



Mom's History of ACEs and It's Impact on Attachment

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GHOSTS IN THE NURSERY

(Fraiberg, Adelson & Shapiro)

"Unresolved mourning related to early privation restricts the mother's own development, autonomy, and relationships. These mothers can be overwhelmed by an activation of disavowed feelings associated with those early experiences. These "ghosts" influence the mother's relationship with her own infant affecting, in turn, the infant's attachment security."

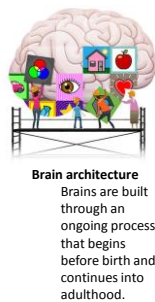
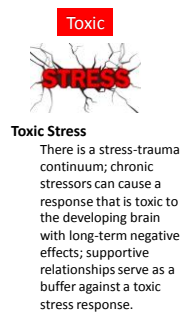
"Ghosts in the NICU"

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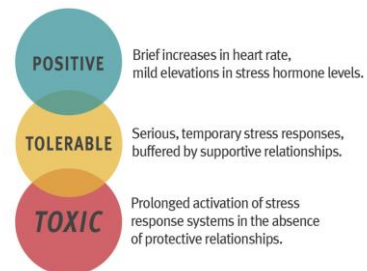
Learning Objectives

- Understand the stress-trauma continuum (toxic stress) and how it effects attachment and breast feeding
- Recognize the impact of neonatal intensive care on attachment
- Discuss how stressors may prevent mom's from breast feeding
- List trauma-informed interventions which can increase successful breast feeding

What is Your ACEs/Resilience Score?



Types of Stress





Serve and Return

Young children serve through babbling, gestures or words and adults return by getting in sync with the child



Resilience Scale

Positive outcome is like a scale tipped to one side, it can be influenced by counterbalancing weights and by adjusting the balance point

A New Medical Model- Beyond the Biomedical Model to the Eco-bio-developmental Model

Circle of Influences on Fetal and Infant Health

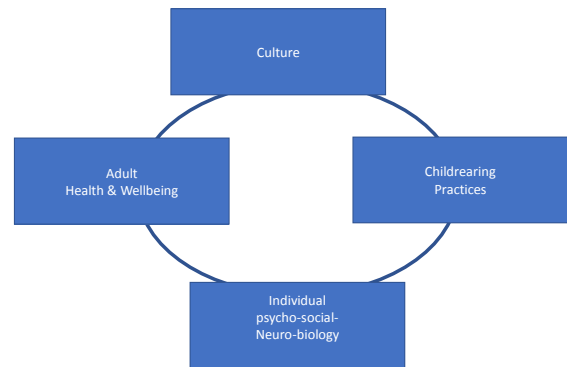


Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships Needed

- Without protective relationships toxic stress has a life long negative effect on the developing brain

Early Life Childrearing Practices Common Among Small-band Hunter-Gatherers

- Soothing perinatal experience
- Responsivity (needs met promptly)
- Constant physical presence, including touch with movement (carrying and holding)
- Breastfeeding (frequent, infant initiated, 2-5 years average weaning age, 4)
- Multiple caregivers
- Positive social support
- Free play in nature with multi-aged mates



Today's Child Health Crisis

What is the problem?

Why worry?

What can we do?

Is the Canary Dead?



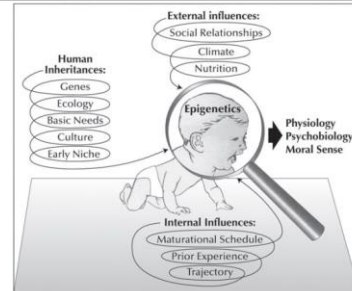
Why Is the Canary Dead?



