A BRAIN BASED MODEL OF ATTACHMENT-FOCUSED THERAPY: SELECTED SLIDES

FOR DDP DAYS, 2014

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Neurodynamics of Change in Attachment-focused Treatment

- **BLOCKED TRUST**: How children suppress the attachment system through state-driven conditioning and learn to avoid the attachment-linked state of separation pain.

- **REAWAKENING THE CHILD’S ATTACHMENT SYSTEM**: Learning to feel safe with experiencing the pain of separation and the need for comfort.

- **BRAIN-BASED MODEL OF THE LEARNING PROCESSES INVOLVED IN A CHILD’S JOURNEY FROM MISTRUST TO TRUST**.
Part One: Blocked Trust and Early Experience - dependent Brain Development

“SHE PUT ME TO THE SIDE”: A STORY OF HOW CHILDREN DEVELOP BLOCKED TRUST TO MANAGE “SEPARATION PAIN”

GOOD CARE AND POOR CARE ON THE BRAIN: EXPERIENCE-DEPENDENT BRAIN DEVELOPMENT IN THE FIRST 18 MONTHS

SOCIAL EPIGENETICS: THE NEW SCIENCE OF HOW LIFE AFFECTS OUR BRAINS AND BODIES

THE DEFENSIVE BRAIN AND STRATEGIES FOR LIVING IN A HARSH, UNCARING WORLD
BEHAVIORAL EPIGENETICS: EFFECTS OF EXPERIENCE ON PATTERNS OF GENE EXPRESSION IN DIFFERENT REGIONS OF THE BRAIN
TWO RELATIONAL SYSTEMS: BONDING AND SOCIAL HIERARCHY

BONDED RELATIONSHIPS: OXYTOCIN, OPIOIDS, PROLACTIN, AND DOPAMINE

GOOD TENDING PROMOTES DEVELOPMENT OF BONDED RELATIONSHIPS

POWER-BASED, “RANKING” RELATIONSHIPS: STRESS HORMONES, LOW SEROTONIN, AND HIGH NOREPINEPHRINE IN LOW-RANKING FOLKS

GETTING CLOSE: SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT SYSTEM

KEEPING YOUR DISTANCE: SOCIAL AVOIDANCE/DEFENSE SYSTEM AND “KNOWING YOUR PLACE”

POOR TENDING SHIFTS THE DYNAMICS FROM BONDING TO HIERARCHY
BLOCKED TRUST: WHEN KIDS HAVE TO PLAY DEFENSE BY SUPPRESSING THE JOY AND THE PAIN OF CONNECTION

HEALING PROCESS: HELPING CHILDREN RECOVER THE ABILITY TO FEEL THE JOY AND THE PAIN OF CONNECTION

SELF DEFENSE

SUPPRESSES GROWTH OF THE HIGHER BRAIN REGIONS
EARLY EXPERIENCES WITH CAREGIVERS PROGRAM THE CHILD’S AMYGDALA FOR LIVING IN SAFETY OR DANGER

EXPERIENCE-DEPENDENT, EPIGENETIC PROGRAMMING OF THE CHILD’S BRAIN: TO TRUST OR MISTRUST?
THE STRESS RESPONSE CIRCUIT: TURNING ON, TURNING OFF, “LOCKING ON”

- PREFRONTAL CORTEX
- AMYGDALA
- HYPOTHALAMUS
- PITUITARY GLAND
- ADRENAL GLAND
- HIPPOCAMPUS
- CORTISOL

Hypothalamus:
- NOT FULLY FUNCTIONAL IN THE FIRST YEAR OF LIFE

Also, stress hormones can damage the hippocampus.
THE CINGULATE AND “CINGULATION”: THE SOUNDS OF JOY, SADNESS, AND SEPARATION PAIN

THE CINGULATE, ESPECIALLY THE ACC, IS ESSENTIAL FOR BEING A HIGHLY SOCIAL, ATTACHED SPECIES: THE CALL AND RESPONSE SYSTEM
TRAVELING THE CINGULATE: FROM PAIN OF REJECTION, TO SADNESS OF SEPARATION, TO JOY OF CONNECTION

I’m Not Feeling Any Pain So I don’t Need Your Comfort

THANKS I’M FEELING SOOTHE AND HAPPY

I’m Feeling Sad and I Need Comfort

ADULT USING VOICE, FACE, GESTURE TO ENGAGE THE CHILD AND MOVE HER INTO SADNESS: UNBLOCKING THE CAPACITY TO FEEL THE PAIN OF DISCONNECTION

