

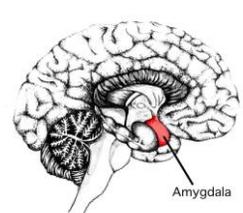
Brain-Based Strategies for Attachment-Informed Practice

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Relational Brain Basics



The Amygdala



- Scans for safety 4 times per second; are you with me?
- Triggers rapid, unconscious nervous system responses
- Regulates based on early experiences

The Nervous System

Window of Tolerance

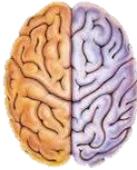
- Sympathetic (Danger)**
 - "Fight-flight," increased heart rate, rage/panic, impaired cognition and relations
- Ventral Vagal (Safety)**
 - Social engagement (eyes, face, voice), cognition, exploration
- Dorsal Vagal (Life threat)**
 - "Freeze," decreased heart rate, dissociation, incapacitated cognition

Thanks to Stephen Porges

Left and Right Hemispheres

LEFT

- Logical, literal
- Linguistic
- Social self
- Task oriented
- Goal directed
- Factual Memory



RIGHT

- Holistic, figurative
- Relationship focused
- In the moment
- Connected to body brain & amygdala
- Implicit memory

Thanks to Ian McGilchrist

Implicit and Explicit Memory

Explicit

- Has beginning and end
- Can be called up
- Happened in the past
- Begins at 4 or 5

Implicit

- Embodied experience
- Always in the present
- First 36 months of life imprints only implicit memory

Explicit →



← Implicit



Secure Attachment

- Presence
- Contact
- Reflection
- Responsiveness
- Delight

● Co-regulation enables the brain to self-regulate



Securely Attached Children

- Have better regulated nervous systems:
 - Able to focus
 - Display curiosity and explore
 - Are available to learn
 - Have better memory
- Less reactive to stress means more resilient

Insecurely Attached Children



More reactive nervous systems:

- React quickly to stress
- Get frustrated easily
- Are vigilant
- Explore less
- Are less likely to use relationships for soothing
- Withdraw or become aggressive when upset

Motivational Circuits in the Brain

ACTIVATED WHEN WE ARE OUT OF CONNECTION WITH SIGNIFICANT OTHERS	ACTIVATED WHEN WE ARE IN CONNECTION WITH SIGNIFICANT OTHERS
RAGE (anger) FEAR (anxiety) PANIC/GRIEF (separation distress)	CARE (nurturance) LUST (sexual excitement) PLAY (social joy)
SEEKING (expectancy)	

How is this an example of treating the wrong part of the brain?

- o **Treatment Focus:** Compliance with authority figures
- o **Note:** Worked w child to accept adult directions. Talked to child to help feel comfortable. Child responded appropriately. Asked child to complete an assigned task. Child withdrew and turned back on me. Allowed time to calm down. Child continued to be rude. Directed child. Child ignored me again. Stated to the child that I was here to help but needed child's participation. Child continued to ignore me and moved away from me. Client was oppositional and is making poor progress towards treatment goal.

What could you do differently?

Thanks to Rick Gaskill

Strategy One:

Know Yourself

Self-Regulation



- Self-knowledge and self-care
- Calm amygdala
- Know triggers and protective behaviors:
 - Anxious? Frazzled? Yelling?
 - Analytical? detached?
 - Humor? Make light?

Moment of Reflection

- What are some of your primary triggers and protective behaviors?
- Brainstorm ways to support yourself under stress?



Strategy Two:

Know the Child

Observe and Respond

- Watch for triggers, behavioral change, body language, gestures
- Relate to child's developmental age not biological
- Wonder: How does "acting out" serve/protect?



Strategy Three:

Provide Empathy

Healing Presence



- Focus on emotions and underlying needs not the behavior
- Remember relating is more important than analyzing (soothes the amygdala)
- Communicate unconditional presence

Strategies to Provide Empathy

- Reflective listening
- Attuned body language and tone



Strategy Four:

Provide
Predictability and
Repetition

Routines and Repetition

- Neuro-ception of safety
- Predictability
- Create rituals
- Be unconditional
- Repeat, repeat



I Love You Rituals by Becky Bailey, Ph.D.

Strategy Five:

Provide Body-Based Activities to Regulate the Lower Brain

(while in connection to another)

Calming and Grounding

- Include the senses: heavy blanket, tea, rocking chair, shaving cream, brushing hair, clay, crochet, sand, finger painting, snacks, baking
- Songs and rhymes
- REPEAT, REPEAT

Building implicit sense of calm and safety



Next Steps



How can you share this information to support kids and those who care for them?

Final Thoughts

- Each of us is always in our best possible adaptation
- Healing will happen not through words or discipline but through the relationships you create



Resources



- Brain Resources**
- B. Perry – The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog, Born to Love
 - D. Siegel – The Whole-Brain Child
 - B. Badenoch—Being A Brain-Wise Therapist
- Parenting Resources**
- Beyond Consequences, Logic, and Control—Forbes and Post
 - Parenting from the Inside Out—Siegel
 - Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids—Markham
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