

Kids These Days

A GAME PLAN FOR RECONNECTING WITH
THOSE WE TEACH, LEAD, & LOVE

BY JODY CARRINGTON PHD

Not often does a book touch the very heart of how important it is to relate to our kids in a way that can transform their experiences at school, home, and play.

Jody Carrington leads each reader to reaching even the most difficult youth, and it is all about developing connections with them.

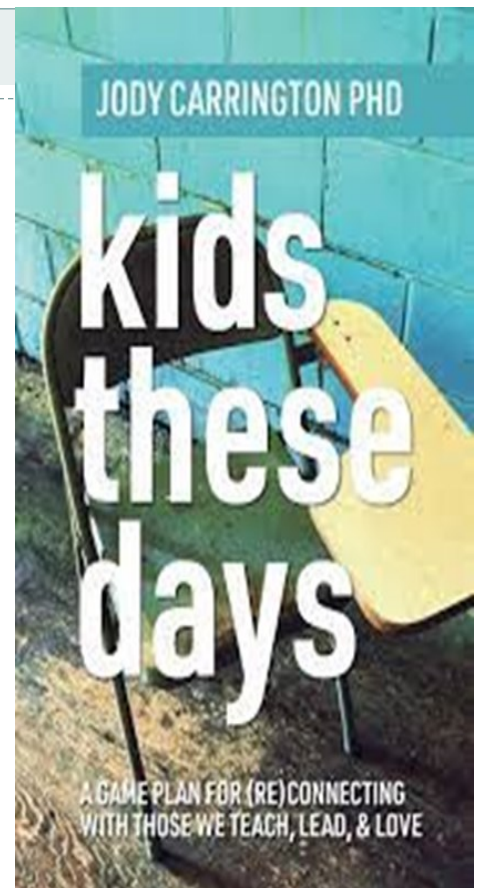
“Somebody’s got to be crazy about that kid. That’s number one. First, last and always” (p30)

INTRODUCTION

Every time I engage with Jody’s work I am left with a feeling that she really gets “it”.

Jody addresses the challenges and trauma that some youth face, but she takes it one step further. She emphasizes that it is the people who hold these “babes” that we need to focus on, not solely on the students’ behaviour and needs.

We need to take care of the teachers and staff that care for our children for most of the day. If the adults are not in a good space mentally then how can we expect them to “show up” for the kids who count on them.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

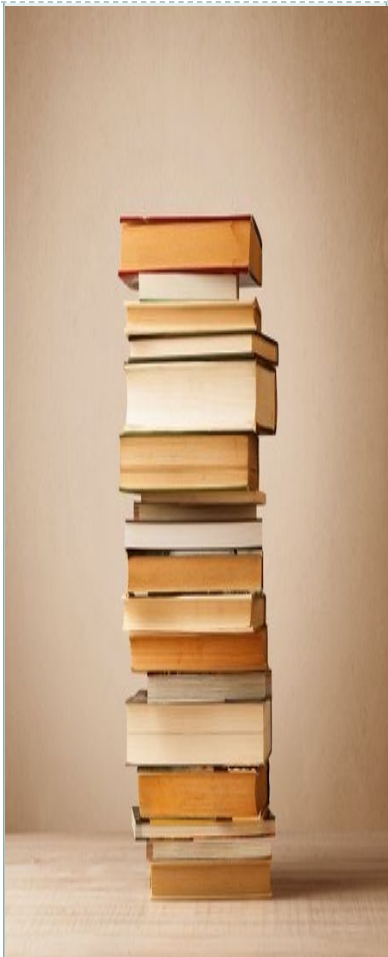
Jody Carrington holds a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. She works with major institutions, and has a thriving clinical practice. She brings 20 years of experience to her work as a speaker, author, and leader of Carrington & Company. Her book, *Kids These Days*, was published in 2019 and has sold 150,000 copies worldwide.

Jody's main message is that we are wired to do the hard things, but we

were never meant to do any of it alone. She speaks passionately adding in a sense of humor about resilience, mental health, leadership, burnout, grief and trauma – and how reconnection is the answer to so many of the root problems we face.

Jody lives in small-town Olds, Alberta, with her husband and three children.

*“We are all just here walking each other home”
-Ram Dass*



CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Chapter One

Reconnecting Back to the Beginning

- Carrington adopts the old adage that “it takes a village to raise a child”. How we were raised in the “good old days” holds power over how we connect with kids.
- To teach children how to regulate emotions we need to be near them in proximity and have face to face connections.
- You need to show kids how to calm down instead of telling them to.