ROLE OF THE CINGULATE IN ATTACHMENT FOCUSED TX
Shifting From Mistrust to Trust: THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE

PACE AS A FORMULA FOR THERAPEUTIC CONFUSION: DISCOMBOBULATING THE CHILD’S NEGATIVE EXPECTATIONS AND ACTIVATING THE CHILD’S CURIOSITY “YOUR WEIRD”

PACE

- PLAYFULNESS
- ACCEPTANCE
- CURiosity
- EMPATHY

SURPRISING THE MISTRUSTING BRAIN BY VIOLATING EXPECTATIONS ABOUT CAREGIVER’S REACTIONS

CHILD’s Brain On Mistrust And Defense-based Living

CHILD’s Brain On Trust And Connection
The Element of Surprise in Attachment Focused Treatment: Positive Prediction Errors (PPEs) as Learning Signals That Wake up the Child’s PFC

“OOPS, MY AUTOMATIC PREDICTION OF BEING REJECTED WAS WRONG!! YOU WERE KIND WHEN I MINDLESSLY EXPECTED YOU TO BE MEAN”

CURIOSITY/REFLECTION SYSTEM

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: APPROACH, DON’T AVOID

FEAR EXTINCTION SYSTEM

REVERSAL LEARNING SYSTEM

REAPPRAISAL SYSTEM
STAGE ONE: AUTOMATIC, MINDLESS MISTRUST
“YOU’RE MEAN, I’M BAD”

STAGE TWO: GOOD CONFUSION
“WHOA! THIS IS WEIRD. YOU UNDERSTAND WHY I DON’T TRUST YOU AND YOU AREN’T ANGRY ABOUT IT”

STAGE THREE: APPROACH/AVOIDANCE CONFLICT-
TOO TRUST OR NOT TO TRUST?

STAGE FOUR: PRACTICING TRUST OVER MISTRUST-
“STROOPIN’”

STAGE FIVE: RESOLVING THE CONFLICT-
“I CAN TRUST YOU AND I AM A GOOD KID!”

FROM MISTRUST TO TRUST: STAGES IN THE JOURNEY TO SECURE ATTACHMENT

ATTACHMENT-FOCUSED FAMILY THERAPY

PACE

+ PACE

PACE

PACE

PACE

PACE

PACE
extinction
reversal
reflection
Conflict resolution
set shifting
extinction
reflection
Set shifting
reversal
reflection
Conflict resolution
extinction
ADULT
CHILD
SOCIAL APPROACH SYSTEM: ABILITY TO GET CLOSE TO ANOTHER PERSON WITHOUT BECOMING DEFENSIVE

SOCIAL REWARD SYSTEM: ABILITY TO ENJOY INTERACTING WITH OTHERS

PEOPLE READING SYSTEM: ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND THE MINDS OF OTHER PEOPLE (“MINDSIGHT”)

MEANING MAKING SYSTEM: ABILITY TO CONSTRUCT SOCIAL NARRATIVES BASED ON EXPERIENCES WITH OTHER PEOPLE AND TO “MAKE SENSE” OF OUR SOCIAL LIFE

EXECUTIVE SYSTEM: ABILITY TO REGULATE INTRAPERSONAL CONFLICTS BETWEEN APPROACH AND AVOIDANCE, PRO-SOCIAL AND DEFENSIVE REACTIONS
THE PARENTING BRAIN

Figure 2.2 The Five Parenting Systems

- Parental Meaning-Making System
- Parental Child Reading System
- Parental Reward System
- Parental Approach System
- Parental Executive System

**SELF-DEFENSE SYSTEM**

- "on"
- "on"
- "on"

**MINDFUL PARENTING**

- "off"

**amygdala**

"safe"
MINDFUL, COMPASSION-BASED PARENTING

- Cultivate compassion for your mistrusting child
- Muster warmth
- Take delight in some aspect of your child
- “Stay in the game”: It’s not a sprint, it’s a marathon
- Endure what feels like rejection and know it for what it is: misplaced mistrust
- It’s not truly personal; it’s generalized mistrust
- Enhance your “approachability”: work at making yourself safe to be near
- Practice catching and releasing your own defensive reactions
- Strengthen your capacity for deep relaxation and exhaling
- Identify and desensitize your “hot buttons”: trigger work
- Maintain a good support system
- Remember to play

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