


PLAY AND EMOTION

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NEUFELD DEVELOPMENTAL PARADIGM

Maturation

Vulnerability

Attachment

Emotions

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Emotion has WORK to do.

**The ultimate job of emotion is
to GROW THE CHILD UP.**

**The immediate task of emotion
is
SURVIVAL**

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Defining Emotion

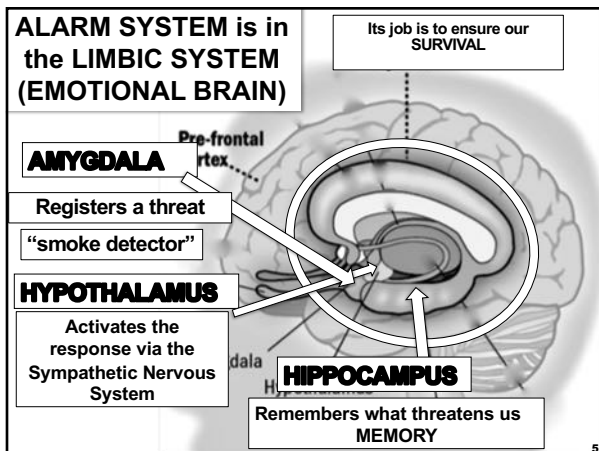
• TO BE STIRRED UP

- happens to us as opposed to under our control
- is irrational although the brain has its reasons

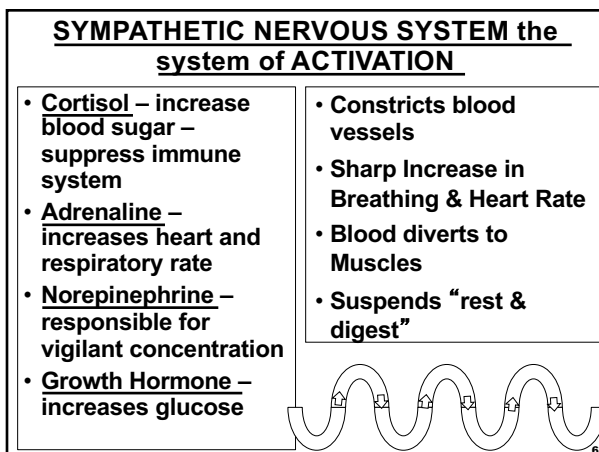
• TO BE MOVED TO

- is meant to move us in ways that would serve us

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EMOTIONS


need to be EXPRESSED
to preserve
healthy functioning and well-being

Emotions are supposed to rise up and flow
through our children.


Their existence is not a problem, although the
way they are expressed may be the cause of
problems.

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Emotions need to be expressed BUT...




1. Expression is often
MESSY & NOISY,
CHAOTIC &
UNACCEPTABLE,
ALIENATING &
WOUNDING



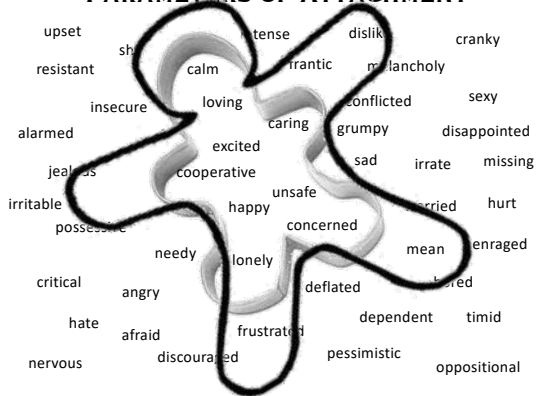
2. It can threaten a child's
RELATIONSHIPS.

3. So, the brain can suppress or depress
emotion to protect its attachments
especially if emotional expression is
considered to be "unacceptable".



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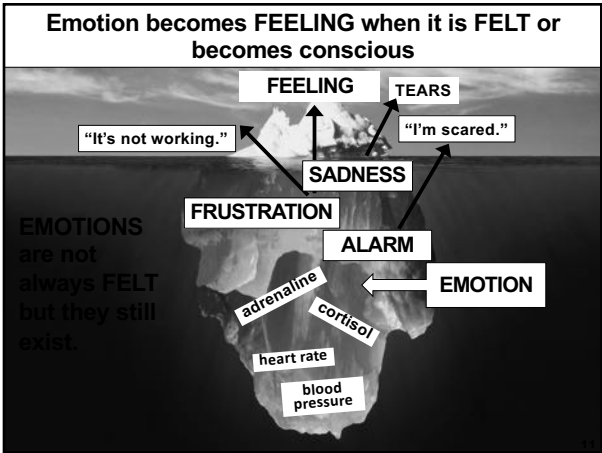
PARAMETERS OF ATTACHMENT



