

Jayson:

The goal is secure attachment, which means they feel free to be who they are in your home. "This home is secure and it's a safe place to be a human. I'm going to keep being myself."

What up? Welcome back to another episode of the Relationship School podcast. Jayson Gaddis shouting at you from the mountain tops here in Colorado about relationship, love, connection, human behavior, all the things that I'm a nerd about. In this episode, we're going to talk about expectant dads and being a new dad and fatherhood in general. This is going to be a long one, I'm going to tell you right now. And I'm going to do my best to get a transcription of this so for you people that also want to read along or get the transcription notes, I'm going to see if I can make that happen.

I hope you have ordered my new book by now, [Getting to Zero: How to Work Through Conflict in Your High-Stakes Relationships](#). It's already getting dozens of five-star reviews on Amazon. I've heard from a lot of you, thank you for buying the book, buying it on [Audible](#), buying it on Kindle. I really appreciate it. Really appreciate the support. I think this book is going to help a lot of people. It's all about how do we get back to a good place after some kind of disconnection or rupture or conflict. That's what the entire book is about. And if you want a roadmap on how to get back to a good place, what I call zero, please order my book. [Gettingtozerobook.com](#) gets you some extra goodies, a conflict quiz, some additional PDFs, et cetera. And you can order it in all the places and support your local bookstores.

Okay, get ready. Here we go. This podcast came about because I love being a dad and every so often I get asked, "Hey, I'm about to be a dad. Jayson, what do you recommend?" This is often coming from friends, close friends who are like, "Dude." These are such cool friends because they're proactive, they're thinking ahead, they're like, "Ooh, I'm going to be a dad next year, what should I start thinking about now?" Or, "I want to be a dad one day, what are some of the questions I should be asking right now?" So I just want to applaud proactive men like you listening. And I also want to thank my friend Andy, who asked me, just like this, these kind of questions, and I said, "Hey, how about I record a podcast?" And he said, "That'd be amazing." So Andy, thanks for helping me make this recording happen. To all the moms listening, or someday going to be moms, may this serve your husband, partner, the father of your kid or kids. And even if you've been a dad a long time or you're not new to fatherhood, I think this is still going to serve you. There's going to be chunks here that you're going to get a lot of value from.

I'm really targeting the conversation to expectant fathers and new fathers so you're going to hear me talk about a few sections. Here's the table of contents, basically. Pre-birth, what happens before your child is born. Birth, what you can do to support that process and how

to show up there. And then, post birth. And then we'll cover things like sleep, sex, with your partner of course, and avoiding damage, long-term damage and brain development for your kid, and how to be supported by your partner and get support from your partner, how to support yourself and ongoing tips as kids develop in age. So this is going to be pretty meaty. And then I'm going to offer at the very end a couple book recommendations. I'm not going to give you many, I don't think you need a dozen books to read because you're not going to read them anyway, but one or two really solid resources I'm going to throw your way. Awesome.

Let's start with pre-birth. Pre-birth means context. You know me, I love to set context. So the context I want to set first here is the statement you've heard before that parents do the best they can. Well, some of us think that's bullshit, especially those of us who grew up in families where there was a lot of pain. But here's the truth in my experience, is that parents do, do the best they can, but here's the disclaimer, with the values they have, with the history they have, with the nervous system they have, with their relationship skills they have. So parents do the best they can with all of that stuff. I think that's an important addition to add on to this jargon that we hear parents do the best they can because then it actually starts to become understandable. When I started to understand my parents did the best they could with the values they have and their lack of personal growth tools and their own relational development, it makes a lot of sense why they parented me the way they parented me.

Okay, next is learn. My friend Andy and others who keep asking me, they're learners. They're smart men who are already asking questions. How can I do this well? How can I do this well for myself, for my partner, for the mother of my child, or the co-father of my child, whatever the case may be, and for my kid, obviously? So learn. Get curious and start learning. And you're doing that right now by listening to this so high five yourself.

Next, choose what kind of father you want to be. It is a choice. It's all in your choice. Do I want to give this everything I got? Do I want to swing for the fences? Or given my realistic life situation, the fact that I don't love babies, I'm really busy at work, I'm running a big company and I have limited hours. Be realistic. You can't be the best at everything. You can be really good at a few things. Is fatherhood and parenting something you want to be really good at? Decide. Choose.

So how all in are you and starting when? When do you want to start this? When the baby's born? When they're five and they can play with you and throw the ball with you? Do you want to wait until they're a certain age or do you want to start now? Decide. Write it down. I'm going to recommend of course, that you commit to becoming a badass father who's super present and very engaged.

Now, it's important we cover a myth here, which is only moms can nurture and your child will be closest to mom. That is a myth. Just ask any stay-at-home father. And for context, I was a part-time stay-at-home father for the first five years of my kids' lives. Literally part-time, like 50-50 my wife and I. So I chose, for a number of reasons, to be heavily involved from the start. So when my kids got hurt, they wouldn't just go to mom, they would come to me also. Now usually your kid, when they get hurt, scared, whatever, and they need someone, some reassurance, they're going to go to the primary parent, which is often mom, let's be honest. And this brings up shit for dads. Why won't the kid come to me? Well, let's look at your schedule and how much time you spend with the kids and your presence and your ability to hold them in their emotional experience. It's kind of understandable why they go to mom over you.

So again, is that how you want it to be? Do not buy into that script. It's a choice, once again. Men can nurture as well as women. We don't have the boob. We don't breastfeed. We didn't grow a baby inside our fucking body. We didn't give birth. That's all enormously incredible and kind of mind blowing actually, if you think about it, how a human life grows inside of a woman's body and then through her vagina has given birth. It's insane. It's so awesome. But you can nurture and you can hold a baby and you can soothe a baby and you can change a diaper and you can be there when it's upset and you can be a secure home base for the baby and you can become a secure attachment figure for the baby, and that's all in how you are in your nervous system, how you walk.

Another pre-birth piece of advice, work through any and all conflicts with your partner. Shit starts to heat up when a woman gets pregnant and her body starts to change and go through this incredible process of growing a human. There might be mood swings, there might be a lot of needs that she needs a lot from you, there might be sleep issues, there might be health issues, there might be all kinds of issues, well, start working. I mean, hopefully you started when you got married or you got partnered or whatever is you want to start as soon as possible learning how to work through conflict effectively. If you don't know how to do that, you're just adding complexity here and it's going to be harder. So know how to get to zero as a couple over and over and over for the rest of your lives and you're in good shape. If you can't figure your shit out, you got to start asking yourselves, why are you having a child together in the first place if you can't even work out basic conflicts? Well, maybe it was an accident. Maybe we chose it thinking that the kid would save our relationship. Either way, you got to get honest and start working through any and all conflicts. You're going to have less time coming up. Less time.

My book is a great resource, [Getting to Zero: How to Work Through Conflict in Your High-Stakes Relationships](#), if you need help.

All right, there's things to say about preparing for a home birth or a hospital birth. The bottom line is there's no judgment here on how you want to do it. Women, in my experience over the years of hearing my wife and so many women talk about birth, is a lot of women want choice. They want to be in charge, they want to be in control, they want to have decision making power and in many births that's taken away from them for a number of reasons and that can be really traumatic for some women. You need to start educating yourself about plan A, plan B, plan C. Plan A, let's say a home birth, doesn't always work out. I've known many friends who that was the plan and then they had to rush to the hospital and then it was a cesarean baby, cesarean birth. Again, nothing wrong with that, there's obviously impact there, but have a plan A and a plan B and a plan C. Let your closest friends in on it. Have your wife's fucking back 100%.

