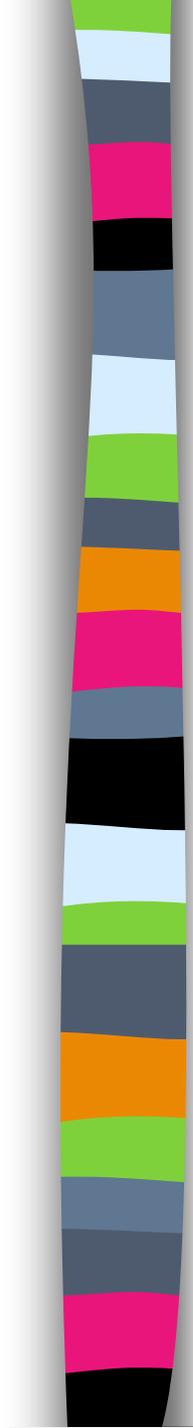


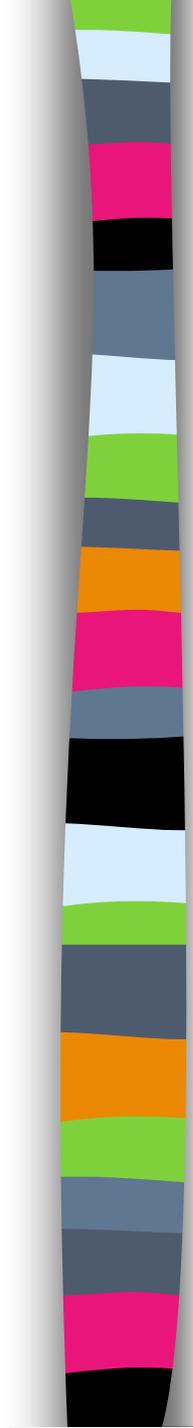
# Circle of Security Parenting© : An Overview



Sonya Vellet, Ph.D., R.Psych.  
svellet@shaw.ca

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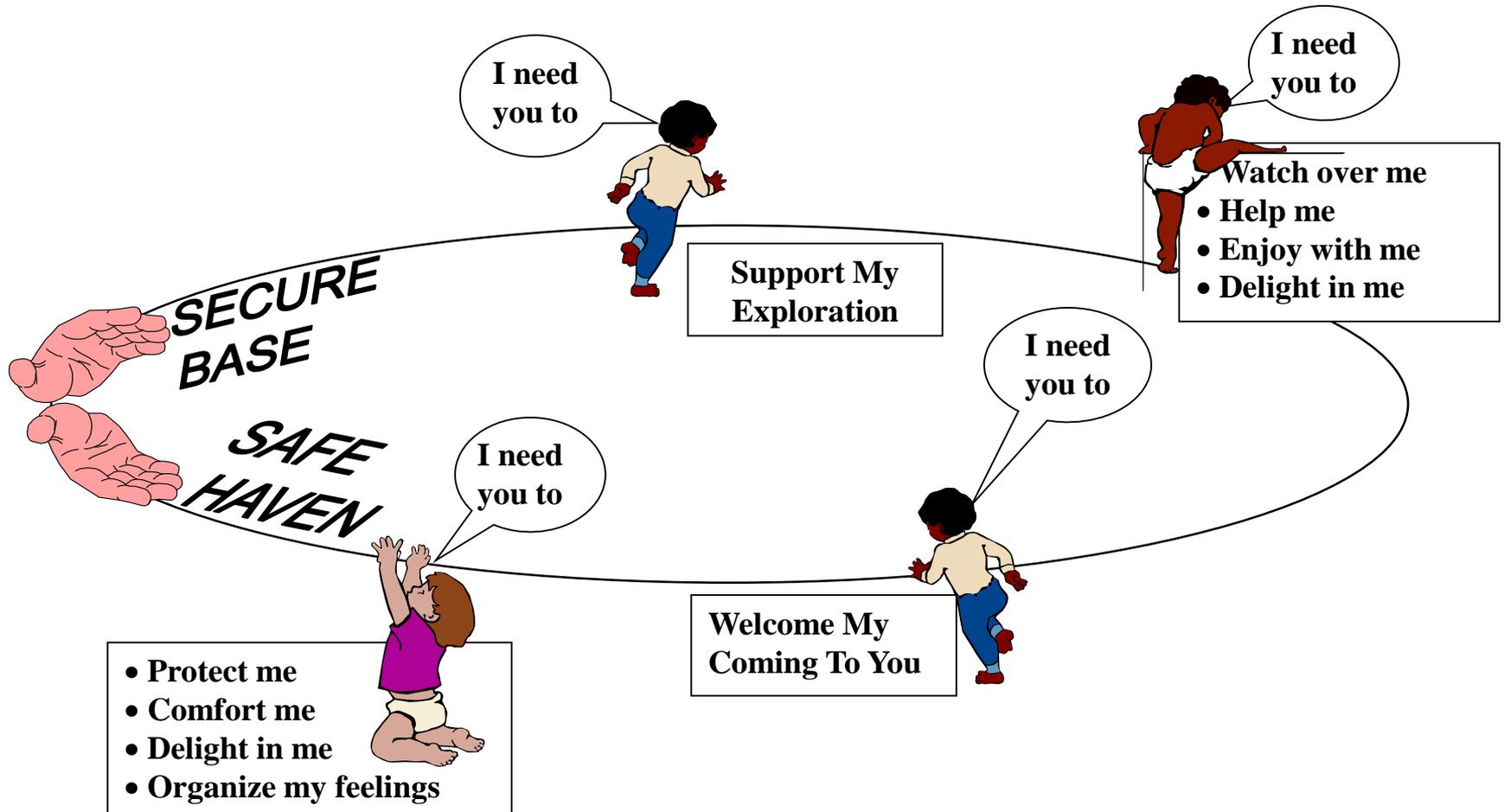


# Learning Objectives

- Understand the importance of attachment as a key foundation for parent-child relationships and optimal developmental outcomes.
- Recognize how a relationship-based approach and COS-P create a unified platform across disciplines to support and strengthen families and their children.
- Gain awareness of how COS-P can be utilized to build capacity within their own teams and communities to engage and support families.

