



COURES offered by Dr. Deborah MacNamara

Making Sense of Kids through Developmental Science

Based on the Relational and Developmental Approach of Dr. Gordon Neufeld

Dr. Deborah MacNamara is on Faculty at the Neufeld Institute and presents, teaches, and writes on all facets of child and adolescent development based on the relational-developmental approach of Gordon Neufeld. She is also in private practice where she offers counselling services to parents and professionals in making sense of learning, behavioural, and developmental issues in kids. Deborah is a dynamic teacher and experienced counsellor who takes developmental science and makes it come to life in the everyday context of home and classroom.



Deborah presents regularly to a range of audiences including parents, educators, child care professionals, social workers, foster and adopt community, and health care professionals. Her particular passions include providing insight into preschooler behaviour, helping adolescent's transition into adulthood, and walking people through the journey of parenthood. She is a developmentalist at heart who is continually fascinated by the mysteries and beauty inherent to human maturation. Deborah has over 20 years experience as a counsellor and teacher working in educational and community mental health settings. She writes for a number of newsletters, parenting magazines, blogs, as well as interviewed for radio talk shows.

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Course Descriptions

The following courses were developed by Dr. Gordon Neufeld. Deborah offers them both in-person and online. They vary in length and may be combined and altered to best meet the needs of a group as well as fit time constraints. The target audiences for the courses vary but are typically suitable for parents, educators, child-care and other health professionals. These courses are more fully described on the Neufeld Institute webpage at www.neufeldinstitute.com. Please consult with Deborah for availability as well as upcoming scheduled courses.

1. Making Sense of Adolescence



Adolescence literally means ‘growing into maturity’. An adolescent is neither child nor adult and therein lies much of the difficulty, the turbulence, the confusion and the challenge. They need us, yet need to not need us. We are their best bet, yet their instincts are to resist us. Unlike primitive cultures, our highly complex society requires a lengthy adolescence with very few rites of passage. The task of turning children into adults has never been more daunting.

Nature’s part in creating grown-ups is to equip them for adult functioning around the time of puberty, ready or not. These changes create their own rites of passage that the adolescent must negotiate to truly mature. Unfortunately, growing up is not a given; not all adolescents embrace their developmental destiny. The most common temptation of adolescence is to replace parents with peers instead of becoming one’s own person. The most common mistake of adults is to back off prematurely. As long as an adolescent is not yet viable as a separate being, he or she is meant to be attached to those responsible for him or her. Our challenge as adults is to help our teens cross the bridge from childhood to adulthood, to encourage them to embrace their developmental destiny and to ultimately shoehorn them into adult society. Meanwhile, we have the day-to-day challenge of parenting and teaching them, of guiding and directing them, of shielding them from stress.

2. Making Sense of Anxiety



As many as 20% of children qualify for an anxiety disorder diagnosis, making it the most common mental health issue. Anxiety can take many forms including obsessions, compulsions, phobias as well as other perplexing behaviours. We cannot treat something we do not understand, so making sense of anxiety is fundamental in making headway. This presentation will bring a fresh and promising perspective to one of our most troubling human problems.

This course is designed for all those involved with children and youth: parents, teachers, helping professionals. Although the focus is children, the dynamics and insights apply to individuals of any age. In fact, although most participants come for their children, they end up with significant insights about their own anxiety and how to best deal with it. Helping professionals will learn how to treat the anxiety of children effectively and without depending upon medication. Helping professionals also learn how to work through the parents in addressing the anxiety of their children. Teachers will gain insights about their own role in the anxiety problem and what they can do to reduce the anxiety of their students. Parents will learn how to address the roots of the issue and so reduce the symptoms and dysfunction of anxiety.

3. Making Sense of Attention Problems



The Attention Deficit Disorder label has brought concerns regarding attention to the fore of public consciousness but unfortunately without the foundational knowledge that enables parents and teachers to find their way through a glut of confusing and often conflicting information. The professionals in charge of diagnosing are often experts at describing the symptoms but tend to come up short when it is time for explanations. Since we can only truly address that which we understand, the prevailing focus in our society has turned to managing symptoms instead of effecting a cure.

There are many kinds of attention problems, most deeply rooted in emotional and developmental dynamics. In this course, participants will gain an understanding of how the attentional system develops and what can go wrong and why. Participants will also learn to differentiate between three basic kinds of attention problems that can all lead to an ADD diagnosis. The ultimate objective of the course is to provide the participants with strategies for addressing the roots of the attention problems in such a way that the symptoms abate, regardless of their underlying cause.