And she may not want to talk about plan B. She might say, "You're doubting me. What are you talking about? There is no plan B." It's really wise to talk about a plan B. What's our plan if this doesn't go according to plan A? Reassure her, "Hey, it makes sense that you would feel doubted, and I don't doubt you at all, I just know that a lot of women sometimes have a plan and it doesn't work out, so I want to be safe. I want to protect you and I want to protect our baby." So honor whatever feels safe to her.

Help the on ramp, or you could say off ramp, by handling shit. Everything you do, basically as the birth starts to approach is, how can I make this less stressful and easier for her? Because she's about to go through a massive rite of passage. How can I do that?

So you want to have things like meal trains dialed, diaper services, boundaries around parents coming to town. You want to have difficult conversations, if needed, to set up, "Well, what are we going to do? When are your parents going to come?" Some people want their parents to come immediately. Ellen and I were like, "Hell no. We want to bask in the glow of our newborn without any input from family or friends even," and our parents didn't come to meet our son for 7 or 10 days, I think, might have been 10 days. That's quite a long time. But that felt right to us because we were like, "Look, this is our space and this is our family now, and you can come later." Notice if you're allowing your in-laws or your parents to bully you into coming to meet the baby immediately. That's you. Again, you get to protect the space, so how are you going to protect it? Are you going to set limits? Are you going to follow through with them? Get on the same page with your partner about what the hell the plan is with family and friends.

We started letting friends come before our family because we felt like our friends... Back then we were more emotionally safe, we could really be super messy without someone's big agenda, like our parents, coming at us. So we allowed friends to come much sooner.

Awesome. Okay, during birth. Birth is sacred. Obviously it's incredible to rite a passage. It's so fucking powerful. I would get educated and not necessarily defer to your wife for everything. There's going to be moments for some of you where your wife can't actually make a coherent decision and it's going to be up to you, so what decision are you going to make? And you're going to make the best decision you have with the information you have so that's why you want to have a good relationship with your doula, your midwife if you have one, the doctor, the nurses if you're in a hospital. You want to have a good relationship and be immediately on the ground like, "Okay, this is what's happening. Cool. These are the decisions. This is the thought process." You want to be right there. If you have issues with blood and seeing the placenta come out and this baby come out of your wife's vagina, like you got to be honest about that and take good care of yourself. I'm not sure what to advise you there, but you might just tell your wife, "Look, I'm not going to be able to actually be there for the first five minutes because I'm going to pass out," or something. That's totally cool. No shame in that. Just be upfront with your partner and get on the same page about that.

Some things might come easy to her and some things might come very hard for her during this process. Again, be curious and interested. Have her back 100%.

Okay, post birth. Again, there's books on all this stuff and I'm no birthing expert so I'm just trying to come at this from a common sense man vibe, perspective.

One other thing I'd say is what helped me tremendously is I was in a Men's Group and I was meeting with men every other week on a regular basis for years prior to my wife having our first child, and that was huge because there were fathers in the group and there were guys who weren't fathers and I was one of those guys that wasn't a father. So it was really helpful to hear from the fathers who have experience in my Men's Group. If you're not in a [Men's Group](#), we have one run from time to time at the Relationship School here virtually. I always recommend if you do your best to get into an in-person men's group that's peer-led eventually by you and your peers in someone's house, it's really homey and awesome. But sometimes if we're an early adopter here of men's work or a late adopter rather, and then we're like, "This is kind of nervous and I don't know, I feel ashamed and I shouldn't be asking for help." Well, get over it and get an in a men's group, because dude, it's going to be an immense resource for you during this whole transition as you become a dad.

All right, post birth. Now, this is the rest of the podcast. We're going to talk about all kinds of stuff, but immediately, here's a couple things for immediately after birth, this is back to mindset, don't have the mindset of we're just going to try to get through the first year of sleep deprivation or we're just going to try to get through and survive. That attitude is the grass is greener in a year or two from now when my kid's older or four years when they can

throw the ball with me. Try not to have a getting through mindset. Instead, embrace. Let's embrace the mess every single day and be present for it, have that mindset.

Every stage is incredible in my experience, and your presence and your availability to your partner and your child set the tone. If you're a checked out dad or you get "too busy with work", you're missing incredible moments in your baby's, infant's, toddler's, young child's life. So every age, trust me, is incredible if you're there for it. Some people call the twos the terrible twos. No, that's bullshit. Do not buy into bullshit narratives that make children wrong. If any smart fucking human understood what was going on developmentally at two they wouldn't call it the terrible twos, they would call it the willful twos that are powerful, where my child's power and will force really wakes up and they start saying no more and it gets "harder" to parent them for incompetent parents. But if you're stay agile between two and three is an incredible, incredible fucking time.

Stop hoping and waiting for things to return to normal. There is no normal anymore. You're done with normal. Let go of how it was and embrace the new and embrace all of the challenges that come. That requires a warrior mindset. If you don't have a warrior mindset and you want pleasure over pain, comfort and ease over adversity, you're going to have a harder time.

So child rearing, it's everything. It's the whole mess. It's incredible. It's beautiful. It's a miracle. It's fucking hard. It's difficult. It's a pain in the ass. You're going to get triggered into every possible emotion that you've ever experienced. New emotions came online for me, like blind rage. That was new for me. I'd never experienced that before. So that feels really important. Let go of normal, that's done.

Another one here, early, early on is deferring to the boob. If your wife has the privilege and resources, and you two have chosen this, ideally she's going to breastfeed because breast milk is full of all the most amazing nutrients a human needs to grow in development, plus you get the attachment bonding, skin to skin, it's all just this incredible thing. There's downsides to deferring to the boob, and I'm going to explain why, it becomes a cop out for you not to learn how to sooth the baby. If anytime the baby's upset, the dad hands the baby to the wife's boob, first of all, that's actually not healthy. It's creating a dynamic where the baby can't self-soothe and they also can't be soothed by you, and the only thing that soothes them is the boob and milk. I've seen this so much over the years, and it just sets up a really meshed, emotionally fused, codependent, if you will, dynamic between the mother and the child.

And moms, this is understandable... By the way, this, sorry, backtrack, this podcast is mostly for privileged fathers. If you're a father in survival mode, your wife's in survival mode, meaning you have low resources, high stress, not a lot of money, not a lot of time,

you're working five jobs, your wife's working two jobs and she's going to get two weeks off, which is absurd for maternity leave, all this is different for people like that. I'm talking about privileged soon-to-be-fathers. That's the kind of context... I messed that up and didn't say that in the beginning. So you have resources that other new parents don't have. You have the time, money, education to dig into this stuff so I'm able to challenge you in a different way that I wouldn't be able to challenge someone else.

So deferring to the boob. My wife and I have done a number of podcasts on just sort of letting your kids' emotions run the house, giving them the boob, when really you need to actually learn how to soothe your child. It's a really cool practice for you to learn how to sooth the child, especially a baby, a crying baby. It's amazing, and you're capable of it. All it really requires is your wife's support and you regulating your nervous system. That's it.

Another heads up that this is pre-birth advice, but it goes forever from parent raising kids, which is prioritize learning how to feel more deeply. Otherwise, you're going to shut your kid down at every stage. So if you can't feel rage, if you can't feel deep grief and sadness and terror and fear, if you haven't allowed yourself to feel that, your kids' emotions are going to trigger the shit out of you and you're not going to know what to do and you're going to hand your kid to the wife again, or the boob, and you're going to be like, "Cool, I get a pass." Don't do that. The warrior way is to meet the moment and be there and learn how.

I'm just setting the bar high here because I think you're going to have the most incredible experience. If you don't want your bar to be this high, just make adjustments as needed.

All right, sleep. Participate in the sleep beat down. Don't drop your wife, and I don't... This is my recommendation.