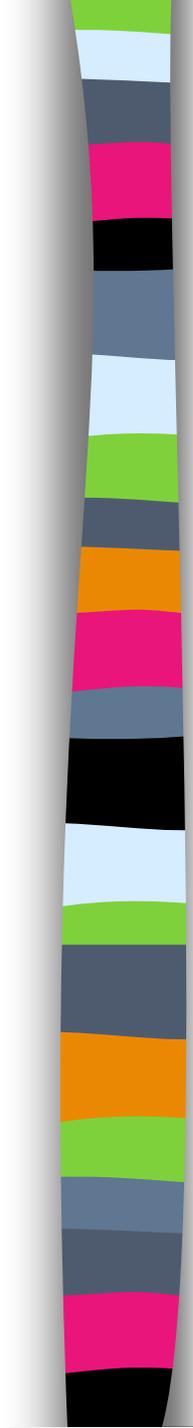
# Circle of Security

## Parent Attending to the Child's Needs



# BEING WITH

At the heart of developing a  
secure attachment  
is the knowledge that my caregiver  
is emotionally available to  
“be with” me  
during times of need

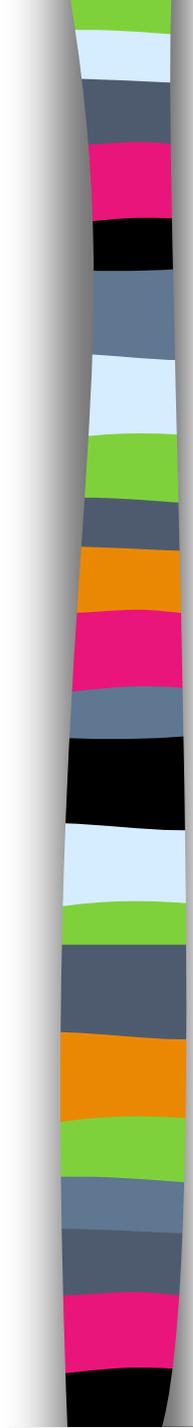


# A Difference that Makes a Difference Implications of Attachment Security:

- Regulation of emotions, attention, and behaviour
- Sense of self (e.g., self-esteem)
- Curiosity and exploration (e.g., approach problem-solving tasks more positively and with greater persistence)
- Cognitive and language competence
- Capacity to relate to others (e.g., more empathic, cooperative, resilient, competent in relationships)
- Optimistic and resilient
- Learn to fear danger
- Build capacity to be a secure attachment figure for own children

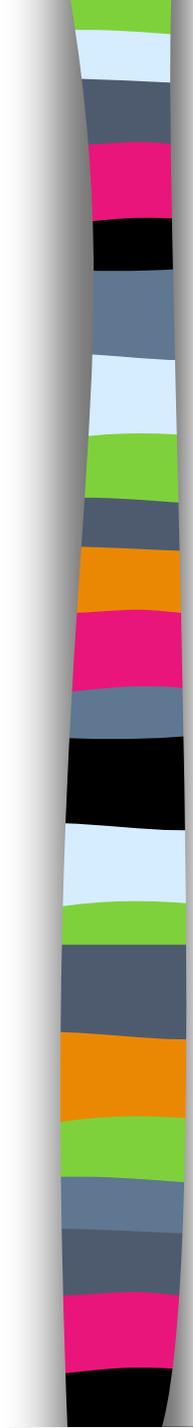
# BEING WITHOUT

At the heart of developing an  
insecure attachment  
is the knowledge that my caregiver  
is emotionally unavailable to me  
during  
times of need



# Circle of Security Parenting©

- Research-based
- Offers key components of COS® within a brief, 8-week parenting programme
- Delivered in a step-by-step process for use in groups, home visitation, and individual counselling
- DVD presents video footage of secure and problematic parent-child interactions, observational skill training, and approaches to support reflective functioning
- Registered COS Parenting Facilitator

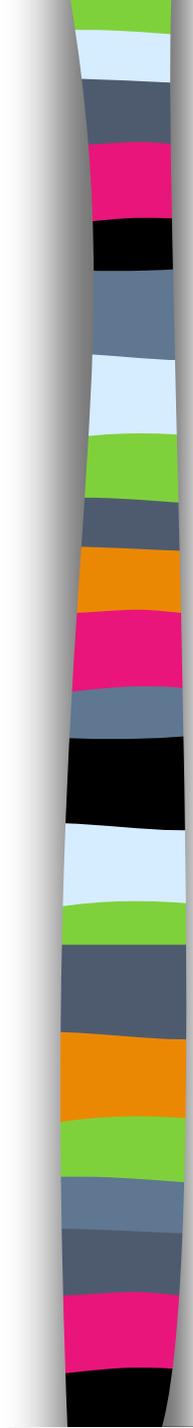


# Circle of Security®: 4 Principles

- I. The quality of the caregiver-child attachment relationship, which can change, plays a significant role in the child's development and behaviour.
- II. Lasting change in caregiver-child attachment results from the caregiver developing **specific relationship capacities** rather than learning techniques to manage their children's behaviors:

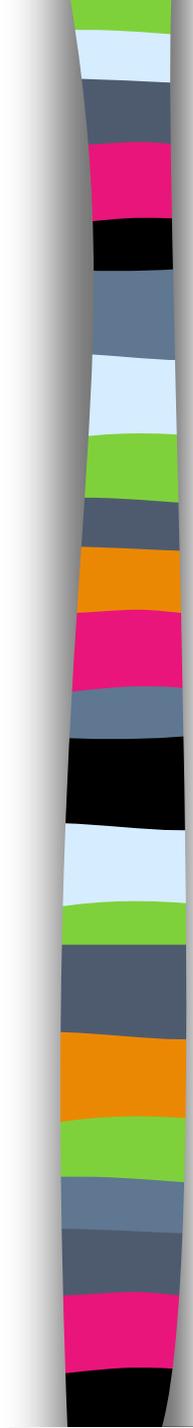
# Circle of Security® - Principles

- 
- II. Lasting change in caregiver-child attachment results from caregiver **developing specific relationship capacities**:
- Provide a **user-friendly map** of children's basic attachment needs
  - Develop their **observational skills**
  - Engage the caregiver in **reflective dialogue** to enhance reflective capacity (including parenting they received)
  - Enhance **emotion regulation**
    - Understand their child's affect
    - Track and regulate their own cognitive/affective response to their child's affect
    - Identify early phases of their own dysregulation
  - Facilitate an **empathic shift** in the caregiver toward the child (e.g., the ability to have empathy for their child even when the child's needs make them uncomfortable)
  - Help caregiver develop a sense of themselves as successful in responding to their child's needs



# Circle of Security®: Principles

- III. Caregiver's relationship capacities are best enhanced if they themselves are operating within a secure-base relationship (i.e., establish a '**holding environment**' for the parent)
- IV. Intervention is most effective when it is **tailored** to consider the strengths and struggles that are specific to each caregiver and child.



