

Jeff Cotton Trainings

2010 Trainings

For

PARENTS & PROFESSIONALS

- **Ten Habits of Highly Successful Parents & Professionals**
 - **Communication Anchored in the Truth**
 - **The Astonishing Listening Training (No Kidding!)**
 - **Skillful Engagement with Crises**
 - **Activating the Best in Children**
 - **What to Do When your Buttons Get Pushed**
 - **How to Speak with Children about Difficult Things**
 - **Being Therapeutic with Sexual Minority Youth**
 - **Burnout & Renewal: Internal Inoculation from External Pressure**
 - **Creating Healthy Teams & Partnerships**
 - **Understanding Attachment & Child Development**
 - **How to Help Children Become Thoughtful Decision Makers**
 - **Living Anxiety-Free in Anxious Times**
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Certified Trainer with the National Foster Parent Association

Mission Statement

The Helping Act is a Three Part Job.

- Clients (children and families)
- Getting along with the other adults
- Working on our own growth

We primarily focus on only one part of that job, namely the children. Most ads in the newspaper are only about that mission. “WANTED: Parents and Professionals to work with special needs kids, medically-fragile babies, traumatized children (physical and/or sexual abuse and neglect), addicted kids, victims, victimizers, runaways, prostitutes, etc .

The second part of our job is to form therapeutic relationships with our co-workers. Children are PTSD (posttraumatic stress) sensitive to conflict within families having come divorced, single parent, domestic violent, addictive households, etc. Our children will not miss our conflicts with one another and will not be able to heal in poisonous atmospheres rife with overt or covert conflicts.

The third part of the job is working on our own growth. Adults need to be congruent role models for growth by living what they are teaching. Children learn best from adults who come from a “Do what I do”, not “Do what I say” model.

The Trainings

The trainings are designed to actively engage participants in the “joyful participation in the sorrows of the world.” The trainings are experiential, pragmatic, hands-on teachings of what is within our power and what it is not within our power.

Things outside of our power are anyone else’s life; their joy, happiness, responsibilities, decisions. Those are up to them. How to best elicit alliance and cooperation with our clients is a huge part of the training focus.

Things within our power is our ability to communicate (listen and speak) effectively, to be role models for truth, to be less codependent and anti-dependent and more interdependent, to form healing alliances with other adults, and to keep growing up within ourselves. These are a huge part of the training focus.

Jeff Cotton Trainings

Ten Habits of Highly Successful Parents and Professionals

This workshop illuminates “Ten Habits of Highly Successful Parents and Professionals.” These habits are effective in helping adults not only form healing connections with children, but simultaneously taking better care of themselves, as well.

The workshop is a wide-ranging smorgasbord of pertinent philosophies and therapeutic strategies with an emphasis on critical communication skills and self-awareness. It's designed to be instantly practical in renewing the spirit and intention of parents and professionals as they face the challenges of better serving their children.

Training Objectives

Helping parents and professionals:

- Understand the three part job: children, getting along with the other adults, and working on their own personal growth.
- Learn to separate underlying themes (self esteem, abandonment, physical/sexual abuse, addiction) from the symptomatic day-to-day triggers.
- Gain clarity about their own: fear and control issues, preferences and attachments, shadow selves

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Communication Anchored in the Truth

Communication is a form of communion. The aim of communication is to connect us with other human beings because it is deeply grounded in connecting us with ourselves. Assertion is the vehicle by which communication is anchored within us; where the truth resides. It is the casual, and deep, ownership of our words thoughts and feelings. Assertion is internally focused. On the other hand, passive and aggressive communication is externally focused on how “you” affect me. It is a disowned form of communication which pretends others create feelings within us.

In our work to be therapeutic with children in our care, it is important to help children become assertive, to claim ownership of their bodies, their thoughts, their feelings. This intriguing training will present a unique perspective for using communication as a vehicle to create space for the truth to arrive.

Training Objectives

Helping parents and professionals:

- Recognize the power of words (positive and negative) upon relationships with self and others
- Understand communication styles with oppositional children (stuck in “no”) and compliant children (stuck in “yes”)
- Recognize the dysfunctional similarities of passivity and aggression
- Discover the healing and curative power of becoming assertive
- Learn the best and worst things to say before, during, and after a crisis

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The Astonishing Listening Training (No Kidding!)

The validation of children does not come so much from *helping* them, as it does *hearing* them. Most parents and professionals are engaged in fixing and advice-giving modes of helping which focus on what children need to hear from us... rather than what we need to hear and receive from them. This profound training is designed to immerse participants in the experience of listening with an ear towards 'being with', rather than 'doing for' children.

