What is the Developmental Approach?

Eva de Gosztonyi, **coordinator**

Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management

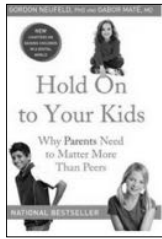*"Building the Capacity of the English School Boards of Quebec"*

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Based on the work of

Gordon Neufeld, PhD.

Hold on to your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More than Peers

Hold On to Your Kids
Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers

Canadian developmental psychologist, Vancouver, B.C.
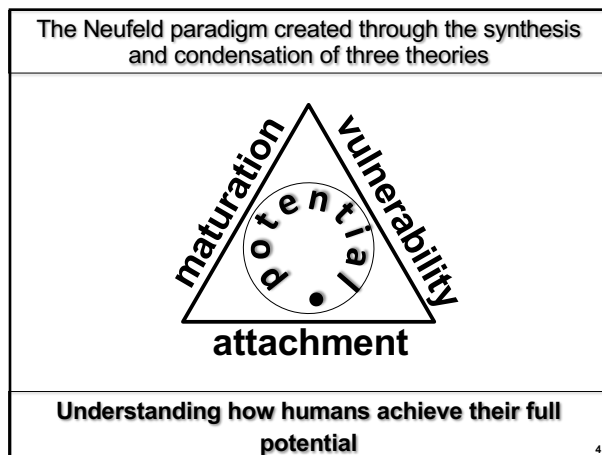
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NEUFELD DEVELOPMENTAL PARADIGM

Maturation

Vulnerability

Attachment

Emotions

3

The Neufeld paradigm created through the synthesis and condensation of three theories

maturation

vulnerability

potential

attachment

Understanding how humans achieve their full potential
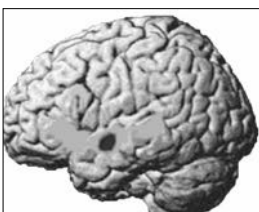
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Distinctives of the Developmental Approach

- is about making sense of children
  - is about what to see, not what to do
- is about how children come to realize their human potential
  - about the big picture and not getting lost in the details
- is about seeing children three dimensionally
- is about finding a common language that promotes understanding
- is about providing maps instead of methods or directions
- is about using interventions that are not prescriptive

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	DEVELOPMENTAL	BEHAVIOURAL
Assumption	inner springs	blank slate
Focus	antecedents	consequences
Key to treatment	insight	skill
Treatment plan	address the problem or situation	address the behaviour
Context for treatment	relationship	incident

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NEUROSCIENCE

The **language part** (left hemisphere) of a 1-day-old baby's brain lights up when the **mother speaks**.

The voice of a **nurse** elicits the **voice recognition** (right hemisphere) part of the brain.

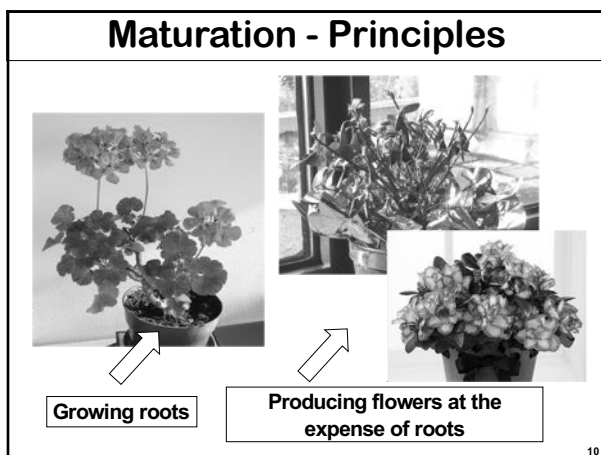Maryse Lassonde – Ste-Justine Hospital-2010   7

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Maturation - Principles

1. Natural Process that unfolds according to a plan – it is in our nature to mature.

2. Maturation cannot be rushed

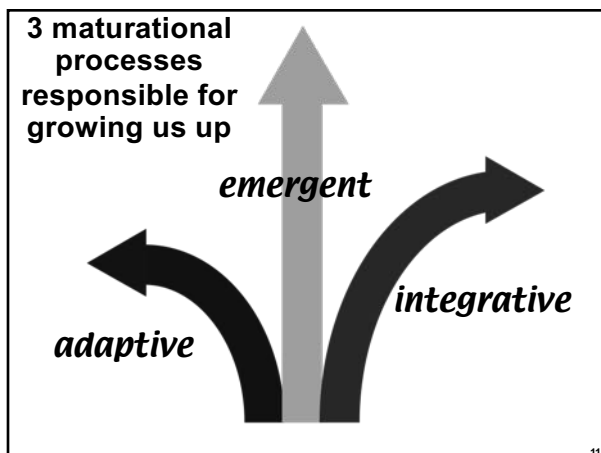**Takes 90 days, "If you want a GOOD one!"**   8

