

Infant and Child Mental Health

Rose Phillips, LMFT

Leah Eckley, LMSW

August 24, 2015

Welcome and Introductions

**Rose Phillips, LMFT, Senior Program Manager
Southwest Human Development
Smart Support, FTF Early Childhood Mental Health
Program**

**Leah Eckley, LMSW, Senior Program Manager
Southwest Human Development
Smart Support, FTF Early Childhood Mental Health
Program**

Today's Agenda

- What is Infant Mental Health?
- Overview of:
 - Attachment
 - Trauma and Young Children
 - Infant Mental Health
- Infant mental health is foundational to development across all domains and for school readiness and success throughout the lifespan.

What is Infant Mental Health?

NOT This:



What is Infant Mental Health?





Infant Mental Health Is:

The developing capacity of the infant and toddler to...

- Form close and secure relationships.
- Experience, regulate, and express emotions.
- Explore the environment and learn.

...all in the context of family, community, and cultural expectations for young children.

(Zero to Three, 2002, pg. 2).

www.zerotothree.org

Infant Mental Health

“There is no such thing as a baby by itself.”

-D.W. Winnicott

- Babies exist and develop within relationships



Attachment: What Is It?

- Attachment Bonds:
 - The emotional connection or tie of the caregiver to the infant. The caregiver's loving commitment and affection toward the infant.
- Attachment Behaviors:
 - Any form of behavior that results in the child attaining or retaining physical closeness to a preferred or specific individual for the purpose of feeling secure, achieving protection, organizing feelings

The Attachment Relationship Defined:

- An enduring emotional connection between the child and a specific individual (“attachment figure”) in which the child tends to seek and maintain physical closeness to that figure, especially under times of stress (e.g. fear, fatigue, illness...)
- Attachment Relationships are central and may be a “protective” or “risk” factor depending upon the relationship



Attachment Classifications

- Secure Attachment (optimal strategy in dealing with stress):
 - develops when the parent/caregiver is loving, consistent and reliable.
 - Ability to utilize caregiver for comfort and a secure base for exploration when not distressed
- Insecure Attachment (sub-optimal strategies in dealing with stress):
 - Avoidant
 - Resistant/Ambivalent
 - Disorganized

EVERYDAY ATTACHMENT

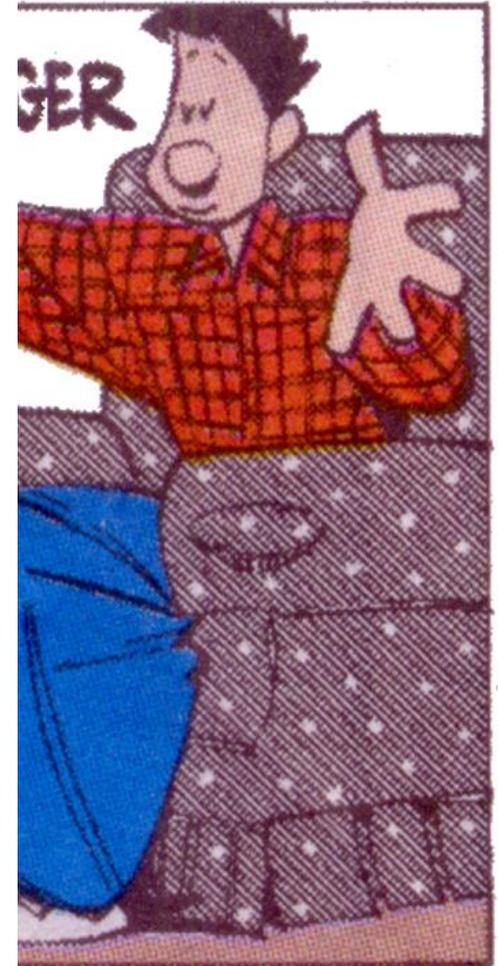
Rose is Rose

Pat Brady

DEPLETED
POWER
CELLS



FULLY CHARGED
CELLS CAPABLE
OF ANYTHING



Attachment: Why Is It Important?

