

Attachment Theory 101 in Juvenile Court

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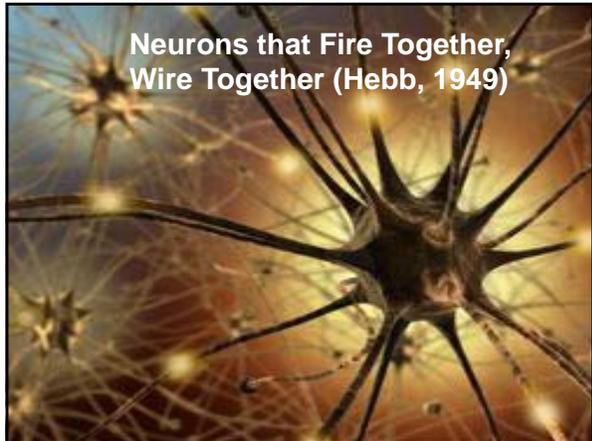
“We are
hardwired for
relationships”

Allan Schore

Brains develop and organize
in the context of relationships.



Positively and **Negatively**



Imitation starts at birth

- Mirror neurons
- Ten-minute old newborn doing tongue-protrusion and mouth-opening, Meltzoff experiments.
- [..\videos\Neonate_imitation.wmv](#)
- "Micro events"
- [..\videos\The Still Face Experiment.wmv](#)
- Next Videos
 - <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/>

What is Trauma?

- An exceptional experience in which powerful and dangerous stimuli overwhelm the capacity to regulate emotions.
- Definition (NASMHPD, 2006)
- The experience of violence and victimization including sexual abuse, physical abuse, severe neglect, loss, domestic violence and/or the witnessing of violence, terrorism or disasters

“the relationship”

- Infants and toddlers **come to experience the full range of human emotions.**
- Initially, they depend heavily on adults to help them **regulate their interaction, attention, and behavior** as they experience emotion.
- Increasing self-monitoring by the young child contributes to the emotional regulation that is a sign of mental health.

“the relationship”

- Through **relationships with parents and other caregivers**, infants and toddlers learn what people expect of them and what they can expect of other people.
- **Nurturing, protective, stable, and consistent relationships are essential to young children’s mental health.**
- Thus, the state of adults’ emotional well-being and life circumstances profoundly affects the quality of infant/caregiver relationships.

Bonding, Attachment, and the Brain

- Critical periods, occur during the first year when bonding experiences (serve and return interactions) must be present for the brain systems responsible for attachment to develop normally.
- If missed → impaired bonding
- **Severe emotional neglect during early childhood can be devastating causing children to lose the capacity to form any meaningful relationships for the rest of their lives.**
- **Aka: neurons that fire together wire together.**
- **“We are hardwired for relationships”**

Attachment

"lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (Bowlby, 1969, p. 194)

"The propensity to make strong emotional bonds to particular individuals is a basic component of human nature" (Bowlby, 1988, 3)

Characteristics of Attachment

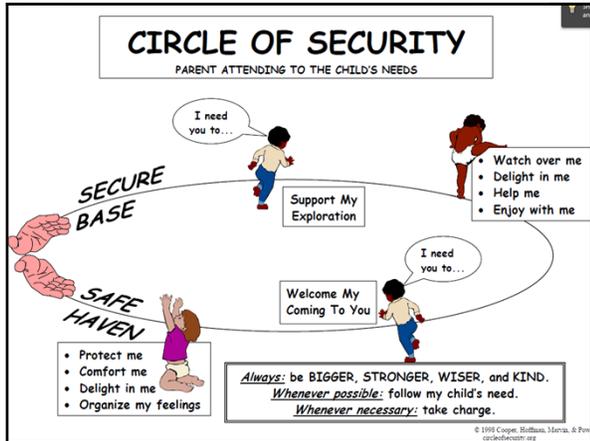
- **Proximity Maintenance** - The desire to be near the people we are attached to.
- **Secure Base** - The attachment figure acts as a base of security from which the child can explore the surrounding environment.
- **Safe Haven** - Returning to the attachment figure for comfort and safety in the face of a fear or threat.
- **Separation Distress** - Anxiety that occurs in the absence of the attachment figure.
- [..\videos\separation anxiety - YouTube.mp4](#)

