

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE EARLY YEARS



The B.C. Healthy Child Development Alliance

Refer to presenter's manual

What is Child Development?

Healthy physical, mental, emotional, cognitive, spiritual & social development.



Source: Harvard Center on the Developing Child developingchild.harvard.edu

Core Concepts:

- **Cognitive, Emotional, and Social Development Are Connected: You Can't Do One Without the Other**
- **Healthy Development Occurs in the Context of a Relationship**

When we talk about healthy child development we are talking about the physical, mental, emotional, cognitive, spiritual & social development.

Key Points

- Healthy development is more than just physical development
- development is interconnected
- relationships are the key to all aspects of healthy development

Source: Harvard Center on the Developing Child developingchild.harvard.edu

What is Infant Mental Health?

- *The emerging ability to cope with emotions & manage behaviour*
- *The ability to form close emotional ties to others*
- *The ability to play, explore & learn*

Source: Zero To Three

Core Concept: Cognitive, Emotional and Social Development Are Connected - You Can't Do One Without the Other

“ZERO TO THREE: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families defines “infant mental health” as the capacity of the child from birth to three to:

- experience, regulate and express emotions
- form close and secure interpersonal relationships
- and explore the environment and learn

Infant mental health is synonymous with healthy social and emotional development. It is how the child fits into the world around them:

- attachment with primary caregiver
- relationships with important others
- smooth developmental progress
- the increasing ability to control behaviour and express emotions
- and the ability to explore and play

Source: Zero To Three

Infant mental health...
...& healthy development
...are two sides of the *same* coin

Core Concept: Cognitive, Emotional and Social Development Are Connected - You Can't Do One Without the Other

- Infant mental health and healthy development are integrated
- When a child is preoccupied, scared, lonely or otherwise in distress, they cannot explore, learn and develop the way we would expect them to. They are two sides of the same coin. When you are talking about the mental health of a baby, you are talking about healthy development
- Early intervention workers are also infant mental health workers and vice versa

Relationships & Mental Health

- *Forming at least one close emotional tie is critical*
- *Infants use the parent or caregiver to interact with the world & to regulate distress*
- *Interfering with important relationships increases stress*
- *Emotional trauma can be transmitted across generations*

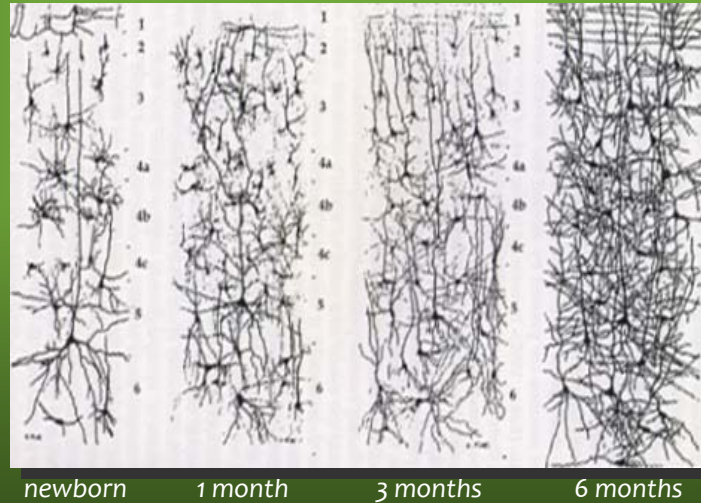
Source: Perry, 2001; Appleyard & Berlin, 2007; Benoit, 2004

Core Concept: Healthy Development Occurs in the Context of a Relationship

- Forming at least one close emotional tie to a consistent, responsive caregiver is critical to mental health regardless of the culture or community the baby comes from – this is a characteristic of being human
- Infants use the parent or caregiver to manage and regulate their distress so it isn't overwhelming
- Interfering with important relationships increases stress on the infant & prolonged stress can interfere with development. No matter how intellectually gifted a child is, prolonged stress will impair learning. When we talk about preparing children for school we cannot separate cognitive development from social and emotional development – you can't have one without the other. All development builds on what comes before
- If the baby can't rely on a relationship with the caregiver, if the caregiver is impatient, unpredictable, preoccupied with worry or frightening, all aspects of the baby's development will be affected
- Emotional trauma can be transmitted across generations because early childhood trauma affects later parenting – community wide trauma will impact parenting across the community

Source: Perry, 2001; Appleyard & Berlin, 2007; Benoit, 2004

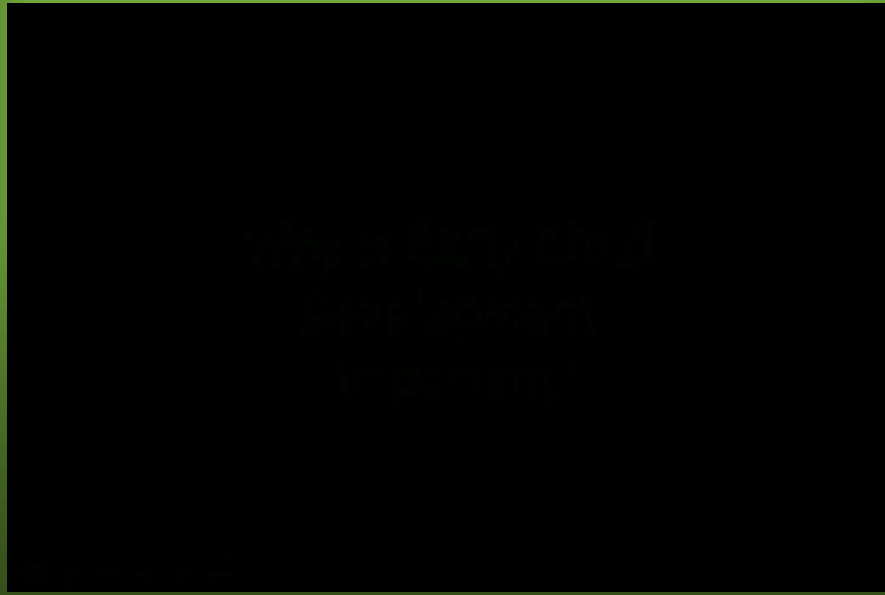
How the Brain Develops: Brain Growth in the Early Months



