



# Promoting Attachment Through Play

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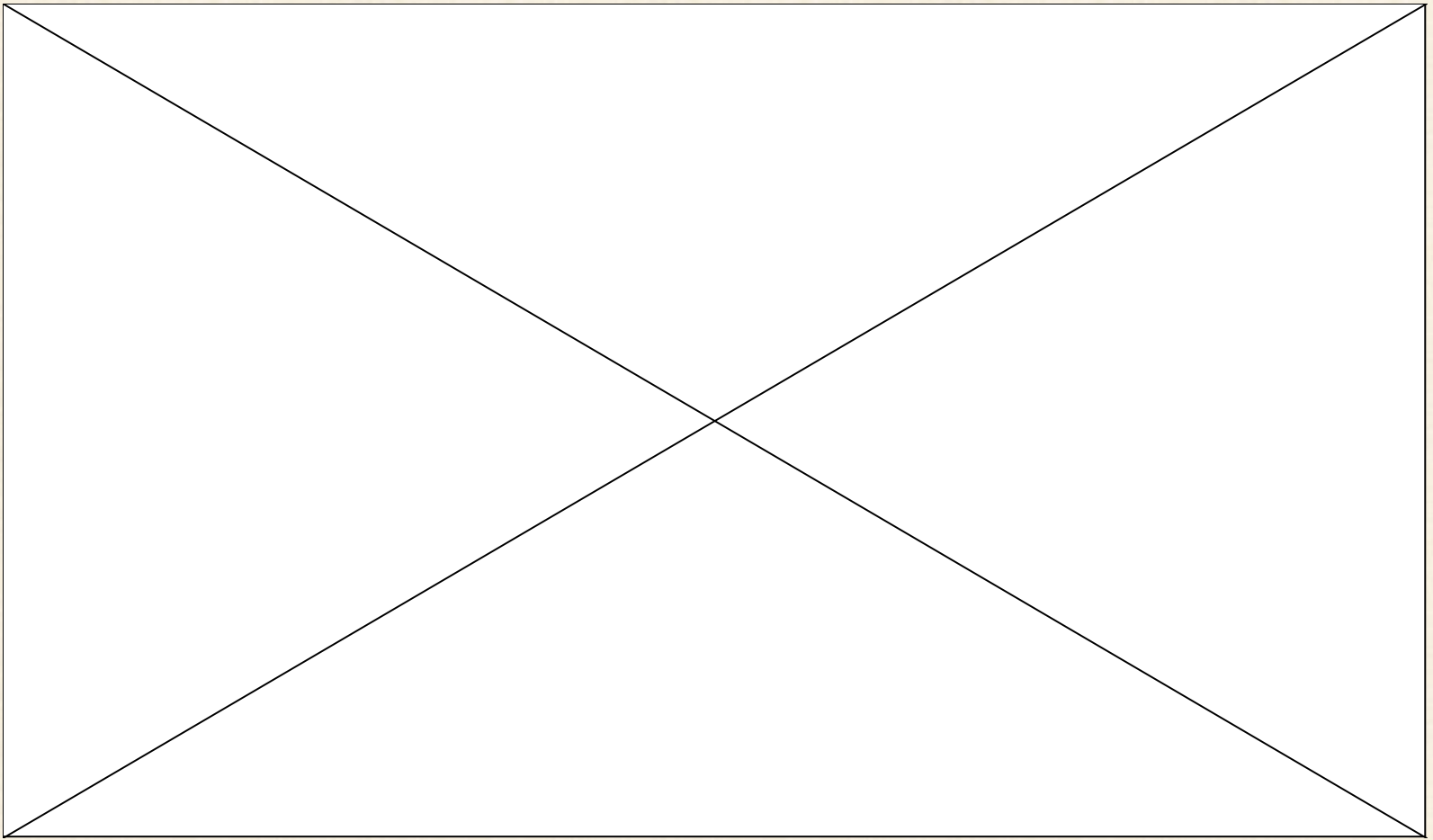


[www.theparentszone.com](http://www.theparentszone.com)