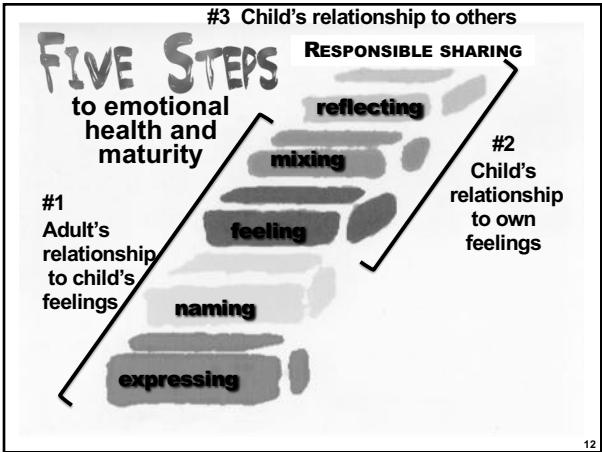
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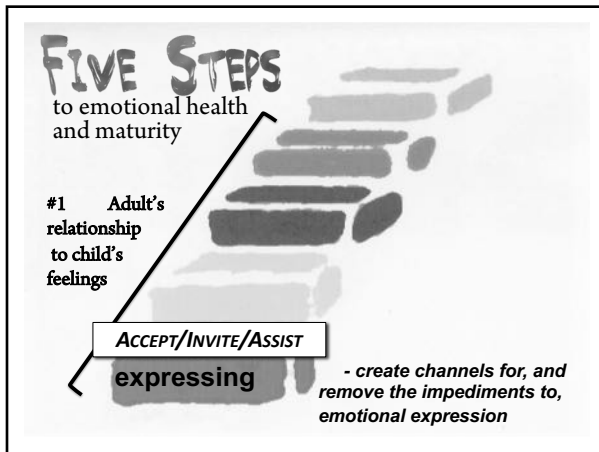
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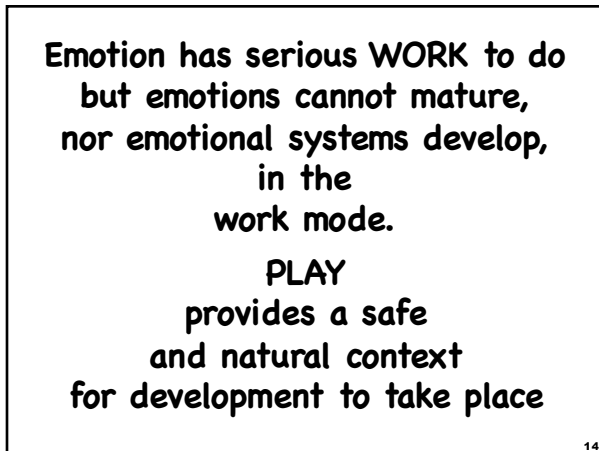
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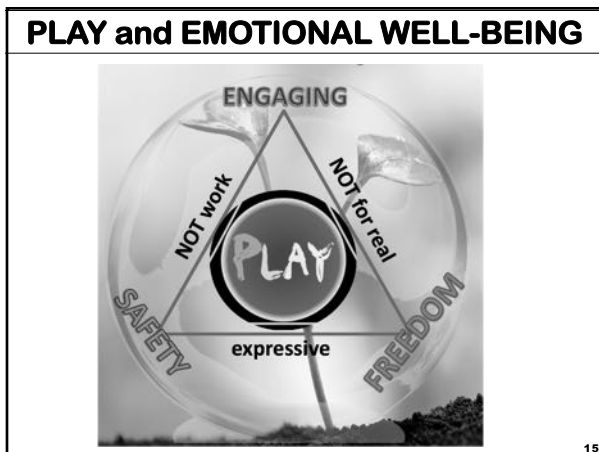
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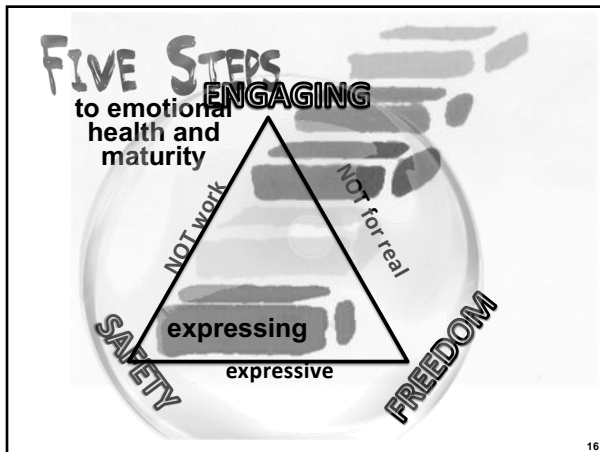
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PLAY and EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING
<p>David Elkind in the <i>Power of Play</i></p> <p>- over the past two decades, children have lost <u>twelve hours</u> of free time a week, including eight hours of unstructured play and outdoor activities.</p>
<p>Stuart Brown on the <i>Status of Play</i> (Encyclopedia of Play Science)</p> <p>- outdoor play has decreased by 71% in one generation in both the US and the UK.</p>
<p>Escalating diagnoses of childhood anxiety, depression and ADHD has paralleled the <u>loss of Play</u> - Peter Gray, American Journal of Play 2011</p>
<p>LOSING THE SPACE TO PLAY</p>