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Maturation - Principles

1. A Natural Process that unfolds according to a plan – it is in our nature to mature.

2. Takes time and cannot be rushed

3. Is spontaneous but NOT inevitable - can get **stuck**

4. Potential - continues throughout the life span

5. There is a price to pay if one aspect is promoted over the whole   9

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Maturation - Principles

Growing roots

Producing flowers at the expense of roots

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3 maturational processes responsible for growing us up

emergent

integrative

adaptive

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EMERGENT PROCESS

itality
iability
enturing forth

A SEPARATE BEING
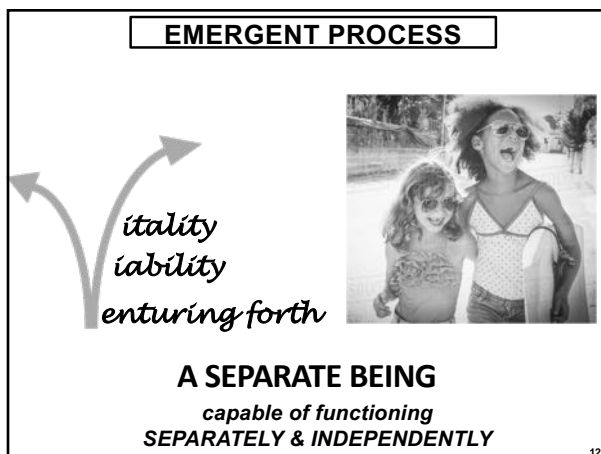*capable of functioning*
SEPARATELY & INDEPENDENTLY

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THE EMERGENT CHILD

- curious
- has plans
- own ideas and values
- creative
- full of vitality
- sense of responsibility
- independent
- aware of other's boundaries
- shifts easily into emergent play

When ATTACHMENT needs are met EMERGENCE happens

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INTEGRATIVE PROCESS

A SOCIAL BEING

able to do 'TOGETHERNESS' AND 'SEPARATENESS' SIMULTANEOUSLY (e. g. civilized, responsible, considerate, respectful)

On the one hand | On the other hand

MY needs | The needs of OTHERS

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INTEGRATIVE PROCESS

Depends on the DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRAIN – especially the PREFRONTAL CORTEX and CORPUS CALLOSUM

BUT
Prefrontal cortex only starts to engage at the age of 5 years-old

The capacity for registering more than one feeling at a time develops between 5 to 7 years of age.

The Prefrontal Cortex takes until at least mid-twenties to stabilize in development

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THE INTEGRATIVE CHILD

- co-operative
- considerate
- tempered
- self-controlled
- patient
- just
- courageous
- has perspective

The BRAIN develops best in ATTACHMENT

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ADAPTIVE PROCESS

A RESILIENT BEING
capable of
BECOMING TRANSFORMED when up
against that which we cannot change

LET DOWN

BOUNCE BACK

GRIEVING   Gordon Neufeld, PhD

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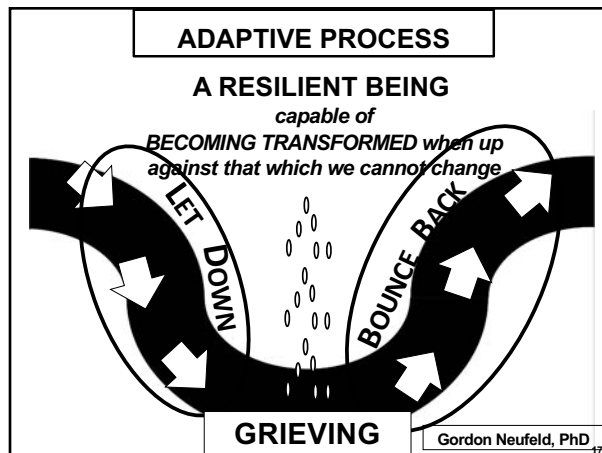
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ADAPTIVE PROCESS

requires a soft heart and
a safe place to cry

a soft heart = able to tolerate feelings of
vulnerability

a safe place to cry =
someone who will keep
you safe while you are
vulnerable

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THE ADAPTIVE CHILD

- learns from mistakes and failures
- accepts limits and restrictions
- transcends handicaps and disabilities
- resilient
- resourceful
- confident in the face of adversity
- can bounce back