This is my recommendation, okay. And they come from my experience with myself and studying attachment science. If your child is having a hard time sleeping at night and now it's impacting your sleep and your wife's sleep, and you've got to go to work the next day. I take the view that that's really good for your growth and a little sleep deprivation isn't going to kill you for a couple years. It is going to be a beat down. Trust me, it's going to be a beat down. No matter how perfect your kid sleeps, sleep can still be hard. The baby, especially early on, needs to wake up in the middle of the night to feed. And you're not the one feeding your baby unless your wife supports you in doing bottle feeding at times at night. So my wife did the breast pump so that I could eventually, because she was so, so exhausted, especially at her age, having a second child. This is true for our second child. She was just so tapped out. She needed me to step up and step in the middle of the night. So I did bottle feedings in the middle of the night. Also, whenever our kid cried, I knew it wasn't necessarily feeding time. And so we were very tuned in and I just would hold my

baby. And we had an amazing rocking chair that we got at this, I think for free actually on Pearl St. here in Boulder. We were just walking by someone's house and they were like, "This is free." And I was like, "Dude, that's an awesome rocking chair." Anyway, we ended up having two rocking chairs. I highly recommend a rocking chair. Middle of the night, 2:00 AM you're just holding your kid. And sometimes it's the most difficult thing, especially if they won't soothe. And when they finally do fall asleep on you, it's like the most miraculous thing ever. Yeah, it's just incredible.

So the downsides of an au pair, for example. A lot of privileged people might choose no pair. We can't deal, I got to sleep. I have a very important job the next day, so I have to get my eight hours. The problem with that is you're saying basically your sleep is more important than your wife's sleep or your partner's sleep. And I don't know, women are so used to men getting kind of the priority around everything that I think it's a really good practice to just shift some of these narratives. And so it was a really good practice for me to just, I was like the guy on call on duty every night for years. It was me and I really liked that. I took pride in that. The next day I'd be drinking latte and coffee whenever I could to get through the days sometimes, but it's all part of it. It was just part of this magical process. So get honest about your sleep needs ahead of time. Your sleep is going to change. You're not going to have your perfect sleep anymore, probably forever.

And especially if you have more than one kid, and then you keep having kids, your sleep is going to be compromised and so is your partners. And I know sleep is vital for good health. And again, a couple years here and there is not going to kill you. But whatever, whatever you need, make decisions around that. And I'm recommending get the sleep beat down, it's interesting and fun. And there's a ton of learning in that. Yeah. What someone else, actually, I asked a bunch of dads for advice to contribute to this podcast. And one of them said, "The middle of the night bottle feedings are a great break for your wife and a wonderful bonding experience with your kid. Don't miss out on it." That was from one of the people on Facebook, one of the dads. Once we had two kids under two, I was on point at night and I loved it, and it was brutal at times. And it was just a really good surrender practice. I had rage come up for me, I had joy, I had tears, I had so much healing go on in the middle of the night for years for me, it was super awesome.

Yeah. Okay, I want to talk about sex, and how your sex life is going to change next. But first before I do that, I want to invite you into another view, another frame that at every age your kid might trigger you into some deep feelings that you haven't dealt with before. And I want you to take the view that that's good for you and that you can heal and work through those traumas. So for example, let's say you were left in a crib to cry it out as an infant and you don't have any cognitive memories of that. Well, when your kid is three months old crying in the middle of the night, it's going to activate you being in a crib all by yourself with

no one around. And that's a trauma and it's going to activate that, and it's going to resurface for you.

And this will happen at every single age. If you had a trauma at age two, if at age three your dad left forever and you never saw him again, All of that is going to come up for you as you raise a child. And that can either be a problem and you can resist it or you can surrender and get on board and say, "All right, I'm up for all of this healing, and all the growth, and all the challenge that's going to come with raising a child. And I want to become a bigger, better, stronger human." Yeah, I recommend that approach. Okay. All right. I'll come back to that point.

Sex, your sex life is going to change probably forever, especially if you have two kids. But it will most certainly change with one child at least temporarily. And by temporarily, for some dads it's like years, for some it's like six months, for some it's a couple years. So just understand once again that it's going to change and you need to let go of your quote, "great sex life" before, because at least temporarily it's going to be impacted. All right.

And now are you going to approach sex with your wife like a wounded, needy, neglected boy who supposedly was relying on sex a certain way, and now you're like, "Hey, what about me?" Well, again, if you empathize with your female partner breastfeeding, you're going to remember, "Oh, right. She's got some little creature on her boob throughout the day and night, and she doesn't necessarily want me on her boob either." She's had enough boob time for the day, and she doesn't want me grabbing her boob and putting my mouth on her boob. Even though that might feel good to her at times in certain contexts and prior to having kids, it's not going to feel that great in the first few months, and maybe longer. So get used to that.

Change your frame around sex that it doesn't have to be intercourse. This is good for any man, especially the young dads. But I think not having the goal always be we both get off and intercourse, or I get off and I feel better, or it's a stress reducer or whatever. The goal can't be intercourse because remember your wife just delivered a baby through her vagina. And her vagina doesn't necessarily want your penis inside of it for a while. Even if she delivered a baby cesarean, she's recovering from a trauma, she might not want your penis inside her. So be sensitive as hell and considerate of her body, and her changing body, and her sensitivity and her feelings around touch, and where to be touched, and all that. Your sex life will exist and it will return, especially if you convey care and you don't turn this into a resentment over time. Remember the baby is going to surface shit you haven't dealt with in your marriage or partnership, so welcome that too.

But that could mean, uh-oh, we had an issue with sex before, now we have kids, and now it's just compounded because we're not having sex or the sex has changed. So now I'm

even more upset and irritated and triggered. Exactly. So you got to kind of be mindful of what was existing before and what's getting triggered now. And there might be a connection.

Okay, a woman can feel, a new mom can feel like a man's desire is another demand. She's all consumed. And if she is more on the avoidant spectrum on attachment, if under stress, she avoids more prior to having kids, it's going to feel overwhelming. Your desire for touch, and your need for touch might feel overwhelming to her, and it's going to be even more of a turnoff. And she's going to want to avoid you even more. So if you give to her, she might open back up to you. And so I recommend massages giving to her without the need to get off or have it be about you. Can you massage? Can you touch? And do it in a way that works for her? Okay. Get really good at giving massages and giving one way and not expecting much in return.

Okay. Another interesting fun fact about men in the first two years as their estrogen levels go up, and their testosterone levels go down. And we think it's because, researchers think, it's because, on a evolutionary level, the man is needed close by the baby to protect and take good care of the mother-infant relationship. And also for men to be a little more nurturing in those first two years and less in hunter mode. I got to go kill something here. Although that's obviously going to be present too, but literally your testosterone may go down and your estrogen may go up, which I think is a good thing, temporarily. I think it's cool. Because it means you're more relational and less, kind of independent, hard charging, whatever, like allow child rearing to just beat you down into being a more soft open-hearted man. Certainly did that to me.

One of the guys who I asked actually around the sex piece had advice and he said, "Go find a quiet place to masturbate, and spare your wife your advances the first few months at least. I know your horny, but be patient." I thought that was interesting. I think that's pretty good advice. I wouldn't go to porn necessarily because I think that sets up some pretty bad habits. And then you get stuck in imagery and fantasy, and then now you're changing, your wife might gain weight, she might lose weight, she might have all kinds of challenges with her body. And if you're starting to find her less attractive and you're going to porn, she's going to feel that. She's going to feel your attention has moved away from her, and she might feel insecure, and you're contributing to that. So you might just tell her, "Look, I'm going to go rub one out occasionally. I'm not going to look at porn, but I'm going to rub one out and take care of myself so I don't bring all my kind of needy sexual energy to you." She might appreciate that.

All right. Okay, there's so much I could say about all this. Each one of these could be a podcast, but I'm just going to keep blasting through here.

