



The 4 S's :

SAFE , SEEN

and

SOOTHED

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 **SECURE** 

ATTACHMENT

A secure attachment with your child is the best predictor of how well your child will turn out.

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson, renowned psychotherapist and author of multiple best-selling books including **The Power of Showing Up** says not only is this backed by 50 years of rigorous research, but secure attachment with even *just one adult* can completely change a child's life!

To build a secure attachment with your child, remember:

When your child is at their worst, that is when they need you the most.

Take a moment to regulate yourself. *Then* help them calm down. Aim for nurturing and care instead of reactivity.

Acknowledge their struggle, no matter how insignificant it seems to you.

Be present in the moment, *listen* first and then help them put their emotions into words.

If you don't know what to do, it's OK to just say "This is really hard. I'm here for you."

When your child has repeated experiences where you show up for them (whether you have a solution or not!), their brain gets wired to show up for themselves in the future no matter what.

Make things right when you mess up or lose it.

We don't always have to be perfect! Everyday situations like these can help your child learn that relationships can have conflict and be messy, but we get through it and make things right!

Finally, a bonus note on discipline...

The goal of "discipline" is not punishment. Rather, it is to help kids build the skills to do better over time. If kids are in a reactive state, *the first thing to do is to help them get calm*. How? Use the 4 S's to help them feel safe, seen, soothed and secure. This is the foundation for discipline!

The four S's are like your parenting compass.

When in doubt or if you're questioning your parenting, always default to these four S's.

NOTE: Need help implementing the 4 S's? Print out the next two pages and post them where you'll be sure to see them so they can help guide you!



To learn more about the 4 S's, brain science, secure attachment and more examples, please take a look at Dr. Tina Payne Bryson's **Power of Showing Up** Masterclass available in The AFineParent Academy at:
<https://afineparent.com/academy>

THE 4 S's FOR BUILDING A SECURE ATTACHMENT

1

SAFE

Safe doesn't mean just physical safety! It also means emotional safety and safe attachment. To do this, choose gentle discipline instead of fear-based tactics such as spanking, shaming or punishment. Regulate your own emotions first and don't co-tantrum with your child. And, if/when you do lose it (we all do!), be intentional about repairing your connection.

NOTE: This does not mean being permissive! Setting boundaries and enforcing them firmly and gently is *essential* for your child to feel safe.

2

SEEN

Always make an attempt to look into the mind behind the behavior. Try to tune into their emotional experience and put words to it ("Oh, you are so mad about having to get out of the bathtub! It's so disappointing when the fun ends" as you physically carry them out, instead of yelling "Stop crying and come out of the bathtub, or else!")

You can say no to a behavior, while still acknowledging their emotions.

3

SOOTHED

Nurturing is an important aspect of helping your child feel soothed. When your child is in a state of emotional overwhelm, soothe them by using empathy, naming their feelings, recognizing and acknowledging their reasoning behind the outburst. This teaches their brain that you are there to help when they're having a hard time.

Hugs are bandaids for emotional owies!

4

SECURE

If you make your child feel safe, seen and soothed, they will develop a secure attachment with you. This helps them develop the ability to show up for themselves, regulate their own emotions and eventually self-soothe. If they have enough experiences where you show up for them, they will better understand their inner landscapes and develop healthier relationships in their future.



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EXAMPLE :

You offer to take your child to the movies. They ask for popcorn. You say no. Instead of being grateful about the movie, they start sulking about the popcorn.



1. SAFE

We may get triggered by this. Our immediate reaction may be that the child is acting “spoiled” and “entitled”. We may want to snap, yell or lecture about their lack of gratitude. Resist the urge. Regulate yourself. Take a deep breath. Don’t react.

2. SEEN

Try to tune in to your child’s internal experience. In that moment, they’re disappointed. They had the expectation that you will buy popcorn. Maybe because you had in the past. Or they saw someone else buying popcorn. Or the smell wafting through just got to them. Whatever the case is, try to see it from their perspective!

3. SOOTHED

Stick with the limit calmly and gently. “Sorry honey, we can’t buy popcorn today. Let’s go in quick and get the best seats”. And gently walk them away from the popcorn stand.

If they continue to sulk, empathize and acknowledge their struggle. If they have a tantrum, resist the urge to co-tantrum or to “teach a lesson”. (They cannot learn when they’re in a reactive state.) Instead, focus on calming them and holding the limit. (“Gosh, you’re so mad! You really wish we could get popcorn. You wish I’d always buy you popcorn. A big bucket of it! I bet that’s what you’ll do when you have kids. Buy them all the popcorn there is. [...]” as you put an arm around them and walk them away.)

4. SECURE

There may be tears. And sometimes a tantrum may last longer than other times. That’s OK. **Exactly how an individual situation plays out is less important than how you show up!** If you predictably and consistently make an attempt to tune in and soothe them through their struggle, their brain will wire to eventually *show up for themselves, and self-regulate* in the future!



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Great Parents are Made, Not Born

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Here is a quick preview clip
of this masterclass:

If you cannot play this clip, please
copy-paste this link in your
browser:

<https://afineparent.com/tb-preview>



Here's what a mom in our AFineParent Academy community had to say:

“

I joined the Academy on a whim, thinking I'd watch a few masterclasses and then cancel. But, wow. The academy has become one of the most important and integrated parts of our parenting world. I remain so grateful for you and your team. I had no idea when we had children how much I would need you all. We truly are raising healthier, happier, and better humans because of your work. I tell EVERY parent I know about you all.

- Sarah P.



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