Parent Infant Interactions

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Outline

• Importance of parent-infant relationship
• Assessment of parent-infant relationship
• CARE-Index – video based assessment
• Video clips
• Summary
Importance of 1st 1001 Critical Days

• 1001 Critical Days Campaign 2013

• Cross party initiative

• Highlighted importance of period from conception to 2\textsuperscript{nd} birthday
Infant brains

- Fetal brain is ‘under construction’ - synapses 2nd half pregnancy

- Fetus sensitive to mother’s emotional state – Fetal heart rate goes up in anxious group – Catherine Monk et al

- Domestic conflict - direct impact on fetus. Stress system switched on

- Much of the infant brain is developed after birth

- 90% of the growth of the human brain occurs in the first 5 years of life.
Parent-infant relationship

• Key to development of healthy neural pathways
  – Emotional regulation (limbic system)
  – Prefrontal cortex (executive function)
• “..the essential task of the 1st year of human life is the co-creation of a secure attachment bond of emotional communication between the infant and his/her primary caregiver.

• The baby communicates its burgeoning positive emotional states (e.g., joy, excitement) and negative emotional states (e.g., fear, anger) to the caregiver so that s/he can then regulate them.

• The attachment relationship shapes the ability of the baby to communicate with not just the mother, but ultimately with other human beings.”

Schore (Science of the Art of Psychotherapy, 2012)
Attachment

• Attachment = interactive regulation of emotion

• Right brain of mother to right brain of baby

• Especially at night!
Mother not only receives infant’s right brain emotional communications, but then interactively regulates them.

Baby becomes securely attached to psycho-biologically attuned caregiver who minimizes negative affect (e.g., fear, in soothing) and maximizes positive affect (e.g., joy, in play).

“It is the emotional availability of the caregiver in intimacy which seems to be the most central growth-promoting feature of the early rearing experience.”

“The main thing is a commun-ication between the baby and the mother in terms of the anatomy and physiology of live bodies.” Winnicott (1986)
Primary Inter-Subjectivity

EMOTIONS
EXPRESSED
and
ACTIVELY
PERCEIVED

The baby, attracted to the mother’s voice, face expressions and hand gestures, replies playfully, with affection; imitating, and provoking imitations.

The mother watches and listens, anticipating the baby’s expressions intuitively. She replies sympathetically and playfully, with ‘motherese’ speech, touches and face and hand expressions.

PROTOCONVERSATION
Rhythmic Turn-Taking of Expressive Acts
Developing representations of emotions and relationships

- Sensitive mother interprets baby’s behaviour - reflective function
- Plays back via ‘marked mirroring’ and verbal labeling - contingent
- Child learns to recognise these himself, and later in mother
- Accurate mental representations – basis of affect regulation and impulse control, coherent sense of self
A Working Model

Mother’s childhood relationships

Maternal IWM

Maternal sensitivity and Reflective function

Infant attachment

Infant’s IWM

Future relationships
Vulnerable Parents
Parental problems and infants

Key factors
- domestic violence; mental health problems; substance and alcohol misuse; unresolved trauma

Infant’s emotional states trigger profound discomfort in these parents

Triggers their internal working models/representations

Non-contingent responses to infant cues
Consequences for infants

- Poor emotional regulation
- Impaired executive functioning
- Stress system in overdrive
- Long term consequences
  - Mental health
  - Physical health
  - Social functioning
Parent Infant Intervention

• Importance of early intervention

• Universal services - Tier 1 & Tier 2

• Parent Infant Psychotherapy in context of perinatal services - Tier 3
CARE-Index

- Oldest of DMM measures developed by Patricia Crittenden
- Best validated of DMM assessments
- Several studies of low risk populations; prospective longitudinal studies
CARE-Index

• Procedure: 3-5 minute video of interaction with parent and baby

• Any setting

• Start while dyad settling

• Birth – 15 months
CARE-Index

• Assessment of playful interaction under non-threatening circumstances

• Assesses dyadic characteristics associated with attachment

• Assesses development of relationship roles
CARE-Index Coding

Sensitivity to infant signals is the central construct around which the coding system is constructed.

Sensitivity is a dyadic construct.
Sensitivity

Adult sensitivity in play is any pattern of behaviour that pleases the infant and increases the infant’s comfort and attentiveness and reduces its distress and disengagement.
ADEQUATE RANGE  
Sensitive (11-14)  
13-14 Mutual delight, joy in one another, a dance  
11-12 Smooth, pleasing interaction, playful, shared positive affect  
Adequate (7-10)  
9-10 Quite satisfactory play, no problems but no dance  
7-8 Adequate play, but noticeable periods of dysynchrony (either controlling or unresponsive)  

INTERVENTION RANGE  
Inept (5-6)  
5-6 Clear, unresolved problems, limited playfulness but no evidence of hostility or lack of empathy (unresponsiveness)  

HIGH RISK RANGE  
At risk (0-4)  
3-4 Clear lack of empathy, nevertheless, some feeble attempt to respond to infant; lack of playful quality  
0-2 Total failure to perceive or attempt to soothe infants distressed state; no play
Seven aspects of interactional behaviour

- Facial expression
- Verbal expression
- Position and body contact
- Affection
- Turn taking contingencies
- Control
- Choice of activity
Adult Scale

• **Sensitive**
  – just right for *that* baby

• **Controlling**
  – too much for *that* baby

• **Unresponsive**
  – not enough for *that* baby
Infant responses

• Co-operative
  – mum makes me feel good and I like being with her

• Difficult
  – too much of mum, overwhelsms me and it's safe for me to show my negative experience

• Compulsive
  – too much of mum, overwhelsms me, but I have to inhibit my display of negative experience because my mum responds negatively if I show it

• Passive
  – my mum doesn’t do enough to connect me to her, so we are usually unconnected
Compulsivity

• Compulsive compliance – prevent adult hostility or intrusiveness. Punishment used to reinforce inhibition of forbidden behaviour

• Accompanied by fearfulness and wariness

• Lack of spontaneity, playfulness and joy

• Seen in child abuse
Rupture and Repair

• What its all about

• Normal for 30% of normal dyads not to be in synchrony

• How mother repairs rupture is key
References