Avoiding damage and impaired brain development, that's the next section. The first three years of life are so vital for brain development and for setting your kid up for success later in life. If you can go all in during these first three years extremely well, your kid will be not only a high functioning member of society, but they'll be a good person. They'll be more connected to their body, and their heart, their emotions, they'll be more relational. And sensitive toward other people's feelings and empathic. So it kind of depends on what kind of person you want to raise. But in these first three years, it is vital time. And honestly, I think the most damage to children comes in these first three years. And let me talk about that. And I've done podcasts, I'll refer you to on this. My wife and I have done several.

So first of all, let's set up insecure attachment versus secure attachment. So there's a difference between attachment science and attachment parenting. A lot of the books you'll read are using what's called attachment parenting, which is not actually backed by science. You want to follow the science attachment science, not attachment parenting. And the science says your kid needs to feel safe, emotionally soothed after they're upset. They need to feel seen in their emotions, and their expression, and accepted, and loved for who they are. And they need to feel, I would add what I add to Dan Siegel's model here, is supported and challenged. If you can do those over and over and over relentlessly, you'll raise a secure human being.

Carrying your kid around in a carrier, baby carrier is attachment parenting. And that doesn't necessarily lead to secure attachment. It often leads to insecure attachment because of the parent is afraid to hurt their kid and they're like, Oh, I got to carry my kid all the time. I got to co-sleep with my kid. I got to breastfeed my kid all the time. Every time my kid's upset, I got to give them the boob. And that kind of energy, that's anxiousness, that's not security, that's not a calm nervous system. And that's fear. So if your motivation to hold your kid all the time is coming from a place of fear, it's not going to produce the outcome you want. Secure attachment is a balance of space. You need to give your kid space and you need to hold them, touch them, be with them, and then give them space. And really what secure attachment is, is you're going to fuck up a lot, and it's your ability to repair with your kid, your baby, your toddler, your small child. If you can repair all of those upsets, that's what builds security over time. Not the absence of conflict, but it's the conflict repair cycle, which [I write about in my book](#). That's what builds security over time.

So don't go for perfection, don't go for no conflict, don't go for doing everything right all the time, not upsetting my kid. No, no, it's, you're going to get mad. You're going to raise your voice, you're going to walk away super triggered. What matters is you come back and you repair, and you let your kid know, "Hey, I'm here now. Daddy scared you. I see you, I see you got upset. It makes sense that you're upset. Okay, I'm going to do better." That shit builds secure attachment. Cool.

I teach deeply about secure attachment. Tons of podcasts on that if you want to search. Zero to three is when personality disorders get developed. And I've recently been nerding out on [Masterson's work](#) and how personality disorders like narcissism and borderline personality disorder develop. Well, they develop in the first three years. And depending on if its narcissism or borderline, it can be one can be earlier than the other. Regardless, it's dicey terrain.

And here's how narcissism might develop. When you make your kid feel too special, they're the center of the universe, and you just bow down to their every need. That obviously that's going to build slowly a narcissist who thinks that they're the most important person in the world and they continue to think that where or special all the time.

Borderline personality disorders, it's sort of like this dynamic between most often mothers and children where the mother's sense of self-worth is based on how the child is doing. And she has a job, if the child is struggling or whatever, she feels like her personal identity gets a prop up. These are complicated things.

(I suggest you go listen to my last two episodes— [Ep 410](#) & [Ep 418](#)— on how this gets set up in detail because I don't want to distract us here. Just know that if you want to avoid the chronic trauma that creates a personality disorder, please go listen to those [podcasts](#).)

And basically it's like too much closeness, invasion, intrusion, or glorifying your child, or too much distance, making your kids so self-sufficient that they become a schizoid personality disorder. They're completely on their own. They can't rely on people as adults.

All this will show up later as adults in relationships, of course, that's where it gets triggered. Because there's plenty of high functioning people in the world, but get them into an intimate partnership and they become very low functioning. Well, all that speaks to is the first three years of their life and how it went.

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Hey, if you want to up- level your life, your relationship life specifically, I want you to consider our Relationship Mastery Program. It's nine months of complete transformation where you become a better listener, a better communicator. You learn how to have secure relationships and you get an experiential taste of that. You feel seen and supported and challenged to reach your relationship goals. And really you become a better communicator. So many, many people have gone through this course now and we have done with you version of it now, which is amazing. Where you get assigned a private relationship coach, you get to do live group coaching with me once a month and ask me anything you want. There's office hours where you get to meet with one of our coaches to nerd out on the curriculum. And the community is very strong. And these are people who care a lot about relationships and they want to get what they want to get, which is they want to be in a

relationship and not betray themselves. They want to get the relationship they want while being true to themselves. That's what most of us want. And this course is the path for you to get that. Here's what one of our participants in the past has said about this course.

Speaker 1:

What I would say to people that have been listening to the podcast but aren't ready to take that final step into joining the course. The most powerful thing has been the partner calls. The accountability is something that you're not going to get by just listening to podcasts on your own. Because I thought the same thing, like, "Oh, I'm getting a lot out of just listening to these podcasts." And I've been in therapy. I've done this and that. To take that deeper dive and the commitment, there's something about just the financial commitment, the time, and the energy that you put into it. What you put in is what you're going to get out of it. And so again, invest in yourself.

Jayson:

All right, amazing words from one of our heartfelt students here at The Relationship School. If you want to change your life like they did, go to relationshipschool.com/relationshipmastery, and we'll see you in there.

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So the goal here is to raise securely attached kids because they do better in every area of life. This is well researched. Go read Dr. Dan Siegel's work if you don't believe me. And I'll just cite the book right now. [The Power of Showing Up](#) by him and Tina Payne Bryson is my favorite, favorite book here. I'll say that again at the end. The goal is secure attachment, securely attached kids, which means they feel free to be who they are in your home. They can be mad, they can be sad, they can fart and run around with their clothes off. They can be their silly selves, they can be joyful, they can sing, they can dance, they can cry in tantrum, and it's all okay in your house.

And you repair any conflicts between partners and with kids. "Ah, this home is secure and it's a safe place to be a human, I'm going to keep being myself." Versus an insecure home is, "Oh my God, I got to be who the big people want me to." "Oh, shit, I can't be emotional." "Oh, fuck, I got to compromising and strategizing on how to be a person here to get my needs met." And that person becomes a, what I call a strategic self-oriented person. Their strategies begin to run their life and they struggle in adult relationships later on. All right. Don't live your life through your kid ever. Putting your values all over them is just creating mini-mes where you get to bask in the glory of what you did, which is I raised a mini version of myself. And I got to live my un-lived life through my child. Don't do that. That creates

carnage. Classic example is me. Okay, I love my dad dearly, and he wanted me to be a ski racer because he was a three time NCAA All American ski racer. Because I wanted his love, I subordinated and went along with his values instead of finding my own. And I never was going to be a champion like him because I was trying to be him and get his love. I wasn't giving myself permission to just be me.

So watch these things creep up subtly. And your kids idolize you and so they want your love. And so they'll do kind of whatever you ask them to do, including join this religion, or join that cult over there, or be relationally focused like Jayson. You can get your kid, you can kind of brainwash them into believing just about anything, which is a very scary proposition here. So I want to raise resilient kids who can think for themselves and who are going to be themselves, even if it upsets me sometimes.

Okay, big one here is in terms of avoiding damage in brain, impacting brain development is minimized screen time. This is particularly for privileged parents. Don't use screens hardly ever in the first five years, I would say, with your kid. There's no need for it. My kids are fucking awesome. I'm just tooting my own horn here. They're beautiful humans. And my kid was 10 before he watched his first movie, 10. And my kid didn't even get a cell phone until age 13, my son. Yeah, that's my values talking, of course. And what we know about screens and brain development and relational development is that kids who are on screens all the time and are being soothed by screens when they're upset, for example, kid starts crying and you hand them your phone. And you have a little video game or a little movie or something that they can watch, little cartoon.

