

## Babies, Brains and Relationships: Considering Social-Emotional & Mental Health Needs in Early Intervention

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## Today's Topics

- Setting the Stage: Babies, Brains and Relationships
- What Relationships Do
- Young Children Face Great Challenges
- Addressing Social-Emotional and Mental Health Needs in Early Intervention



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[www.earlychildhoodpolicy.com/ECTrain.html](http://www.earlychildhoodpolicy.com/ECTrain.html)

## Setting the Stage: Babies, Brains and Relationships

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## Brain Changing Prime Time

- Newborn – 400 grams
- 3 Year Old – 1100 grams
- Adult – 1500 grams



Image: [www.brainconnection.com](http://www.brainconnection.com)  
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## Experience Changes the Brain

- "...our experiences are what create the unique connections and mold the basic structure of each individual's brain."
  - Siegel, D., Hartzell, M. (2003)
- "Neurons that fire together, wire together." – Hebb's Law
  - Donald Hebb (1949)
- Today will change your brain!

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## Building "Normal"



Normal is as normal does --- every day.

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### Babies Come Relationship Ready




Babies are born (hard-wired) to fit into social relationships

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### The Brain in Relationship

- Monkey See – Monkey Do
- Video Learning a No Go for Babies
- Sharing Brain Wave Patterns



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### What Relationships Do


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### Early Relationships Are Important !!!

*“Each achievement – language and learning, social development, the emergence of self-regulation – occurs in the context of close relationships with others.”*

- *From Neurons to Neighborhoods, National Academy of Science, 2000*

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### Skills Are Developed In Relationships



“The computational brain is controlled by the social brain”

Shonkoff, Seattle, 1/7/10

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## Skills ↔ Relationships

“The developmental challenges facing infants and toddlers seldom sort themselves neatly into issue that are clearly the province of ‘early intervention’ or ‘infant mental health’.” p.13

Foley, GM & Hochman, JD (1997) Programs, Parents and Practitioners: Perspectives on integrating early intervention and infant mental health. *Zero to Three Journal*, December 1997/January 1998, 13-18.

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## Relationships ↔ Service Delivery


“A focus on relationships is harmonious with the family-centered perspective that regards parents as full partners in all aspects of service delivery.  
....  
By emphasizing strong relationships with parents and families, practitioners attend not only to what they do, but also to how they do it.” (p5)

Edelman, L (2004) A Relationship-Based Approach to Early Intervention. [www.nectac.org/topics/families/famassess.asp](http://www.nectac.org/topics/families/famassess.asp)

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## Relationships Move Change

Provider-Parent Relationships Predict Intervention Outcomes




(Kelly, 1999 in Edelman, 2004)

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## Relationships Set Biological Stress Systems

Stress Types

- Positive
- Tolerable
- Toxic




■ NSCDC

“The good, the bad and the ugly.” (Tronick)


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## Setting the Stress Thermostat



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## Relationships are Important!



“Early Life Experiences are Built Into Our Bodies (for Better or for Worse)”

Shonkoff, 1/7/10

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## Young Children Face Great Social-Emotional & Mental Health Challenges

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## Maltreated Children in WA

- Cases Accepted for Investigation
  - 0-3 Year Olds: 32% of Victims
- Children in Out-of-Home Care
  - 0-3 Year Olds: 29.8%
    - Nichols, Orme (9/16/09) The Children in Washington's Child Welfare System
    - [www.accountabilityinchildwelfare.org](http://www.accountabilityinchildwelfare.org)

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## Foster Care



Infants are the largest group of children to enter, remain in and re-enter foster care and the least likely to reunify with their biological families.

- F. Wulczyn & K.B. Hislop, Zero to Three, April/May 2002

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## Infants and Toddlers in Foster Care Nationally

- Nearly 80% have prenatal exposure to substances,
- Nearly 40% are born low birth weight and/or premature,
- Approximately half have developmental delays or disabilities.
  - F. Wulczyn & K.B. Hislop (2002)
  - Leslie et al. (2005)

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## Young Children in Child Care

- Colorado 0-5 year olds (low income)
  - 23% of children were identified as having significant emotional behavioral problems
    - Gould, M. (2000)
- Illinois 0-3 year olds
  - 16%-24% had significant social-emotional problems
    - Colin et. al. (2003)



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## Young Children OUT of Child Care

- Washington 3-5 year olds
  - 1 in 10 pre-K teachers expelled a child
    - Twice the rate of school-age children.
      - Gilliam, W. (2005)
- Illinois 0-3 year olds
  - 42% of programs had asked families to withdraw their infant or toddler
  - Program was unable to handle the child's social and emotional problems
    - Colin et al. (2003)

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## Babies and Toddlers Do Have Mental Health

- Infant mental health is the capacity of the child from birth to three to experience, regulate and express emotions; form close and secure interpersonal relationships; and explore the environment and learn.
- **Infant mental health is synonymous with healthy social and emotional development.**



Slide 25 ■ [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)

## Babies Can Suffer

- Traumatic Stress Responses (PTSD) and Depression have been identified in babies as young as 4-6 months
- ZERO TO THREE: National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families. (2005) Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Development Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood, Revised (DC:0-3R)

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## Addressing Social-Emotional and Mental Health Needs in Early Intervention

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## Value Social-Emotional Development

Routinely talk about social-emotional milestones as part of developmental anticipatory guidance on home visits.



IDEA Infant & Toddler Coordinators Association – Infant Mental Health Approaches and IDEA Part C Position Paper  
[www.idealinfanttoddler.org/position\\_statements.htm](http://www.idealinfanttoddler.org/position_statements.htm)

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## Common Misunderstandings

- Only 30% of parents know a child can experience sadness and fear by 6 months of age.
- 1 in 5 parents think a child can control their emotions, such as not having a tantrum when frustrated by 2 years of age.

■ ZERO TO THREE 2009 National Parent Survey  
■ [www.zerotothree.org/parentsurvey](http://www.zerotothree.org/parentsurvey)

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## Monitor SE & MH Needs: Watch for Red Flags

- Developmental Screening and Assessment Instruments with an Emphasis on Social and Emotional Development for Young Children Ages Birth to Five
  - Compiled for the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center May 2008 <http://nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/screening.pdf>
- Emotional Health Red Flags
  - [www.traumaresources.org](http://www.traumaresources.org)

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## Value Adult Emotions

"To be genuinely 'family friendly', early intervention practitioners need to pay attention to the emotional experience of family members." p19

Hirshberg, LM (1997) Infant mental health consultation to early intervention programs. *Zero to Three, Dec/Jan 19-23.*



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## Open Up to EI ↔ MH Partnerships

"It is possible to identify skills and strategies that are not exclusive to mental health and address universal human needs." p17

Grabert, J (2009) Integrating Early Childhood Mental Health Into Early Intervention Services. *Zero to Three, Vol 29 (6).* 13-17.



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## Consider Therapy Referrals

### Child Parent Psychotherapy

- Attachment, Psychoanalytic and Trauma Theories
- Cognitive-Behavioral and Social Learning Therapies
- Attention to Family Cultural Values



Lieberman & Van Horn (2008)

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## Help Everyone Remember

Early Relationships Are Important!!!!



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