

THE POWER OF SHOWING UP

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Children who form secure attachments with their caregivers lead happier and more fulfilling lives. These bonds are formed when parents respond to the needs of their children by providing the Four S's:

SAFE:

Parents have two primary jobs when it comes to KEEPING kids safe, and making them FEEL safe: protect them from harm, and avoid becoming a source of fear and threat.

SEEN:

Truly seeing our kids is about three main things: (1) attuning to their internal mental state by being present; (2) coming to understand their inner life; and (3) responding to what we see in a timely and effective manner. This three-step process helps children “feel felt.”

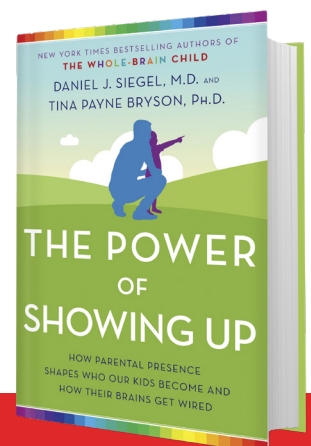
SOOTHED:

When a child is in a state of internal distress, that negative experience can be shifted by an interaction with a caregiver who attunes to and cares for her. She might still suffer, but at least she won't be alone in her pain. Based on this parent-directed “inter-soothing,” she'll learn to provide “inner soothing” for herself.

SECURE:

The fourth “S” results from the first three. We give our kids a secure base when we show them that they are safe, that there's someone who sees them and cares for them deeply, and that we will soothe them in distress. They then learn to keep THEMSELVES safe, to see THEMSELVES as worthy, to soothe THEMSELVES when things go wrong.

Flip over for strategies on implementing the Four S's in your child's daily life.



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SAFE STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING SAFETY:

- First, do no harm: Make a commitment that you won't be the source of fear in your home.
- Repair, repair, repair! When there's a breach in your relationship with your child, reconnect as soon as possible and apologize if necessary.
- Help your kids feel snug in a safe harbor: Create within your home an overall environment of safety and well-being.

SEEN STRATEGIES FOR HELPING YOUR KIDS FEEL SEEN:

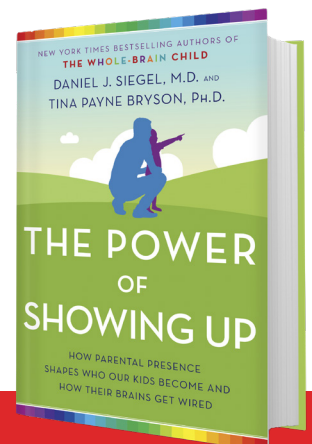
- Let your curiosity lead you to take a deeper dive: Simply observe your kids. Take the time to look and really understand what's going on with them, discarding preconceived ideas and avoiding snap judgments.
- Make space and time to look and learn: Generate opportunities that allow your kids to show you who they are. Create space for conversations that take you more fully into their world so you can learn more about them and see details you might otherwise miss.

SOOTHED STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE INNER SELF-SOOTHING:

- Build a calming internal toolkit: Before emotional situations arise, work with your child to develop simple tools and strategies to help him calm himself.
- Offer your P-E-A-C-E: When your kids are upset, give them your presence, engagement, affection, calm, and empathy.

SECURE STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE A SECURE BASE:

- Invest in a relational trust fund: Each time your kids need you and you show up, the trust in the relationship increases. You make a deposit in the relational trust fund.
- Teach mindfulness skills: Teach your children to show up for themselves when they need to feel more secure. Provide them with the gift of mindfulness, which helps them better understand their own as well as another person's mind. With mindfulness skills they can live lives full of security, meaning, and significance, both as individuals and in their relationships with other people and the larger world of nature around them.



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