What that does is it trains your kid that they cannot soothe themselves, and they can't be soothed by a person. So when they become an adult, and they get upset, and they get emotional, what are they going to reach for? They're going to reach for their fucking phone. And in an intimate relationship, they're going to have no clue how to support you and your emotions. And they're going to have no clue what to do when they get emotional and upset, except go to a screen or go to medication. Medication being a screen, or food, or sugar. So screens are, I'm not making screens wrong. I love my screen. I carry it with me all the time. I run my business through my screen. And my kids see that. But I do my best to have boundaries around my screen.

And I've given my kids very little time with my phone. Particularly when they were younger. There's a new emerging thing, when the kid's on the changing table and you're trying to change their diaper, parents, because their kid's wiggling all over the place and they're hard to, the kids' got shit all over them. It's messy proposition, right? You'll get used to this.

And if you hand them your phone every single time just so you can change them, you're missing out on this incredible relational dance between, "How do I get my wiggly kid who's

flopping around on the changing table and getting poo everywhere, how do I get them to just be with me here? And how do I change their diaper?" I think that's such a cool challenge.

Versus the shortcut, is hand them your phone. Okay? And again, remember every time you hand a two year old or a one year old your phone, you're communicating, "I can't handle you and your feelings and neither can you. So here, be with this screen that's entertaining." That's fucked up, I think, over time. All right? Fine to do once in a while. And if you are a non-privileged parent and you're relying on this for childcare, I get it. Understandable. But privileged parents, no excuse. Minimize screen time. Yeah. Decide limits around screens early on because they'll creep in and they'll just take over.

I have lots of friends who are like, "Dude, how did you do this? Your kids are so amazing, and they can connect with me and I'm an adult and they can look me in the eyes and shake my hand." And they're like, "Wow, they're so available."

They often say to me, "I wish I would've not let my kids do the screen thing from such a young age." That's probably the single biggest compliment I get, is them saying that to me. Because they see how sweet our kids are. Now, of course there's downsides to my way as well.

All right. Okay, next thing. Prioritize... So those are just some high level, be careful in these first three years. Minimize the carnage, the damage. And really you want secure, optimal brain development here. So create the causes and conditions in the environment that will support that, making that happen. All right?

Okay. Next thing is, prioritize your partner like a beast. Okay? She's your number one priority, not the kid. So mom goes down, you're on duty. You're like, "Shit, how can I help?" Whoever the primary parent is, in a same sex couple, it's same thing. You're prioritizing the primary parent, who's often breastfeeding, who's often dealing way more. And so how can you make her life easier?

And I'm going to use the just gendered language here in a heteronormative marriage, because that's my life. And I get that that's not everybody's life. But you can hear me say, "Prioritize the primary parent," all right?

Okay. And many guys, when I ask them in this Facebook threads about what advice do you have for new dads? This was probably the loudest piece of advice, is prioritize her, her feelings, make her the number one priority. Treat your wife like your kids are watching the entire time, because they are. That's what one gentleman said.

Your job is to look out for her stress and help her feel less stressed. And making sure she has the support and resources.

Consider her feelings forever. You should have already gotten this by now. But her feelings matter so much. And to have her feel seen in her feelings and her experience and empathize with and validated, is going to make or break your marriage. So you got to prioritize that shit over and over and over again.

One of the ways you can prioritize her is by asking her, "Hey, how are you with all this? How is it being a new mother? How are you feeling about your birth? What is this like for you to be up half the night breastfeeding? How are you changing and shifting as a woman, as a person?"

Be interested in her journey as it unfolds. Postpartum is not six weeks, it's years. So if your wife... And again in America it's pretty sad how little time women get off to be with her kid. It's kind of deplorable. If we understand attachment and attachment science, it's kind of ridiculous. But this is the modern world we're in.

So postpartum is years. It's not just six weeks or two months or whatever. It's years. That's an important one my wife reminded me of. Yeah.

Okay, so you're prioritizing her like a monster, like a beast. You're just going to be there for her, like a champ. Now what about you? Let's talk about getting support for yourself. So first, there has to be room in your relationship for your journey.

It is a lot about her and the baby that first six months or longer. And you can feel like, very neglected and rejected and ignored. And it's temporary. Especially if you're with an awesome partner. It's temporary. She's going to come back, "Hey, what about you? How are you? What's it like being a dad? How can I support you?"

Her capacity to be there for you is going to come back. It will. Guaranteed.

If it doesn't, that is a concern, for sure. Because this is where couples start to drift. Sex starts to not happen. It's all about mom, dad feels rejected, he starts to get hurt and pulls away. This becomes the new dynamic. Everybody's comfortable in it. Mom and child are bonding. Mom puts all of her heart and energy into kids. Kids become her number one priority.

Husband's like completely neglected and ignored and he's not behaving in a way that would have her be interested. He's kind of being a jerk at this point. And he's just going to his work and his TV and his games, and everything he's going to. And he's not really collaborating anymore. This is where marriages drift, okay? This is where partnerships drift. And it sucks, okay?

And it's very comfortable for some people, that they let this happen. People let this shit happen. And this is when people get separated and divorced and affairs come in. This is when people are most vulnerable, is these first couple of years.

So put a high level of attention on yourself, your wife, and your partnership.

You need support. So get therapy, get a Men's Group. You got to have some male contacts. Ideally you've got at least one father in your circle of friends. If you don't, you want to find a father who's a male relationship coach, a male therapist, someone in your community that you're like, "Hey, I could use some help here." Ask for help, ask for support.

You need a place other than your wife to talk to about all the shit that's coming up for you. She's, remember, less available to hear all your dramas, your pain, and your story.

I'll never forget, when my daughter, who's our second, we had two kids under two, 22 months apart. And I was having a spiritual crisis. I was like, "Fuck." My first kid triggered me into this deep spiritual emergency that lasted about a year and a half.

And in that process, my daughter came. And while my wife was pregnant with my daughter, she was having a very hard second pregnancy. And I was just like "woe is me" about my life. I was kind of in a shame pile. I wasn't making money. I was struggling on a whole number of levels with my identity, and what am I going to do next? I had just fucking failed in a business venture that I tried. I had so much shit go down. And a lot of personal shit came up, self worth, all that. And one day I was just, "woe is me"-ing, and she was in a lot of pain. And she's like, "Dude, can you set your shit down and just show up for me? I don't want to hear about it anymore."

And it was the wake up call I needed. And I set my shit down and I showed up for her, for a long time. Until she was in a place to start being interested in my experience again.

And it was hard. I'm not going to lie. It was hard for a temporary amount of time. And then she fully came back and was interested. And what was so cool is it forced me to get very resourced outside my marriage.

And I didn't form a resentment because I knew that this was what I needed to do to make the situation at home better. So I was in choice about it, it wasn't like, "Oh fuck my wife for making me do this." I was like, "Shit, you're right. I need more support. I need to get better support, so that I can show up for you, honey."

So get support for yourself. As I said before, your childhood history's going to come up forever as long as you're a parent, at every age. Get hip to that and get on board with that.

How do you want to be different or similar than your parents? Your father? What are the traumas that happened to you at age 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, that you need to work through that you never have touched?

Because I guarantee you it's going to block you from something, some dynamic with your kid at that age that you have a big trauma, especially if it's unresolved.

Prioritize yourself to the degree that you can be successful. So you get time for yourself, you get checkout time, which is watching the game, going to movies, smoking a bowl,

having a drink, whatever you need to do to just, "Holy shit, I need a break." Totally fine. But then check back in. Okay?

Checking out is always welcome. I still check out. But try as much as you can to do it consciously and not unconsciously. Unconsciously is, it just starts happening and it kind of starts to run your life. And it's hard for you to be present anymore because all you do is check out. That's not the kind of dad you want to be.