Core Concept: Experience Shapes Brain Architecture by Over-Production of Connections Followed by Pruning

- You can see the difference between the 6 month old brain and the newborn brain
- What is happening here is not so much that new neurons, or brain cells, are forming. Rather, the brain cells are forming connections to one another called 'synapses'
- Through a process called 'synaptogenesis' the brain is rapidly developing these connections - about 700 new neural connections are formed every second during this period (this is mentioned in the Schonkoff lecture referenced earlier <http://www.norlien.org/pages/player2.php?v=Jshonkoff>)
- At its peak the infant brain has more of these connections than there are stars in the Milky Way
- These connections are then pruned according to usage – if the connection isn't used, it is lost

Sensitive Periods in Brain Development



Core concept: Impact of sensitive periods in early brain development on the entire life course

This clip, by Dr Clyde Hertzman, describes sensitive periods in the early years of the developing brain. It emphasizes the importance of early social experiences and relationships on the health, well-being, learning and behaviour across the entire life course.

Brain Development Depends on Relationships

Babies need new stimuli to be offered in ways that are “safe, nurturing, predictable, repetitive, gradual, and attuned” to the infant’s developmental stage – D. Glaser

Source: Glaser, D. (2000).

Source: Glaser, D. (2000).

How Babies Regulate Stress



Core Concept: Healthy Development Occurs in the Context of a Relationship

- What stresses a baby?
- Babies are stressed when they fail to get the expected response from their caregiver. The Still Face Experiment illustrates this very well
- How many people found that stressful to watch? Most people do. Why?
- The baby wasn't hurt physically in any way, she wasn't dirty and she doesn't appear to be hungry. Why is it so upsetting?
- How did the baby respond? What cues did she use to try to engage her mother in an interaction?
- What do you think the baby would do if the mother stopped interacting with her all the time?
- What if the baby couldn't predict how the mother would respond?
- What if the mother responded sometimes but not others, or if sometimes she was scary and other times she was caring?
- What if the mother only responded when the baby got very upset?

Promoting Infant Mental Health Stack the Odds in the Child's Favour

1. *Tackle problems that contribute to stress*
2. *High quality child care*
3. *Routine screening*
4. *Celebrate family strengths*

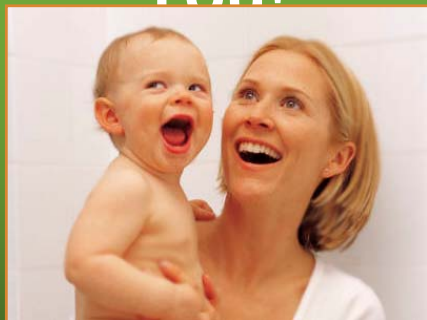


Refer to handouts for the professional group you are presenting to (health, child welfare or early childhood/community) under What should I do if I am concerned? Modify this slide according to the specific local resources or particular strategies you want to emphasize. These are suggestions:

- Generate ideas from the group – what kinds of things do they do to help parents and children now?
- What works really well?
- What hasn't been as helpful?

- Talk about using a strength based approach – pointing out the things that are working well
- Parents are inundated with advice/criticism implied or more blatant. The professional who is in the habit of pointing out the small victories has a more memorable impact

Thank
You!



Acknowledgements for Video Clips

- Attachment Network of Manitoba - *Listening to Baby*
<http://www.attachmentnetwork.ca/index.php?act=viewProd&productId=2>
- Hertzman, Clyde. *Sensitive Periods in Early Brain Development*
<http://www.youtube.com/HumanEarlyLearning#p/u/1/M89VFlk4D-s>
- Klaus M, Klaus P. *The Amazing Talents of the Newborn: A Video Guide for Healthcare Professionals and Parents*; Johnson & Johnson Pediatric Institute
www.parentsaction.com Phone: 877 565-5465 Fax: 877 565-3299
- Tronick, E. *Still Face Experiment*
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apzXGEbZht0>
- Santa Barbara Graduate Institute – *Trauma, Brain and Relationship: Helping Children Heal* Email: tr@sbgi.edu Phone: 805 963-6896
order from: traumabrainrelationship@gmail.com
- Attachment Network of Manitoba - *Listening to Baby*
<http://www.attachmentnetwork.ca/index.php?act=viewProd&productId=2>

Acknowledgements

This presentation was prepared for the BC Healthy Child Development Alliance by Evelyn Wotherspoon (www.evelynwotherspoon.ca), in partnership with the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Research findings were mainly drawn from the Harvard Center for the Developing Child Working Papers, available for download at -
http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/reports_and_working_papers/working_papers/

Special acknowledgements:

- Alberta Centre for Child Family & Community Research (ACCFRC). www.research4children.com
- Alberta Health Services Collaborative Mental Health Care Team.
www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/mh/collaborative
- Circle of Security. www.circleofsecurity.org/
- Dr. M. Hill - Early Brain & Biological Development Lectures.
<http://ebbd.banffcentre.ca/course/view.php?id=2>
- FrameWorks Institute. www.frameworksinstitute.org
- Mind in the Making. www.mindinthemaking.org
- Zero To Three. zerotothree.org