

Chapter Eleven — Saving All Kids And Lifting All Ships

Now that we understand all of those issues about key brain development biological time frames for each and every child, it would be criminal for us to not use this information to save all of our children.

It would also be sad, tragic, and almost criminal for each of us to know this information and not share it directly with anyone in our lives who is about to have a baby or who now has a baby, infant, toddler, or a very young child in their lives and who needs to personally understand those processes right now for the sake of their child.

When the caregivers for any young child understand those issues, decisions can be made daily by the caregivers that can improve the life of the child.

We need everyone in America to understand those issues — and we particularly need every parent of every new child to understand those issues. The parents of newborn children all love their children and parents need this information to give their children the best pathway for their lives.

Those issues are not so complicated that they require significant support processes or extensive educational materials to teach the key points.

Once we understand those issues, we can all explain the key points to relevant people in relatively few words.

Because it is easy to explain, there is no excuse for not explaining those points to people whose child will benefit directly and immediately from the parents having this knowledge.

We each should be personally accountable for having anyone in our lives who needs this information to have access to this information. We owe it to people — to our societies' children — to make this knowledge part of the lives of the people who care for each child.

We should all make that commitment to share that information in relevant ways and we should make that commitment now.

We need everyone who has young children to know this information. We can achieve that goal if we each teach that information to anyone who has a young child.

The financial impact for each child — all by itself — makes that information worth knowing. When children get the right levels of neuron connectivity support in those key early years, that support enables those children to graduate from school and it enables those children to not be school dropouts.

Collect A Million Dollars And Avoid Jail

The lifetime income difference between the average school dropout — doomed to a life of frequent unemployment combined with minimum wage employment — and the average income of an actual graduate, exceeds \$1 million. That is a significant amount of money. The basic reality is that helping children build strong brains in those golden early years can be a million dollar gift given by parents to their children.

Not going to jail is another gift from parents of almost inestimable value. Prison is a bad and often damaging place to be. Prison life can be ugly. The other people who are also in prison can be bad, dangerous, angry, and damaging people. Convicted felons lose voting rights and have impoverished and weakened legal status even after they are released from prison.

Prison is bad. Jail is bad. Gang membership can also be damaging and bad for a child and for a prisoner.

We need to help children have the learning levels necessary to read in order to change those life paths for all children.

Eighty-five percent of the young people in our juvenile justice system either read poorly or don't read at all.¹¹ Children who can't read drop out of school. The likelihood of a Black male high school dropout going to jail is nearly 80 percent.^{65,67,69,70}

Those are horrible and horrific numbers and those are very ugly realities.

So we need parents to read, talk, and sing to their children. Reading, talking, and singing to infants and toddlers to keep them from being damaged later by dysfunctional and angry people in prison or being forced to be with dysfunctional and angry people in gang-related street and community situations is a gift of great merit and great love that a parent can give to a newborn child.

Society Will Collectively Benefit When We Do This Well

The challenge we face now is to figure out as a society how to give that gift to every child. We all benefit at multiple levels when that gift is actually given to a child.

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Schools clearly will have immediate benefits from children being given that higher level of learning ability as a gift. Our schools will be able to focus their efforts on children who come to school ready to learn when the students who come to school are actually ready to learn.

Our prisons don't need to bear the expense of incarcerating any people who actually don't end up going there as prisoners.

The number of teen pregnancies can decrease significantly and the number of teen health problems can also diminish. Toxic stress syndrome children tend to have layers of other health problems that impede their progress and create expenses and care delivery challenges for our public care systems.^{25,26,55}

Giving that gift of brain growth and emotional security to each child has multiple layers of benefits to us all.

Several highly reputable economists at the University of Chicago, the University of Minnesota, and Harvard University have projected that the return on investment for society of investing money in those initial years of each child's life is a multiple of every dollar spent. Read their work to see why those very capable people believe that to be true.

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There are many upsides to getting this issue right for our children. There are no discernable downsides to helping those children in that key time of need and opportunity for each child.

We need to help the children in each community, each setting, and in each family who has newborn children get the support each child needs in those first key years.

We Need To Build On The Best Approaches

A number of research programs are doing great research on those child development topics and agendas. A number of really solid childcare programs in a number of settings are doing good things to help the children in their settings who need that support. We need to build on those best programs in each of those settings.

Most care for the very youngest children in those key months and years takes place in each child's home, so we need to do what needs to be done to make each home the focus for the effective support of each child.

A significant amount of care happens in day care settings — both formal group settings and family level-based day cares. We need each of those day care settings to support the learning process for each child.

The next chapter of this book describes some of the science that is relevant to those issues. That chapter also describes some of the programs that are working now across various communities to help our very young children today in a wide range of settings.