Training Objectives

Helping parents and professionals:

- Recognize key barriers to listening
- Illuminate the vast differences between open-ended and closed-ended questions
- Debunk that praise builds self-esteem
- Experience the freedom that compassionate empathy makes in being with, rather than doing for, children
- Activate children's inner wisdom

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Skillful Engagement with Crises: Approaching Fear Without Fear

This training focuses on helping participants better engage with volatile behaviors. It shifts the focus from de-escalation of these behaviors (which is always about "us" de-escalating "them") to helping us hear, be with, and understand the children before we "do" anything. The intention of this training is to "slow the whole thing down." There is so much fear in reactivity which only perpetuates more fear. This training is about responding to them; using crises as "teachable moments" designed to strengthen the bond to children with fragile attachments.

Training Objectives

Helping parents and professionals:

- Recognize importance of words in forging an alliance or creating a war
- Become internally anchored during a crisis situation
- Find empathic resolutions, respectful disagreements and clear boundaries
- Use the crisis as a “teachable moment” to strengthen the bond with children

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Activating the Best in Children

Learning to help abused, vulnerable children mature into healthy, self-responsible human beings is a profoundly difficult challenge. It demands a true willingness on our parts to *not* just try and make them behave and make the “right” choices but, instead, to enter into more equal and healing partnerships with our children. This pragmatic, inspirational training goes beneath the labels and diagnoses, settling for nothing less than the arrival of the human being inside the child.

Training Objectives

Helping parents and professionals:

- Enter into deeper partnerships with children by transitioning from behavioral point, reward and consequence systems into more healing, interactive and *co-authored* decision-making
- Focus less on telling children what to do, which elicits either compliance or defiance, and instead focuses on asking great questions, which elicits insight and wisdom within the children.
- Use misbehavior as a “teachable moments” not a punishing ones, where conversation trumps consequences

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What To Do When Your “Buttons” Get Pushed

What type of kids, adults or families “get you going”? Who pushes your buttons and allegedly makes you mad? Helpless? Irritated? Frustrated? Frightened? Incompetent? Yet, more important than who pushes your button is... **which button (of yours) did they push?**

While the work can be exhausting, our own issues and countertransferences... our buttons... are the major stumbling blocks we’re actually up against. It’s crucial to come clean with what’s activated within us. In fact, there’s no way out of the reactive prison if we think someone else put us in one. This training is about coming to peace with ourselves and our issues as the vehicle by which we make peace with all others and with the world itself.

Training Objectives

Helping parents and professionals:

- Gain a clearer understanding of their own buttons so they can become freer and more skillful in their interactions with their children
- Become actively involved in their own growth, so they can serve as role models in teaching children to grow within themselves
- Gain valuable insights into recognizing their own buttons and receive pragmatic tools in working with them
- Mature and grow in high stress professions with enthusiasm, effectiveness, grace, and balance

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How to Speak with Children About Difficult Things

Learning to talk with children about the profound issues affecting their lives demands a high level of skill and empathy on the part of parents and professionals. Many of our children are confused and well-defended, pushing away all attempts to help. This training is designed to help participants gain clarity about their own issues as a vehicle to connect with children about theirs. The training takes the premise that the two necessary conditions to connect with any human being are:

- 1) We know the issue within ourselves, within our own way
- 2) We have come to peace with that issue

Training Objectives

Helping parents and professionals:

- Gain awareness in how to lay the therapeutic foundation for a truthful, thoughtful conversation to take place
- **See it all as human**; that everyone in their own way has dealt with grief, abandonment, addiction, betrayal, joy, love, hope, etc.
- Develop new tools in how to listen with an ear toward understanding rather than doing
- Learn the difference between information sharing which engages the child's inner witness and manipulation which engages either opposition or compliance

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Being Therapeutic with Sexual Minority Youth

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Questioning Youth (GLBTQ) have a difficult time making their way in the world. They face hostility in society and in their own families. Many GLBTQ youth, kicked out of their families, become wards of the court, either in the social service or probation programs. Compounding the dilemma they face is discrimination from foster/adopt parents and group home professionals.

This thoughtful and challenging training helps explore the parallel processes of sexual abuse and societal condemnation which contributes to creating shame, secrets, suicidality and alarming addiction rates in our children. It is designed to help parents and professionals learn to become more therapeutic in working with sexual minority youth, whether they view homosexuality as a sin or not.

Training Objectives

Helping parents and professionals:

- Recognize societal sexual abuse of sexual minority youth
- Learn to protect GLBTQ youth from peers and adults
- Know what to do when religious beliefs clash with professional duties
- Develop strategies to help not only teach tolerance, but to celebrate diversity

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Burnout & Renewal: How To Internally Inoculate Yourself from External Pressure

Caregiver burnout is rampant in professions where it seems that no matter what we do, we can never get it done. Whether it our children's disturbing behaviors, our coworkers/spouses (and *their* disturbing behaviors) or the agency and state's ever-shifting, never-ending demands... it seems that someone always wants more than we can give. This pragmatic and inspirational workshop is about thoughtfully cultivating the internal resources key to thriving (rather than just surviving) the ongoing chaos inherent in the helping act.