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PLAY AND THE BRAIN
<p>PLAY AND ADHD</p> <p>At present, reasonable predictions are that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • psychostimulants will REDUCE the natural play urges of human children • a <u>regular diet of physical play</u>, each and every day during childhood, should alleviate ADHD-type symptoms in many children and diminish numbers of kids on the "clinical" track; • play will have long-term <u>pro-social benefits</u> for children's brains and minds, that are not obtained with psycho-stimulants;
<p>Panksepp – ADHD p. 63</p>

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PLAY AND THE BRAIN

PLAY AND ADHD

Have ADHD children received less social play in childhood? This has never been documented. *But what if it turned out that a substantial percentage of ADHD kids currently receiving psychostimulants are simply normal kids who have excessive, unsatisfied desires to play, and ADHD symptoms would diminish with play supplementation?*

In our informal efforts to evaluate this, we (at the Memorial Foundation for Lost Children in Bowling Green, Ohio) **routinely counseled fathers in families with young ADHD children** to expend special effort to have **daily periods of happy rough-and-tumble play** with their children. Their feedback was consistently that **such daily activities were beneficial**.


Panksepp – ADHD p. 63 19


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PLAY and EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

When children are “stirred up” emotionally, their PLAY can reflect themes they are struggling with.

PLAY is how they naturally make sense of all the emotions they are experiencing.





Unstructured dramatic play gives children the freedom to choose their own roles and play scenarios.

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What Play Offers Emotion



- a work-free space for development to take place
- protection for feelings
- expression without repercussion

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Taking PURSUIT & SEPARATION into PLAY

Play is a place to process their internal world

- playing the orphan
- playing and re-playing the birth of a sibling
- pretending to be a creature (eg, dog or cat) to get some affection
- playing the baby or playing sick in order to solicit being taken care of
- fairy tales where children are lost or face separation



"It is through play that children get to imagine how they will survive in the face of adversity." Hannah Beach

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Taking PURSUIT & SEPARATION into PLAY

- **CHASING**

- tag, chasing the win, the prize, the score

- **HUNTING**

- catching, collecting, acquiring, attracting, hoarding, possessing

- **FINDING**

- hide & seek play, finding the treasure play, fantasies of finding love, status, fame



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Taking ALARM into PLAY

Play is like a release valve – it allows the emotions to move through.


- corona virus tag
- playing with monsters
- being the monster
- scary stories (one step removed)
- pretending to be scared
- playing "disaster"
- playing hospital/being sick



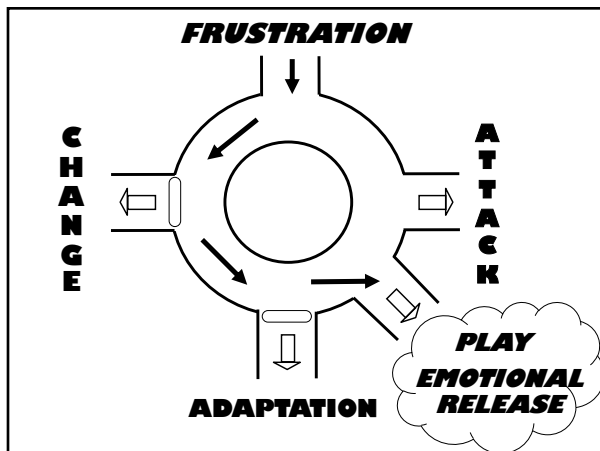
Reduces the driven-ness of alarm in real life while exercising the flight to safety

