

## Centering Attachment in Childcare

Early Childhood Investigations 09/21/2022  
with Ruth Anne Hammond, MA

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### What is Attachment?



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### Physical Connection



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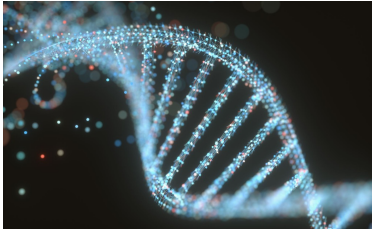
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### It's in our genes....



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### Survival of the Species

- Lower mammals, such as wolves or prairie dogs run to the nest in fearful situations
- Primates, including humans, run to mama when frightened



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### When/where does attachment start?

- Before birth
- In the context of essential relationships
- In the unconscious mind/brain/body
- Patterns are largely established in the first 36 months



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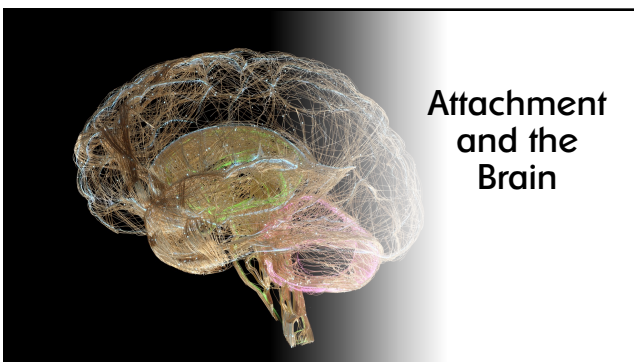
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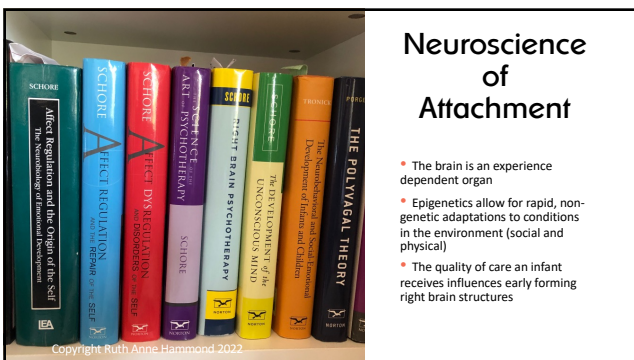
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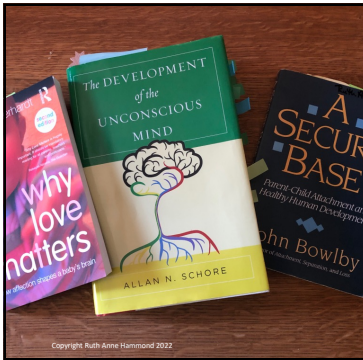
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**Quality Interactions = Healthy Brain Development**

- Adaptability and neuroplasticity can be for good or ill
- Well-developed brains lead to emotion regulation and later forming self-control
- Resilience is the result of sufficient positive early experiences

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**Attachment is formed through repeated body-to-body togetherness**

- Eye contact, facial expressions
- Prosody (musicality in voice)
- Touch (skin-to-skin)
- Smell (conscious and unconscious)
- Shared movement
- Timing or synchrony



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**A 'good enough' parent will:**

- Pay close attention to the baby's signals, though miss many of baby's cues
- Respond kindly and in a timely way to the baby's need for comfort, care or connection
- Offer positive stimulation via face-to-face conversations and play
- Respect and help the child manage their feelings

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### Secure Attachment Promotes Self-Regulation

- **Self-regulation** is how a person manages their emotional ups and downs (aka "arousal") in order to survive and thrive.
- Babies and young children need a lot of helpful **co-regulation** to stay in their optimal zones of tolerance and arousal.
- Adults also need to allow infants and young children the chance to find their own ways to manage states and feelings – to learn appropriate means of **auto-regulation**.

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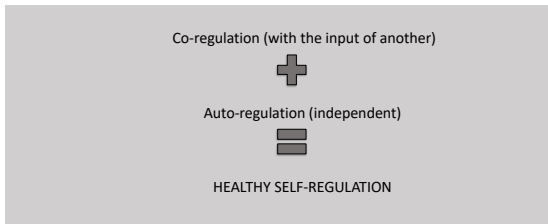
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### How Schore's Regulation Theory Works



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### Attachment Patterns & Self-Regulation



Pattern of Attachment	Self-Regulation Pattern
Secure	Flexible ability to auto-regulate and seek help from a co-regulator when needed
Avoidant	Over-uses auto-regulation
Anxious/Ambivalent	Over-uses co-regulation
Disorganized	No effective means of self-regulating

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## Window of Tolerance

- If the arousal is intolerably high, co-regulation with a caring adult can bring down the distress.
- If the child is not engaging with the world for a long period of time, up-regulation can encourage babies to be curious, connected and active.
- In times of tolerable distress or quiet introspection, the child should have a chance to find their way to an optimal state of arousal.