Get clear, and more clear, and more clear on what's important to you. I think having a child helps you prioritize shit, and it's going to help you clarify your priorities.

Things became very clear when I had a kid. I was like, "Oh my God." Friends fell off, out of my radar. It became like stop, drop and deal time. And I wanted to be a present father. So I was super involved.

And anytime my friends wanted to go to lunch or have coffee, I'd say, "Look, I'm with my six month old. You're welcome to come over here and go on a walk with us." It was all on my terms basically.

And friends that didn't like that, went away. My friends who were adaptable were like, "Shit yeah, I'll go on a walk with you and your kid. I'll go to the park and do the swings with you and your kid." And yeah, my attention was split. I wasn't a hundred percent there at times, but it was better than not seeing my friends.

And sometimes my friends would just come over and get on their knees and play blocks with me and my son, when he was like one.

And then when I had two kids, it was like we'd be in the backyard building a fort and my friends would come over and play in the sandbox with us and watch me build forts with my kids. And they would get involved. And that was awesome. It was fucking awesome.

All right, so keep prioritizing you. Yeah, I would watch the tendency to desperately hold onto your values. So let's say you're a golfer. I have friends that they live for golf. And they start to resent their child and their wife for not getting to golf as much, damn it. Dude, get over it, man. Golf is not that important. Raising your child is the most important thing you can do, well.

If you're more focused on your playing scratch golf or your handicap in golf, your priorities are way fucking disoriented here. And that's okay. But you wouldn't be listening to this podcast if you were that kind of dad. If you were like, golf is more important than your kid, you'd probably be listening to golf podcasts. This podcast would never find you, right? So I don't think that's you.

But what I'm saying is, your priorities are going to shift, as they should. And decide, keep choosing, be in choice about them. So you're not resenting your child from taking away from all your important values.

You don't want to resent your child. You chose to have a child. No need to resent. You might have grown up with a parent who resented you, because you took away from their life. You don't want to be that person, right?

Okay, I have many more tips, we're getting there. Really appreciate your ears here.

Ongoing tips as kids develop. So those are some of the big ones in the first couple of years.

Remember the mindset here is *warriorship, surrender, letting go over and over and over*.

Don't get attached to any one stage. When your kid... Any parent will tell you this, that you get so used to this cute little, "Oh, they're finally sleeping through the night," and then all of a sudden, wham, something happens and they start teething and now they're not sleeping through the night again.

Or you're just having such a fun time when they're crawling, because they kind of can't go very far. The moment they start walking, holy shit, it's like you wish you had a leash on your kid. And strangely, some parents actually do have leashes for their kids. Because they don't have command over their kids through voice. That's always weird to me, when a kid's on a leash. I'm always like, "Is this a special needs kid? Or what's happening here?" And sometimes it is, but sometimes it's not. And it's like, "What is going on?"

Anyway, every week, month, year, it changes. Get very good at letting go. Relax and let go.

You want to have relentless collaboration with you and your partner. Even if you get divorced, you want to be amazing co-parents. So you can show your kids, "Hey, we don't get along anymore, we don't like each other so much anymore, but we respect each other. And we are cool to each other. And we can even be friends. And we can work through our hurts so that we can parent you too in separate households in a good way." So have that long game commitment to collaborate ruthlessly, relentlessly, forever.

As I said, work through any and all conflicts. [Read my book](#), get very good at that. That's a skill you want to master.

Okay, here's a big one. Don't wait for your kids to engage and be fun for you.

I went across the street... So we raised our kids for seven years in downtown Boulder, Colorado. And we were renting in this fancy neighborhood, right near town. We could walk to town, it was so awesome.

And this guy across the street would host these Monday Night Football games. And every house in the neighborhood had screens, huge, huge televisions, except ours of course. And so he'd always invite me over to the game, "Hey dude, you going to come watch the game tonight?" And say, "Oh fuck, okay, fine. I'm going to go have a beer, a Coors Light with this guy just because I'm a neighbor and that's kind of the nice thing to do."

And I go into his house and there's another guy there saying, "Oh cool, you got kids? I'm a dad too. How old are your kids?" And I said, "Two and four," whatever. And he's like, "Oh, that's really kind of a nightmare. Just wait till they're 10. And then it's awesome. It gets so awesome when they're 10 because you can throw the ball with them and they can play catch with you and you can... They actually look up to you."

And I was sitting there going, "Wow, I can't relate at all to this guy." And I was like half smiling, fake smile, like, "Oh, okay. Right."

And it was really painful for me because I realized that that guy resented his kids and didn't like them, basically, and couldn't relate to them and couldn't even connect with his babies, his toddlers, whatever. And it was all like, "Ah, my wife just did all that. But now they're fun because they're older and they can confirm my ego." I was like, "Oh, got it." So anyway, try not to be that guy. Okay?

All right, another tip. Make sure you are with a partner who's open to getting coaching or counseling if the tension builds and the relationship gets strained. Have that conversation. Discuss whether or not your partner supports you being a really involved dad. There's some moms out there that live for the identity of being a mother, and they kind of don't want you that involved. Find out if that's your partner.

Get on the same page there early on about that. But make sure you're definitely... You're going to have stressful hard moments. Your marriage might get into a really challenging place. Make sure that she's on board, or they're on board, with doing the work.

And hey, when we get in the weeds and we can't figure it out on our own, or with Jayson's book, we go hire someone. A skilled, skilled therapist or coach, to help us get through this hard spot. All right? Please do that. Don't do the drift thing. Drift into each other's corners and just not... And then the years go by, and you become roommates.

Make agreements ahead of time about your parenting approach and always be adaptable and proactive about that. "Hey, our kids are entering school. Holy shit. What kind of things do we want to consider? A public school or private school? What kind of school? And what kind of values do they have? And do they align with who we are? And do we have the resources to make these kind of choices?" "When kids from the neighborhood come in and we have different values, what are our agreements? Are we on the same page?"

For example, when my kids were really young, my son would go over to this other kid's house in the neighborhood. And again, the TVs were blaring. Commercials are super intense, for me as a grown guy, and having my three year old watch intense, violent commercials about a violent horror film, that's not what I wanted my kid to see.

So my wife and I had to make choices. "Do we want our son going into certain homes in this neighborhood? And can we go in these homes and kind of vibe it out first? And can we

befriend these people? And could we maybe even eventually make requests like, Hey, when my kid's over, do you guys mind having the TVs off? Is that cool? I know that's kind of a lot to ask." You can ask for things like that. Which we actually ended up doing with this family. Make explicit agreements about division of childcare. If you don't make them explicit, it can be easy for resentments to build early on, on both sides.

And this is from a listener of the podcast and one of the dads on Facebook suggested this, I think it's awesome: "What are our agreements around division of childcare? Who's taking care of the house? Who's taking care of the kid? Who's doing pickups? Drop offs? Is there a bottle feeding, breastfeeding thing? Yeah, when the kid's hurt, can I please try and get good at being there for them so they don't always go to you? Can we both be in alignment there? That we want to support me in learning how to nurture the kid without the boob? Can we do that?" and "If you embrace these learning opportunities as they present themselves, and see what amazing teachers your kids are for you, the ride will be a whole lot easier." (That also from another father on Facebook. I thought that was great, so I included that).

Your kids are little teachers and they're going to school you in a lot of things. Allow yourself to be schooled. It's a fucking cool process. It's awesome.

Okay, here's another one from a listener: "Understand that your role is not to control your kids." As I was saying, it's not to superimpose your values onto them. Of course you're going to instill "good" values, whatever those are for you. But I'm talking about the example I used where, "Okay, I was an all- star athlete, so my kid better damn be an all-star athlete." Well, guess what you're going to raise? You're going to probably raise, you'll be blessed with that kid who wants to dance, that boy who wants to dance and dress up like a girl. And that'll confront you and your agendas.