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Taking ALARM into PLAY	
<p>Cultivating COURAGE - facing what alarms in play</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • slaying-the-dragon play • claiming-the-treasure play • taming-the-monster play • daring oneself in play 	
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Taking FRUSTRATION into play	
<p>Playing out the impulses to MAKE THINGS WORK</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making things perfect - puzzles • constructing and crafts • building – Lego, blocks 	
<p>When children can't make their world work, let's give them a chance to make other things "work".</p>	
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Taking FRUSTRATION into play	
Cultivating PATIENCE Facing what frustrates in play	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • frustration is encountered in the context of engagement • since one is free not to play, frustration is optional and thus more likely to be embraced 	
Increases tolerance and mastery of frustration	
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Taking FRUSTRATION into play	
PLAYING OUT the impulses to ATTACK or DESTROY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • destroying & demolishing • hitting & throwing • kicking & screaming • war games • attacking games • play fighting 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces levels of frustration • Decreases aggression and violence in real life 	
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Taking FUTILITY and SADNESS into play	
Facing FUTILITY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • games provide plenty of experiences of loss and losing that do not 'count' for real • play confronts us with the futility of not being able to control another's will or decisions as well as of not being able to get our way • play (as in stories - one step removed) makes it easier to get a glimpse of the limits of our control, our finiteness, and the inescapable consequences of our decisions 	
A leap from weakness & fragility into strength & resilience.	
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Taking FUTILITY and SADNESS into play**Allowing space for SADNESS and TEARS**

- by giving something to cry about that is one step removed and thus not too much to bear
- by rendering defenses unnecessary and thus making it easier to feel
- by removing the self-consciousness, shame, fear, and social sanctions around tears



Promotes adaptation and builds resilience

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PLAY and VULNERABILITY

Masks, hats and glasses can also help to provide a 'veil' and help reduce vulnerability as they 'set the stage' for more emotional expression



Working with puppets often reduces vulnerability when expressing one's emotions



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Stories as a playground for emotion

- reading stories,
- writing stories,
- telling stories,
- hearing stories,
- watching stories (movies),
- creating stories,
- acting out stories

- stories provide multiple ways of activating, accessing and expressing emotions that are one-step removed from real life

- stories allow us to touch upon dynamics and topics that could be overwhelming in real life, as well as to take a break from real life

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The Healing Power of Play

- can **SOFTEN** the defenses and help get **TEARS** unstuck
- provides the **SAFETY** from the repercussions of emotional expression
- enables the emotional **MOVEMENT** that is the essential for healing and recovery
- spontaneous **RE-PLAY** provides for emotional discharge, resolution and neural resetting

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MAKE TIME FOR PLAY


When children play **alone**, they are creating an identity, or they are working through their emotions.

When children play **with each other**, they practice getting along with another, and/or are working through their emotions.

When children play **with adults**, attachment increases, and they are working through their emotions.

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*Emotion
is Nature's way
of taking care of us.*



*PLAY
is Nature's way
of taking care of
emotion.*


Gordon Neufeld

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THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT (CEBM)

Welcome to our site! As a support to the 10 Quebec School Boards of Quebec, the CEBM aims to enable boards and their staff to find developmentally appropriate interventions that are effective in helping students who are struggling with behavioural issues.

Events for 2021-2022 For Professionals only

A website that helps schools to use a developmental-trauma-responsive-attachment friendly approach

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How can teachers/schools make space for more playtime?

Do the adults need to get involved for the play to be beneficial?

What types of play should we be encouraging? Are games on the Smart Board considered as true play?

Do we need to encourage children to play together or is play equally beneficial when children play alone?

What if the play starts getting rough? Should we allow it and to which extent?

Must I step in and comfort a child if they display sadness or anger during their play or do I step back and let it run its course?

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Play and Emotion Resource Links

Neuroscience of Play

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QnHqs8Z5vMg>

For the handout of slides:

https://www.cebm.ca/files/ugd/931e65_4c1e579eab2a4d31ba78f9d1365dac13.pdf

Naming and Playing with Emotions

<https://youtu.be/w1Bjeej63go>

Link to the Padlet: <https://padlet.com/SpecEdConsultantsRSB/lhxwwgeqho7qz3ow>

Providing Opportunities for Emotional Expression Through Creative Experiences

<https://youtu.be/y19WYOT-afg>

Link to the Padlet: <https://padlet.com/SpecEdConsultantsRSB/rtbbhpekuuy3ngy3>

Enabling Emotional Release: Getting Physical and Outside

<https://youtu.be/oEsli8lGQgg>

Link to the Padlet: <https://padlet.com/SpecEdConsultantsRSB/gwbsr6o0h5hfmcge>

Understanding How Emotions Impact Play and How Play Can Be a Catalyst to Work Through Emotions

<https://youtu.be/-rZcfLHLBo>