Adaptation happens in the safety of ATTACHMENT

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TO REMEMBER

Good development requires patience and faith

There is a difference between a child who acts mature and a the child who is given **time** to become mature.

emergent

adaptive   integrative

We can train a child to do a lot of things at early ages but we shouldn't mistake this for maturity.

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NEUFELD DEVELOPMENTAL PARADIGM

Maturation

Vulnerability

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Emotions

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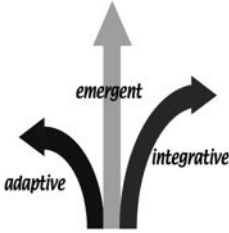## Vulnerability Principles

1. Growth requires softness – which means being vulnerable.
2. When the brain senses it is <u>too vulnerable,</u> it protects itself

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INTERACTIVE FACTORS FOR VULNERABILITY

<u>SENSITIVITY</u>   X   <u>STRESS</u>

- Genetics

- Pre-natal stressors

- Peri-natal stressors

- Too much Separation
- Being too Alarmed or for too long
- Feeling too much Shame or that something is wrong with you

23

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**Too much separation
Too much shame
Too much alarm**

- It's not safe to express what I am feeling.

- It's not safe to depend or be vulnerable.

- The world is overwhelming (including hypersensitivity) and there is <u>no one</u> who can <u>keep me safe.</u>

emergent

integrative

24

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Vulnerability Principles

1. Growth requires softness – which means being vulnerable.
2. When the brain senses it is <u>too vulnerable,</u> it protects itself

3. When the brain is **protecting** itself, it <u>cannot be growing.</u> "gets stuck"

   - *Physical abuse, physical &/or emotional neglect can decrease the volume of the PREFRONTAL CORTEX." – Edmiston et al. 2010*
   - *Children with PTSD had reduced volume in the Corpus Callosum - Jackowski et al., 2008*

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Vulnerability Principles

1. Growth requires softness – which means being vulnerable.
2. When the brain senses it is <u>too vulnerable,</u> it protects itself

3. When the brain is **protecting** itself, it <u>cannot be growing.</u>

4. Immaturity is at the root of, and the most likely explanation for, learning and behaviour problems.

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THE COST OF DEFENSIVE ARMOUR

- a loss of PLAYFULNESS, RESTFULNESS and VULNERABLE FEELINGS
- a <u>stunting</u> of development - IMMATURITY
- <u>less flexibility</u> in distressing scenarios (the hardening results in rigidity)
- the <u>loss of ability to heal,</u> <u>recover</u> or b<u>ounce back</u>
- a LOSS OF EMPATHY AND CARING, resulting in *more wounding interaction*
- the risk of <u>losing caring </u>ATTACHMENTS
- a predisposition to a host of problems that have defendedness at their core

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Impact of Defendedness on Learning

New Learning increases the feelings of VULNERABILITY

- These students instinctively **avoid** doing anything that would lead them into **vulnerable territory** – trying new things, asking questions, presenting original ideas, exploring the unknown.
- These students are reluctant to look at their own **mistakes** or to attend to their **failures** as that would make them feel **vulnerable**.
- They find it difficult to **admit to inadequacy or ignorance**, or to confess confusion, as that would open them to feelings of shame.
- They rarely ask for **assistance** from the teacher as that would create **feelings of dependency** and **vulnerability**.
- Since they cannot feel sad about what is not working, their brain is then less able to do "work arounds" – they get **stuck in their learning disabilities**.