The Stress of Poor Early Care

- Stress response system:
 - Over-reactivity or under-reactivity
- Immune system
 - Suppression, ratio
- Endocrine system
 - Malformation (e.g. oxytocin)
- Neurotransmitters (number, functionality)
 - Malformation (e.g. serotonin, NMDA)
- Emotions and emotion systems
 - Underdeveloped centers and circuits (especially prefrontal cortex, anterior cingulate cortex)
- Corpus callosum and brain hemispheric integration
 - Underdeveloped

Figure 3.3 The Dynamics of the Micro Developmental System

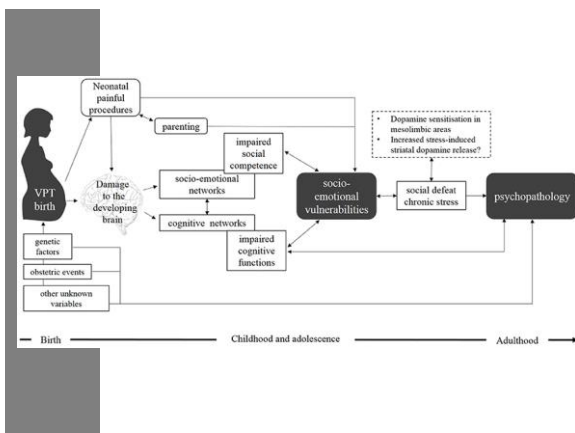


Narvaez, Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality, p 43, 2014

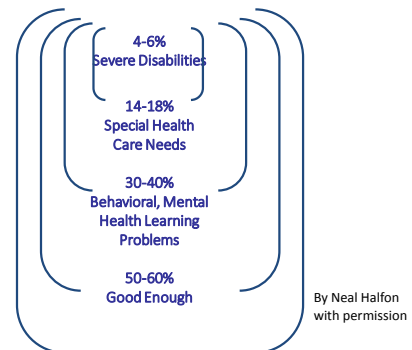
Trauma Informed Lactation Care

- “When identifying reasons why women abandon breastfeeding, or refuse to initiate breastfeeding altogether, we need to look at the role emotional and physical trauma plays in breastfeeding.”
- “Emotional and physical trauma suffered by women at a young age, during pregnancy, during labor and delivery, or in the immediate postpartum period can negatively impact a new mother’s ability or desire to breastfeed her baby.”

Cassidy, *Emotional and Physical Trauma and its Impact on Breastfeeding Mothers*, 2014



Children & Adolescents at Risk



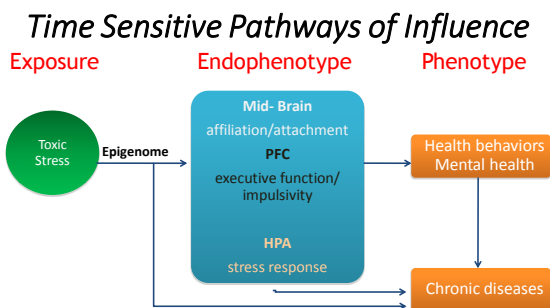
WHAT PREDICTS THE CHILD WHO WILL HAVE DEVELOPMENTAL/ BEHAVIORAL/ MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS?

Insecure Attachment
+
Toxic Stress
+
Ineffective Harsh Parenting
+
Atypical Child Characteristics
(temperament, activity level,
intelligence, etc) Genetic and
Epigenetic

Adversity in Childhood

- Early Childhood is a sensitive period of development
 - Developmental Symbiosis –intertwined biological and environmental factors (the environment talks and genes listen)
 - Developmental Plasticity -
- Early adversity associated with broad range of impairments later in life
- Developmental trajectories emerge early & reinforced by a cascade of differential stresses and risks
- Adverse childhood experience include the dramatic but more often and more pernicious are the ordinary day to day interactions
- While exposure to adversity is a significant predictor, they are not inevitable (some are more biologically susceptible to social context)

