ATTACHMENT IN THE CLASSROOM: HOW TRUSTING EARLY EXPERIENCES SHAPE BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Presenter: Jonathan Baylin, PhD
ATTACHMENT AND LEARNING: SAFE TO BE CURIOUS AND EXPLORE THE WORLD

"THANKS, MOM FOR MAKING ME FEEL SAFE AND DELIGHTFUL SO I CAN GO TO SCHOOL, TRUST MY TEACHERS, AND LEARN"

SECURE BASE FROM WHICH TO EXPLORE THE WORLD, SEEK HELP, AND SHARE THE JOY OF LEARNING WITH TRUSTWORTHY OTHERS
ATTACHMENT RESEARCH

ATTACHMENT STYLES

- SECURE
- INSECURE: AVOIDANT
- INSECURE: ANXIOUS, PREOCCUPIED
- DISORGANIZED: WHEN EARLY EXPERIENCES WITH CAREGIVERS ARE FRIGHTENING AND THERE IS NO PREDICTABLE SAFETY

EACH STYLE HAS A DIFFERENT “BRAIN SIGNATURE”
“...the mother acts as a switch for amygdala-mediated fear learning” Nim Tottenham, 2013, p 8

Good care buffers the young child’s amygdala by triggering release of oxytocin and keeping the amygdala from activating the fear/stress/defense systems

TUNING IN: PREVERBAL TUNING OF THE INFANT’S RIGHT BRAIN

EMOTIONALLY CHARGED INTERPLAY BETWEEN THE RIGHT BRAIN OF THE PARENT AND THE RIGHT BRAIN OF THE CHILD

10 INCHES: THE MAGIC SPACE

14 MILLISECONDS

SOCIAL BUFFERING

❖ EYES
❖ VOICE (PROSODY)
❖ TOUCH:
❖ NON-VERBAL SAFETY MESSAGES
Divergent Developmental Pathways in Response to the Quality of Early Care

THE TRUSTING BRAIN

- FEELINGS
- COGNITIONS
- BEHAVIOR

GOOD CARE

THE MISTRUSTING BRAIN

- FEELINGS
- COGNITIONS
- BEHAVIOR

POOR CARE
EFFECTS OF GOOD AND POOR CARE ON THE DEVELOPING BRAIN

GOOD CARE

PFC = Prefrontal Cortex
A = Amygdala

REGULATED EMOTIONS
MORE MINDFUL BEHAVIOR

POOR CARE

BIG, UNREGULATED EMOTIONS
AUTOMATIC DEFENSIVE BEHAVIORS

PFC = Prefrontal Cortex
A = Amygdala
Integrated information processing vs cue-based processing: contextualizing social experiences

WHO-WHAT-WHERE-WHEN: CONTEXTUALIZED INFORMATION PROCESSING

PFC = Prefrontal cortex
A = amygdala
H = hippocampus
THE BRAIN ON “EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS”: PREFRONTAL POWERS

- Pay attention to “boring” stuff
- Tolerate frustration
- Think before acting
- Delay immediate gratification
- Control strong emotions like anger and fear
- See and correct your own mistakes
- Keep track of time
- Stick with hard tasks
- Stay on track with long-term goals
- Change old habits
- Deal with complicated situations

CHRONIC STRESS

MAY TAKE TWENTY-FIVE YEARS TO BECOME FULLY FUNCTIONAL

SELF DEFENSE AND STRESS REACTIONS
FACIAL EXPRESSIONS TRIGGER THE AMYGDALA WITHIN 20 MILLISECONDS
TRUSTBUILDING IN SCHOOL

- BRAIN WHISPERING: SEND NONVERBAL SAFETY SIGNALS TO THE CHILD’S EMOTIONAL BRAIN
- CONNECTION BEFORE INSTRUCTION: SAFETY FIRST
- PACE: PLAYFUL, ACCEPTING, CURIOUS, EMPATHIC
- STORY TELLING: DISARMS THE DEFENSE SYSTEM
- SCAFFOLDING SUCCESS EXPERIENCES: ACTIVATES THE REWARD SYSTEM AND DISARMS DEFENSE SYSTEM
- EMBRACE THE ROLE OF TRUSTBUILDING ADULT: JUST TAKES ONE.......
- SELF CARE
- SHARED GOALS: PROVIDING AN EMOTIONALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT AND BUILDING TRUST
- PACE FOR EACH OTHER: CREATING A CIRCLE OF SECURITY
TEACHER’S HOT BUTTONS


TEACHER BUTTONS
1) THE APPROVAL BUTTON
2) THE CONTROL BUTTON
3) THE APPRECIATION BUTTON
4) THE FIX-IT BUTTON
5) THE RESPONSIBILITY BUTTON
6) THE INCOMPETENCE BUTTON
7) THE GUILT BUTTON
8) THE RESENTMENT BUTTON
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*Brain-based Parenting (2012)* Norton

*The Neurobiology of Attachment-focused Therapy (2016)* Norton

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