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Vulnerability and Resilience

- Defending against a sense of vulnerability (protecting) prevents growth.
- Growing requires softening and results in adaptation and resilience.
- The **process needed for softening** is feeling the **sadness** about what does not work.
- Tears are essential to adaptation.
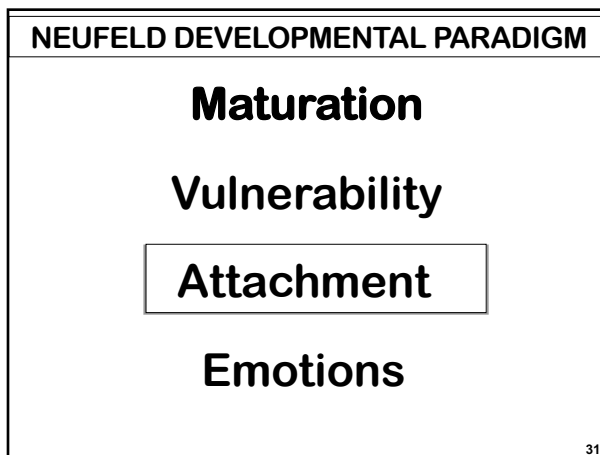- **Tears** only can happen when a child feels **safe enough** to **remove defenses.**

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What is it that makes us feel the most vulnerable?
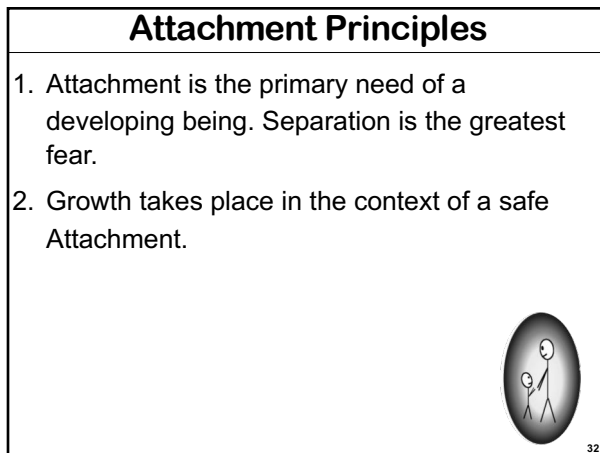
FACING SEPARATION

EXPERIENCING OR FACING THE LACK OF OR THE LOSS OF CLOSENESS
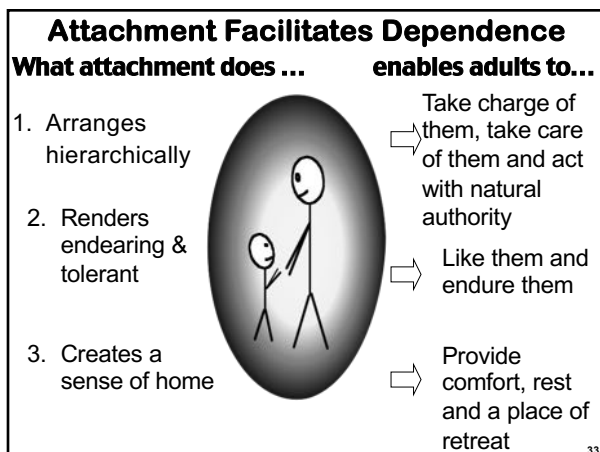
WITH THOSE TO WHOM WE ARE ATTACHED

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NEUFELD DEVELOPMENTAL PARADIGM

Maturation

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Attachment Principles

1. Attachment is the primary need of a developing being. Separation is the greatest fear.

2. Growth takes place in the context of a safe Attachment.

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Attachment Facilitates Dependence

What attachment does ...   **enables adults to...**

1. Arranges hierarchically

   Take charge of them, take care of them and act with natural authority

2. Renders endearing & tolerant

   Like them and endure them

3. Creates a sense of home

   Provide comfort, rest and a place of retreat

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Attachment Facilitates Dependence

What attachment does …	enables adults to…
4. Creates a compass point	Command their attention, guide & direct them and transmit our culture
5. Activates proximity instincts	Keep them close and command their loyalty
6. Evokes the desire to be good for those attached to	Act with natural power & authority

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Attachment Principles

1. Attachment is the primary need of a developing being. Separation is the greatest fear.

2. Growth takes place in the context of a safe Attachment.

3. A "safe" Attachment figure both c<u>ares about </u>and <u>cares for </u>(takes charge of) the dependent being.

4. Being dependent requires the ability to tolerate vulnerability.

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How do we attach?