Training Objectives

Helping parents and professionals:

- Gain critical insights into codependence and anti-dependence; as well as their profound impact upon working with abused and vulnerable children
- Recognize their own codependent and anti-dependent reactive stances
- Become less entangled in the helping act while learning to care for themselves and others in a more skillful and interdependent manner
- Mature and grow in this sacred and stressful work with enthusiasm, effectiveness, grace, and balance

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Creating Healthy Teams & Partnerships

This interactive high risk/high gain workshop helps individuals, couples and teams assess their own, and each others, areas of strength and areas of challenge while working with abused and vulnerable children. Much of the wounding of children happened within their own families. We, as group homes and foster/adopt homes are the “new families”. **Our ability to get along with one another is paramount in our ability to be therapeutic.**

This training is designed to instantaneously increase the personal and professional commitments of parents and professionals to find inspiration and commitment, consensus and resolution, and healthy interactions to help children heal.

Training Objectives

Helping parents and professionals:

- Understand Posttraumatic Stress: how dysfunctional families create it; how disharmonious teams perpetuate it
- Accurately and honestly assess their own, and each others,' areas of strength, growth and challenge
- Allow each person to develop a concise, personal maxim
- Resolve interpersonal conflicts and mend communication wars which can rip at the core of teams' effectiveness to be healing with others

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Understanding Attachment & Child Development

Children in foster, adopt and group homes often suffered devastating chaos in their developmental milestones. Bonding, attachment and trust, necessary pre-conditions for becoming authentic and whole, were often ruptured by the inability of the birth parents to anchor these fragile beings as they came into the world. This insightful, thoughtful training illuminates the developmental stages children go through. It helps parents and professionals understand healthy and unhealthy child development and help foster attachment.

Training Objectives

Helping parents and professionals:

- Understand symbiosis, practicing, rapprochement, and object constancy
- Illuminate the survival strategies of **reality distortion** and **projective identification**
- Gain awareness of object splitting and emotional refueling
- Get practical tools and strategies to help us see children with respectful and therapeutic eyes... eyes that see them as human and not damaged

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How to Help Children Become Thoughtful Decision Makers

It is not our job to help children make good or right decisions (which are driven by our answers). It is our job to help them make thoughtful ones (which are driven by our questions). Learning to help abused, vulnerable children mature into healthy, self-responsible human beings is a profoundly difficult challenge. It demands a true willingness on our parts to enter into more equal and healing partnerships with our children. This pragmatic, inspirational training offers freedom from the helping act.

Training Objectives

Helping parents and professionals:

- Learn to help children make internally thoughtful, as opposed to externally good or right, decisions
- How to lay the groundwork that allows children to see themselves as thoughtful, responsible, reflective human beings
- Master the art of asking question which elicit children's real decisions, their real 'yes' and real 'no' to an issue
- Enter into more healing, interactive and *co-authored* decision-making with children.

Jeff Cotton Trainings

Living Anxiety-Free in Anxious Times

We live in anxious and uncertain times. Almost everyone is affected in some way or another. As long as we hold the misperception the external “world” is causing our anxiety, there will be no escape from fear. Once we are convinced they (the government, economy, social services, social workers, the children, our parents etc) are causing our distress, two things happen:

We feel powerless because "look what it's doing to us".

We become engaged in power struggles with it because "look what it's doing to us".

This training is about how to internally inoculate yourself from external pressures, allowing parents and professionals to thrive even in the midst of anxious times.

Training Objectives

Helping parents and professionals:

- Recognize anxiety factors in how we see what we see
- Develop critical tools in recognizing the lens of fear which are the projections we put onto the world and others
- Develop critical tools in freeing ourselves from our own lens of fear, widening how we see what we see
- Become less entangled in the helping act; while learning to care for ourselves in a more skillful, balanced, and interdependent manner

BIOGRAPHY

Jeff Cotton, MFT of *Jeff Cotton Trainings* is a trainer with the National Foster Parent Association has worked with children and families for 35 years. For the past 22 years, he's conducted seminars for Child Care Associations; including group homes, residential treatment programs, foster family agencies, and schools throughout the United States.

Jeff's trainings are clear, concise, pragmatic, inspirational and fun. His trainings are designed to engage a high level of interactive participation with helps the audience to put on their thinking caps and see in a new, deeper, more compassionate, empathic way.

Jeff is the author of the training manual, "***Skillful De-escalation with Children: Approaching Fear Without Fear***", certified by the state of California for group homes and residential treatment programs. Here are comments from one of his 2010 workshops:

- Wonderful!
- Thoroughly enjoyed this presenter
- Good presentation, had good info-shared in a way that was helpful and engaging
- Thought it was great
- Speaker was great!
- This training really made me evaluate what I have been doing and how I have been working with the children
- Great workshop!
- Fantastic!
- Mr. Cotton provided excellent hands-on training
- Speaker was very energetic and fun; passionate about working with our youth