<http://www.examiner.com/article/attachment-parenting-eight-principles-of-parenting>

<http://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/mar/03/babies-film-review>



# Bowlby and Ainsworth

- Attachment provides the foundation for healthy, intimate relationships.
- “Attachment is an inborn system in the brain that evolves in ways that influence and organize motivational, emotional and memory processes with respect to significant caregiving figures.” (Bowlby, 1969)

# Why do we care about attachment?

- Attachment provides the early foundation for the working model for how relationships work, and what you can expect.
  - Can you depend on people?
  - Can you trust them?
- Facilitates development of emotional regulation, social skills, and empathy
- Secure attachment is a resiliency factor



# Secure attachment promotes

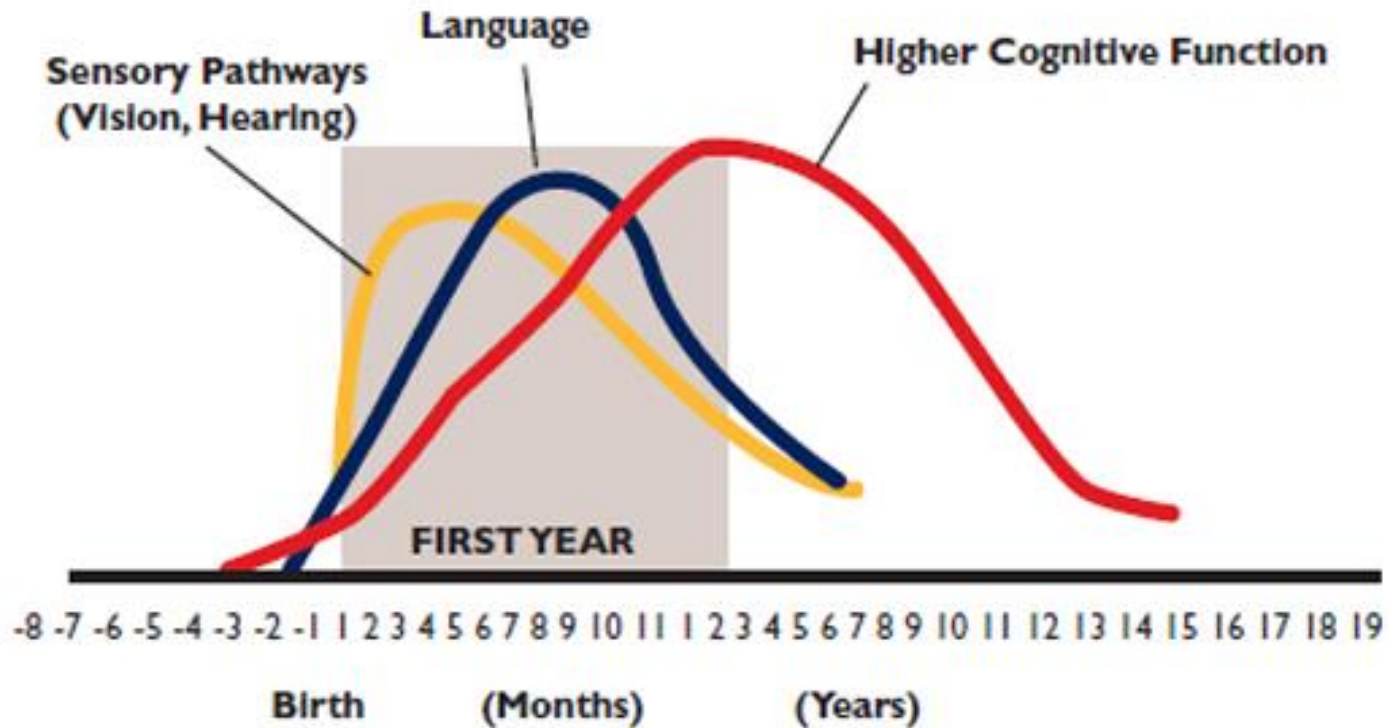
- Flexible self-regulation
- Prosocial behavior
- Empathy
- Positive sense of emotional well-being
- and self-esteem
- Coherent life-story

