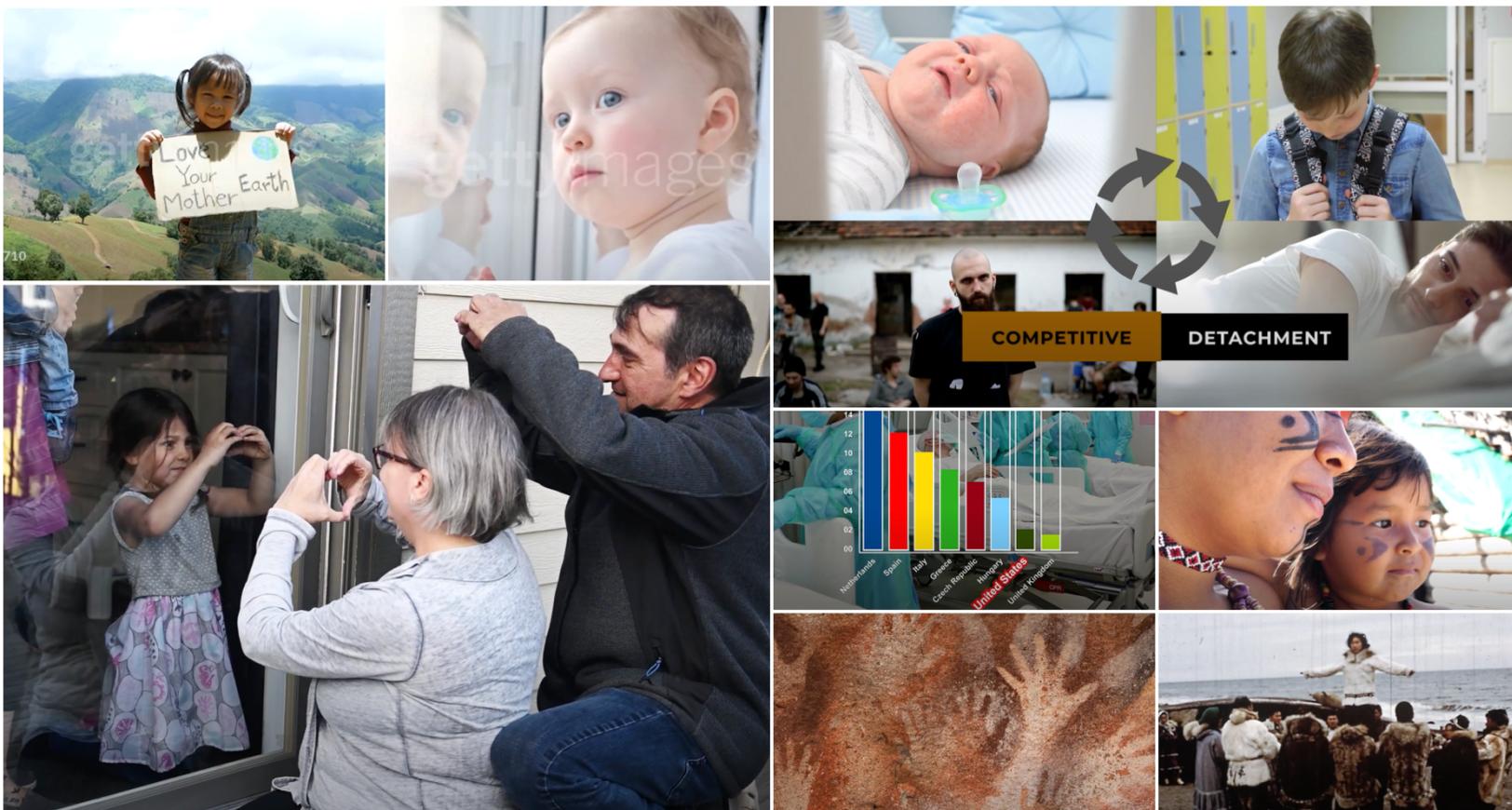


# BREAKING THE CYCLE

## Film Discussion and Resource Guide



An Evolved Nest Project  
By Darcia Narvaez, PhD



*Breaking the Cycle Film is an outreach project of The Evolved Nest, an educational initiative of the award-winning nonprofit Kindred World. All materials in this document are protected by copyright laws. You may, however, share this document and its resources with appropriate attribution to Darcia Narvaez, PhD, and the Evolved Nest at [www.EvolvedNest.org](http://www.EvolvedNest.org).*

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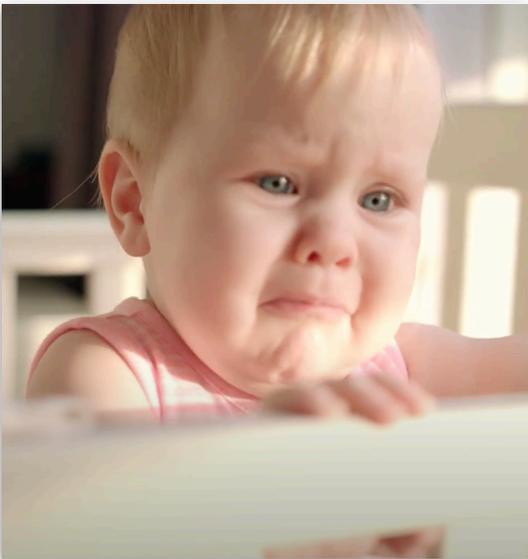
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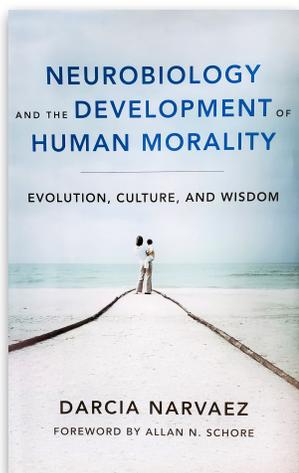
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About Darcia Narvaez. A Professor of Psychology Emerita at the [University of Notre Dame](#), she is the founder of the public and professional educational outreach project, The Evolved Nest Initiative, whose nonprofit mission is to share her science research into developing appropriate baselines for lifelong human wellness by meeting the biological needs of infants. In a [2020 analysis](#) of top scientists, Narvaez emerged in the top 2% of scientists worldwide. Narvaez's book, *Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality: Evolution, Culture and Wisdom*, received the William James Award from the American Psychological Association in 2015. The book also was chosen for the 2017 Expanded Reason Award from among more than 360 total entries from 170 universities and 30 countries. Narvaez received the prize, including a substantial monetary award, at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in Vatican City on September 27, 2017. Some of the prize money was used to make this film.

# WELCOME FROM DARCIA NARVAEZ



## **Why we made this film**

The film emerged from my book, *Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality: Evolution, Culture and Wisdom* (see page 25 of this guide). I wrote the book because, since I was a child, I puzzled about justice in the world. I spent half my childhood outside the United States and, as a bilingual/bicultural child, could not comprehend the vast inequalities among nations, among children my own age, nor the callous and destructive treatment of some humans towards others. I knew that something had gone wrong, but it took me decades to figure out what had happened. The film provides a glimpse into the answers I've discovered.