“There is no single effort more radical in its potential for saving the world than a transformation of the way in which we raise our kids”

(Marianne Williamson, p. 13).



Chapter Two

Taming the Crazy by Getting Crazy

- We need to teach emotional regulation to kids
- John Bowlby states that our kids need to develop a secure attachment in order to learn emotional regulation. We need to become a safe haven for those we teach, lead and love.
- Dr. Daniel Siegel refers to kids who dysregulated as “flipping your lid”. Kids need to be dysregulated in order to practice emotional regulation.
- Rewards and consequences can achieve short term gains, but this approach can damage the relationship.

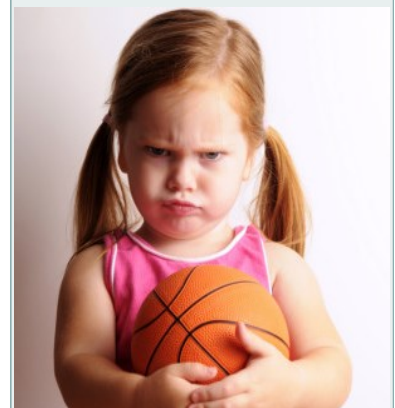
Chapter Three

How I See Them

- Carrington names three categories of kids along a continuum of insecurity (regular lid-flippers, the Caillou, the Flat Stanley)
- Regular lid flippers are on a path of typical development
- Caillou kids rarely have a full bucket and always find something wrong
- Flat Stanley kids have had big people let them down so many times that they don't trust anyone
- Kids are not attention seekers, they are connection seekers
- We need to address inappropriate or unacceptable connection seeking behaviours
- We need to teach kids how to repair relationships when they breakdown. They need to be shown how to apologize

“First, last, and always, it’s about the light-up, the “crazy”.

“Don’t forget that the kids who need it the most are often the hardest ones to give it to”



INSIDE STORY HEADLINE

“Being a trauma informed school system means educating all staff in what trauma means and the subsequent effects on behaviour and learning these experiences can have”

(p. 98)

GRIEF: The Great Equalizer

Helping Students Dealing with Loss

1. Acknowledge you know about the loss
2. Give other students in the class a “script” about how to respond
3. Stay connected to the adults in your student’s world
4. Allow outlets for expression
5. Don’t try to fix it, just allow the student to talk about their pain. Just listen.
6. Acknowledging becomes very critical. Also ensure students like the counselors who might be brought in to help deal with the situation.

Chapter Four

Trauma Complicates It All

- Adverse Childhood Experiences(ACEs) are used to identify experiences that may develop into trauma if untreated
- There are 10 experiences identified and the more of these experiences a child has the more likelihood they will struggle emotionally and physically
- The corrective experiences are important to identify
- Suspending a child from school is usually not going to help correct behaviour if corrective experiences are not offered.
- Treating trauma early will result in the most effective healing



Chapter Five

Grief

- **T**here is a difference between grief and mourning. All people experience grief during a loss. Mourning is how people heal. People need to be shown how to mourn.
- **I**f you’re old enough to love, you are old enough to grieve. It is important to let kids talk about things that make them sad. Use language like, “Tell me more”, “What’s the hardest part?”
- **C**eremony is an important part of mourning, and children should be a part of that.
- **D**eath does not end a relationship, and kids should be encouraged to continue that relationship such as make mother’s day or father’s day cards for a deceased parent.



Chapter Six

The Answer: Getting Hearts and Taking Names

- We're wired to do hard things, but not alone. It is important to remember this when we need to deal with difficult things.
- The light up and lid flip are the basis of strategies for when we are trying to reconnect with people.
- Do not underestimate the power of your opinion of your students with their parents. Typically if you win over the parents then the students will follow.

5 Keys to (Re)Connection

1. Showing genuine interest in things they care about
2. Eye contact and say their name
3. Getting down on someone's level
4. Use food to get a lid flipped back on. A person can not swallow with a flipped lid. Offer water or a snack.
5. Never leave them— proximity matters-especially when they tell you to go

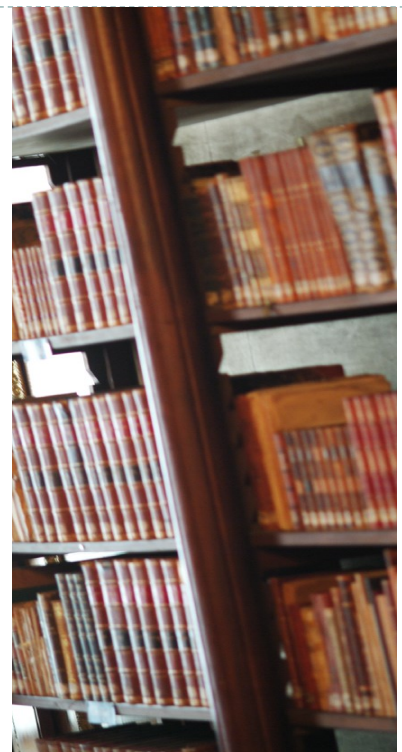


“Great leaders excavate the unsaid. And they need to have a plan.”