Anyway, we get often such good medicine from our children about our bullshit. It can be really helpful to see. So your role is not to control your kids.

And my wife and I did a podcast on, [how do you get your kids, teenagers and two year olds, to do things without fear or bribes?](#) So fear of losing shit, or fear of getting punished. Or, manipulating like bribes, like, "I'll give you a cookie if you blank. I'll let you have ice cream tonight if you get in the car." That is, I don't know, it's just lazy. It's lazy parenting. It's understandable. And at times, that's fine. Maybe 10% of the time, to do shit like that. But most of the time you don't want to use fear or bribes or manipulation to get your kids to do shit. If you are, that says more about you than your kid.

As someone said, the goal is not to sculpt your child into you, so you feel okay about yourself. The goal, on the other hand, is to create space for this tiny human to feel safe and secure so that they can be who they are.

And you want to fan the flames of them being who they are. Whatever they are, however they are. Within obviously the boundaries of, these are socially acceptable behaviors. These aren't like, you got to say please and thank you. And of course you got to go to sleep on time.

I'm not talking about letting your kid be a little monster. I'm talking about, authentically who they are. It's a really beautiful dance. That's our goal over here in my household.

Another big one, never let your kid's emotions run the house. My wife and I have done several podcasts on this ([like this one](#)).

For example, here's a couple examples: "I don't want to go to school today. I don't feel like it." And you say, "Okay," because they're throwing a tantrum. Because you're so uncomfortable with the tantrum, you just say, "Okay, you don't have to go." That's an extreme example.

Another softer example is I was dropping my kid off at kindergarten one day. This was maybe when he was five. And it was a foot of snow out here in Colorado. And this kid was throwing a tantrum in the parking lot. And the mom was trying to put a coat on him, a parka on him, and the kid was in a T-shirt. And the mom was like, "Just put your coat on." And he was, "No, never. I'm never wearing this coat ever again. No." And he was just in tears and he was raging. And she was like, "Okay, okay." And she just backed off and acquiesced and let this kid, in six inches of snow in the middle of winter, 30 something degrees out, let him go to school without a coat. I'm like, "No, you don't get to let your kid make those kind of decisions, ever."

That's what I'm talking about is the people in the attachment parenting camp do this kind of shit. "Oh, my kid's really sensitive. And yeah, they need all this stuff. And yeah, they're really special, and I don't want to upset them." It's really just about the parent and their inability to hold capacity for the kids' experience and their tantrums.

I often tell this other example when I was an REI and this amazing mother. Very crowded REI. It was a sale, and this kid starts throwing a tantrum in line, and he's three. And he's just melting down, he's rolling on the ground because he wants one of the cookies or bars that they're near the checkout lines at REI. They give you all the cool shit there like energy bars and goos and stuff. They just have a ton of sugar in them. And this kid was wanting one, and she was like, "No." And he was writhing all over the ground, and she kept saying, "Nope, nope. I hear you. Yeah, it makes sense you're upset. No, you don't get to have that." And I watched. And most of the people in the REI in the lines were upset and annoyed at this mom and judging her, and I was secretly cheering her on. And I was like fuck yeah, this woman is holding the line. And within two minutes, maybe a minute, that kid finally stopped and then was holding her hands and was in line and was quiet because she held

the line, she held the boundary, let him have his reaction, validated his reaction, but held the line. And they moved on.

Tantrums are this incredible practice for you as a dad to be present and then to validate the hell out of your kid and their experience. And then it's a wave; they're done. No kid can tantrum for a long time because it's such a massive energy dump. And it's so powerful to watch. My son used to jump two feet off the ground, just jumping up and down. "No," just screaming. And I'd just be breathing through it, and just like, "Whoa, this is so intense." And then validate, "I'm here. I hear you, you're mad. Got it. Daddy's with you. I hear you." "Shut up. Leave me alone." I'm like, "You don't get to talk to dad like that. And I hear you're upset." And then he was done. And then he'd be laughing a few minutes later.

Learn how to hold space for your kids' massive emotional range of experience. Get better at that by dealing with your own emotions.

Yeah, again, I just want to reiterate a really good challenge for you as to parent without fear, bribes or manipulation. See if you can do it. It's a really cool challenge because it's going to force you to ask better questions and get smarter.

Keep deciding what kind of family culture and family values you want to have. Keep deciding. What do we stand for? Make one of your family values that we always, always, 100% of the time work through conflict as a team. We do it together. Man, that would change our culture if every family had that as a family value. Whoa. But people don't have that as a family value because they don't know how and they feel ashamed and they don't want to learn and they're just brush it under the rug or they're blame their partner or something else. Not wise. Just like a company, create family values, family agreements. And these can come over time as you emerge and get to know yourselves as a family. What do we stand for? What do we believe? What's our mission statement? Do we have a vision for our family? Yeah.

All right. Those are some of the big ones, folks, dads, soon to be dads. Really appreciate you listening this long. I typically don't record podcast this long. I actually thought it was going to be longer. There's many things I haven't said, of course, because I can't just cover... go drill down in all of these subjects, but I think you get the basic idea.

Okay, A couple books to read. All right, as I said, [The Power of Showing Up](#) is my #1 parenting recommendation, *The Power of Showing Up*, and that's by Dr. Dan Siegel and Tina Payne-Bryson. Yeah. Tina, side note, also has a great book called [The Bottom Line for Baby](#) where she talks about screen time, sleep training, thumb sucking, tummy time, what the science says, and what subjective experience says. Some of the highly charged topics, even vaccines I think are covered in this for your babies. Vaccines are a whole thing for new parents. Shit, do we get our kids vaccinated or not? And that's a whole thing. *The Bottom*

Line for Baby, that's another good book by Tina Payne-Bryson. I interviewed her about that book on this [podcast if you want to check that out](#). And then again, *The Power of Showing Up*.

Another good one is [Simplicity Parenting by Kim John Payne](#). Kim John Payne. Also had him on the podcast ([listen to episode](#)). If you want to listen to that episode and you can Google Jayson Gaddis, Kim John Payne. I've had [Dr. Dan Siegel on this podcast](#) many times as well, just trying to understand attachment science. And it's kick ass. It's incredible stuff. And I'm trying to make it even simpler than Dan makes it. And I have a few different ways to talk about it, so you can also go listen to [Jason Gaddis Attachment Science](#) or [Attachment Parenting](#) or the [Four Core Needs](#). You could Google that as well.

[No Drama Discipline](#). If your kid starts to become a kid who's hard to discipline, I would... and is quote, "acting out all the time," and it's getting unruly and it's difficult for you, my favorite resource there is the *No Drama Discipline* also by Tina Payne-Bryson and Dan Siegel. And the reason I refer to them so much is because it's science-based... They study nervous systems and brains of children in the context of interpersonal neurobiology and relationships. And I think that's the legit stuff I want. I don't want some Instagram influencer telling me how to parent my kids who hasn't done the work and hasn't actually studied this stuff for a living. Check that out.

Yeah, another good one is [Hold Onto Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers](#). Don't worry about this until your kids are at least, I don't know, six or seven. I wouldn't touch this book till then.

And then [The Conscious Parent](#) by Shefali Tsabary. She's an influencer out there. She's a doctor. She's great. She kind of does this whole conscious parenting stuff that really is about your kids are a mirror to your own stuff that's unresolved. I like that view a lot. Woo. All right, thanks expecting dads and new dads for listening in. Thanks Andy and others who have asked for this for so long, and we'll see if we can put together a little guide or transcription that's coherent.

May you be an awesome father and put some energy and attention on that. Yeah, and may your kids grow up securely attached.

All right.

Hey, dads, or dads to be, I left out a couple things so I'm adding them here. Carrying your baby versus a stroller. Let's talk about that for a minute. I think strollers are problematic for a number of reasons, because if you look around the world, people carry their babies. Think of hundreds of years ago, thousands of years ago, there were no strollers, and people just set their babies down, they picked them up and they held them in their arms.