There is a lot going on in the world and most people are under a great deal of stress. These facts make it hard to stop and think about the bigger picture of why so many are so miserable. The film is a succinct description of the overall pattern that has shifted away from human and planetary wellbeing. The dominant culture conveys that "there is no other way" than to put up with the stress and misery plus "that we're better off than our ancestors." Neither is true. The film is intended to break open our hampered imaginations and realize that we are caught in a cycle that we can change.

## **For those who have watched the film**

I'm so glad you were able to watch the film. It is intended to stimulate you to think about your own upbringing, your orientation, and your culture. I hope it has excited you about the possibilities for change.

Please join the film's [Mighty Network Discussion Group](#) and share your thoughts about the film.

## **How to use this film**

This document has discussion questions that can be used in the classroom, in friend groups, and more. There are also links to podcasts and blogs that can extend your knowledge about the film's topics. There is a list of ideas for what to do next, where to learn more, and how to help bring about change, on page 6. Feel free to contact me with more suggestions. Learn more at the website, [BreakingTheCycleFilm.org](http://BreakingTheCycleFilm.org).

Let's empower one another for holistic change!

Darcia Narvaez

President of [KindredWorld.org](http://KindredWorld.org)

Host of [EvolvedNest.org](http://EvolvedNest.org)

Professor of Psychology Emerita, University of Notre Dame

# WHAT TO DO NEXT?

## **How To Break the Cycle, and Create Our Evolved Nest**

After you watched the film, you may be wondering what to do next. Here are some ideas to add to your own:

**1. Screenings and Discussions.** You are encouraged to use our **Breaking the Cycle Film Discussion and Resource Guide** when hosting screenings and showings of the short film. You can download a PDF of the guide [here](#).

**2. Join the Mighty Network Group.** You are welcome to join the film discussion group on [Mighty Networks here](#). We will be discussing the film with the creators in a private group, with no ads, spam, or trolls allowed. This is a safe space and your commitment to help us keep it safe is required for participation.

**3. Learn about the Evolved Nest.** You are invited to dive deep into the many diverse learning opportunities at the [EvolvedNest.org](#), including podcasts, videos, resources, and free book excerpts and articles. The website is also divided into the [Evolved Nest's nine components](#), which allow you to learn about each component, one at a time.

**4. Share the Evolved Nest.** Follow the Evolved Nest's social media platforms to keep up with the science, resources, and Darcia's ongoing blog series.

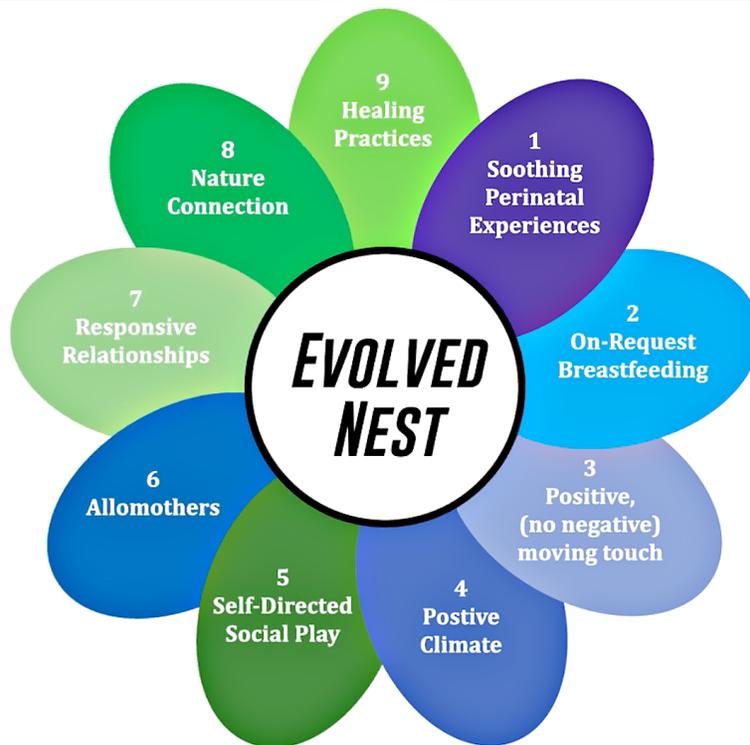
**5. Subscribe to our Newsletters.** Subscribe to the [Evolved Nest's newsletter](#) to follow Darcia Narvaez's research, and subscribe to [Kindred Media's newsletter](#) to discover the [New Story of the Human Family](#) from the Evolved Nest and multiple contributing editors, thought leaders, trance-breakers, and new cycle-makers.

**6. Take Action.** In our [Evolved Nest components](#), you can find the organizational and institutional groups who are working for systemic change in the United States. You can find ways to support paid leave, maternal and infant wellness, nature

connection, and more, on these pages. You can also take action wherever you are, in whatever you do, to make systemic change towards meeting people's basic needs.

- a. Do you have particular skills that can help meet a child's basic need?
- b. Join a group working for family wellbeing.
- c. Help your neighborhood feel more bonded.
- d. How can you use your skills to enhance someone's sense of worth and connection?
- e. What political action can you take to move society towards favoring children and families instead of bank accounts and privileges of the wealthy?

**7. Support the Evolved Nest's nonprofit work.** This film and many educational resources are made possible through tax-deductible donations from supporters like you. We look forward to expanding our reach with your help. Feel free to make a one time or ongoing [\*\*donation here\*\*](#). And thank you for your generosity!



# ABOUT BREAKING THE CYCLE

Download a [PDF of this release](#).

See the film and resources: [www.BreakingtheCycleFilm.org](http://www.BreakingtheCycleFilm.org)

For interviews, contact: [evolvednestinitiative@gmail.com](mailto:evolvednestinitiative@gmail.com)

Kindred World is proud to launch The Evolved Nest's educational short film, *Breaking the Cycle*. The moving and inspirational six-minute film illustrates our capacity for breaking our current Cycle of Competitive Detachment and returning to the pattern of 95% of our human history: a healthy, peaceful Cycle of Cooperative Companionship. *Breaking the Cycle* is based on the multi-award-winning book, *Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality: Evolution, Culture and Wisdom*, by Darcia Narvaez, PhD.

*Breaking the Cycle* contrasts the two basic ways societies can function: the optimal approach, which most human societies through time have followed, is the Cycle of Cooperative Companionship where children's basic needs are met; they grow into well-functioning, cooperative community members (from neurobiology and on up); and as healthy adults, they maintain the cooperative system.

Currently in the USA the opposite pattern is in place: children's basic needs are not met, ill-being and dysregulation ensue, creating adults who are detached and distracted and keep this Cycle of Competitive Detachment going. The United Nations ranks the USA as 41st out of 41 developed countries for child and adult wellness.

"Humans are so immature at birth that to develop in a healthy manner, reaching their full potential, they need to experience humanity's evolved nest," states Narvaez. "This helps structure well-functioning brain and body systems like the stress response, immune system and many other systems, preparing the individual for cooperative behavior and compassionate morality, including with the rest of the natural world. With a degraded evolved nest, the individual will have one or more areas of dysregulation, undermining sociality and morality. The evolved nest is an intergenerational, communal responsibility that industrialized societies have largely forgotten, especially the USA."