# Circle of Security Parenting©

- Parents and other attachment figures learn:
  - Relationship with child does not need to be perfect (upset, ill, hurt\*)
  - Quality of relationship with child shapes child's development and behaviour
  - Repair strengthens relationships
  - 'Being with' child emotionally when child is distressed is more helpful than using time-outs
  - Child's behaviour will improve when quality of caregiver-child relationship improves



## References

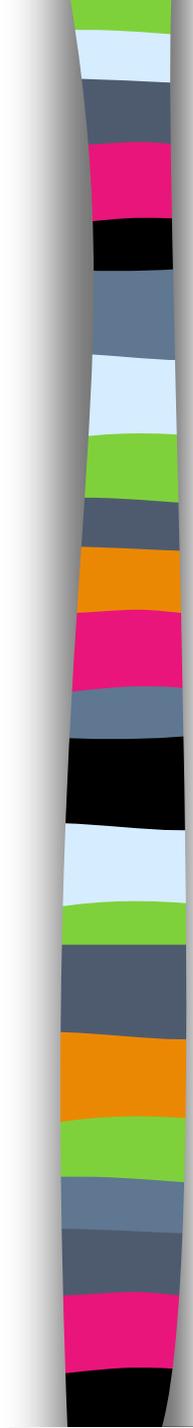
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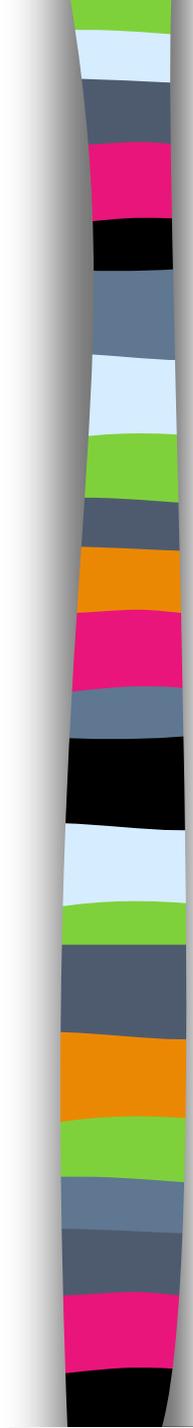
# Circle of Security Parenting© with Video Review



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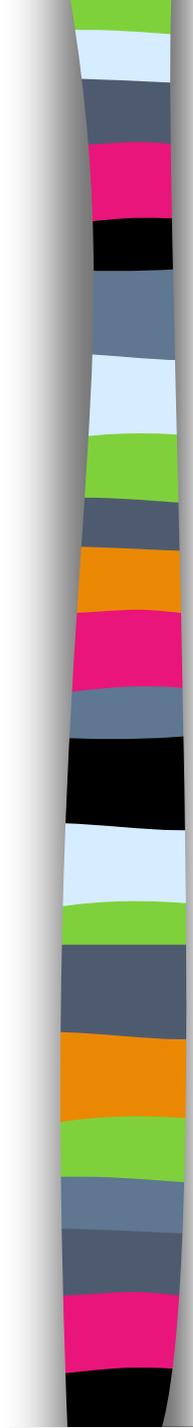
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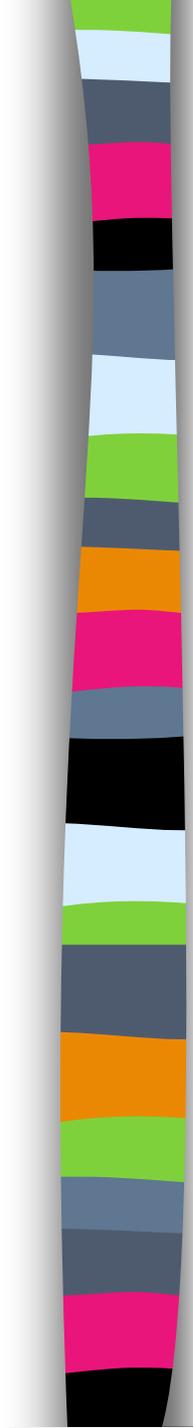
# Learning Objectives

- Understand the importance of attachment as a key foundation for parent-child relationships and optimal developmental outcomes.
- Recognize how a relationship-based approach and COS-P create a unified platform across disciplines to support and strengthen families and their children.
- Gain awareness of how COS-P can be utilized to build capacity within their own teams and communities to engage and support families.



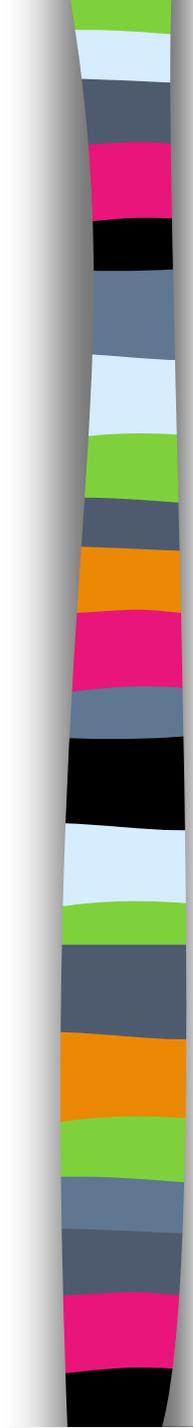
# Thank you

- Glen Cooper, Kent Hoffman, and Bert Powell (Marycliff Institute, Spokane, Washington: [www.circleofsecurity.net](http://www.circleofsecurity.net)).
- Colleagues from multiple disciplines working to promote infant and early childhood mental health and development.
- All courageous parents who have sought out support and COS-P for their families.
- Debt of gratitude to those parents who have been open to sharing their stories and struggles with others.