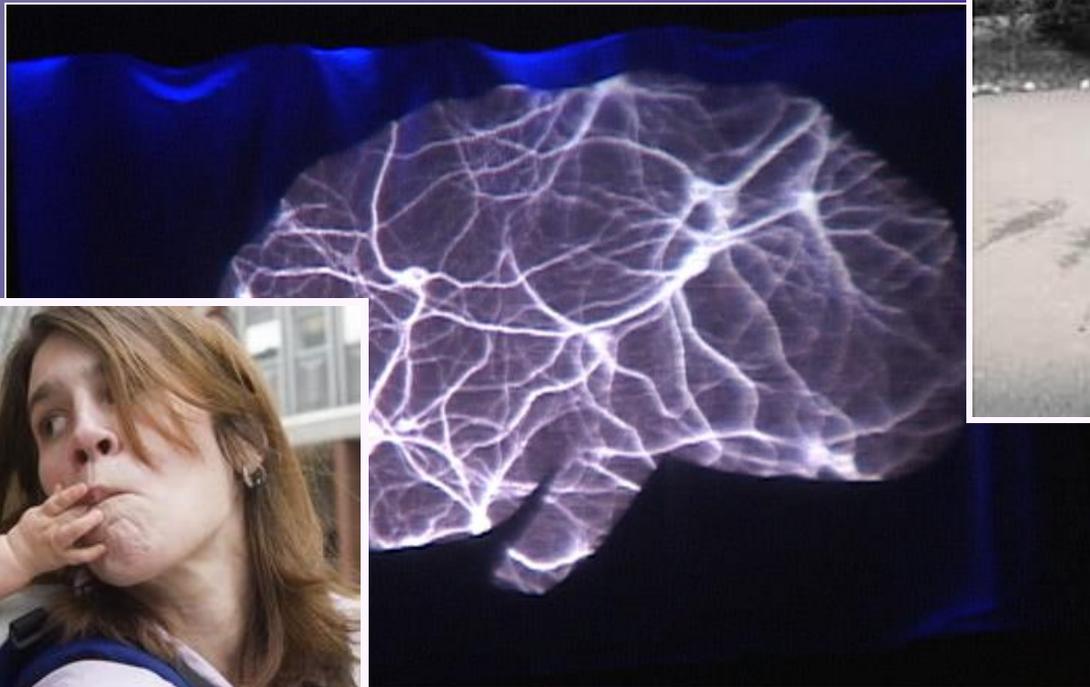
- Internal Working Models (“Representations”)
 - Maps/templates of integral relationships resulting from the infant’s experiences in these relationships
 - Influence how infants come to think and feel about themselves (worthy, lovable, or not) and how they expect relationships to go

Discussion: Scenario 1

- Keisha is 9 months old and attends “Happy Campers Preschool.” She is very quiet and often stares off into space for short periods of time. Her teachers call her their “easy baby” because she rarely fusses or requires attention.
- What might be going on for Keisha?

Early Experiences Matter

- Early experiences, both positive and negative, have a decisive impact on how the brain is wired.



Human relationships are the building blocks of development



Early Years



- Brain is not fixed, but flexible
- Early years lay the groundwork

Acquiring self-regulation is a fundamental task of early childhood



Self-Regulation

- ▶ Behavioral, emotional, and cognitive control are essential to healthy functioning throughout life.
- ▶ The development of self-regulation is strongly tied to the child's relations with others.

Video (self-regulation)

- Video – disregulated child in classroom



Social Emotional development affects all areas of development

- Communication
- Gross Motor
- Fine Motor
- Social emotional
- Cognitive

Social and Emotional Competence in the Classroom

- Confidence (“I expect to succeed.”)
- Capacity to develop good relationships with adults (“I expect that you expect me to succeed and will help me to succeed.”)
- Capacity to develop good relationships with peers
- Motivation and generally positive attitude toward learning
- Concentration and persistence on challenging tasks AND
- Ability to ask for help when needed
- Ability to effectively communicate emotions
- Ability to listen to instructions and be attentive
- Ability to solve social problems

Ready or Not?