"Many people believe the tale that humans have made great progress and that there is no other option than this dehumanizing, anti-life, planet-destroying culture. In the short film, *Breaking the Cycle*, and at the [EvolvedNest.org](http://EvolvedNest.org), we show other options. We help people understand that life does not have to be the way industrialized societies have set it up."



*Breaking the Cycle* is based on Narvaez's book, [Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality: Evolution, Culture and Wisdom](#), which was chosen for the 2017 Expanded Reason Award from among more than 360 total entries from 170 universities and 30 countries. Narvaez received the prize, including a substantial monetary award, at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in Vatican City on September 27, 2017. The book also received the William James Award from the American Psychological Association in 2015, and the American Educational Research Association's Moral Development and Special Interest Group Award in 2016. *Breaking the Cycle* was made possible through the Expanded Reason Award's award monies.



**95% of our human history we valued cooperative companionship... what happened?**

We can reclaim our ancestral heritage by breaking the cycle. Discover the award-winning science in the new short film.

[www.BreakingTheCycleFilm.org](http://www.BreakingTheCycleFilm.org)

A Professor of Psychology Emerita at the [University of Notre Dame](#), Narvaez emerged in the top two percent of scientists worldwide in a [2020 analysis](#). Of the eight million scientists in the world, the analysis concerned those who had at least five articles published in scientific journals between 1996 and 2017. Individuals were ranked according to various criteria, including number of citations of their work.

Narvaez hosted interdisciplinary conferences at the University of Notre Dame regarding early experience and human development in [2010](#), [2012](#), and [2014](#). In 2016 she organized a conference on [Sustainable Wisdom: Integrating Indigenous KnowHow for Global Flourishing](#). (Click on the links to see the full conferences in video on the Evolved Nest's YouTube Channel.) She is the author or editor of numerous books and articles, see [The Science](#) page for listings.

Narvaez is the president of the venerable American nonprofit, [Kindred World](#), a contributing editor to [Kindred](#), the first global eco-parenting magazine, an advisory board member of [Attachment Parenting International](#) and [Self-Reg.](#) She is former executive editor of the *Journal of Moral Education*. She has been quoted and her work cited in *The Atlantic*, *Time*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Indianapolis Star*, as well as in international media.

Viewers of the *Breaking the Cycle* short film are welcome to host public screenings of the film with the Breaking the Cycle Film Discussion and Resource Guide on the website, [www.BreakingtheCycleFilm.org](http://www.BreakingtheCycleFilm.org).

Extensive resources, including Next Steps, are also available on the website. Narvaez is available for interviews and presentations about the film and her work. You may contact her at [evolvednestinitiative@gmail.com](mailto:evolvednestinitiative@gmail.com).

[Kindred World](#) is an award-winning American nonprofit providing public education on creating sustainable humans through multiple initiatives since 1996.



## BREAKING THE CYCLE FILM SCRIPT

We've been told a story that we are selfish, aggressive, rugged individuals. But if that were true, we should have no problem with physical distancing and self isolation. The pandemic showed us that this story is not who we are.

That's because we evolved in cooperative bands of kin and nonkin where we were nurtured and welcomed by all members of the community. We lived together, we gathered food together, we sang together, and we danced together. We knew it would have been impossible to survive on our own. But together, we thrived. (Explanation: Only 1% of human existence (the last 10,000 years or so) has involved civilization. Before that and outside civilization, small-band hunter-gatherers existed with a common set of practices that fostered thriving in the community. We call that the Evolved Nest.)

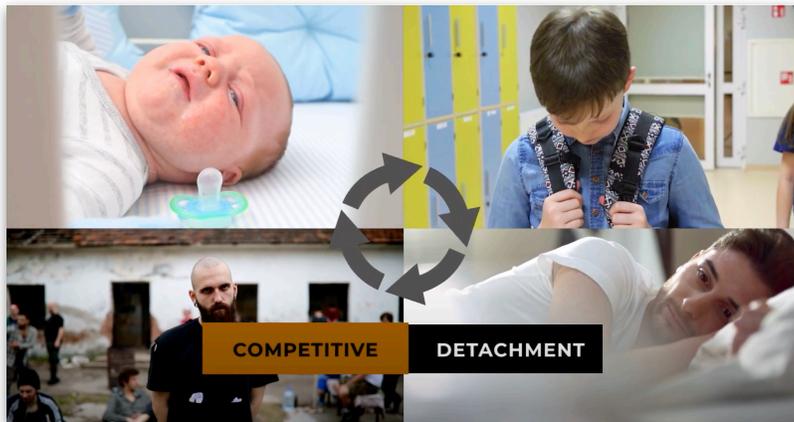
Today, we are living in a culture that goes against everything it means to be human. Our culture emphasizes toughness over tenderness, isolation instead of togetherness, even for babies. As a result, we are depressed, anxious, chronically ill, and at the bottom of every international indicator for health.

We are stuck in a **Cycle of Competitive Detachment** where we feel disconnected from others and even ourselves, while at the same time feeling we have to compete for anything worthwhile. There is a way, not only to break this cycle, but to create a new cycle, one that reclaims our humanity and helps us heal ourselves and our culture. We can create a cycle of connected, cooperative companionship.

For most of our existence, we have created culture from the bottom up, from the way we raised children, and from the top down, from the stories we told one another. Children were nested in loving supportive

village care, growing deep connections to and respect for the natural world.

In modern culture, children are raised with disconnection, with little concern for their basic needs and with an almost random set of relational experiences. They still hear stories, conveyed by various media, but they are full of put-downs, egoism and violence.



Babies require an external womb experience to grow and connect with others. They need calming affectionate care, immediate responses to keep them optimally aroused while rapidly growing brain connections. Without this early care, babies learn a pattern of disconnection from the self, others, and the world, manifesting in self-protective mindsets and irritation with people from different backgrounds or with different ideas. We withdraw from social life because it is just too painful, triggering the traumas we experienced early on in life. We constantly seek to fill a void we were never biologically intended to experience.

The good news is that it is possible to break this cycle of competitive detachment and restore the cycles of connected, cooperative companionship.

We can learn what our basic needs are and find ways to help everyone get them met. We can take steps that open our minds and hearts and build empathy towards others who are different from us can become aware and careful about where we put our greatest asset - our We can build attachment to the natural world by immersing ourselves in its beauty and developing our connection with its aliveness.



Cultures can and do change. It begins with each one of us realizing our inherent nature to be empathic, flexible, and sovereign beings, and taking steps to heal and restore our core nature.

Many of us assume that the culture we live in mirrors innate human nature. But today's dominant cultures of competitive destructive detachment are rare and recent. Nearly every other culture that has ever existed during our species history over millions of years has been one of connected cooperative companionship. To heal ourselves and our world, we simply must return to this way of nurturing children and communities.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

FILM: We've been told a story that we are selfish, aggressive, rugged individuals. But if that were true, we should have no problem with physical distancing and self isolation. The pandemic showed us that this story is not who we are.