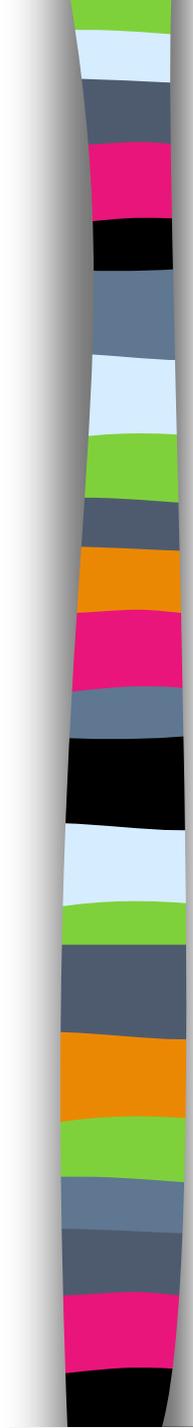
# COS-P (with Video Review)

- Susan McDonough, Diane Benoit, Ellen Moss and others
- Provided to biological (including teen), adoptive, and foster parents of infants, young children, and school-aged children:
  - Screen caregiver-child attachment:
    - Adult Attachment Interview
    - Working Model of the Child Interview
    - Videotape caregiver and child
- Program-wide (e.g., 0-6, 6-12)
- Community- and province-wide (e.g., IDP, AIDP, SCD, ASCD, CYMH)



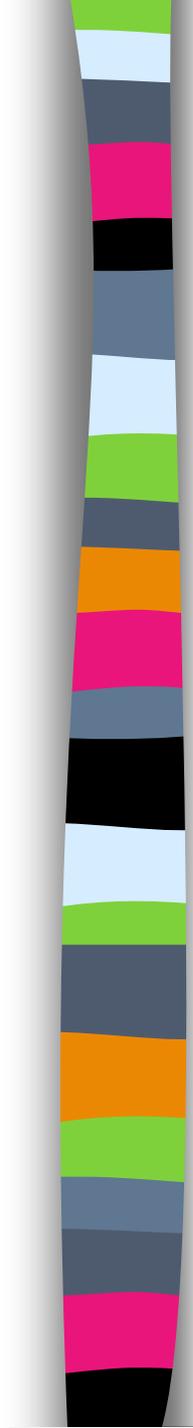
# Advantages of Video Review (Boris, 2014; Steele et al., 2014)

- Facilitates therapeutic alliance
- Creates connection and security priming
- Teach and enhance observational skills
- Engage parent in reflective dialogue
- Explore new working models of attachment and interaction patterns
- Primes empathic reflection



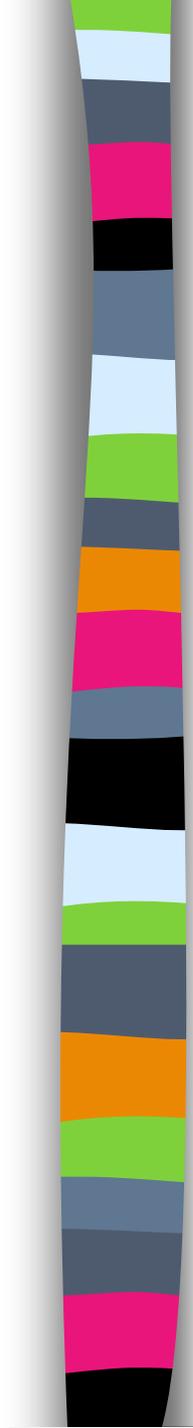
# Seeing, Guessing, and Reflecting

- What is your child doing and saying?
- When/Then: Describe AND – “when your child did and said X, then what did you do and say?”
- What do you think your child is needing?
- What do you imagine your child is thinking and feeling?
- What do you imagine you are thinking and feeling?
- Is this a follow moment or a lead (take charge) moment?
- What are you thinking and feeling right now?



# Case Example

- 23-year old woman, history of childhood neglect/maltreatment, homelessness, domestic violence, and diagnosed with a Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Trichotillomania (Hair-pulling Disorder)
- Three children (ages 1 ½, 3, & 5 years) in foster care due to concerns about maternal mental health and substance use, child neglect, inadequate supervision of children, and domestic violence

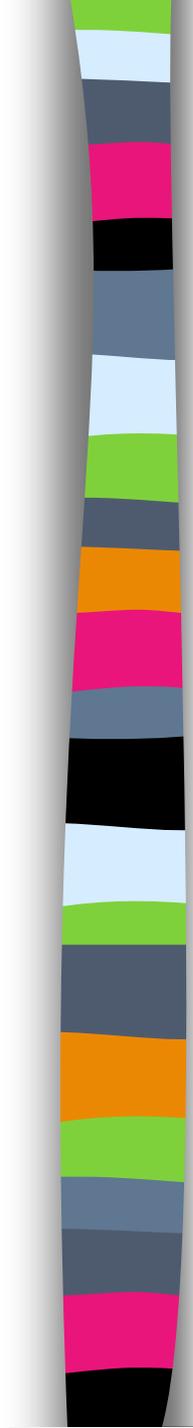


# Assessment

## ■ Parent-Child Attachment:

- AAI – Unresolved around trauma and loss and Insecure
- WMCI: Insecure
- Parent-child attachment relationships: Disorganized