They swaddled them around their bodies while they were out in the fields working, they had them on their backs while they were hunting. You can just imagine that's how it was. Strollers are this weird thing where you plop your baby in a cart basically facing forward, so they're not facing you. And then they have a cover on them so you definitely can't see their face or anything about them. And they're facing away from you. From an attachment science perspective, I don't like this because there's little to no eye contact for long periods of time. And the world can feel overwhelming if you have a sensitive child to have them out facing all the time.

And parents will go on walks for hours or to the park or whatever and they've got them in a stroller. And some of the reasons are because it's easier, it's not as big of a hassle. "I have a bad back, so I don't want to carry my child." Carrying kids, especially a couple kids under four, is a lot on your body, and so strollers make sense. I'm not an personally an anti-stroller, I'm just think that stroller should be used sparingly.

And instead, it's so joyful to carry your baby on you, on your person, on your body. And there's a couple really good swaddle wraps that you can do that are really good. We use *the ergo* in our family. And *the ergo* is great because you can wear the baby on your front or back. And when it's on your front, the baby's facing you, and when they're on your back, they're also facing the back of your head. And they can fall asleep there. They have a little cover. If it's sunny, a cloth cover. I think the company is really wise in terms of how they created this baby carrier. It's like a backpack but it's against your back. Sometimes you get sweaty and you can feel the baby's heat and your heat together and, I don't know, it feels really good. I'd be doing dishes in the kitchen trying to put my daughter to sleep while my son is flopping around and on the floor playing with blocks or whatever. And I had my daughter here, and I'd be doing dishes, and eventually she'd fall asleep on my chest or my back sometimes in the kitchen.

And then I would go on hikes, I would hike with friends and socialize with friends and I'd have the baby on me. And it was a great way to connect with friends. And then the baby eventually falls asleep on you while you're hiking Mount Sanitas here in Boulder or something.

There are *bjorns*, *baby bjorns* I think they're called. And a lot of people have front-facing baby carriers. Again, that doesn't make a lot of sense to me because the baby's legs and arms are sticking out and their face is facing out toward the world, which is like, oh, I've got a front row seat to the world. But again, there's no eye contact. It's really hard for the baby to turn around and look at you. And if things get upset, one of the ways babies sooth themselves is through your eyes and your face and your facial expressions. I don't like the front-facing really anything for the attachment bond purposes, facial expressions and

reading each other's faces. If your baby gets scared, one of the first things they're going to do is look at you to see if you're calm or not. And they're going to take notes and cues off of how you are and your vibe.

This brings up another piece I didn't cover, which is training wheels on your bike. This is just random. Training wheels on your bike versus *the Strider or scoot bikes*. I think it's silly now that we finally... some amazing guy or gal invented *Striders or scoot bikes*, which are basically bikes with no pedals. Two year olds, three year olds, four year olds can ride these little scoot bikes and scoot along using their feet, and they get really good at balance and they start to be able to coast. And they're amazing learning bikes.

Training wheels make absolutely no sense, just like floaties make absolutely no sense to me in a swimming pool. The reason parents use training wheels and floaties is because they think that's part of the learning process. But again, it's a shortcut. It's a way to keep your babies safe in the pool with floaties on, but your kid's not learning anything about swimming and how dangerous water is and that they need to learn to swim and they need to figure it out so that they don't sink and they don't drown.

I think floaties have probably saved some lives, but I see privileged parents use these as... I've been at resorts and parents will be talking to their adult friends, socializing so they don't actually have to interact with their kid and their kid's just floating around in the pool with their floaties on playing by themselves. I would rather be in the water holding my child, messing around with them, playing with them, dunking them under, and teaching them how to get comfortable in the water, and then eventually how to swim. And I think floaties are dumb. And I also think training wheels are dumb given that we want our kids to be resilient and strong and learn how to deal with the challenge of water, for example, or pavement on a bike, that falling over is actually part of learning, making mistakes is part of learning. And that's how you learn to ride a bike is you're, you're going to fall a few times, but the *Strider and scoot bikes* are amazing at this seamless transition to a pedal bike, seamless. I think there is absolutely zero point to get a training wheel bike anymore. And I just really feel strongly about this.

And also the floaties on the arms in a swimming pool, unless you're babysitting four kids under four, I don't think it's necessary. Be there in the water. Get in the water with your child and interact. And if you want to socialize with your friends, tell your friend to get in the water with you and play with your kid also. Yeah, I don't know, floaties, man, I just could do a whole podcast on...

Floaties are emblematic of what privileged parents do with their kids. "Oh, I don't want my kid to have any challenge, I don't want things to be hard, and I want to be able to still socialize and actually have my life." Remember parenting is you're giving up some things by

having a kid. And if you want to maintain your lifestyle and maintain your friendships and do everything exactly as you've always done it, your kid is going to feel neglected, rejected, sidelined, not like a priority. And I'm just like, why have a child if you're not going to get in the game and fully show up for this process called parenting?

All right, another one I quickly forgot is [The Happiest Baby on the Block](#) and *swaddling* your baby. Okay, this gives Dads a really cool role early on in the first six months or so. And there's a video that I think most privileged dads have watched, which is called The Happiest Baby on the Block. And it's how to swaddle your child. And it worked really beautifully with both our kids. It was harder for my daughter because she had cradle cap, which is eczema on her top of her head. It was a really big bummer because she'd start to fall asleep and then she would have the top of her head would start to itch so she would wake up crying and try to scratch the top of her head. It's a big bummer. Like a mosquito bite, kids are naturally going to want to itch that thing. When you swaddle your child, they can't get their hands out or their legs out. And you, as a dad, get good at swaddling your baby really tight. And sometimes it feels like, wait, is this okay that I'm... It's like duct taping your child in a wrap that's so tight they can't get out.

But again, there's sciencey reasons why you have to just watch the movie [The Happiest Baby on the Block](#) to get his instruction on this. It's a pediatrician, I believe, who did this. I can't remember the guy's name, but it really helped. And so our daughter couldn't scratch her head, which she would obviously get mad about that for a minute, but then she would fall right back asleep. And it's like when you don't itch a mosquito bite, eventually it stops itching. That was the theory why we did that and why we wanted to swaddle when she had this really gnarly itch on the top of her head. [Happiest Baby on the Block](#), really, really good resource for new dads to learn how to swaddle their babies. And then also it helps you put the baby to sleep and in the crib or the little bassinet or whatever you're going to put your kid in. Yeah, I got really good at swaddling and I felt proud. I was like, "Oh, cool, I can do something," because I don't have a boob and I don't really... I have a different way to bond with my child. This was really good for me. And I've heard a lot of dads talk about that movie as being game changer for them, so check that out.

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Hey, if you want to get the latest training live and to ask me a question, go to relationshipschool.com/masterclass. I do these frequently on subjects ranging from attachment styles to boundaries, codependency, conflict, how to get to zero, et cetera. Would love to see you there. All right, back to the show.

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As you know, I've dedicated my life to helping people with their relationships. I want to solve this problem so that all of you can work through your differences and have fulfilling, amazing, badass partnerships and relationships, family, coworkers, friends, whoever. And I have trained a ton of relationship coaches, almost 100 certified relationship coaches to help you specifically work through your relationship challenges. I want to invite you to a special deal we're offering to the podcast listener where you can get 50% off your first month of coaching with one of our amazing relationship coaches. If you're tired of therapy, it feels like that's going around in circle or you want to actually set goals and accomplish your relationship goals, hire a relationship coach. Go to relationshipschool.com/getcoachingnow, and then use the coupon code **FIRST50** to get the 50% deal off your first month of relationship coaching. Super psyched to have our amazing coaches serve you and help you get to the next level.