4. Making Sense of Counterwill



Counterwill is a name for the instinctive reaction of a child to resist being controlled. This resistance can take many forms: opposition, negativism, laziness, noncompliance, disrespect, lack of motivation, belligerence, incorrigibility and even antisocial attitudes and actions. It can also express itself in resistance to learning. Despite the multitude of manifestations, the underlying dynamic is deceptively simple - a defensive reaction to perceived control or coercion.

Counterwill is undoubtedly the most misunderstood and misinterpreted dynamic in adult-child relations. The simplicity of the dynamic is in sharp contrast to the trouble it creates - for parents, for teachers, and for anyone dealing with children. It creates a perplexing dilemma in that what is most demanded or expected from a child can become the least likely to be realized.

Understanding the role of counterwill in the development process is the key to knowing how to handle it. A three-pronged approach to safely defusing counterwill and to handling the resistant child or adolescent will be discussed.

5. Making Sense of Play



Play - at least the kind that builds brains and forwards development - is becoming an endangered activity among those who need to engage in it most. Part of the problem is the premature pressure on children to learn and to become socialized. Another factor is that play has increasingly become associated with a sport or a screen activity. Probably our most significant failing is our lack of collective understanding concerning the pivotal role of play in development. We have never known more about the value of play and at the same time, we have never been so in need of this knowledge. The importance of play has become eclipsed by the urgency surrounding childrens' conduct and achievements.

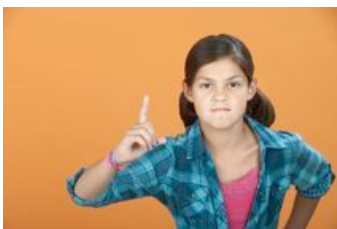
6. Making Sense of Preschoolers



No one is more susceptible to being misunderstood than the preschooler. Precocious, brazen, obsessive, endearing, hysterical, impulsive, anxious, delightful, unreflective, dogmatic, generous, unstable, aggressive, resistant, compulsive, and anything but consistent - the preschooler could qualify for any number of personality and behaviour disorders. Unlike infants and toddlers, preschoolers actually bear a resemblance to grown-ups and therefore fool us into thinking that they are much more like us than they really are. Projecting our psychology onto them is a typical mistake.

To make sense of the preschooler is to make sense of the very essentials of human development. Once the primary principles of development are appreciated together with their purpose, the developmental deficits that plague the preschooler become transparent and understandable. Rather than pushing them to be other than who they are, we can celebrate their differences. Instead of trying to get them to grow up, we can attend to providing the conditions that are conducive to their transformation. Knowing what they need is the key to knowing how to dance with them.

7. Alpha Children: Reclaiming our Rightful Place in their Lives



This course takes us on a fascinating journey to the essence of the attachment, revealing a little-talked-about-dynamic that impacts every relationship, most significantly the parent-child and teacher-student relationship. Our children are becoming more alpha and this dynamic can manifest itself in a myriad of ways - bossiness,

demanding personality, competitiveness and even bullying.

Alpha children are not only more challenging to parent but also predisposed to a number of problems including anxiety, aggression, oppositionality and eating problems. The plethora of advice-giving and strategies that are offered for these behaviours only tend to make matters worse when the underlying problem is an alpha complex.

In this course, we will uncover the roots of the alpha problem, and in so doing, opens the doors for lasting change: in the family, in the classroom and in society.

8. What to do with Children's Feelings? The Science of Emotion



Constructs like emotional intelligence, emotional self-regulation, emotional well-being and emotional social learning are being bandied about like never before. Emotion, long dismissed as a nuisance factor, is now confirmed to be at the core of development and well-being. What are the implications for raising and teaching children? How can we ensure healthy hearts and what does heart hygiene look like? How do we teach our children the language of the heart? Should we be discouraging negative emotions' and encouraging our children to calm down? This presentation will bring clarity to the plethora of confusing information bombarding parents, child care providers, educators, and health professionals today.

9. Bullies: Their Making and Unmaking



Bullying is an age-old problem with a new face in today's increasingly digital world. Cyber bullies are now replacing playground bullies at an alarming rate and the need to protect our kids is great. Efforts to curb bullying are failing and children are being wounded at the hands of their peers like never before. Protecting our children from bullies is possible when we understand the modus operandi driving bullies, how to thwart attacks, and guide our children through situations where bullies are involved. Parents often feel helpless to protect their children from bullies but there is much we can do to address this age-old problem.