**What/Where did you hear about human nature?**

**During the pandemic, did/do you have any difficulty with physical distancing from others?**

FILM: That's because we evolved in cooperative bands of kin and nonkin where we were nurtured and welcomed by all members of the community. We lived together, we gathered food together, we sang together, and we danced together. We knew it would have been impossible to survive on our own. But together, we thrived.

**Think about all the things in your life that other people have made or given you, from before you were born until now.**

FILM: Today, we are living in a culture that goes against everything it means to be human. Our culture emphasizes toughness over tenderness, isolation instead of togetherness, even for babies. As a result, we are depressed, anxious, chronically ill, and at the bottom of every international indicator for health. We are living in a trauma factory.

**Grit is a popular term these days but it can be misapplied, for example, towards children and their needs. Many have been traumatized by harsh treatment in childhood. Did that happen to you?**

**What trauma do you see around you these days?**

FILM: We are stuck in a cycle of competitive detachment where we feel disconnected from others and even ourselves, while at the same time feeling we have to compete for anything worthwhile.

**Do you notice the cycle of competition—in children, adults, society? How does it affect your life?**

FILM: There is a way, not only to break this cycle, but to create a new cycle, one that reclaims our humanity and helps us heal ourselves and our culture. We can create a cycle of connected, cooperative companionship.

For most of our existence, we have created culture from the bottom up, from the way we raised children, and from the top down, from the stories we told one another. Children were nested in loving supportive village care, growing deep connections to the natural world. The stories they heard spoke of their relationships to and responsibility for the community and the earth.

**Have you seen communities like this? You may have to travel to other countries.**

FILM: In modern culture, children are raised with disconnection, with little concern for their basic needs and with an almost random set of relational experiences. They still hear stories, conveyed by various media, but they are full of put-downs, egoism and violence.

**Have you noticed how violent the media is in the USA? You might have to travel to Europe to see a different media environment.**

FILM: Babies require an external womb experience to grow and connect with others. They need calming affectionate care, immediate responses to keep them optimally aroused while rapidly growing brain connections.

**Did you know how needy babies are? Learn more at [EvolvedNest.org](http://EvolvedNest.org).**

FILM: Without this early care, babies learn a pattern of disconnection from the self, others, and the world, manifesting in self-protective mindsets and irritation with people from different backgrounds or with different ideas. We withdraw from social life because it is just too painful, triggering the traumas we experienced early on in life. We constantly seek to fill a void we were never biologically intended to experience.

**Do you feel connected to your deeper self? To others? To the world? To Nature?  
Do you have trouble with people who have different opinions?**

FILM: The good news is that it is possible to break this cycle of competitive detachment and restore the cycles of connected, cooperative companionship.

We can learn what our basic needs are and find ways to help everyone get them met. We can take steps that open our minds and hearts and build empathy towards others who are different from us. We can become aware and careful about where we put our greatest asset - our attention. We can build attachment to the natural world by immersing ourselves in its beauty and developing our connection with its aliveness.

**How do you open your heart and mind and build empathy?**

**Think about where you put your attention throughout the day. You can choose.**

**Take time to enjoy the beauty in the natural world.**

FILM: Cultures can and do change. It begins with each one of us realizing that we are living in a culture that is at odds with our inherent nature to be empathic, flexible, and sovereign beings, and taking steps to heal and restore our core nature.

**What will you do differently?**

# THE EVOLVED NEST

## Nested Children, Compassionate Adults

### Why We Need It

- Restore human nature to its cooperative orientation, its original and "normal" human heritage.
- Cultural Imperatives of the industrial era have undermined child development so much we think disregulated people are "normal." A return to and honoring of our Biological Imperatives, especially in child development, will help us shift culturally toward wellness and wholeness.
- Restore humanity's connection to nature.
- Honor the primal continuum for wellness and wholeness that starts in pre-conception and babyhood.
- Honor the needs of the mother, father, providing community support systems that optimize normal psychosocial development.
- Become aware of the damaging, culturally accepted ideologies of nuclear family parenting by moving toward village-mindedness.

### Science & Research

The Evolved Nest is based on the award-winning research and writing of Darcia Narvaez, PhD, a psychologist and researcher at the University of Notre Dame. Her recent book, *Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality: Evolution, Culture and Wisdom* (2014), won the 2015 William James Book Award from the American Psychological Association, as well as the 2017 Expanded Reason Award.



### Research Is Clear

Children evolved to need humanity's evolved nest which provides the developmental system that optimizes normal human development. The nest was provided in 99% of human genus history and is characteristic of sustainable societies.

Neuro-, developmental, and clinical sciences demonstrate the linkages between each component and psychosocial and neurobiological health.

Human moral capacities are shaped by nest provision: empathy, self-regulation, social engagement and communal imagination.

To optimize normal development, growth in health, wellbeing and socioemotional intelligence, let's provide children with humanity's Evolved Nest.



**The Evolved Nest**



# Humanity's Evolved Nest

## Website Resources for Nest Building

The Evolved Nest's website will support your exploration of

- Podcasts and Videos
- Blogs and Featured Articles
- Research and Science Papers
- The Whys and Hows of Nest Building for Children and Adults
- Subscribe to The Evolved Nest Monthly Newsletter for fresh insights and resources

### Follow The Evolved Nest

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/EvolvedNest/](http://www.facebook.com/EvolvedNest/)

Twitter: @EvolvedNest

Instagram: @TheEvolvedNest

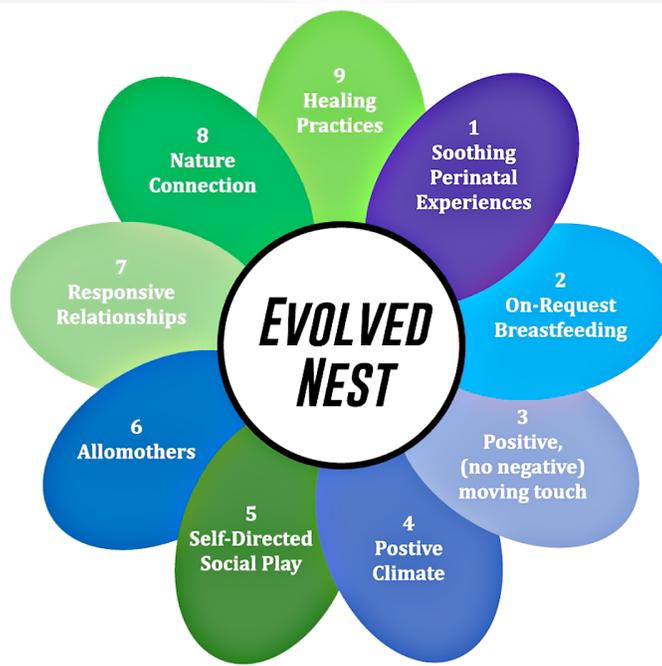
Pinterest: [www.pinterest.com/kindredmagazine/the-evolved-nest/](http://www.pinterest.com/kindredmagazine/the-evolved-nest/)

YouTube: <https://tinyurl.com/y2np8e6n>

SoundCloud: <https://tinyurl.com/y2lmtm7>

Contact: [EvolvedNestInitiative@gmail.com](mailto:EvolvedNestInitiative@gmail.com)

1. **Soothing Perinatal Experiences** include limited stress in pregnancy, no separation of baby from mom at birth, no painful procedures.
2. **On-request Breastfeeding** occurs for several years.
3. **Positive *Moving* (and no negative) Touch** like carrying and rocking promote neurobiological health.
4. **Positive Climate** is a welcoming community culture.
5. **Self-Directed Social Play** is free social play with multiple-aged playmates.
6. **Multiple Allomothers** refers to responsive caregivers other than mothers (e.g., fathers, grandmothers, aunts, uncles).
7. **Responsive Relationships** keep baby contented while the brain rapidly develops, the foundation of healthy childhood growth.
8. **Nature Connection** means developing caring relationships with the natural world of plants, animals and other entities.
9. **Healing Practices** are made routine to mend wounds.