Source: Dan Siegel

<http://www.drdansiegel.com/uploads/webinar006.pdf>

## Attachment and brain development

### Human Brain Development Synapse Formation Dependent on Early Experiences (700 per second in the early years)



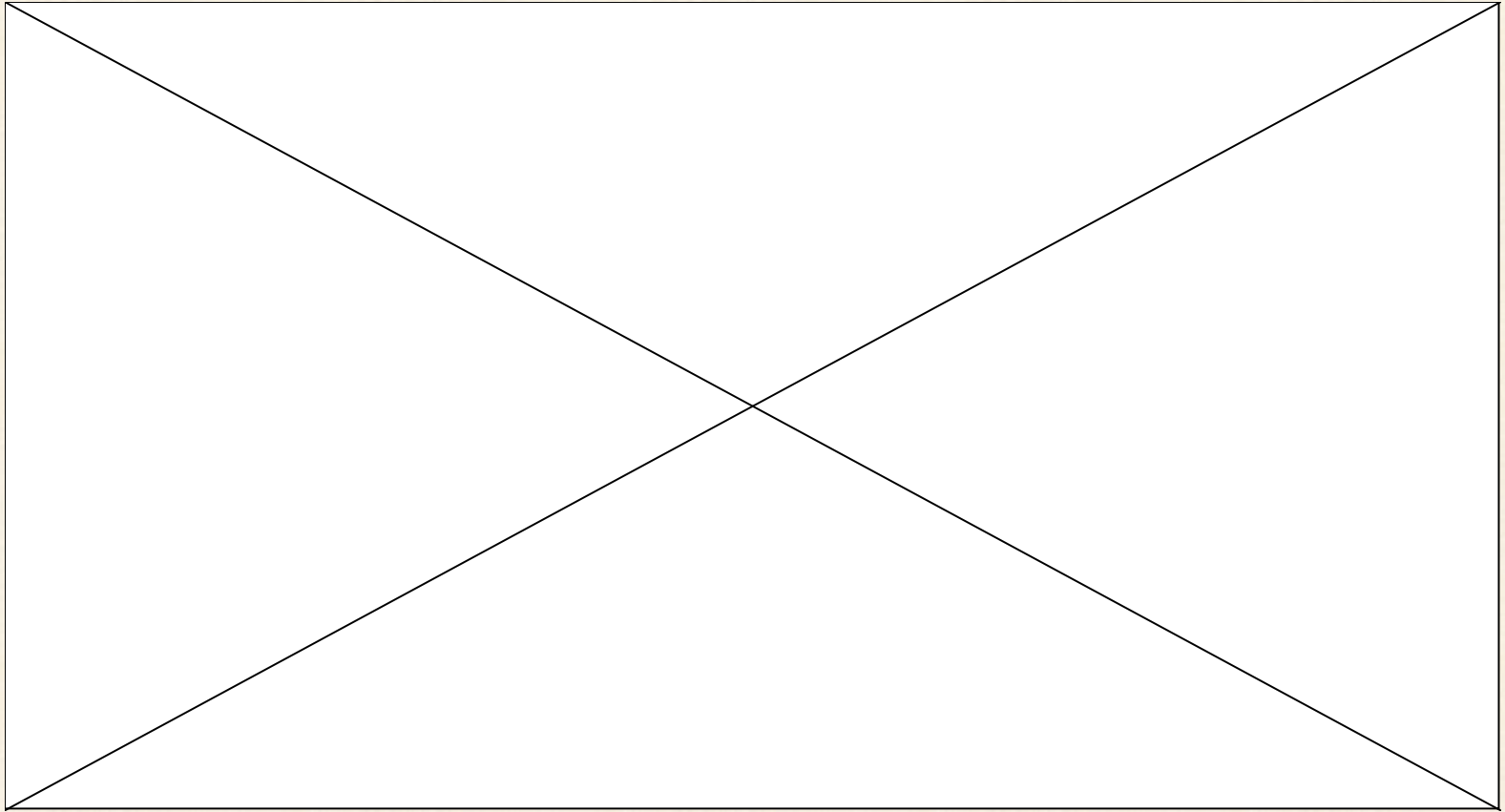
Data source: C. Nelson (2000); Graph courtesy of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

# What is needed for synaptogenesis to take place?

- Serve and return interactions with human beings



Still Face Experiment  
Dr. Edward Tronick  
University of Massachusetts Boston



# Attachment and mirror neurons

“Mirror neurons are a type of brain cell that respond equally when we perform an action and when we witness someone else perform the same action.

