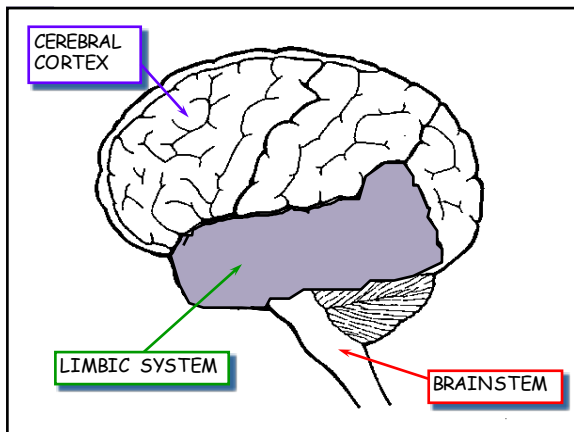
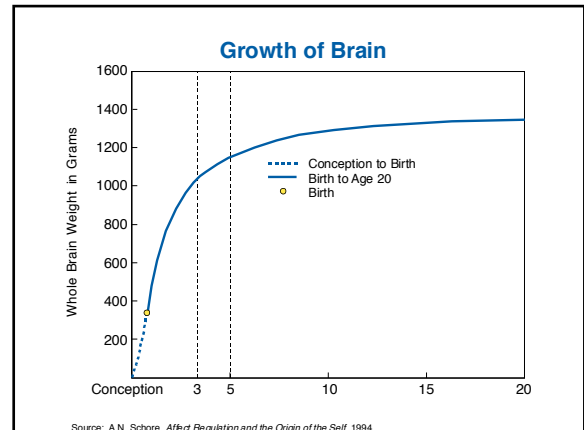


ENCOURAGING CONNECTIONS

Early Childhood Mental Health

Building a Foundation for Life

Betty Rintoul, Ph.D.
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Development of Emotional Regulation

- Stress response arises from a complex feedback system based in the limbic system
- Managing impulses and emotions is related to connections in the frontal cortex
- How well these skills develop depend to a large extent on having a caring adult emotionally available to model, guide, and support self-regulation

The Challenge

- “Early onset” problems in young children have been shown to be predictive of subsequent drug abuse, depression, juvenile delinquency, antisocial behavior and other mental health problems in adolescence and adulthood
- Preschool teachers report that children’s disruptive behavior is the single greatest challenge that they face

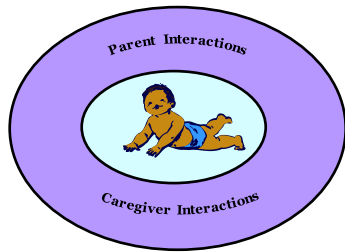
Temperament, Genetic Traits, Biological Factors

Some Biological Risk Factors

- Pregnancy and birth complications
- Low birth weight
- Exposure to toxins (maternal smoking, alcohol, drug use, lead)
- Head injuries
- Reactive temperament

Nurture Activates Nature

Social environments influence the activation of specific genes – thus reducing or increasing genetically based risks.



Encouraging Connections™

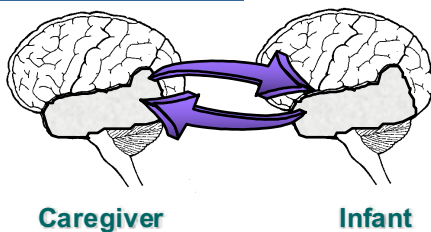
What Research Tells Us:

Aspects of Relationship with Caregiver that..

Promote Child's Potential:	Create Developmental Risk
➤ Gentle, responsive nurturing	➤ Neglect of physical or emotional needs
➤ Clear, consistent expectations & supervision	➤ Harsh or inconsistent punishment
➤ Positive & responsive verbal interaction (5 to 1)	➤ Little expressive speech; excessive prohibitions
➤ Stable environment and caregiver	➤ Frequent changes in caregiver, routines

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Primary Attachment Through Limbic Communication



Schore, 2001

Limbic Level Communication

- Touch
- Tone of voice
- Facial expression
- Music
- Smell
- Rocking, other rhythmic motion



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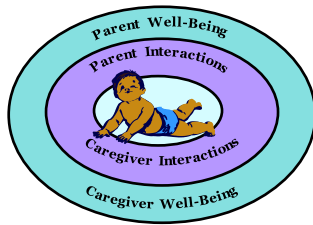
Video of Caregiver and Child

- Look for the “limbic” communication.
- What happens when the communication link is cut by the mother not responding?

“Still Face” Experiment



Dr. Edward Tronick

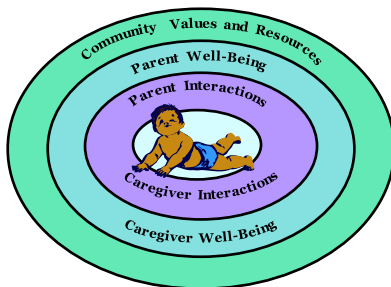


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What Research Tells Us: Aspects of Caregiver Well-being that..

Promote Good Interaction:	Contribute to Risk:
➤ Good mental health	➤ Depression; substance abuse
➤ Adequate knowledge and education	➤ Less than high school education
➤ Social support (3 to 1)	➤ Social isolation, poor relationship skills
➤ Adequate time and energy	➤ Demanding, unpredictable work schedules
➤ Adequate housing and material resources	➤ Poverty, food insecurity, unsafe neighborhoods

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Early Childhood Mental Health =

Promoting Healthy
Social Emotional Development



Early Childhood Mental Health

- Based on developmental orientation
 - developmental psychopathology
 - neurodevelopmental understanding
- Integrated into a family context
- Emphasizes development and support of positive caregiver-child relationships
- Supports the emergence of developmentally appropriate social and emotional skills

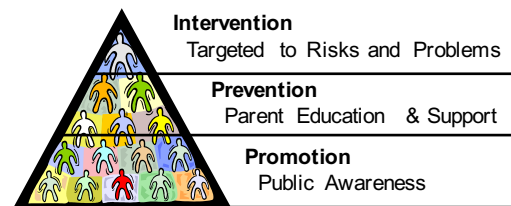
Principles of Early Childhood Mental Health

- Prevention is a primary rather than a secondary focus
- Relationships are central to development
- The child is a contributing participant in the parent-child relationship
- Helping parents is the most powerful and long lasting way to help young children
- Development is complex and transactional

Challenges and Differences

- Children don't refer themselves or describe their symptoms verbally
- Children are undergoing rapid developmental changes in personality, emotions, and behavior
- Difficult behaviors can be normal "phase" OR sign of future mental health problems
- Infants and young children are best understood and treated **with** and **through** the parent
- Multiple service providers and disciplines must often coordinate services

Community Mental Health Activities



Examples of Effective Activities

- Public awareness and education
- Screening for and addressing parent well-being
- Social-emotional screening, birth to five
- Parent group support, education, or training
- Home visitation and support
- ECMH consultants for child care providers
- Parent-child interaction guidance
- Parent-child psychotherapy

Building Adult Capabilities to Improve Child Outcomes



Center on the Developing Child, Harvard