- When kindergarten teachers report that children are not entering school ready to learn, they are most often referring to deficits in social and emotional skills.
 - Perry, D., Holland, C., Darling-Kuria, N. & Nadiv, S. (2011). Zero to Three, November. 4-11.

The Research

- Teachers' assessments on this score are quite in line with the research, which indicates that children's emotional, social, and behavioral adjustment is as important for school success as cognitive and academic preparedness (Raver & Zigler, 1997).

The Research

- Children who have difficulty paying attention, following teacher directions, getting along with others, and controlling negative emotions, do less well in school (Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1997).
- They are more likely to be rejected by classmates and to get less positive feedback from teachers which, in turn, contributes to off task behavior and less instruction time (Shores & Wehby, 1999).

Teacher-Child Interactions

- Recent studies have emphasized the importance of high-quality emotional interactions between teachers and young children and the development of social and emotional skills.
 - Study of 2,439 4-year-olds enrolled in 67 pre-K classrooms found that children developed greater social skills when they had higher quality emotional interactions with teachers.
 - In fact, the quality of these interactions was more predictive of social skills development than were many other factors such as teacher's level of education and field of study, class size, and teacher-to-child ratio (Mashburn et al., 2008)

In: Conners-Burrow, N., Whiteside-Mansell, L., McKelvey, L., Virmani, E., Sockwell, L., (2012). Improved Classroom Quality and child behavior in an Arkansas early childhood mental health consultation pilot project. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, Vol. 33(3), 256-264.

Video

- Well-regulated child – in CSEFEL video



Discussion: Scenario 2

- Julio is 4 years old and acts as though driven by an internal motor set at high speed. He is moving all the time, cannot sit through a circle time and is easily “set off” by someone taking a toy or accidentally stepping on his finger. Once he becomes upset, he is hard to soothe, often tantruming for as long as 20 – 30 minutes. His father was recently incarcerated and the family moved in with his maternal grandparents.
- What might a likely reason for Julio’s behavior?

Trauma

In Infancy and Early Childhood

-A **Very** Brief Overview-

Trauma

An exceptional experience in which powerful and dangerous stimuli overwhelm the infant/young child's capacity to regulate emotions.



(Early Trauma Treatment Network,
ND)

A Traumatic Experience...

- Threatens the life or physical integrity of a child or of someone important to that child
- Potential resulting feelings include overwhelming terror, horror, and helplessness
- Overwhelms a child's capacity to cope and may produce intense physical reactions

Potentially Traumatic Experiences

- Neglect
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Born Drug/Alcohol Addicted
- **Witness Domestic Violence
- Animal Attack
- Witness Community Violence
- Accidents
- Natural Disasters
- Painful Medical Procedures
- Separation from/multiple caregivers can be traumatic for infants and young children

Impact of Trauma on Children

- Derails the normal developmental trajectory
- Can impact:
 - Development
 - Trauma in young children can look like other issues
 - Difficulties with emotional regulation
 - Relationships in childhood and later in life

“Relational” PTSD

The best predictor of outcome for young children following a traumatic event is *the caregiver’s ability to cope with the trauma*

Red Flags For IMH Services

- **TRAUMA**
- Difficult/unwanted/unplanned pregnancy
- Depression/Mental Illness during pregnancy
- Newborns with feeding, sleeping, regulation problems
- Families with children with special needs
- Families with few resources or social supports

Red Flags For IMH Services

- Children with social or emotional delays
- Multiple caregivers/environments
- Families with one or more of the following:
 - Mental Health Disorder
 - Substance Abuse
 - Domestic Violence

