SUPPORTING ATTACHMENT RELATIONSHIPS

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DISCLOSURE
ROYALTIES FROM ATTACHMENT-INFORMED PARENT COACHING

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
- Attendees will learn:
  - To recognize the role of attachment in healthy development
  - How to promote healthy attachment
  - About resources for parent-child relationship difficulties
WHAT LENS DO YOU USE FOR VIEWING PARENT-CHILD INTERACTIONS AND ADDRESSING PROBLEMS?

Take a few seconds to reflect on the lens you bring to your work with parents and children.

ROLE OF ATTACHMENT IN HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

Our relationships with attachment figures influence who we are, who we become, and our lens for viewing the world.
DEFINING ATTACHMENT

Attachment is a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space.

Mary Ainsworth

ROLE OF ATTACHMENT IN HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

Relationships with attachment figures provide the foundation for:

- Emotional regulation
- Behavioral regulation

How to Promote Healthy Attachment
“Humans are a weed species.”
Steve Suomi

Humans have succeeded in a wide variety of environments
- Our dependence on relationships with others for survival
- Our ability to adapt to a wide variety of environments, including a wide variety of caregiving environments

Using the Inborn Need for Attachment to Promote Healthy Attachment: Attachment Priming
- We can “prime” affiliative and attachment behaviors by focusing on conditions that set the stage for these behaviors.
Attachment priming improves prosocial behavior in 18-month-olds

Over & Carpenter (2009), Psychological Science.
To promote healthy attachment

Harness the universal need for attachment

USE ATTACHMENT SECURITY PRIMING TO IMPROVE CHILD BEHAVIOR

What examples of attachment and positive child interactions do you have in your practice setting?

Experience of positive caregiver-child interaction increases child’s cooperative behavior and compliance.

How does your practice setting promote positive caregiver-child interactions?
ATTACHMENT SECURITY PRIMING IN ADULTS

- Pictures of mother and child
- Remembering positive experience with attachment figure

ATTACHMENT SECURITY PRIMING IN ADULTS

- More positive mood
- Generosity

USE ATTACHMENT SECURITY PRIMING TO PROMOTE PARENTS’ ATTACHMENT BEHAVIOR

- Experience of positive caregiver-child interaction increases caregiver’s sensitive responsiveness to child’s attachment signals

- How does your practice setting provide a child-friendly and parent-friendly environment that promotes attachment?
PROMOTING HEALTHY ATTACHMENT
BY SUPPORTING PARENTS

If a community values its children, it must cherish its mothers.

John Bowlby

PROMOTING HEALTHY ATTACHMENT
BY SUPPORTING PARENTS

“DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE
OTHERS DO UNTO OTHERS.”

JEREE PAWL

PROMOTING HEALTHY ATTACHMENT
BY SUPPORTING PARENTS

It is our job as early childhood educators and parenting researchers to assure
new parents that attachment is a process, not dependent on any single event
or specific parenting practice.

Howard Steele
PROMOTING HEALTHY ATTACHMENT BY SUPPORTING PARENTS

Parents need to be heard, seen, and appreciated so they can hear, see, and appreciate their children.

As we promote best practices in parenting, we need to be mindful of parents’ unique role in determining what is best for their family.

Focus on moments where the parent is responding to the child’s cues:
- crying
- smiling
- reaching for the parent

Tell parents what a fabulous job they are doing of ____________________:
- Responding to their child’s cues
- Asking for help
- Coping with sleep-deprivation
WHAT IS HEALTHY ATTACHMENT?

Healthy attachment is a balance.

Healthy attachment provides secure base support for exploration.
HEALTHY ATTACHMENT PROVIDES

Safe haven
Support for seeking proximity and comfort when distressed

ORGANIZED PATTERNS OF ATTACHMENT

• Secure (B)
• Ambivalent/resistant (C)
• Avoidant (A)

Secure

independence

relationship
Secure attachment is a protective factor.

Insecure attachment, especially disorganized, is a risk factor.

**HOW TO PROMOTE HEALTHY ATTACHMENT**

- Recognize and support moments of secure attachment and healthy functioning.
- Respond to parents’ concerns about their child’s emotional development and behavior problems.

Referrals for Parent-Child Relationship Problems

Promoting Healthy Attachment
Harnessing the power of attachment to address parent-child relationship problems in young children

Two Phases to IoWA-PCIT

Child-Directed Interaction (CDI)
Focus on teaching parent to follow the child’s lead.

Parent-Directed Interaction (PDI)
Focus on teaching child to follow parent’s lead.
Teaching parent to set limits.
Teaching parent to give effective commands.

https://pcit.lab.uiowa.edu/
Child-Directed Interaction (CDI)

“The most precious gift we can offer anyone is our attention.”

- Thich Nhat Hanh

“When mindfulness embraces those we love, they will bloom like flowers.”

- Thich Nhat Hanh
Why I talk about the **power of attention** instead of "negative attention-seeking behavior" or "just doing that to get attention"

- "Attention-seeking" or "just doing that to get attention" evokes
  - negative idea about children’s need for attention and their attachment needs
  - defensiveness in parents as implies they are not giving their child enough attention

**Parent-Directed Interaction (PDI)**

“There is a point, however, toward the end of the first year of life or early in the second year, when a baby's confidence in being able to control the world through his own actions is well enough established that parents can begin to show him the limits of his power.”

Mary Ainsworth

- Parent-Directed Interaction involves a series of steps to teach the child to follow directions.
- Consequences are introduced gradually and with a focus on the child and parent feeling successful.
- "Listening practice" is used at home to reinforce the importance of learning to follow directions.
REFERRING PARENTS FOR PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS

• Referrals for parent-child relationship problems are most useful when:
  • The referral addresses the parent’s concern – the parent feels heard
  • The referral is provided at the time the parent wants help – the parent feels their concern is taken seriously
  • The referral expands the network of support and guidance for the parent – the parent feels supported in developing a relationship with another provider

RESOURCES

• IoWA-PCIT website:
  • List of IoWA-PCIT providers: https://pcitlab.uiowa.edu/
  • IoWA-PCIT manual and handouts

Resources:
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