By Neal Halfon
with permission



From Hertzman

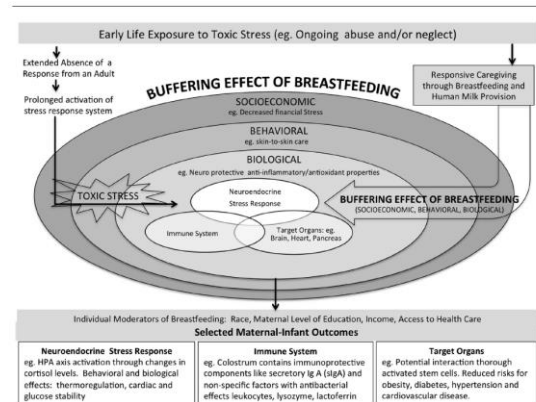


Figure 1 – Hypothesized buffering effect of breastfeeding mitigates the effects of toxic stress. HPA, hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal; Adapted from [Schnecko et al., 2014](#)

What is Attachment?

Attachment is a profound, reciprocal, physical and emotional relationship between a parent and a child that endures and sets the stage for all future intimate and trusting relationships.

Attachment

- All attachment behaviors reflect an attempt to modulate emotions, specifically anxiety
- Attachment types or styles do not reflect specific personality traits, but styles of engaging in relationships

Why Is Attachment Important?

- Early infant-caregiver attachment sets the stage for the infant's future intimate and trusting relationships
- Development of ability to regulate emotions linked to attachment relationship
- Child develops a set of beliefs ("Working Model") about whether:
 - The attachment figure is capable of responding helpfully in time of need
 - The child is the sort of person to whom the figure might respond

Most Children Attach

- Most children who are adopted out of orphanages attach to adopted parents
- Most children who are abused attach to their abusive parents
- Attachment disorders usually atypical, insecure, disorganized

Resilience

Secure attachment helps protect children, so that when adversity comes they can cope!

Steps in Attachment

- Indiscriminate 0-3 months
- Preference for the familiar 3-6 months
- Selective attachment 6-8 months
- Multiple attachments, thereafter

Causes of Attachment Problems Today

- Modern Obstetric Practices:
 - Scheduled C-section
 - Epidural analgesia
 - Infusions of oxytocin
- Childrearing Practices:
 - Early non-maternal child care
 - Lack of physical touch
- Harsh parenting
- Perinatal mood disorders
- Toxic Stress

Adult Attachment Interview

- The first comprehensive report of the AAI was "Security in Infancy, Childhood, and Adulthood: A Move to the Level of Representation" (Main et al., 1985)—a publication whose influence is difficult to overstate. (PDF) Ten clinical uses of the Adult Attachment Interview. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285731843_Ten_clinical_uses_of_the_Adult_Attachment_Interview [accessed Sep 10 2018].

ACEs Correlates with Non-secure Attachment

Murphy et al, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Questionnaire and Adult Attachment Interview (AAI): Implications for parent child relationships, Child Abuse & Neglect 38 (2014) 224-233

The Biology of Attachment

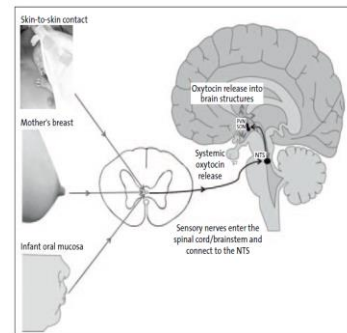
Oxytocin: Important for Both Breastfeeding and Attachment

- Oxytocin is released in the mother and infant during breastfeeding and skin-to-skin contact.
- Milk ejection patterns vary between women.
- Oxytocin is released into circulating blood and brain structures, in parallel.
- Oxytocin levels are higher in the infant than in the mother and differ with mode of birth.