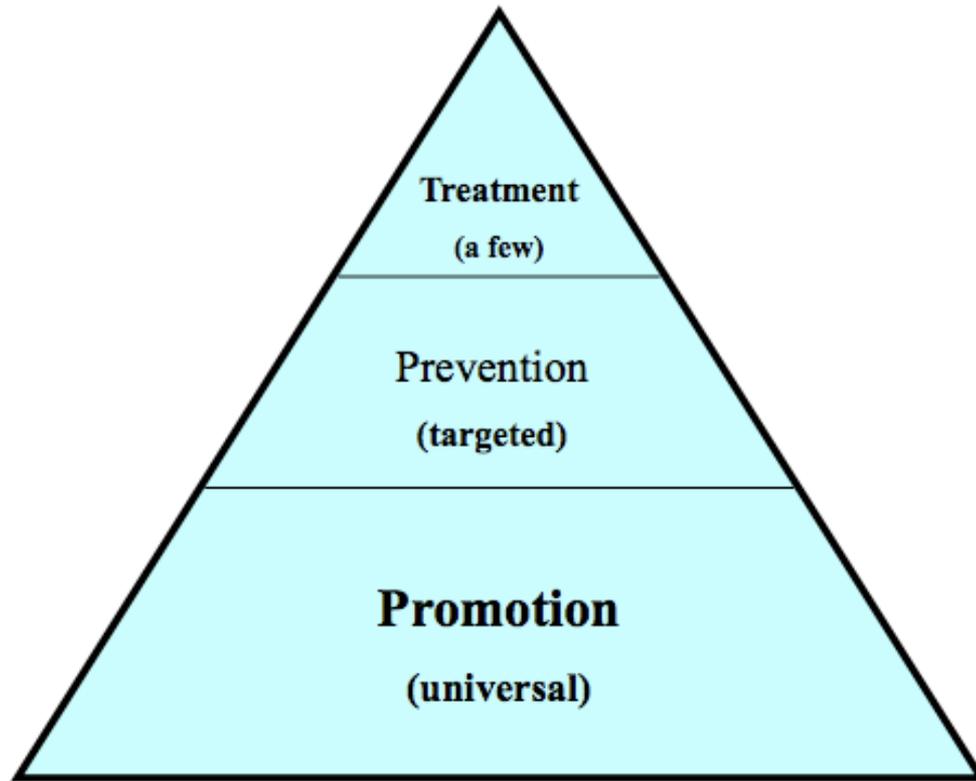
Discussion: Scenario 3

- Aidan is a young 3 years old. He has loving foster parents who have been caring for him and his sibling for over a year. They hope to adopt both children soon. Aidan does well most of the time, but on rainy days he cries uncontrollably for his foster mother. He has difficulty at morning drop off and is inconsolable during the school day. Twice during the summer rains, the school called Aidan's foster mother to come back as he had cried so hard he had thrown up.
- What seems a likely reason for Aidan's behavior?