Chapter Seven

The Carrington Connections Network for Educators

- School divisions across North America do not have standardized mental health practices. This is true even though mental health challenges are on the rise.
- Carrington believes we need to shift our practices in schools to focus on relationships and trauma informed practices and less on behavioural interventions.
- A whole staff team speaking the “same language” can make a big impact
- Creating spaces where kids feel safe, and are seen and heard requires everyone on a staff team. Connections with kids can be made from a bus driver to a principal. Everyone has a part to play.



Discussion Questions

1. “A relationship with the one you are trying to teach, lead or love is where all the power lies”. (Carrington, 2019)

Do you think the most important way to support our kids is to build relationships?

Do you feel there is a shift from applying behavior theories to connection building in working with dysregulated students?

2. Connection before direction.

This is a move away from the consequence and reward systems. How would you defend your decision to engage with a student rather than apply a consequences following inappropriate behaviour?

3. What are the best practices to keep a team connected?

Chapter Eight

The Kids Are the Least of Our Worries

- The final chapter is dedicated to self care for the adults who teach, lead, and love. If adults feel overwhelmed and empty then they have nothing left to give to the kids that count on them.
- Compassion fatigue can set in if we don't make sense of the hard stuff we deal with.
- Staying lit is not about putting yourself first, rather caring for yourself as well.
- Creating teams is important so that when we falter in our compassion and confidence that we are made for this then others can support us.
- We have the capacity to change the direction of a life every single day and Carrington reminds us that we are amazing!

Critical Evaluation

As a clinical psychologist Carrington gives many ideas of the importance of building relationships with the kids we work with. She presents big ideas, outlined in the chapter highlights, backed with her own personal stories that inspire and entertain a reader. However, these ideas are presented without many practical ideas on how to apply them in school settings. The ideas are general and are not specific to the relationship between students and staff. Since Carrington includes teachers in her intended audience, it would be helpful to give practical examples of how the big ideas can be implemented in schools.

Another critical look at the ideas presented in *Kids These Days* (2019), show that the priorities of schools being institutions to educate children are not considered. Many other priorities make their way into our schools including social services, community outreach programs, etc. and educators need to assess how these programs impact students' learning.

Finally, Carrington addresses the challenges of the disproportionate number of First Nation students in ministry care in Canada. She uses the lens of colonial history and the effects of generational trauma. However, she oversimplifies this topic which is a larger issue. Much more needs to be done to support our families and kids who live with this reality.

THE SIX PRACTICES TO KEEP YOU LIT FOR THE WHOLE SCHOOL YEAR



1. **Bottom Hands Only**

Who is the person you want to make proud? Who's opinion matters the most? These people can be dead or alive or someone you may not have met. Only these people's thoughts of you matter. "The rest don't score" (p.169)

2. **Choose Joy**

Choosing joy is a conscious decision. Slow down and notice the small things. Shine light on what makes you happy, and share it with others. This is a conscious effort that we need to practice.

3. **Gratitude and Intention**

Practice gratitude. Change your thoughts and it'll change your feelings. Try thinking of three things each morning that you are thankful for.

Set an intention for the day from to focus on someone or something to bring that into focus.

4. **Practicing the F-Word**

F stands for forgiveness . True forgiveness sets you free. Apologies can be hard to give but they help repair a broken relationship.

"Forgiveness is linked to positive mental health outcomes such as reduced anxiety, a reduction in depression..."(p.181)

5. **Collective Effervescence**

We need to stay connected to our team. This creates excitement, commitment and unifies a group. Find commonalities to create bonds and keep you connected to others. You might impact the people you work with more than the kids you teach. Empathy helps you to understand the people you walk along side with.

6. **Lean in. We Need You**

Sit with the winners. The conversation is different. "Lean into your true power for the lives you influence" (p. 187).You change lives even if you don't always know it. Remember that.