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*Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life.*

## **Nurturing Mothers<sup>1</sup>**

*Suzanna Smith<sup>2</sup>*

Did you grow up in a warm and nurturing home? Did your parents show they cared, listen and talk things over with you, teach you new things, and respect you? Recent research shows that positive parenting behaviors can be passed down from one generation to the next.

According to an international team of researchers reporting in the journal *Child Development*, mothers who were raised in a positive, nurturing home during childhood and adolescence are more likely to raise their own children that way. This study was based on interviews and observations of more than 200 New Zealanders followed over 20 years, beginning during childhood and as participants in the study became parents themselves (Belsky, Jaffee, Sligo, Woodward, & Silva, 2005).

Researchers found that mothers who were reared in supportive homes tended to support their own children in warm, sensitive, and stimulating ways. Those who were raised in a low-authoritarian household as preschoolers, in sharing, low-conflict homes during middle childhood, and who had trusting and close relationships with their parents during their early teen years, were more likely to engage in such positive parenting with their own young children.

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This research suggests that a mother's own experiences shape her parenting style. Likewise, parent education for all new parents, where they learn to create a positive environment for their children, can start a chain reaction that lasts across generations.

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### **Reference**

Belsky, J., Jaffee, S. R., Sligo, J., Woodward, L., & Silva, P. A. (2005). Intergenerational transmission of warm-sensitive-stimulating parenting: A prospective study of mothers and fathers of 3-year-olds. *Child Development, 76* (2), 384-397.