# Evolved Nest Articles

## Articles

All articles presented here are written by Darcia Narvaez, PhD, and can be found on Kindred Media, the Evolved Nest's sister-initiative, as well as Psychology Today.

- Raised-Nested: Species Typical Child-Raising, answers the commons myths and cultural bias against nurturing/nested child-raising.
- Layers of Structures That Support Families and Individuals
- Five Ways Many Americans Are Impoverished (Beyond Money)
- What Are The Characteristics Of Thriving Adults?
- Ecocentrism: What May Be Needed To Save Our Species
- Indigenous Psychologies Contrast With Western Psychologies

## Subscribe

Subscribe to the [Evolved Nest's monthly newsletter](#) for more science behind Breaking the Cycle.

Subscribe to [Kindred's monthly newsletter](#) for Evolved Nest blog posts, podcasts, and like-minded thought leaders writing a New Story of the Human Family.

## Join

Join the [Breaking the Cycle discussion group](#) on Mighty Networks.

## Raised Nested: Species-Typical Child-Raising

In a [newly published book](#), I wrote a chapter called Evolution and the Parenting Ecology of Moral Development, I describe how evolutionary theory is often mischaracterized as only about genes, a shrinking area of importance as epigenetics becomes the bigger story—how genes are turned up or down or off by lived experience. Though epigenetics occurs all day long from our activities, there are sensitive or critical periods for the developmental of neurobiological structures that undergird all our capacities (e.g., stress response, vagus nerve function) (Narvaez, 2014).

**The most sensitive periods occur in early life, the younger the child the greater the effect.** Hence, our species, like all animals, evolved a developmental system to enhance normal development, what my lab calls the evolved developmental niche, or [evolved nest](#). Though all ages need to feel supported and attended to—to be nested—the early nest may be the most important for developing the resilience needed to face life's challenges.

- The [evolved nest](#) includes soothing perinatal experience, multiple responsive caregivers (keeping baby optimally aroused), extensive affectionate touch and breastfeeding, positive social support and welcoming climate, self-directed social play, immersion in nature for connection.

It is obvious that many children are not being raised nested.

It is difficult to take in this fact, and sometimes people resist the information. There are several common reactions to hearing about the [evolved nest](#) and the need for it. I list some of them

below and give some responses, paraphrasing from and adding to what I said in my chapter.

**Q. We modern humans have evolved; we are different from past humans. Genes have changed in the last 10,000 years (e.g., for lactose tolerance).**

A. Humans actually have not evolved away from being social mammals, a line that emerged 20-40 million years ago (10,000 years is a drop in the bucket of time). Babies still have built in needs for our species' nest (and they let you know). The nest components have been documented around the world in the modern era in small-band hunter-gatherers, the type of society that represents 99% of human genus history. Components of the nest are related to peaceable individual and societal outcomes (Eisler & Fry, 2019; Prescott, 1996).

**Q. Modern humans, without the evolved nest, have taken over the world—a sign of evolutionary success.**

A. This idea of success represents a shifted baseline. Evolutionary progress is about greater diversity, not the dominance of one species. Balanced ecological communities are the norm for planetary ecological life. Contrastingly, invasive or weed species last for a short while until a more cooperative species emerges to rebalance the biocommunity (Naess & Rothenberg, 1989). Modern society is acting like an invasive species.

**Q. Children today face a harsh world so we should prepare them for it early by teaching them independence and self-reliance.**

A. Treating babies harshly undermines their development. Period. It doesn't make sense to stress a child when her neurobiological systems are otherwise setting themselves up for optimal health and intelligence. To say that it is good not to provide the nest components is like saying we should neglect our children to prepare them for neglect later. This is an idea from John Watson (the behaviorist) who wanted babies treated like college undergraduates so they would get used to it early. He did not understand the dynamic development of children. More here.

**Q. Human beings are naturally selfish and violent. We are much better behaved than our ancestors (Pinker, 2011).**

A. These views are based on incorrect analyses of data and are promoted by cultural misunderstandings and incorrect baselines (see Eisler & Fry, 2019; Fry, 2006, 2013; Narvaez, 2014; Narvaez & Witherington, 2018).



## RAISED NESTED: SPECIES- TYPICAL CHILD RAISING

—  
*Species-atypical child  
raising has become  
normal—to the  
detriment of the world*  
[kindredmedia.org](http://kindredmedia.org)

**Q. It's impossible to go back to hunting and gathering.**

A. Sure, but that is not the point. The point of nesting children is to provide for their basic needs. Some advanced nations provide some nesting supports like midwife- and doula-guided soothing birth, paid maternal and paternal leave, breastfeeding support, controls over formula advertising, and make possible play-filled childhoods.

**Q. "I did not experience the evolved nest and I'm fine."**

A. It's not apparent that anyone raised in modern societies is "fine," especially in the USA where supports for child raising are next to none and where illbeing is rampant. For example, wellbeing in the USA is worsening in terms of health comparisons with other advanced nations—for example, everyone under age 50 (in 2012) is at a health disadvantage compared to those in 16 other advanced nations (National Research Council, 2013).

**Q. Every culture is different. Parents prepare their children for their culture. For example, some cultures raise people with insecure attachment.**

A. From a planetary perspective, we need human persons to grow their full cooperative and intelligence capacities for living with others including other than humans. We are far from that at the moment.

**Q. I don't want to have to deal with children. If parents are going to have them, let them raise them.**

A. Children become the adults that fill your neighborhood, workplace and society. Dysregulated, disconnected individuals cause a lot of havoc, not participating in strengthening communities and sometimes even destroying what has taken years or decades to build.

**Now what?**

**Change basic assumptions.** Humans expect the nest to grow their inbuilt seeds for cooperation. Adults need to realize that babies are highly immature and malleable and that mistreatment or undercare leads to less than optimal outcomes. Babies become what they experience.

**Nest provision.** Providing the nest to the young involves adults who are supported and prepared to do so. Adults who feel loved and safe are more likely to act with love and kindness toward children. So let's support the relaxation of pregnant women, encourage medical personnel and parents to be loving and tender with babies and children. These will go a long way toward growing a cooperative child. Avoid coercion but instead honor, from the beginning, the child's innate aim for social cooperation. Parents may need some guidance on overcoming their own stress reactivity and how to handle it when it occurs in parenting situations. Books like *Brain-Based Parenting* can help.