Mirror neurons repond not only to other people’s actions and emotions, but also to the intent behind these actions.” (Winerman, 2005,p. 48)

# Human connections shape neural connections

“Our brains are extremely social. Areas involved in self-regulation overlap with those involved in interpersonal communication and plasticity”

“How one brain interacts with another has important effects on how the brain functions: Social interactions are one of the most powerful forms of experience that help shape how the brain gives rise to the mind “

Source: Dan Siegel

<http://www.drdansiegel.com/uploads/webinar006.pdf>

# Attachment and neurotransmitters

- Infants who experience secure attachment: secretion of neurotransmitters, produces sense of well being
- Trauma or neglect can reduce secretion of neurotransmitters

Gonzalez-Mena and Widmeyer (2015)

# Brain Development and Early Childhood Adversity

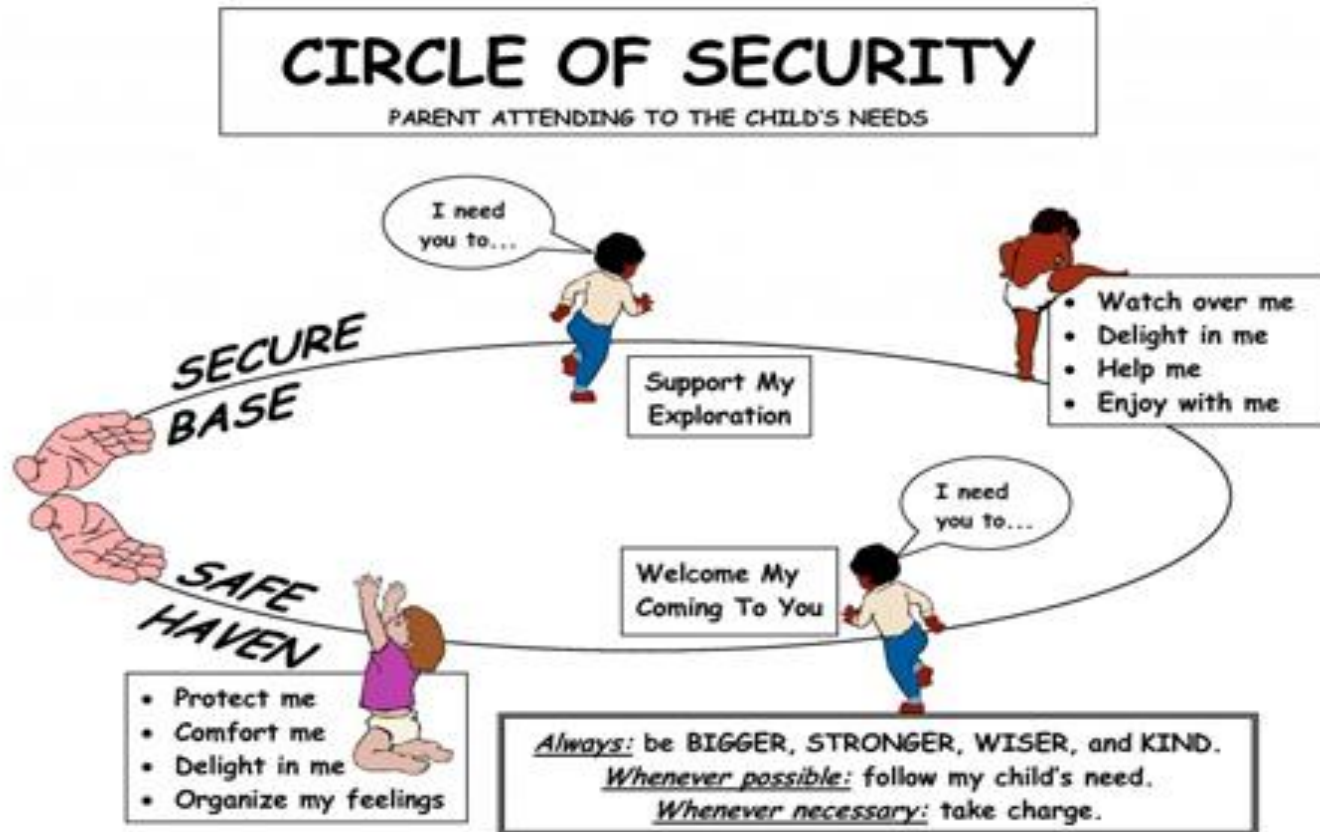




- We need to create conditions that reestablish the Circle of Security

# Attachment creates the Circle of Security

<http://circleofsecurity.net>



# The unique role of infant/toddler and preschool Teachers

“Teachers of infants and toddlers have an amazing opportunity to build a healthy attachment with each baby in their care. They also have the unique role of helping to support a healthy, lifelong attachment between babies and their parents”  
(Gillespie and Hunter, 2011, p. 62)

# Double role

- Creating healthy attachment with young children in our care
- Supporting families in their attachment with their children

# What strategies do you use to create healthy attachments in your center?

- Understand uniqueness of each child
- Consistency and responsiveness
- Encourage laughter and play
- Care for yourself



# How can you support parent/family-child attachment

- Encourage parents to read and understand signals baby sends, and respond appropriately
- Help parents/family caregiver recognize and feel that they are the most important people to the baby
- Show parents how they can connect with the baby through humor and play

# Attachment Play

“Playful activities can reduce stress, strengthen attachment, and solve behavior problems while bringing laughter and joy to you and the children.” (Solter, 2015, p. 3)

