

Attachment Vitamins ©
Addressing Attachment, Stress, and Trauma in Early Childhood
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Attachment Vitamins is a 10-week intervention to help parents and caregivers of children aged birth-5 years learn about child development and the impact of stress and trauma, reflect on the child's experiences and the possible meanings of the child's behaviors, and promote secure attachment and safe socialization practices. Attachment Vitamins is available as a home visiting intervention and a group intervention. Attachment Vitamins is also an interactive online course for caregivers and professionals working with young children and their families. In all three formats, the Attachment Vitamins curriculum focuses on the following areas:

- **Parenting Knowledge of Emotional Development and Child Individual Differences.** Attachment Vitamins contains specific information about emotional development during infancy, toddlerhood, and preschool, including constitutional differences and temperamental styles that influence young children's responses. The curriculum describes young children's emotional need for safety, expectable response to stress and trauma, and the impact of these experiences on the child-parent relationship. Parents create and practice strategies to help the child cope with the normative fears of separation, disapproval, body damage, and being unlovable ("bad"). Caregivers are also encouraged to reflect on their own emotional experiences to foster empathy for their own and their child's inner life.
- **Emotional Attunement.** The program encourages playfulness and joy in everyday activities, highlighting "the magic of everyday life" that occurs when small moments of connection become the building blocks for lifelong feelings of love and trust. It helps parents observe, reflect and respond to challenging child behaviors in a supportive way; promotes acceptance of young children's expectable difficulties with emotional regulation; and supports the parents in exploring the burdens that stress and trauma may place on the child's feelings and behaviors.
- **Mindfulness.** The program emphasizes a mindful awareness of the present moment, particularly with regard to positive parent-child interactions. A weekly exercise asks the parents to share a "moment of connection" with their children. Other exercises include mindful breathing and guided imagery to assist participants in becoming aware of their inner states and how these states influence their frame of mind and their behavior.
- **Executive Functioning.** The program provides parents with emotion monitoring and regulation skills, including cognitive reframing, relaxation techniques for stress management, and strategies for managing anxiety and frustration in their children.
- **Reflective Functioning.** While the program teaches specific parenting strategies and skills, it is intentionally designed to provide a space for caregivers to reflect deeply on their parenting experiences. By increasing reflective functioning, parents can become more intentional in developing and pursuing parenting goals.

The curriculum includes reflective discussions, handouts, worksheets, videos, and a weekly early early literacy activity to emphasize these concepts.

Attachment Vitamins is based on the principles of Child-Parent Psychotherapy (Lieberman & Van Horn, 2005, 2008; Lieberman, Ghosh Ippen & Van Horn, 2015), a relationship-based treatment for young children exposed to trauma. For more information about training in Attachment Vitamins, contact Dr. Ann Chu, Ph.D. at ann.chu@ucsf.edu.