maturation

vulnerability

attachment

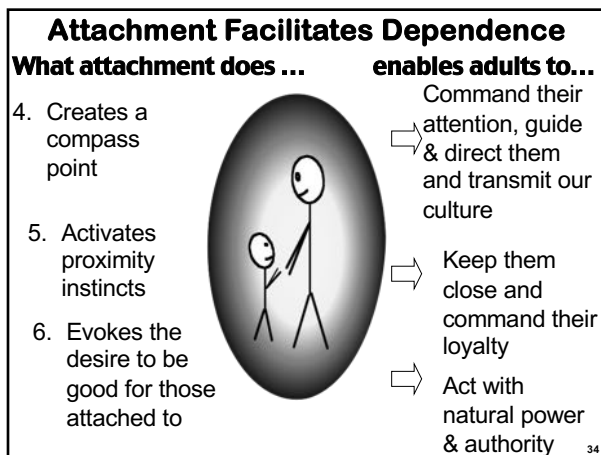belonging & loyalty   SENSES   sameness
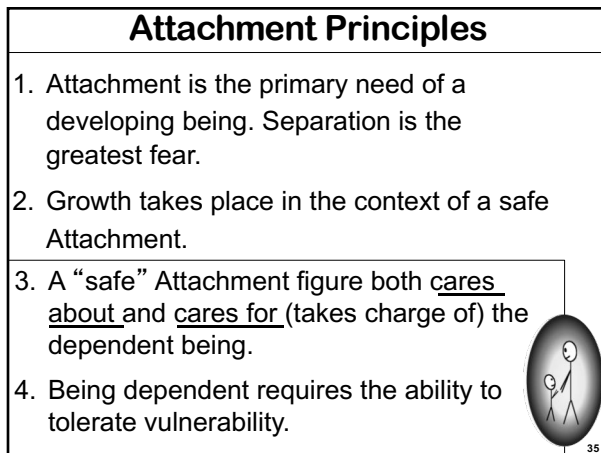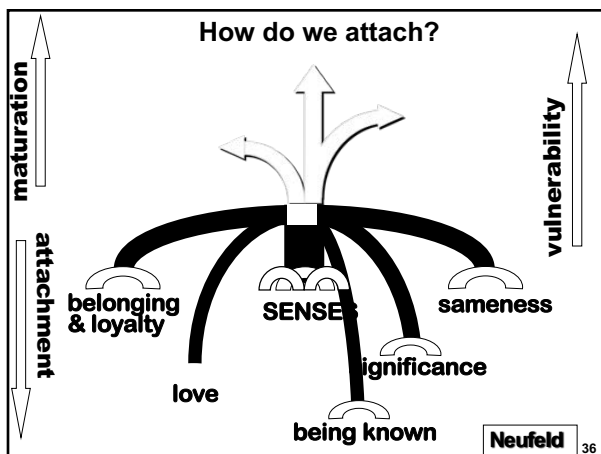
significance

love

being known   Neufeld   36

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How can we help children stay attached to the adults who are there to care for them?

- a warm invitation
- safe enough from disruption
- a soft enough heart

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What happens when we are

FACING SEPARATION?

THE BRAIN IS <u>MOVED</u> TO FIX THE PROBLEM

=

E-MOTION

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NEUFELD DEVELOPMENTAL PARADIGM

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Emotion has WORK to do.

The <u>ultimate</u> job of emotion is to
GROW THE CHILD UP.

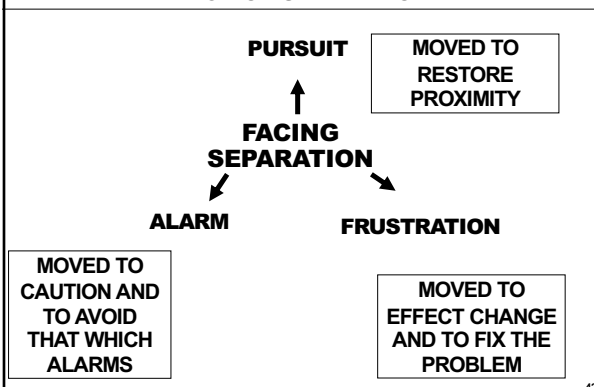The <u>immediate</u> task of emotion is
SURVIVAL