# The Importance of Mind-Mindedness in Attachment

Parents who are mind-minded act as if a baby can communicate and understands what we say to them. They are attuned to the baby and follow their gaze and try to see what the baby is interested in. They observe the baby and imitate his/her actions. They tend to comment on what they think the baby is feeling, interested in, or seeing. (Meins, 2013)

# Attachment Play

Solter, A.J. (2013) *Attachment Play How to solve children's behavior problems with play, laughter and connection*. Goleta, CA: Shining Star Press

# Attachment play is a special kind of play

- Interactive, strengthens connections
- Often involves laughter
- Can be child or adult initiated
- Does not require special equipment
- Can take place anywhere, anytime
- Includes many familiar activities

Solter (2015)



# Attachment play is not

- Permissive discipline
- Does not teach aggression to children
- Is not a form of teasing
- Does not involve competition
- Does not have any set rules

Solter (2015)

# General guidelines

- Follow the child's lead, remain flexible
  - Recognize indirect invitations
  - Be sensitive to response: does the child withdraw? Participate?
- This is not the time to teach or correct
  - Try and accept everything, unless if it's hurtful toward the child, another person, animal, or the environment
- If your child is laughing you are on the right track
  - Change activities if child appears to be afraid
- Teasing is not attachment play
  - Children may laugh out of embarrassment
  - Imitative play may turn into teasing, need to be sensitive
- Avoid tickling
- Don't try attachment play when the child is crying
- **PUT YOUR SMART PHONE AWAY, BE CONNECTED TO THE CHILD**
- Solter (2015)

# Different forms of attachment play:

## Solter 2015

- Nondirective child centered play
  - Promotes security, trust, reduces stress
- Symbolic play
  - Useful to deal with trauma
- Contingency play
  - Promotes sense of predictability, power
- Nonsense play
  - Helpful for shy children
- Separation games
  - Helps deal with daily separations
- Power-reversal games
  - Helps children feel power, in control
- Regression games
  - Helps feelings of being cared for
- Activities with body contact
  - Promotes feelings of belonging, being valued
- Cooperative games and activities
  - Helps deal with feelings of envy, competition, rivalry

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