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## solutions in parenting



### FEBRUARY BOOK REVIEW

by Kristi Miller, MA, CAPI,

#### **Connection Parenting: Parenting Through Connection instead of Coercion, Through Love instead of Fear**

By Pam Leo

In the first few lines of *Connection Parenting's* Introduction page, Pam Leo posits a question so intriguing I could not help but want to read on. She asks, "Why do some children grow up to become a Gandhi and others a Hitler? What happens from birth to adulthood that determines that difference?"

The main concept for the whole book is that the vital parent-child connection must be cultivated through conscious, aware and deliberate parenting skills intended to increase the parent-child bond. Leo, a voracious researcher and disseminator of information, tackles this heavy concept in her book, *Connection Parenting: Parenting Through Connection instead of Coercion, Through Love instead of Fear*.

*Connection Parenting*, written and presented in a workbook format, is designed to give the reader the experience of the Connection Parenting™ classes, taught by Leo. Like the classes, readers are encouraged to find partners and read the book in a group, such as a parenting workshop, Mamatoto group or a new parent's group. The Connection Parenting classes include activities such as keeping a parenting journal, and lists of key discussion points.

Participants are encouraged to list their parenting goals, explore their parenting inheritance, identify their parenting strengths and challenges and share their mini-biographies with their group. All of this is with the intention of shining the light on any histories of connection or disconnection experienced while growing up, so as not to perpetuate any dysfunctional future relationships.

Because of its informal layout, this book will feel approachable and useful, especially for new parents. Nevertheless, Leo manages to include many simple yet heavy tenets similar to The Golden Rule. Leo believes that "respect is the foundation of connection." In fact, she continues, respect is a need just as important as physical needs. Children learn what they see, and if adults respect children, in turn, children will respect others.

Connection Parenting is an easy read, with profound and thought-provoking quotes throughout. Although Leo has coined the term, "Connection Parenting," the concept is not an original one. Dr. Thomas Gordon of the infamous Parent Effectiveness Training, Alfie Kohn of Unconditional Parenting and Jean Liedloff of The Continuum Concept all support the same beliefs of parenting with respect. The difference being Leo has simplified the concepts in her "easy to read" format.

While the importance of parenting with respect cannot be undervalued, *Connection Parenting* seems to be geared toward parents who are not in crisis situations with their children. Although this book does offer some useful step-by-step parenting instruction and solid philosophy, it tends to lack the ability to incorporate the issues of the parents dealing with drug-

addicted teens, homework battles and sibling rivalries. It may be more of a guidebook for parents who have the opportunity to delve deeper into the philosophies of parenting, rather than the daily survival skills so many parents desperately need.

The layout of the book is a bit confusing, at first, bouncing between parenting tips and recommended exercises and sometimes longer-than-necessary chapters. It is not the polished, glossy parenting book so readily available in major bookstores. Instead, it is a usable read for parents to tuck into diaper bags or purses to explore when necessary or when time allows.

Although ***Connection Parenting*** is a little more than 200 pages long, it contains within its covers some very worthwhile, practical and transformational parenting wisdom. I recommend this book, to new parents especially, to research and develop their parenting philosophy from the start. With proper use, parents practicing Connection Parenting's philosophy have the potential to teach peace and respect to the children of our generation so they may, in turn, teach peace and respect to their children for generations to come. As Pam Leo says, "How we treat the child, the child will treat the world".

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