap, she sat on my lap while she ate, and slept with us. I had thought that was attachment parenting, until just a few months ago, when trying to wrap my head around some family trials I was watching some loved ones go through. It was only then that I realized how important CONNECTION was. Something I've been incredibly neglectful of, regardless of how physically close my kids are to me. I feel like this book really helped me work out what connection looks like - my main take away points are warmth, and empathy (i.e. naming the emotion). I also found the way he describes the "futility" process especially interesting, and incredibly helpful.

This book is also great for getting you "back in touch" with your parenting instincts, and validating what you feel you always knew, somewhere deep inside [buried beneath all the frustration :)]. I'm guilty of "caving"

into disciplinary pressure, using methods that make me cringe in retrospect (the classic 1, 2, 3, sticker charts, etc) offered to me from friends, family, and from what I've found in my own desperate search for "fixing" my problem child. I had slowly come to many realizations, but this book just took it to another level. It's given me the conviction I needed to stay calm, detach myself from my own emotional response when my kids "don't listen", to begin to see opportunities for building relationship with my kids in unexpected moments, and to continue making time for these moments. It's made so many instances when I couldn't wrap my head around WHY they are behaving this or that way, startlingly clear. Realizing the underlying cause of all this trouble is a game changer, and we are all ready enjoying a more peaceful, more relationship oriented home. I cannot recommend this book enough to parents.

Wendee says

Polarization occurs in relationships, which explains why youth shun their parents when they attach to their peers... they can't see how to have both connections. It is soooo important for parents to spend plenty of time with their kids in fun engaging activities.

For me, this is one of the main reasons I homeschool... I could never find enough time to spend with my children when they were gone from 8am to 4pm and then racing off to other activities when they weren't at school. Now, I can actually have quiet conversations with them!!! Hooray for home and family--the key to healing the nation, and the world.

Christina Burt says

This is not just another parenting book! I think anyone could read it and gain an incredible understanding on the people we interact with every day.

It is very eye opening to the cultural shift that has happened over the last 70 years: peers have become the main attachment figures for many children and teens rather than parents and other adults which has lead, among many things, to children not really knowing who they are, having the inability to be vulnerable or to take risks or to stand out in a crowd, and leaving them with very few tools for meaningful connection with others. It doesn't take a lot to see how true this is and what the impact has been!

While this book does talk a lot about the dangers of peer orientation, I did not come away from it feeling like I need to shelter my children from having any friends at all, ever. It gave me more of a greater confidence in my instincts as a parent, that my husband and I are vital in the development of our kids' relational maturity, that meaningful relationships with our kids will do more good than any discipline tactic out there, and that there is no need to fear parenting through the teen years.

The last chapter on the digital age is probably the most practical, relevant, true, and hopeful information that I have come across. If you never read the whole book, at least read the last chapter! It gives very good insight to how we can approach social media and technology with our kids in this age when we as young parents are still trying to figure out how to navigate it ourselves.

Jen says

Here's what I put on my blog about it:

A few months ago a friend blogged about a book she had read. Seeing how it seemed to have an impact on her and respecting her as a seriously amazing mom, I decided to pick it up. She was right. It was one of those books that I would try to relay to Ryan after every chapter I read. (And he even listened, which is sort of, um, rare.) It's obviously a little older than the stage my kids are at, but I'm glad I read it before I get to that point where your kids are annoyed when you're around and just want to be with their friends, because it also seems like something you should just make your lifestyle. Practice makes perfect, and it would be nice to get it figured out before you really need it, you know? Besides the fact that it's not like it happens overnight, and I was amazed to see how early on the seeds of peer orientation are sewn.

Part of the basic idea is that the natural order is for things to be passed on from older generations to the younger ones - knowledge, ideas, values, how to act, talk, dress, etc. It's that way in all of nature - animals and humans. Or it used to be. In the last few generations there has been a huge shift in that kids now look more to their peers for this information rather than adults. So much so, that I didn't even realize it wasn't normal when I was first reading this book! But as the author says, anyone reading the book probably grew up that way and so we don't even realize it's a problem. So now we have generations of immature children - being raised by other immature children. Even language and vocabulary has dropped as a result because they're getting their language (or lack thereof) from each other. His idea is that this has resulted in a whole lot of the issues that we see in society now - children who want nothing to do with adults, can't socialize with adults, children who are more aggressive, more calloused, don't feel emotion, don't engage in meaningful relationships, have their curiosity stamped out because it's not "cool," are more sexually promiscuous with less feeling about it, families falling apart, parents who have lost the power to parent their children, and kids who will follow their skewed instincts to stay close to their peers at all costs. His theory is that we all have a basic instinct or need for attachment, and when that is not met or strong enough with parents, kids will shift that need to peers to fill it, with the costly loss of parental attachment, which causes parents to lose the power to parent their children because the children are no longer looking to them for cues about anything.

I'd love to tell you all the great ideas from the whole book, but I wouldn't do it justice and really you should just read it. It really has made me think a lot about my own life, my own parenting, and did make me notice a lot of the things that did go right. Like my mom always having lots of big family dinners. We always had extended family around and always intermingled with the generations, playing games and talking. I also think of how much the church is inspired in this way - from it's strong emphasis on families and family time, to always ensuring that there were caring adults who played a big part in your life (leaders and Sunday school teachers and such) and helped your own parents get to know people you were associating with better, along with their families. It also made me resolve to be a better friend to other kids - to get to know my friend's kids better or other kids at church who could benefit from another caring adult in their life. I'll admit - this is hard for me. I've never been a real kid person, so having my own children I've had to be totally focused inward just to take care of my own little family, especially once the twins came along. I have a hard enough time paying attention to my own kids, let alone someone else's, but I always love it when friends have a genuine interest in my kids. And that's part of his suggestions is to have a big network of caring adults, family members, and friends to be a part of your children's lives. To help them attach to other positive adults rather than to a bunch of peers you know nothing about and that they want to leave your company to spend every waking minute with. He says, "The greater the number of caring adults in a child's life, the more immune he or she will be to peer orientation."

It did, however, make me more anxious about sending my kids to school here, especially given their personalities, and made me realize where you live and what kind of neighborhood and school area you're in could possibly have a huge impact on how your kids grow up - for better or worse. I was also interested to see how much applied to teachers and teaching and how much attachment plays a part in learning.

I even thought some of the advice was applicable to my marriage - like remembering the relationship is more

important than the behavior. That's a good one. And that filling someone's need for attention when they're begging for it really doesn't fill the need; it's only when it's spontaneously given that it really satisfies. (Um, ok, that one wasn't actually for me. HINT.)

The one thing I didn't like as much was that even though the things he was suggesting seemed to point to it, he never said much about how staying home with your kids rather than working would be a good idea. I'm pretty sure his own wife and mother must have worked out of the home because he just sort of brushed it off as not being practical in today's world and just told you how to deal with it since you would probably be out working. It just seemed like so many other things he was suggesting were different from the societal norm that it seems like he could have given it some weight as at least being beneficial to your children and worth the effort to make it work.

Anyway, all in all, the author is not saying friends are bad, just that there should be adults around, and ideally you would be involved with your children and their friends and their families. He even goes into better ways to discipline to help preserve your relationship with your kids rather than hurt it. That's going to take some creativity on my part and I'll have to see what works for us.

Even with how much I liked the book though, I'll have to say it did take me about 3 or 4 months to read it. I just have trouble when they're not gripping page-turners! Alright, enough already, but I highly recommend it!