Most prevailing approaches to this problem assume bullying is either learned behaviour or the result of failure to acquire social skills. In contrast, the bully syndrome will be dissected to reveal its deep instinctive roots in the dynamics of attachment and vulnerability. Further discussion will center on how common approaches to bullying and dealing with victims can exacerbate the situation instead of remedy. We cannot effectively address a problem we do

not understand. Every human has the potential to become a bully and every bully has the potential to become fully human.

10. Discipline that Doesn't Divide



Most every parent and teacher wants to know what to do when children 'misbehave.' This tends to be the most pressing and universal issue in dealing with children. Finding the right answers to these questions becomes more challenging when parents and teachers are concerned about issues like attachment and healthy development and do not want their discipline methods to undermine or sabotage these processes. At the same time however there is the responsibility to teach the lessons that need to be learned and to impose order when required.

This course speaks to the question of what to do when, but does so in the larger context of what is required to raise children to their full potential as human beings. Some of the prevailing discipline practices - like time-outs and consequences - are discussed from this perspective. This course provides participants with the opportunity to develop a comprehensive approach to discipline with strategies that are attachment-safe and developmentally friendly.

11. Level I Intensive: Making Sense of Kids



The Neufeld Intensive I provides the conceptual foundations of Neufeld's approach. Participants are trained to use the constructs of attachment, maturation and vulnerability to view children and their problems three-dimensionally and from this base of perceptive insight, to open doors for deep-rooted change. Participants will learn to recognize the signs of stuckness, determine the causes of this condition, and get children unstuck. Course participants are also

equipped to use a working model of attachment that can be applied to children of all ages and levels of challenge, to assess for the appropriate depth and development of attachment, and to employ strategies for cultivating a context of connection with the immature. Although the course is focused on children and youth, the material applies to all ages and is applicable across all settings. This course consistently receives outstanding accolades from registrants and many return to reflect on the rich content.

The model is the result of years of synthesis and distillation and is rooted in depth psychology, grounded in the developmental paradigm, saturated in attachment theory and

congruent with current neurological research. It has also been honed by over thirty-five years of professional practice, parenting and personal reflection. The model has been used effectively in a wide variety of venues and settings: parenting, classroom, special behaviour programs, alternate education settings, therapy, correctional settings, aboriginal communities, adoption, counseling, and the foster system.

12. Level II Intensive: Common Childhood Problems



Building on the foundations of the Intensive I, this course sheds light upon the profound impact of separation on a child's personality and behaviour. Special attention is given to the problems of aggression, resistance, oppositionality, bullying, distractability, impulsiveness, anxiety, alarm problems, alpha problems, attachment problems, and more. This course is a prerequisite to entry into the Neufeld Institute training programs for course facilitators and practitioners.

13. Raising Children in a Digital World



The digital world is here to stay, changing our society in a way that has far reaching consequences for our children. What are the implications for raising children? How do we harness the spectacular connecting potential and yet avoid the pitfalls of attachment technology gone awry? How do we prepare them to live in this new world and yet preserve what is required for healthy development to take place? We have followed our children into the digital world and yet for their sakes as well as ours, need to restore our lead in order to avoid the insidious dangers that live in the shadows of this potent technology. We will consider the digital revolution through the lens of developmental science, committed to helping adults help children reach their full human potential.

14. The Teachability Factor



Teaching is getting harder, not easier. This despite the fact that teachers have never been more educated, technology has never been more advanced, curriculum has never been so refined and pedagogy has never been so honed. Although these factors are important, the true problem in learning lies elsewhere - in the teachability of our students. This material will resonate with teachers' experiences and point to a way through that is as powerful as it is surprising. This

material is useful for all those involved in a child's learning.

The teachability factor refers to those determinants of learning that are psychological in nature, that is, developmental, relational and emotional. There are signs that the teachability of students is on the wane. The implications for education are profound. To the degree that this is true, teaching is becoming harder, despite our being the best equipped and most educated ever. Furthermore, the gap between our students' potential and their achievement is widening. Teaching 'harder' is not the answer; enhancing teachability is.

15. Art and Science of Transplanting Children



Transplanting children – whether this occurs as the result of remarriage, removal, adoption, parental loss, or change in custody - constitutes the most difficult challenge in raising children. Like plants, it is all about their attachment roots; unlike plants, it is a great deal more complicated.

When proximity to one's parent is neither possible nor in the child's best interest, the child is subjected to the most impacting experience of all - separation from those to whom they are attached. When such children are unable to recover from the impact of the attachment disruption, or when they fail to adequately re-attach to the parent or parents who are raising them, nothing works as it should. **The objective of this course is to provide a map for all those who are involved with transplanting or transplanted children.**