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DEFINING EMOTION

- To be stirred up

  - <u>happens to us</u> as opposed to under our control

  - is irrational although the brain has its reasons

- To be moved to

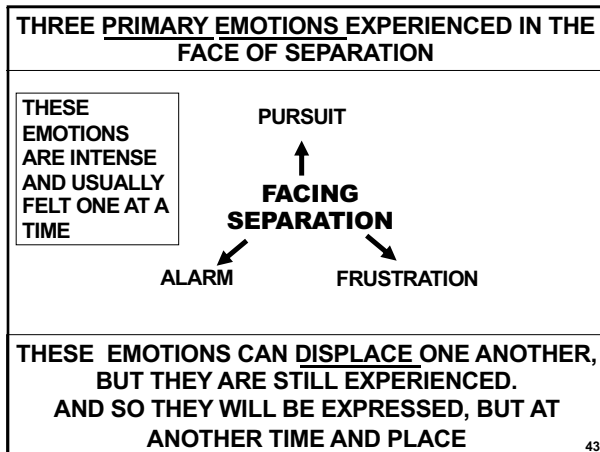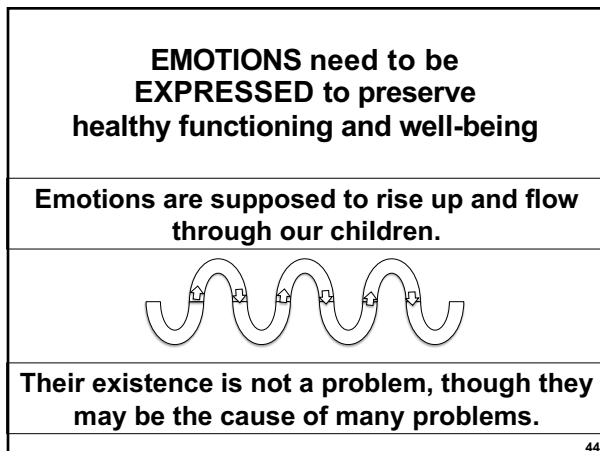 - is meant to <u>move</u> us in ways that would <u>serve</u> us

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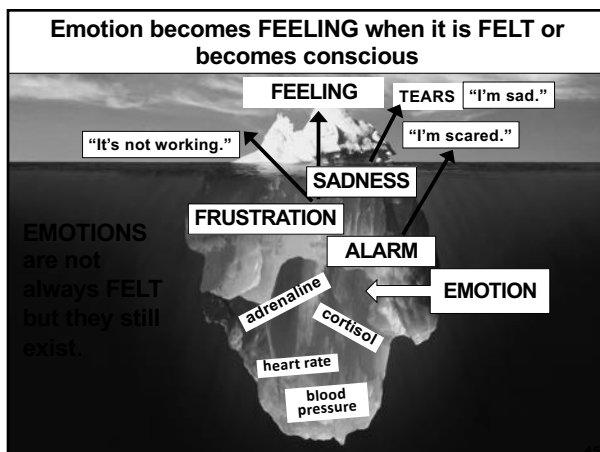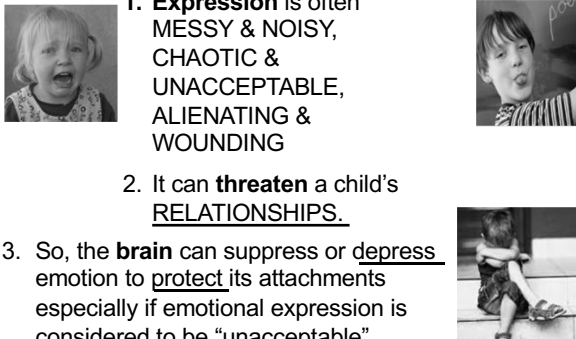### THREE <u>PRIMARY EMOTIONS</u> EXPERIENCED IN THE FACE OF SEPARATION

PURSUIT — MOVED TO RESTORE PROXIMITY

FACING SEPARATION

ALARM — MOVED TO CAUTION AND TO AVOID THAT WHICH ALARMS

FRUSTRATION — MOVED TO EFFECT CHANGE AND TO FIX THE PROBLEM

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THREE <u>PRIMARY</u> <u>EMOTIONS</u> EXPERIENCED IN THE FACE OF SEPARATION

THESE EMOTIONS ARE INTENSE AND USUALLY FELT ONE AT A TIME

PURSUIT

FACING SEPARATION

ALARM   FRUSTRATION

THESE EMOTIONS CAN <u>DISPLACE</u> ONE ANOTHER, BUT THEY ARE STILL EXPERIENCED.
AND SO THEY WILL BE EXPRESSED, BUT AT ANOTHER TIME AND PLACE

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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, though they may be the cause of many problems.