## ■ Children: Developmental delays, difficulties with self-regulation and aggression



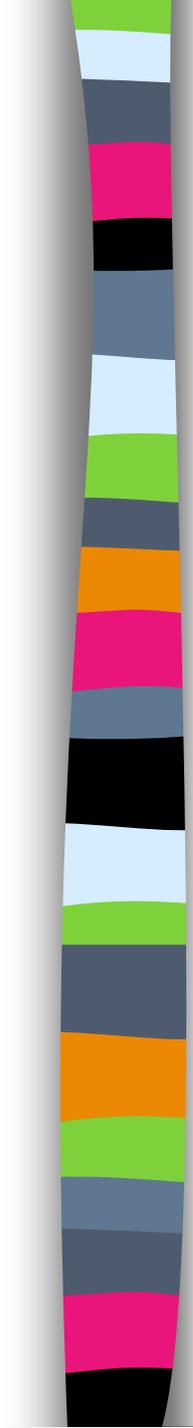
# Intervention: Key Linchpin Struggles

## ■ Hands on the Circle

- Being Secure Base and Safe Haven
- Bigger, Stronger, Wiser, and Kind (includes taking charge, when necessary and confident presence)
- Children feel that their mother knows, accepts, and is committed to them and their safety

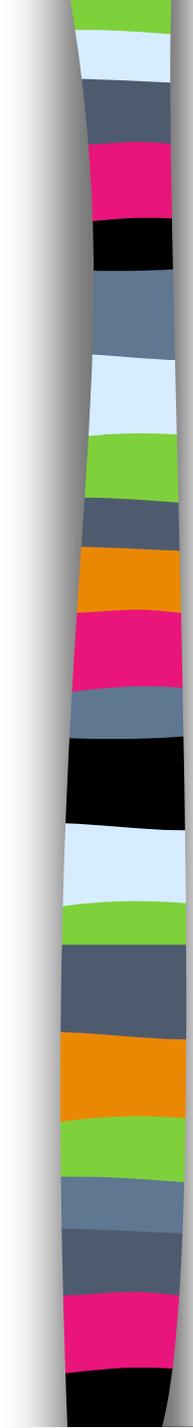
## ■ Specific Linchpin Struggles in each parent-child dyad:

- 1 ½ year old: Secure Base
- 3 year old: Hands on the Circle
- 5 year old: Safe Haven



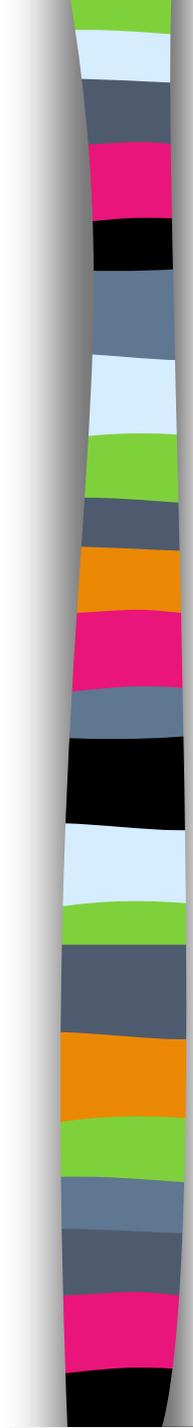
# Intervention – Wrap-Around services:

- COS-Parenting (to mother and all three children and to foster parents)
- In-home support (also trained in COS-P)
- Individual counselling (trauma-focussed and for victims of domestic violence)
- Rapid Exit Housing
- Multi-faceted Early Intervention Program (including pediatric monitoring and attachment-in-the-classroom approach)
- Advocacy re involvement with Child Protection Agency



# Outcomes (post-COS-P)

- Parent-child attachment relationships – Secure
- Children: Gains in quality of sibling relationships, self-regulation, and development
- Parent:
  - Improved affect regulation and coping
  - Enhanced cue-reading, sensitive responsiveness, empathy/affective attunement, & reflective functioning
  - Developed a sense of herself as successful in responding to her children's needs, even when her children's needs made her uncomfortable