**[READ THE POST AND LISTEN TO THE PODCAST](#)**

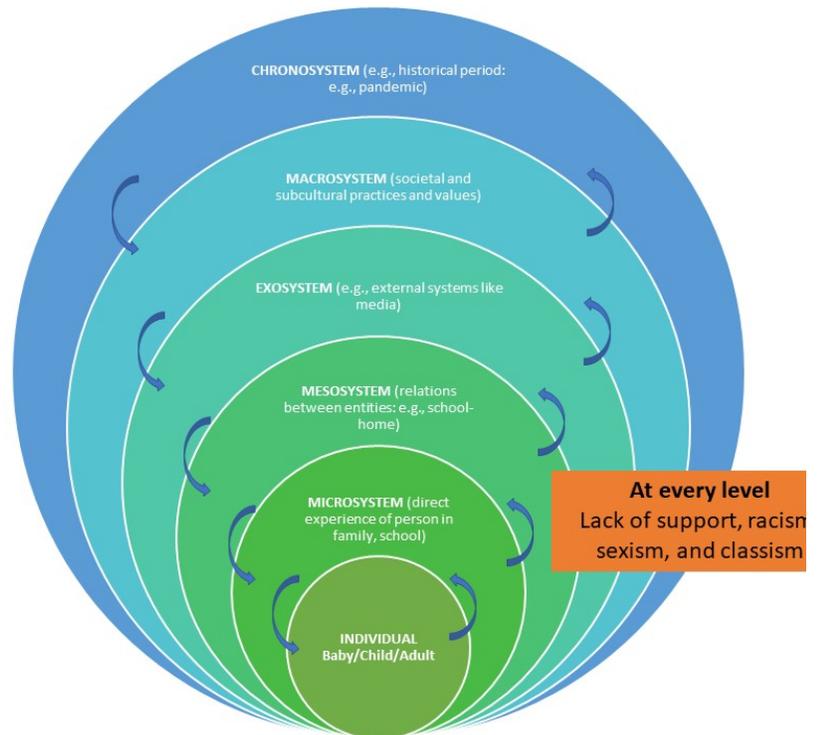
# The Layers of Structures That Support Individuals and Families



## What supports has the pandemic damaged and what can we do?

What are you feeling today? Despair, fear, anxiety, panic, confusion, helplessness, loneliness, anger? Many of us feel like we are going to burst, sometimes even without the long-lasting physical distancing from a pandemic.

In today's world, we often feel disconnected from community and from nature, from the world. In an individualistic society like the USA, it is sometimes hard to realize that disconnection is contrary to the evolution of our species. We evolved to develop well when supported within a network of connections. Here is an "ecological systems theory" that helps explain why we are all so miserable, and suggestions for what we can do.



## What can we do?

We can find ways to help those we know who are overwhelmed with multiple simultaneous responsibilities (work, homeschooling, caregiving, homemaking). Families in these tough situations can find ways to help themselves calm down and get clear headed (e.g., [28 Days of Self Calming](#)). Stimulate the vagus nerve, a health inducing action, can be done with singing alone or together (even humming), and belly breathing (lots of YouTube videos on this), and belly laughing (figure out ways to make family members to laugh uproariously).

## READ THE POST.

# Five Ways Many Americans Are Impoverished (Beyond Money)



## Unfulfilled basic needs are forms of poverty.

What are psychological reasons for America’s political, health, and social crises? Here is one answer: Poverties. Economist Manfred Max-Neef (1991) noted that modern industrialized societies have been so focused on GDP, bank accounts, and material wealth that they have ignored other forms of poverty. As a result, one or more poverties may be experienced by virtually everyone in a modern society.

The additional kinds of poverty Max-Neef identified are related to unmet basic needs. Psychologists have identified similar needs (Fiske, 2003; Maslow, 1970; Narvaez, 2018). We know that unmet basic needs, especially in early life, can lead to various psychological and health problems.

Here, I compare the USA, the European Union, and societies representative of our ancestral environment—nomadic foragers (Berman, 2000).

[\*\*READ THE POST.\*\*](#)

## The Evolved Nest Podcast Series

Discover multiple Evolved Nest podcasts series and topics on our website. Series include the Introduction to the Evolved Nest and its science, a 24-part series with Darcia Narvaez and Mary Tarsha. A podcast series, in audio and visual format, on the nine components of the Evolved Nest, and a book review series. [Subscribe to the Evolved Nest monthly newsletter](#) for notifications of new podcasts, interviews, and videos. Discover the podcasts series [on the website](#).



**The Evolved Nest**

# What Are The Characteristics Of Thriving Adults?

**Indigenous Worldview offers a wider view of human potential.**

**Humanistic and positive psychology have delved into the upside of personality. But Indigenous perspectives are wider and deeper.**

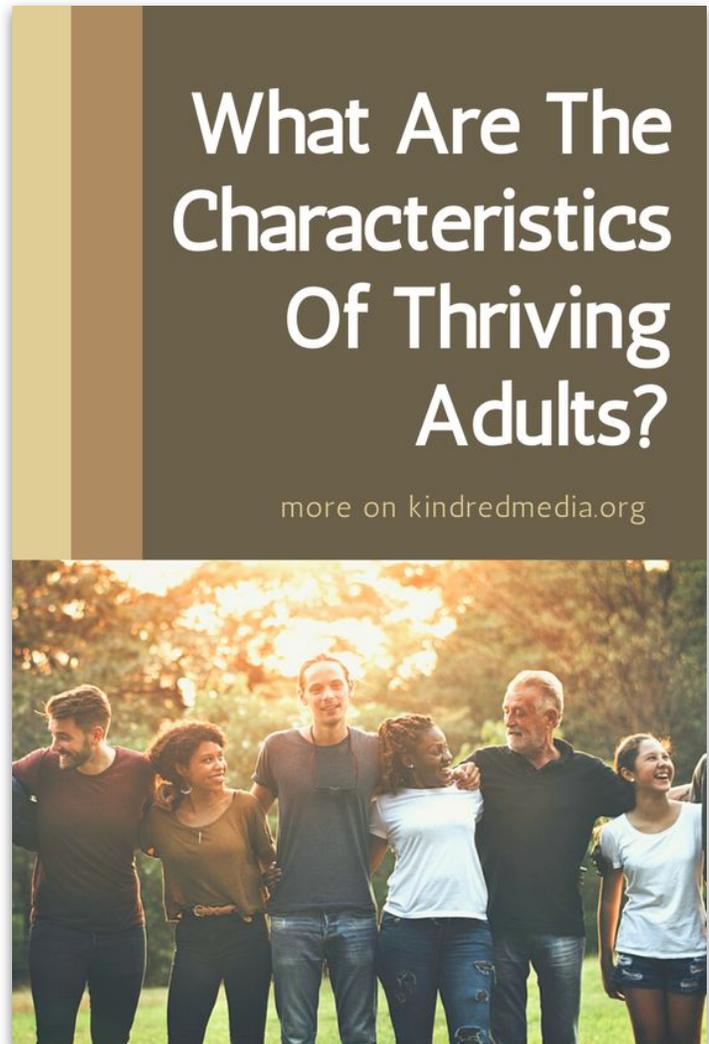
**How has positive psychology conceived of a thriving individual? Here are three examples.**