We Need More Than Pilots At This Point

There are some positive things happening for some of our youngest children today in a number of settings. But those positive things that are happening for children in those settings are just the tiny tip of what we need to be a massive public health iceberg that brings needed help to each child in that key period of time for each child.

Pilots are good and fine, but we need more than pilots in a number of settings to help large numbers of children at this point in our history.

We need a public health campaign that actually creates universal awareness of those issues and that creates broad opportunities for all children across all settings to get the support each child needs.

At this point in time — all of us need to be part of the solution. We can all help. We need everyone who understands those issues to be part of that campaign to help all children by helping other relevant people to understand those key issues.

Knowledge Is Power

Knowledge is power. Understanding those issues increases our power over them. When people understand those issues relative to their own children, then people can make better and more informed choices about the interactions that happen with each child.

The new science reinforces that set of interaction in ways that give us better tools and better insights than we have ever had.

This is the right time for that new science about brain development in children to exist and this is the right time for adults to be doing needed interactions for each and every child. This is a good time for us to support each other in those efforts and to make very sure that each child who is relevant to us gets the support that we now know each child needs.

We need a culture of continuing learning for America and we need that culture to begin its impact at birth for each child. We need the care systems and the care teams for each child — beginning with the obstetrician and the hospital and transitioning to the caregivers in our pediatric care settings — to be teaching and supporting those practices for each child.

We need all parents to know the potential to help their own child in those key areas during those key years.

That support and knowledge are clearly not happening far too often for many of our children now. Most families and most communities are not aware of those sets of issues and those key opportunities today.

Too many children are being damaged. That damage is happening right now far too often without anyone who cares for those children understanding or knowing that inadvertent damage is being done to their child by not interacting with their child or by not providing the right levels of support for their child.

We need awareness immediately on those issues for each person involved in the care of each child and we need that awareness in all relevant settings.

This is a job we can all do.

We all need to help create that awareness. The functional likelihood of that awareness existing across all of us and across all relevant settings will increase significantly if each person who does becomes aware does what can be done to share the awareness with other people in our lives.

We Need To Give Parents The Tools To Help Each Child

Succeed

Parents love their children. Parents want their children to succeed. People in communities all want the children in their communities to succeed. Everyone wants children to do well and everyone wants the children in their life to have the best chance in life.

We now need to understand collectively and as parents how we can achieve those goals and then we need to act together in various ways to make that success for each child happen.

The children who do well now do well because that support exists for each child. We know that this support process works for a child because it is working today for millions of children.

We need to use what works and we need to use what works for each child.

Success for children can be enhanced in all settings when the people who are relevant to each child very intentionally help each child succeed.

That needs to be our goal. Each child needs our support.

Each child who is helped will be on a different life path because that child has been helped.

This is a very personal agenda for each child, and it needs to be a shared cultural agenda for all adults.

We Can Help All Children To Do Better

The need for helping children extends beyond the currently disadvantaged children who have low vocabularies in kindergarten and who can't read at all today. We need all children to benefit. If all parents from all groups understand those biological truths and developmental opportunities, then all children in America from all groups can have their developmental experiences enhanced.

That knowledge and insight about those developmental issues can help every single child.

If we do this right and if we do this well and if we create a national agenda of continuous learning for all children — starting with birth — we can actually help all children do better.

That strategy can be a rising tide that lifts all ships. The children of affluent people and the children of impoverished people will all benefit from having their parents understanding and utilizing those opportunities for each child in those golden, high opportunity years when the biology of the brain makes those interactions relevant and effective for each child.

We can become brighter as a nation if all of our children get excellent levels of support in those earliest years. We can have the best work force in

the world and we can continue to lead the world in innovation and in creativity because we will have even more people being creative and innovative.

Other Cultures Stifle Creativity And Suppress Intellectual

Growth

Too many other cultures in the world stifle creativity and practice various kinds of intellectual suppression, repression, and oppression. We, by contrast, have led the world in many ways for many years by utilizing our creativity and by recognizing, supporting, and even rewarding innovation at multiple levels.

We need to stay on that path and we need to do our most creative and innovative work at even higher and more inclusive levels so that we have more people able to contribute to the greater good.

Being more inclusive in our creativity approaches is a cultural manifestation and an economic blessing that we will be able to build on collectively if we have all of our children becoming all that they can be with the right level of early childhood support.

We All Need To Be Accountable To Make That Growth Real

We need all of us to support that childhood support agenda and we need each of us to be accountable for helping make that agenda real for the children in our lives.

If we do this badly, the greatness of America will fade into a sad morass of intergroup anger, intergroup division, and even intergroup conflict. We could become just another sad and divided country at war with itself.

If we do this well, and if we very intentionally and very effectively help all of our children from all of our groups do well, then the greatness of America will be enhanced by a future of intergroup success.

Success is the better choice.

Let's win.

We know how to make that happen.