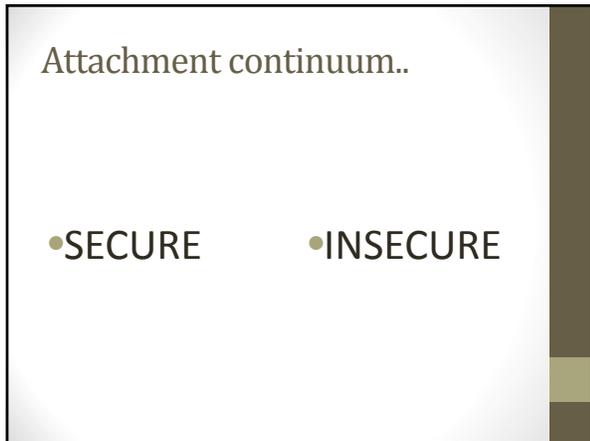
(Bowlby, 1988)

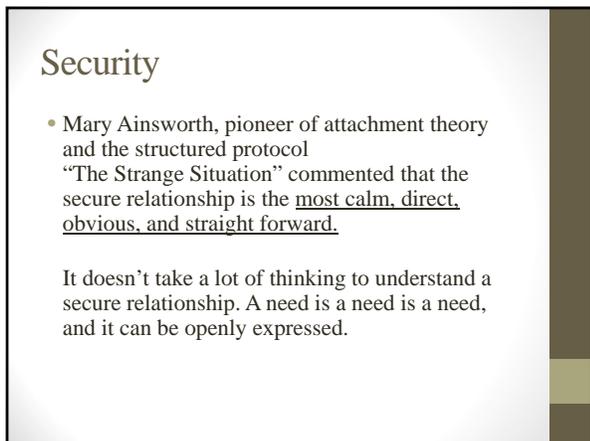
Key Elements of an Attachment Bond

- Enduring emotional relationship with a specific person
- Presence of that person provides a sense of safety, comfort, and pleasure
- Loss or threat of loss of that person evokes intense distress

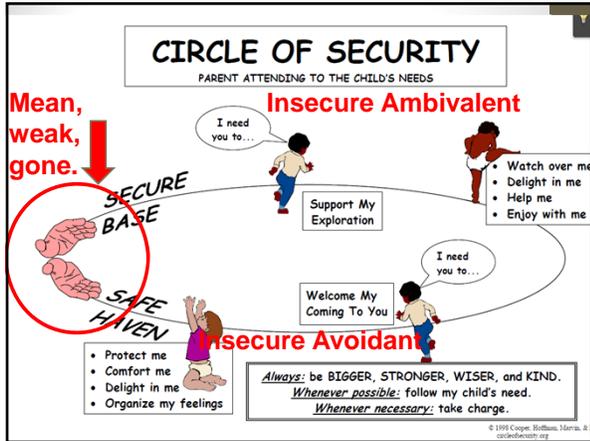
(Perry, 2002)







Insecurity
 is the unresolved tension between
 experiences of
being with
 and experiences of
not being with.



Characteristics of Children with secure healthy attachments?
 The more secure children are the more they are able to:

- Know that most problems will be solved.
- Have high self esteem.
- Get along better with friends.
- Know how to be kind to those around them.
- Solve problems on their own.

The more secure children are the more they are able to:

- Have better relationships with brothers and sisters.
- Feel less anger at their parents.
- Solve problems with friends.
- Turn to their parents for help when in trouble.
- Trust the people they love.
- Enjoy more happiness with their parents.