**Uncovering species-normal baselines for thriving is a transdisciplinary endeavor,**

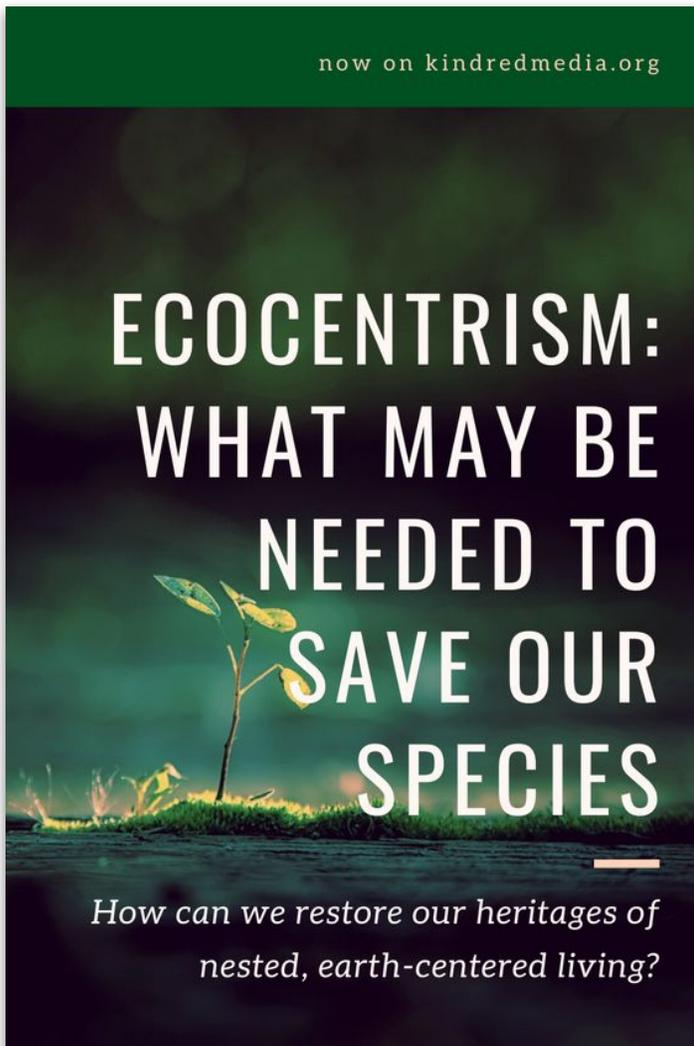
integrating evolutionary systems theory and ethology to understand how species grow and thrive, attending to the glimpses and summaries of Indigenous peoples who raise children in our species-normal way ([evolved nest](#)) (Narvaez, 2014). Just like other animals thrive when they are raised in their evolved developmental niches, so do humans. For 99% of human genus history, humans lived in nomadic foraging bands that provided humanity's [evolved nest](#), the developmental system that matches up with the maturational schedule of the child (Gottlieb, 2002). Around the world, nomadic foraging communities not only have similar child raising practices (Hewlett & Lamb, 2005; [evolved nest](#)) but similar adult personalities (Ingold, 2005).

Thus, traditional Indigenous peoples, in particular hunter-gatherers, can show us what species-normal flourishing looks like and how it is fostered. Jon Young (2019) gathered a list of adult thriving characteristics from his work around the world and in particular with the Bushmen of southern Africa. Jon Young (2019) also describes the social structures and practices that support individual and group thriving.

**[READ THE POST.](#)**



# Ecocentrism: What May Be Needed To Save Our Species



### **How can we restore our heritages of nested, earth-centered living?**

The dearth of virtue in (tested Western) populations has been lamented and assumed to be part of the human condition (Doris, 2002; Miller, 2013) but a natural history indicates otherwise. From a planetary perspective, industrialized humans have become highly destructive in comparison to 99% of human genus existence.

### **Humanity faces what have been called the four horsemen of the environmental apocalypse**

(Wilson, 1991), brought about in a matter of centuries: (1) massive toxification of water, air, soil, and food chains (e.g., Diaz et al., 2019); (2) degradation of the atmosphere, such as ozone depletion; (3) [global warming](#) (e.g., IPCC, 2014); and (4) the “death of birth”—the extinction of millions of species (Eisner, 1991; Kolbert, 2014). We are entering an unpredictable “hothouse earth” (Steffen et al., 2018).

Why have we reached these crises? One has to take an interdisciplinary approach to figuring out the answers. I recently wrote and published [the](#)

[paper](#), “[Ecocentrism: Resetting Baselines for Virtue Development](#),” taking just such an interdisciplinary approach. **The paper is a challenge to reset baselines for how we consider virtue and what it entails.** Here is a brief summary of some of the main points:

**We must understand who humans are, how they become human, and what can go wrong.**

**[READ THE POST.](#)**

# Indigenous Psychologies Contrast With Western Psychology

## Is it time to expand psychological theories?

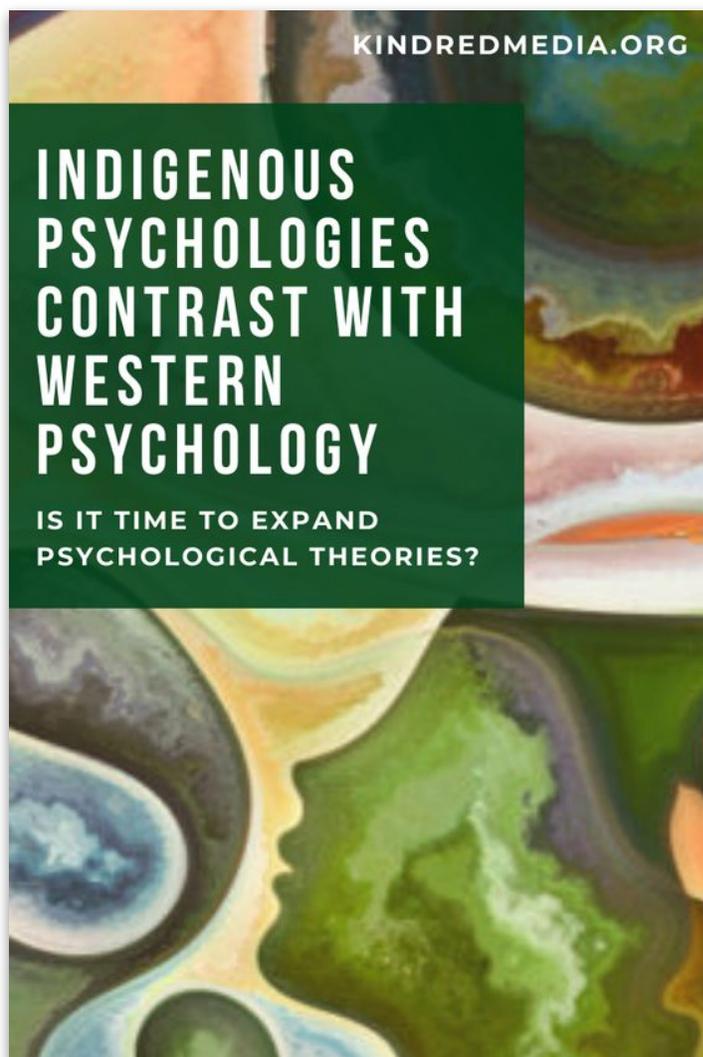
IP contrasts with western scientific paradigms that decontextualize the phenomena of psychology to produce universal theories based on a narrow regime of truth. IP incorporates meanings, values, context, beliefs and locality into knowledge generation, research designs and application.