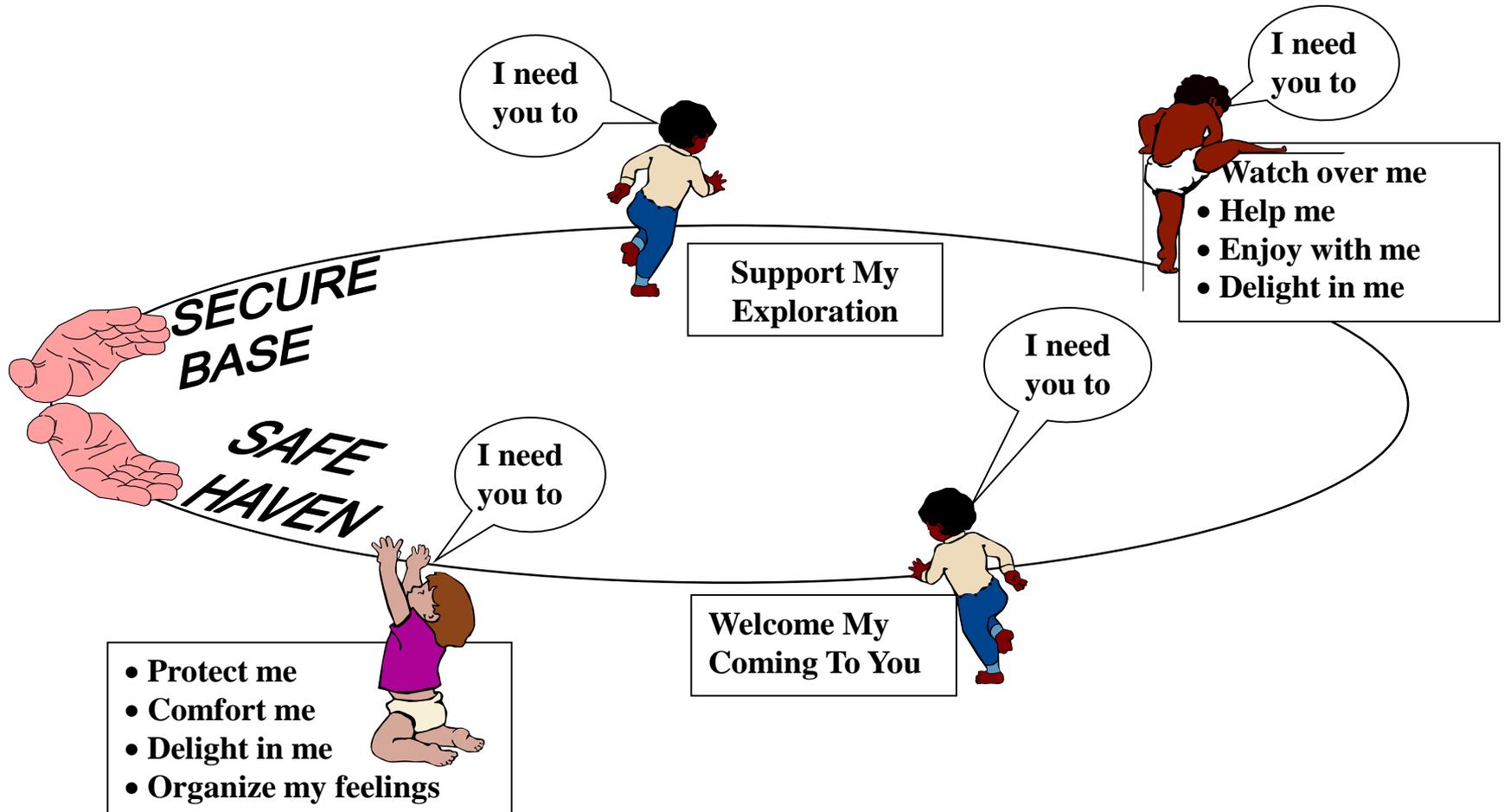


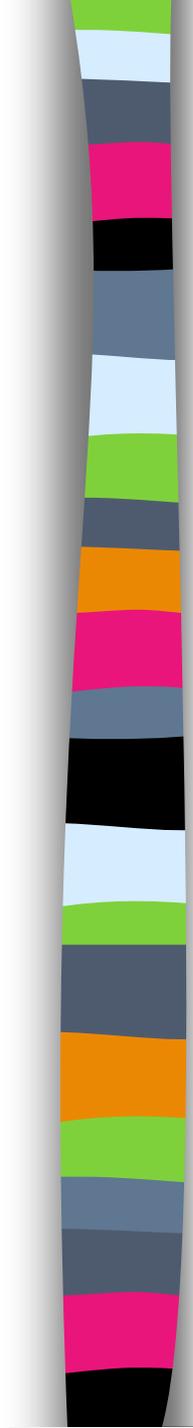
# Advantages of a Wrap-Around, integrated team approach:

- An attachment perspective underpins the team's clinical work (i.e., consistent message to parent and children)
- Creates a safe 'holding environment' for parent and children
- Draws on our individual expertise of team members to support different elements and needs of the family system
- Enhances progress made by mother

# Circle of Security

## Parent Attending to the Child's Needs





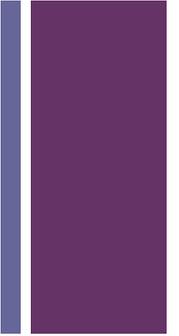
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# The Transdisciplinary use of COS-P to Promote Child Development and Secure Caregiver-Child Attachment

Dianne Tower, MA, S-LP (C), Reg. BC & Ami-Jo Dunn, MSC (OT)



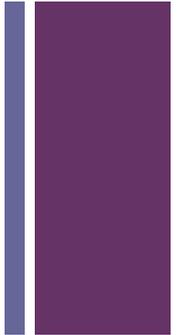
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# + WHAT?

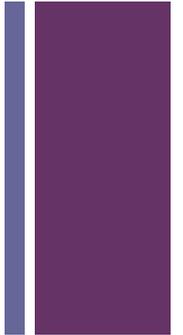
## Self-regulation

Of the 10 core concepts of development:

- Executive summary: **Self-regulation** is #3 of 10
  - #3. The growth of self-regulation is a cornerstone of early childhood development that cuts across all domains of behavior.
- (From Neurons to Neighborhoods: Shonkoff et al. 2000)



# + WHAT?

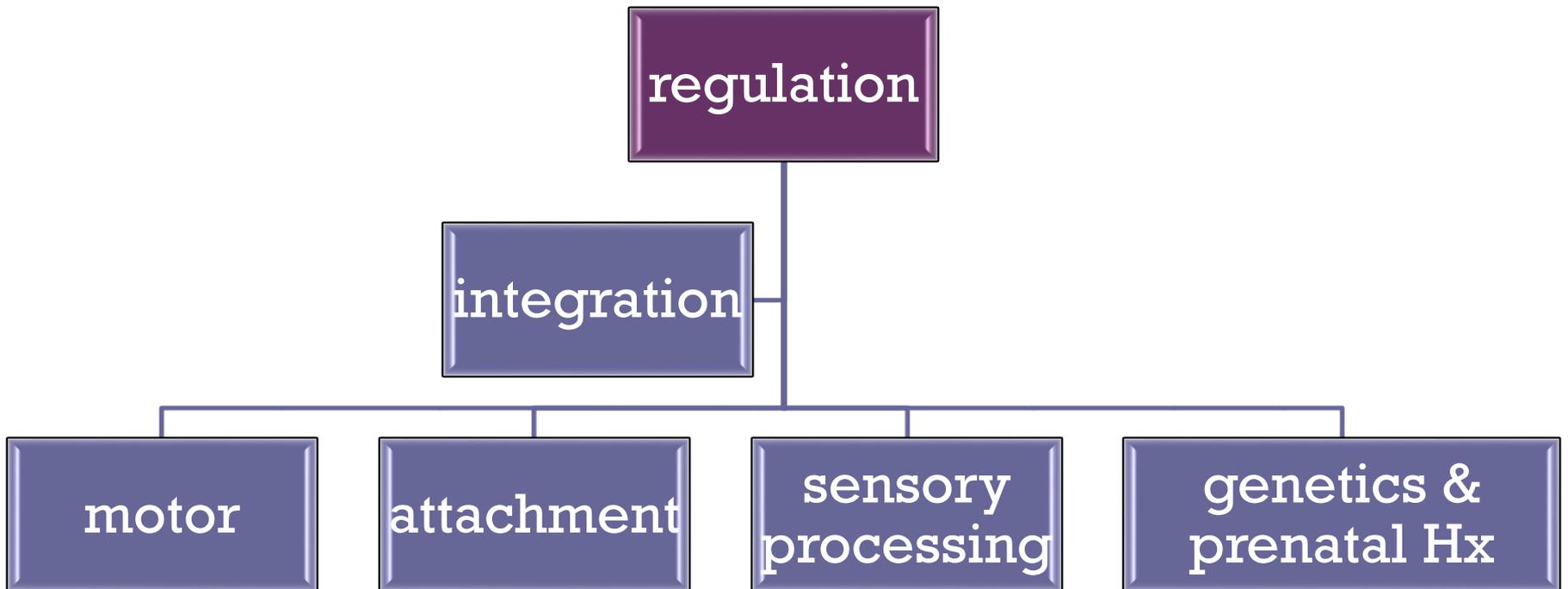
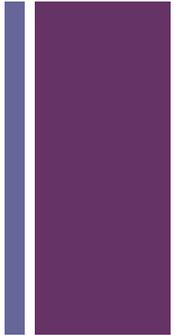


