

Understanding the Impact of Maternal Sensitivity on Social and Emotional Development in Infants

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Agenda

- Background
- Brain growth in the early years
- Effects of prolonged stress
- Responsive caregiving
- Internal working model
- Developmental pathways
- Waddington's model
- Activity
- What does this mean to me?

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Background



"Mother love in infancy and childhood is as important for mental health as are vitamins and proteins for physical health."

Bowlby, 1953

Image retrieved from: www.trauma.blog.yorku.ca

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Brain Growth in the Early Years

- Most rapid growth in neurological connections take place within the first 3 years of life
- Immaturity makes it susceptible to change
- Experience-expectant and experience-dependent
- Early relationships matter and drive the development of this organ

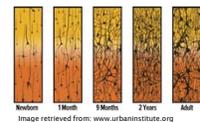


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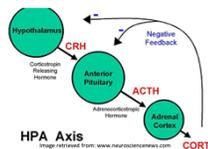


Image retrieved from: www.teachforamerica.org

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Effects of Prolonged Stress

- What is stress?
- What does it do?
- How do our bodies regulate stress?
 1. Stressful trigger
 2. Chemical response
 3. Cortisol binds with receptors > stop the release of cortisol
- Temporary stressful situations allows for adaptation and coping. Chronic stress, however, impairs this process
- Parental care that fosters attachment is critical for the development of the HPA axis
 - Elevated levels of Cortisol are seen in children whose mothers were unresponsive/withdrawn
 - Elevated in maltreated children



HPA Axis
 Image retrieved from: www.neuroscience.com

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Responsive Caregiving

- What is responsive caregiving? What does it look like?
- What role does caregiver sensitivity play?
- How is maternal sensitivity assessed?
- What do these "styles" look like in children?

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Internal Working Model

- Attachment relationship
- Components of the Internal Working Model
 1. Trustworthiness
 2. Self as valuable
 3. Self as effective when interacting with others
- What is necessary to support the development of this model in children?

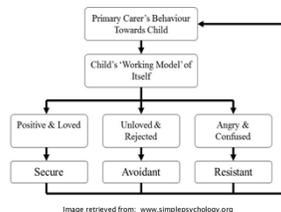


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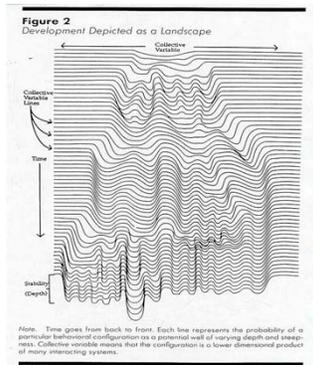
Developmental Pathways

The degree of responsiveness impacts the internal working model



Waddington's Model

Imagine the child as a ball rolling down the landscape, with environmental events (e.g. storms) combining with genetic possibilities (represented by the contours of the landscape) to nudge the child into one of several pathways.



Activity

- Each group will need:
 - “Developmental Pathway” Maze
 - Stack of “Storm” cards
 - Marker
- Each maze represents several possible trajectories of an individual's developmental path.
- As you progress through the maze, there will be points where 2 routes are available. Upon reaching this fork in the path, draw a “storm” card.
- Follow directions on the cards to move you through the maze to see the trajectory of your developmental journey.

What does this mean to me?

How can we support the development of the Internal Working Model in early childhood settings?

What does this mean to me?

How can we support the development of the Internal Working Model in early intervention settings?