“Indigenous Psychologies are systems of knowledge and wisdom based on non-western paradigms” that originate in “particular ecologies and cultures... they deconstruct psychological phenomena within political, economic, historical, philosophical, religious, cultural, and ecological contexts” (Ciofalo, 2019, p. 7).

As psychologists from non-western societies have long noted: “Existing psychological theories are not universal since they have eliminated the very qualities that allow people to understand, predict, and control their environment” (Kim & Park, p. 31). Advocates of IP contend that “psychological phenomena must be understood in their ecological historical, philosophical, religious, political, and cultural context, and at the same time, global context” (Ciofalo, 2019, p. 7).

“Kim and Berry (1993) defined Indigenous Psychologies as “the scientific study of human behavior or mind that is native, that is not transported from other regions, and that is designed for its people” (Ciofalo, 2019, p. 2; cited in Kim et al, 2006, p. 5).

## READ THE POST.



# THE RESEARCHER AND THE BOOK

## Meet Darcia Narvaez, PhD

Darcia Narvaez is a Professor of Psychology Emerita at the [University of Notre Dame](#). She is the founder of the public and professional educational outreach project The Evolved Nest Initiative whose nonprofit mission is to share her science research into developing appropriate baselines for lifelong human wellness by meeting the biological needs of infants. This baseline is imperative at this time as the United States ranks 41st out of 41 developed countries in public policies that support families.

In a [2020 analysis](#) of top scientists, Narvaez emerged in the top 2% of scientists worldwide. Of the eight million scientists in the world, the analysis concerned those who had at least five articles published in scientific journals between 1996 and 2017-- over six million scientists. Individuals were ranked according to various criteria, including number of citations of their work.



**Darcia Narvaez, PhD**

Breaking the Cycle is based on Narvaez's book, [Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality: Evolution, Culture and Wisdom](#), which was chosen for the 2017 Expanded Reason Award from among more than 360 total entries from 170 universities and 30 countries. Narvaez received the prize, including a substantial monetary award, at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in Vatican City on September 27, 2017. The book also received the William James Award from the American Psychological Association in 2015, and the American Educational Research Association's Moral Development and Special Interest Group Award in 2016. *Breaking the Cycle* was made possible through the Expanded Reason Award's award monies.

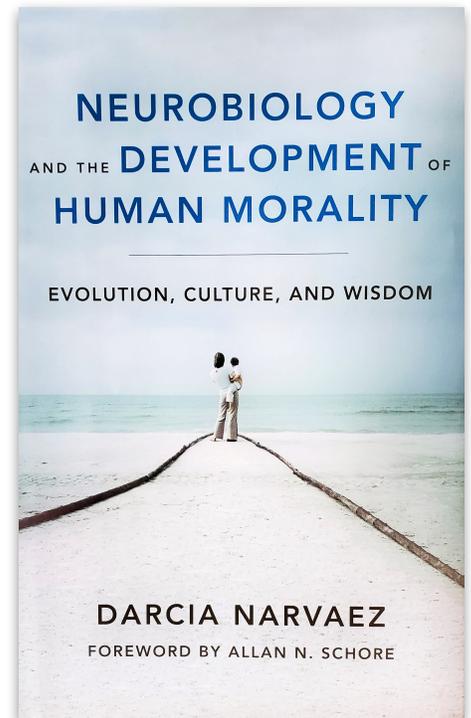
Narvaez hosted interdisciplinary conferences at the University of Notre Dame regarding early experience and human development in [2010](#), [2012](#), and [2014](#). In 2016 she organized a conference on [Sustainable Wisdom: Integrating Indigenous KnowHow for Global Flourishing](#). (Click on the links to see the full conferences in video on the Evolved Nest's YouTube Channel.)

She is the author or editor of numerous books and articles, see [The Science](#) page for listings.

She is the president of the venerable American nonprofit, [Kindred World](#), a contributing editor to [Kindred](#), the first global eco-parenting magazine, an advisory board member of [Attachment Parenting International](#) and the Association for Pre- and Perinatal Psychology and Health, [APPPAH](#). She is former executive editor of the *Journal of Moral Education*. She has been quoted and her work cited in *The Atlantic*, *Time*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Indianapolis Star*, as well as in international media.

# Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality: Evolution, Culture, and Wisdom

Moral development has traditionally been considered a matter of reasoning—of learning and acting in accordance with abstract rules. On this model, largely taken for granted in modern societies, acts of selfishness, aggression, and ecological mindlessness are failures of will, moral problems that can be solved by acting in accordance with a higher rationality. But both ancient philosophy and recent scientific scholarship emphasize implicit systems, such as action schemas and perceptual filters that guide behavior and shape human development. In this integrative book, Darcia Narvaez argues that morality goes “all the way down” into our neurobiological and emotional development, and that a person’s moral architecture is largely established early on in life. Moral rationality and virtue emerge “bottom up” from lived experience, so it matters what that experience is. Bringing together deep anthropological history, ethical philosophy, and contemporary neurobiological science, she demonstrates where modern industrialized societies have fallen away from the cultural practices that made us human in the first place.



Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality advances the field of developmental moral psychology in three key ways. First, it provides an evolutionary framework for early childhood experience grounded in developmental systems theory, encompassing not only genes but a wide array of environmental and epigenetic factors. Second, it proposes a neurobiological basis for the development of moral sensibilities and cognition, describing ethical functioning at multiple levels of complexity and context before turning to a theory of the emergence of wisdom. Finally, it embraces the sociocultural orientations of our ancestors and cousins in small-band hunter-gatherer societies—the norm for 99% of human history—for a re-envisioning of moral life, from the way we value and organize child raising to how we might frame a response to human-made global ecological collapse.

Integrating the latest scholarship in clinical sciences and positive psychology, Narvaez proposes a developmentally informed ecological and ethical sensibility as a way to self-author and revise the ways we think about parenting and sociality. The techniques she describes point towards an alternative vision of moral development and flourishing, one that synthesizes traditional models of executive, top-down wisdom with “primal” wisdom built by multiple systems of biological and cultural influence from the ground up.

\*Winner of the William James Book Award from Division I of the American Psychological Association

\*Winner of the 2016 book award from the Moral Development and Education SIG at the American Educational Research Association

**[READ the introduction and first chapter to the book.](#)**

# SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

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# Your Film Notes and Questions