## Self-regulation:

- a child's ability to gain control of bodily functions, manage powerful emotions, and maintain focus and attention.
- a cornerstone of early childhood development and is visible in all areas of behavior.

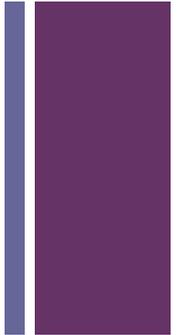
(Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000)

# + Regulation Foundations



# + WHAT?

## Regulation



- At the foundation is a secure and stable relationship
- This base provides stability (physical & emotional) for exploration and growth
- This is the starting point for learning. **The brain can either grow or protect.**

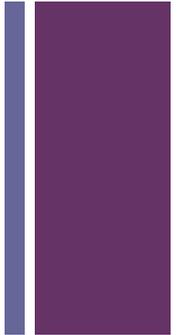
# + WHAT?

## Attachment



- Hard wired to connect
- The attachment system is shaped by experience
- The child's pattern of brain function becomes activated within the context of relationship
- This adaptation to experience changes the development of the brain either positively or negatively

# + WHAT?



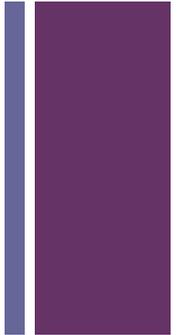
“There is no such thing as a baby, there is a baby AND someone”.

- Donald Winnicott MD

# + WHO?

## Parents

- Provide the relational context for growth
- Parent's own relational patterns and nervous systems set the stage for child's interactions
- Parents provide a relational & regulatory base from which the child learns.



# + WHO?

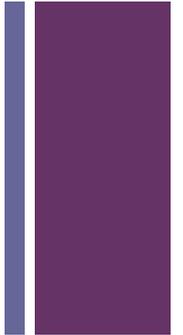
## Parents

- Families referred for support with children with :
  - “extreme behavior”, risky actions (jumping/climbing/running away), high pain tolerance, can’t sit still or pay attention and tantrums / meltdowns, etc
  - physiological regulatory difficulties such as sleep, feeding, temperature regulation
  - limited joint attention, poor social language and play skills
- Referral often requests a sensory integration assessment to help with strategies for regulation



# WHO?

## Professionals



OT – “Occupational therapists use a knowledge base of neurology, anatomy, physiology, kinesiology, child development, psychology, psychosocial development, activity-task analysis, and therapeutic techniques. They are trained to treat clients holistically, addressing their cognitive, emotional and physical need through functional, activity based treatment.” (Williams and Shellenberger, 1992)

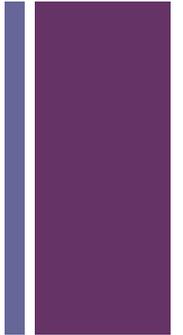
Child Development Centre – other team members include speech therapist, physiotherapist, infant development consultants, family services coordinator, preschool teachers, support child care workers and respite/skills workers

Families with children infants to 5 years old, who have developmental delays or are at risk for delays

# + WHO?

## Professionals

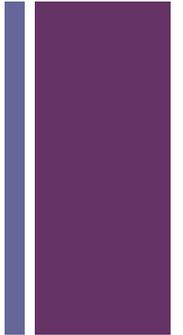
- Within & Across disciplines:
  - Provide “hands on the circle” support for families and for team members or organizations





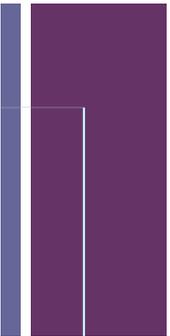
# WHO?