Infant Mental Health

Working with Young Children and their Families

Infant Mental Health Strategies



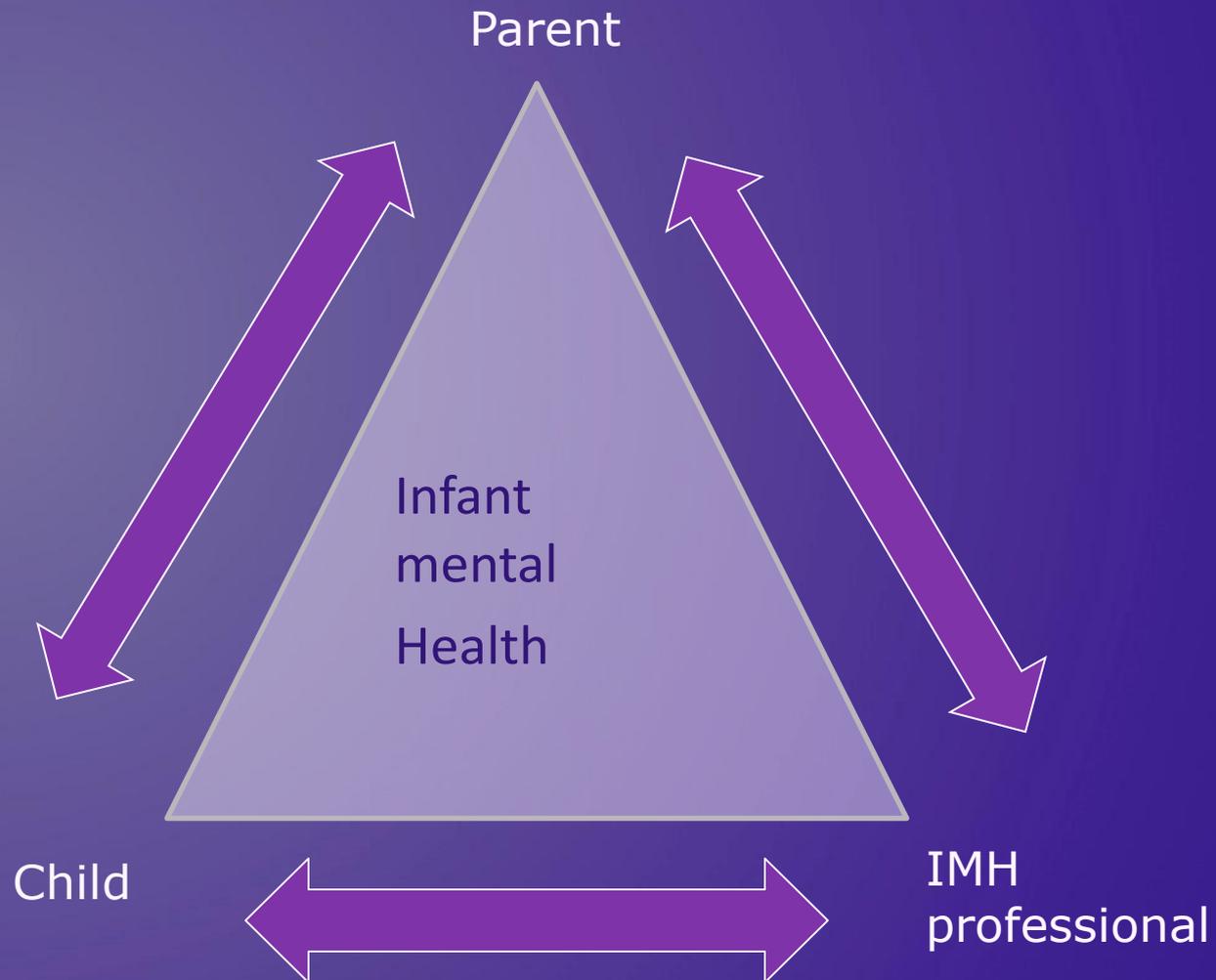
Intervention/Prevention Pyramid

Discussion: Scenario 4

- Maria is a petite 3-1/2 year old. She is very bright and outgoing and enjoys her teachers and her peers. Her parents are no longer living together and she spends Tuesday nights at her father's home. On Wednesdays, she is often irritable, cries easily and has dark circles under her eyes.

What might be going on for Maria?

Infant Mental Health



What does an Infant Mental Health Specialist do?

- Infant/Child-Parent Psychotherapy
- Concrete support/Resources/Referrals
- Emotional Support
- Therapeutic Presence
 - Parallel Process, Holding another in mind

The Infant Mental Health Specialist

“Each interaction is an opportunity for you to make children and families feel heard, appreciated, and understood.”

- Jeree Pawl & Amy L. Dombro,

Learning & Growing Together with Families: Partnering With Parents to Support Young Children's Development, 2001

Supporting Young Children and Families

- Young children need:
 - Consistency
 - Predictability
 - An emotionally available caregiver
 - And...Safety
- Behavior IS communication

Opportunities and Education

- Southwest Human Development
 - (www.swhd.org)
 - The Harris Institute- Accepting applications in February
 - Good Fit Counseling Center
- Zero to Three: www.zerotothree.org
 - The Infant Mental Health Specialist, D. Weatherston
- Infant Toddler Mental Health Coalition of Arizona (www.ITMHCA.org)

Questions & Comments?



Thank you!

- Birth to Five Helpline:
- 1-877-705-KIDS
- Monday through Friday 8 am to 8 pm

