



Why DDP?

An interpersonal neurobiology perspective

Dr Sian Phillips

Clinical Psychologist & DDP Therapist, Consultant and Trainer

13 October 2013

Introduction

Trauma and attachment difficulties have profound implications for the structure of the brain and make it very difficult for children who have experienced abuse and neglect to develop an integrative, stable and coherent brain. This then compromises all aspects of learning, which further limits mental health.

DDP is modeled on attachment and neuroscience principles to facilitate brain plasticity and engender a sense of safety so that the individual can move away from a focus on self-protective strategies and be able to make use of relationships in a healthier way. Relationships are a critical component of well-being.

The Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy (PACE) attitude works simultaneously on a child's sense of being seen or "felt" as well as on helping the brain become more integrative. The therapist's ability to co-regulate affect and to promote intersubjectivity helps the child's right brain develop better emotion regulation skills. The dyadic nature of the work ensures that the parent develops a greater understanding of the protective nature of challenging behaviour and to develop more empathy for their child's vulnerability as well as to ensure that parent and child learn to trust each other.

DDP is defined by its therapeutic stance based on intersubjectivity and PACE; and is based on relationship and connection.

DDP is also defined by its therapeutic stance that is rooted firmly in **attachment** and **interpersonal neurobiology** principles and where the purpose is to facilitate more trusting relationships and healthier brain development.

About Attachment

The standard definition of attachment centers around the parent's ability to provide a safe base from which a child is able to explore and find the optimal balance between dependence and independence. A good enough parent is seen to be attuned and to ensure that their infant/child is not left to cope with stressful experiences alone. A child then learns to trust that adults are helpful and responsive.

More recently, Alan Schore (2012) states that the purpose of attachment is to drive brain development. He delineates that the process of a good enough parent is to upregulate positive emotions and down regulate negative emotions and the process of doing so allows for optimal right brain development.

The right brain is the area of the brain specialized for processing of socio-emotional information, emotion regulation and allocation of attention. Damage to right brain functions results in relationships that are characterised by either the sympathetic nervous system's anger or fear or the parasympathetic nervous system's shame or discouragement. Such

primary states interfere with the process of attachment, which interferes with the development of mental health.

The DDP therapist remains attuned to the child's state, repairs the relationship at the places of misattunement, through co-regulation of affect ensures that the child remains in the window of tolerance for affect and through an intersubjective stance communicates their sense of enjoyment and respect for the child. This allows for a developing sense of safety and trust in relationships and promotion of healthier brain development.

About Interpersonal Neurobiology (IPNB)

IPNB is a theory based on what we now know about how experience shapes the brain. Trauma and neglect directly changes the architecture of the brain, especially in the right brain associated with the processing of social and emotional information.

Dan Siegel and Alan Schore have written extensively of how positive intersubjective relationship with a therapist can lead to corrective experiences and the growth of new neuronal pathways that can lead a child away from expectations that relationships that are dangerous to expectations that relationships can be enjoyable, relaxing and safe. Through those new expectations they can learn to see themselves not in the shame-based descriptions that are a legacy of abuse and neglect, but in more positive terms indicative of a more secure attachment.

DDP therapists continuously strive to provide the child with an environment where they feel deeply valued and not alone with emotional experiences. The attitude of PACE, the co-regulation of affective experiences and co-construction of a new narrative based on the child's experience of the intersubjective therapeutic stance allow for the child's brain to grow towards mental health.

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About DDP Network

DDP Network is a worldwide body that promotes DDP and supports professionals, parents and caregivers in finding out about the therapy and the parenting approach. We provide information about the therapy, how to become certified in DDP, the parenting approach, resources, training courses and conferences.

Contact

Web: ddpnetwork.org

Email: contact@ddpnetwork.org