## Transdisciplinary Approach



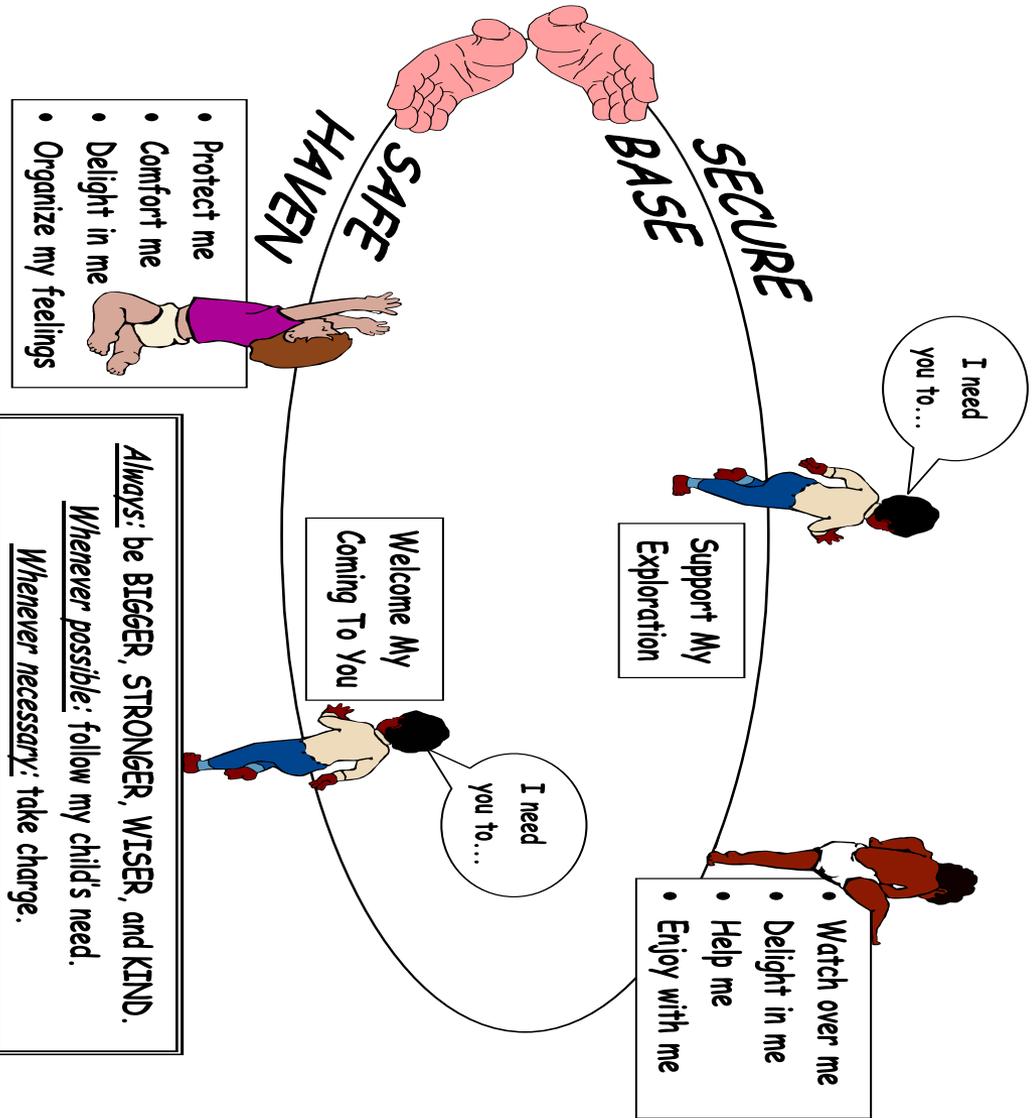
“As the the natural developmental association between sensory input and psychic experience becomes better understood, the two forms of therapy may profit from joining forces. What is rocking and being cuddled other than tactile and vestibular stimulation plus and interpersonal relationship? Are not the neural traces for the sensory and the social aspect of experience laid down as one in the brain? Are not many of the child’s important emotional experiences in the first five years of life closely associated on an experiential and therefore neurological basis with their sensorimotor equivalents?”

(Ayres, 1972)



# CIRCLE OF SECURITY

PARENT ATTENDING TO THE CHILD'S NEEDS

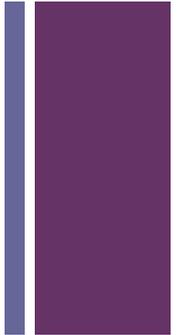


+ HOW?

# + HOW?

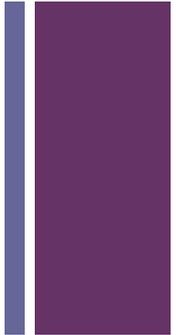
- Common framework & language to understand and describe relationships
- Accessibility of content across demographics
- Flexibility of concepts to variety of applications across disciplines
- Training for professional to become skilled in creating a “holding environment” for building family capacity

# + HOW?



- Informal education with the circle, shark music and cues/miscue
- COS-P, 1:1 or group

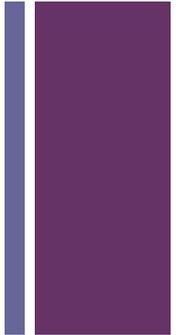
# + HOW?



- Circle:
  - Builds observational skills
  - Helps parents understand their child
  - Gives framework / road map
  - Assists parents in understanding their role with developing child's regulation

Case example

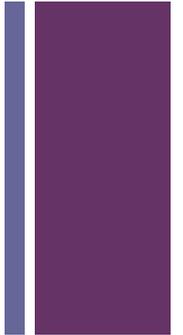
# + HOW?



- Shark Music:
  - Interesting and relatable way for parents to reflect on area(s) of struggle
  - “Being With” parents during their reflection BEFORE moving into strategies and intervention

Case example

# + HOW?



- Cues & Miscues:
  - Builds parents observational skills
  - Increase parents understanding of child's bottom up attempts to regulate (i.e. deep pressure, small space, oral motor, etc)
  - Help parents understand how sensory integration difficulties can contribute to miscues and overall arousal levels

Case example

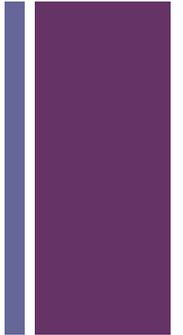
# + WHY?

- “The course of development can be altered in early childhood by effective interventions that change the balance between risk and protection, thereby shifting the odds in favor of more adaptive outcomes”

\* #10 principle (Shonkoff et al., 2000 ,Neurons to Neighborhoods)

# + WHEN?

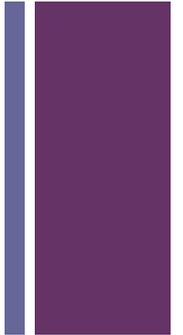
## Prevention & Early Intervention



- Early Access to Support:
  - Creates a shift towards favorable and adaptive outcomes (Shonkoff, 2000)
  - Supports the resiliency of the child by increasing protective factors and minimizing the risks and vulnerabilities (Werner, 2001)



# Reflections:



- ***What do we accept?***

- Sensitive caregiver influences infant brain development (architecture)

-  ***What can we change?***

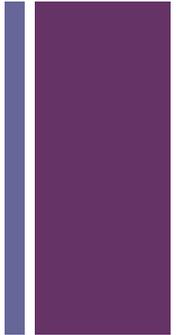
- Support parents to support infants/children in gaining self-regulatory skills
- Approach to parents: COS-P as prevention and early intervention

-  ***What do we need to ask?***

- How can we collaborate to improve child and family outcomes



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