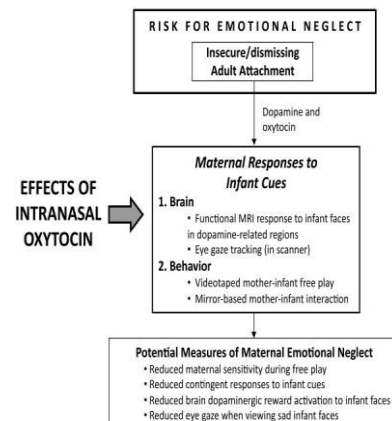
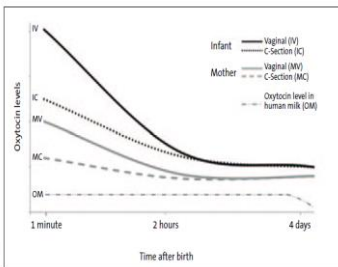
Oxytocin functions like a system activator and often influences the release of other signalling substances such as opioids, serotonin, dopamine and noradrenaline.

Uvnäs Moberg K., Prime D.K. Oxytocin effects in mothers and infants during breastfeeding. Infant 2013; 9(6): 201-06.

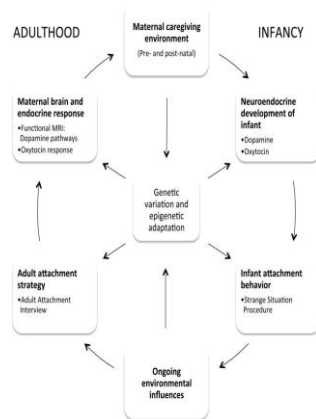
Different kinds of sensory nerves can release oxytocin during mother-infant interaction. While various sensory nerves can initiate this pathway, the nucleus tractus solitarius (NTS) acts as a common relay station for sensory input to the oxytocin-producing paraventricular (PVN) and supraoptic (SON) nuclei. (Image © Medela.)



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Adaptation of the oxytocin and dopamine systems—whether through a mother's own early childhood experience, stress during pregnancy or even breastfeeding experience—may lead to variation in infant and adult attachment, and maternal brain and endocrine responses



What can we do in the NICU?

- Encourage physical contact
- Redesign NICU to allow parents to stay with baby
- Minimize pain
- Recognize signs of maternal perinatal mood disorders
- Consider resident counselor (LCSW, psychologist) to talk to every mother and father, build relationship

Parents Can Foster Secure Attachment Children Need to Be:

- **Seen**— this is not just seeing with the eyes. This is not just seeing with the eyes. It means perceiving them deeply and empathically — sensing the mind behind their behavior.
- **Safe** — we avoid actions and responses that frighten or hurt them
- **Soothed** — we help them deal with difficult emotions and situations
- **Secure** — we help them develop an internalized sense of well-being

YOUR VALUE

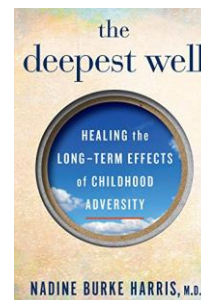
- Regular caregivers (teachers, foster parents, day care workers, therapists, NICU nurses etc.) are the “active ingredients” of any treatment.
- The relationship is what allows a child to grow and thrive.
- Without at least one such relationship, development is disrupted and the consequences can be severe.
- A sensitive, caring relationship can foster remarkable recovery



- “The enduring impact of early maternal care and the role of epigenetic modifications of the genome during critical periods in early brain development in health and disease is likely to be one of the most important discoveries in all of science...”

• Alan Schore, PhD

What You Can Do



Continue to learn about ACEs/Resilience

Understand that it is not what is wrong with that parent (mother/father) but what happened to them

Understand your own childhood narrative

Develop a mindfulness practice that works for you

We are guilty of many errors and many faults
but our worst crime is abandoning the children
neglecting the fountain of life.
Many of the things we need
can wait. The child cannot.
Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his
blood is being made, and
his senses are being developed.
To him we cannot answer
‘*Tomorrow.*’
His name is ‘*Today.*’

Gabriela Mistral
Nobel Prize-winning poet from Chile

***Thank You!
Questions?***

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