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## Reading Cues & Sensitive Responding

Play video of Amélie Rose



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## Things to Account for in Group Care

- People's brains light up differently while gazing at a photo of their own infant versus someone else's baby.
- Some developmentalists see hours-long separation from primary caregiver as a source of relational trauma with a little "t."
- How can we mitigate the differences home and non-familial care?

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### Bridging the Gap Between Home & Childcare



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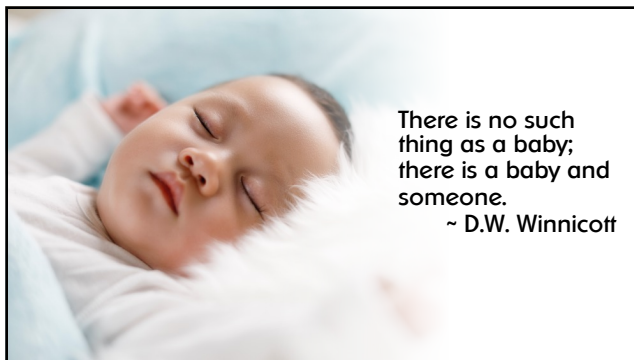
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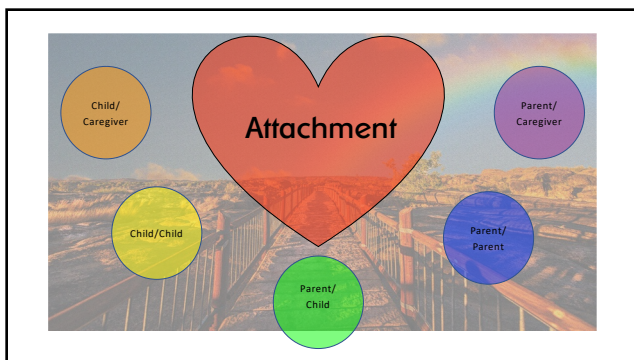
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### POLL

- How many best friends do you have?
  - 1) One or two
  - 2) Three to five
  - 3) Six or more

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### Child/Caregiver Attachment

- Dr. Emi Pikler of Hungary pioneered the concept of **Primary Caregiving & Continuity of Care** in institutions.
- Magda Gerber brought these concepts to the US via RIE®.
- PITC adopted them as the standard of quality DAP care in child development programs




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### Primary Care and Continuity of Care

- Each caregiver is responsible for 3-4 infants; performs most caregiving, communicates with parents, keeps records
- Knows these babies deeply
- Relationship is continuous and persists over time (looping)
- Security results (attachment between infant and caregiver supports healthy regulation)




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### Wylie's Diaper Change Video



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### One-on-One Attention During Caregiving Builds Intimacy

- Let them know what you will do at every step
- Invite the child's participation
- Slowness allows for cooperation



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### Help from the Environment

- Separate safe space for other children to play while carer is busy with the one child allows for focused attention.
- Before bringing the child, the care area is all set up.
- Diapering and feeding areas with visual access to play space are gated off.



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**Offer time for free play & movement**

- To support self-confidence/agency
- To promote creativity and inner resourcefulness
- To introduce the joys of friendship with peers

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**Caregiver-Parent Connection and Collaboration**

- Learn how parent takes care of the child
- Be out front with your philosophy and learn about theirs
- Home visits IRL or virtual



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**Old Fashioned Home Visits**



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## Child - Child Friendships



- Small groups
- Same children stay together
- Move up together

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## Toddlers' Own Game Video



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## Support Parent-Child Relationships

- Let them know you know they are working hard to provide for their children
- Offer times for parents & their children to be together in the center
- Love every child
- Reduce parent's sense of guilt



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### Family/Family in Community

- Bring families together
- Connect dads with each other
- Include grandparents and other loved ones

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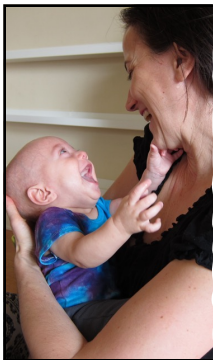
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### Learning to Love

- Connecting to their own feelings
- Trusting information from their own body
- Finding joy in being with others

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### Other Timely Needs

- Music & Rhythm
- How to pay attention
- How to move with grace and ease
- Learning to love learning

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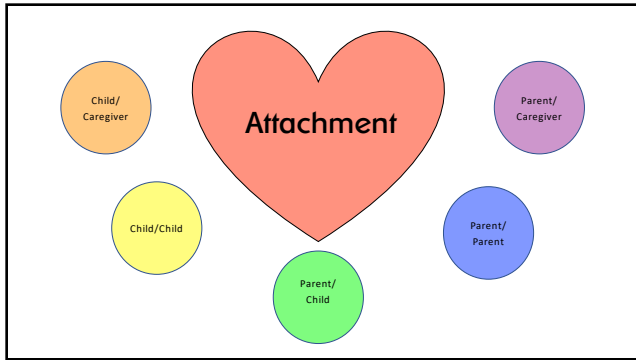
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**Where Secure Attachment Culminates:**

- Basic trust in self and other people
- Well-developed right brain
- Confidence
- Sense of worth
- Ability to form deep and intimate relationships
- Body-based knowledge
- Readiness to learn
- Better lifelong health

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