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Emotion becomes FEELING when it is FELT or becomes conscious

FEELING   TEARS   "I'm sad."

"It's not working."   "I'm scared."

SADNESS

FRUSTRATION

ALARM

EMOTION

EMOTIONS are not always FELT but they still exist.

adrenaline   cortisol

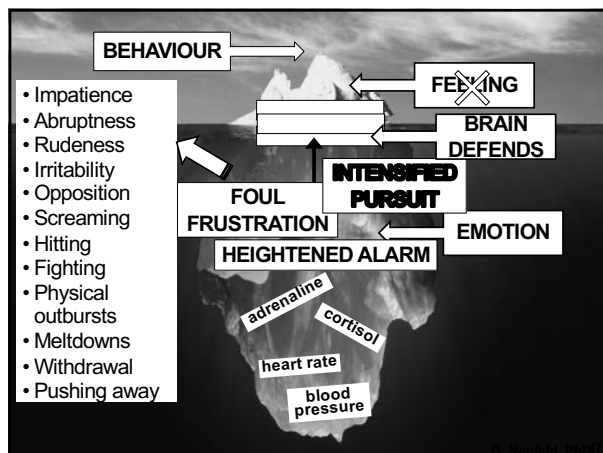heart rate

blood pressure

45

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".
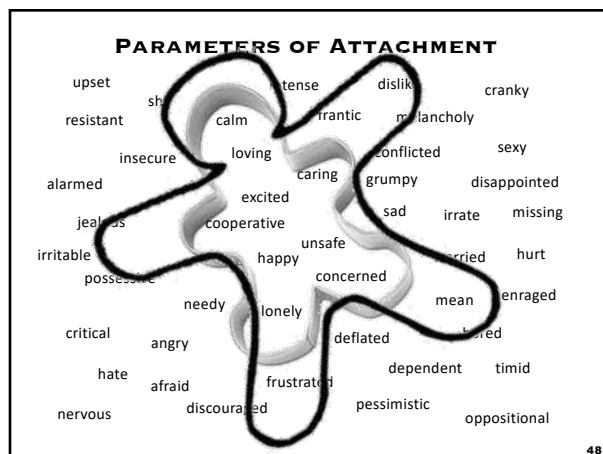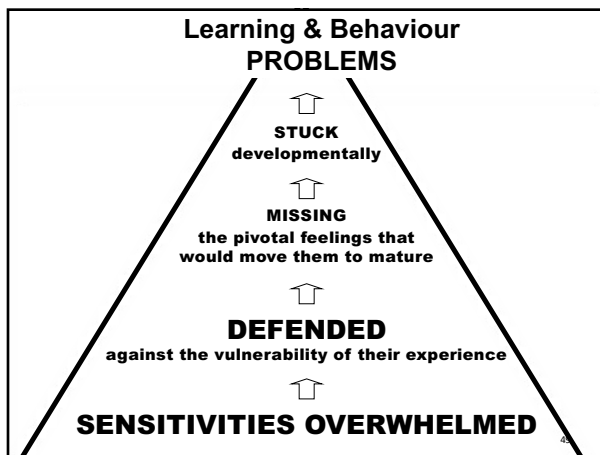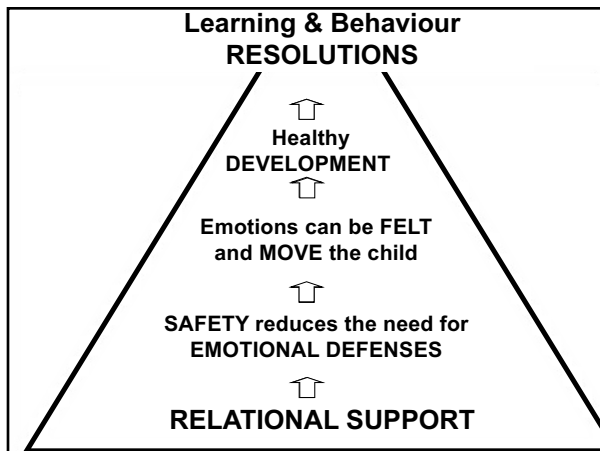
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PARAMETERS OF ATTACHMENT

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Learning & Behaviour
PROBLEMS

⇧

STUCK
developmentally

⇧

MISSING
the pivotal feelings that
would move them to mature

⇧

DEFENDED
against the vulnerability of their experience

⇧

SENSITIVITIES OVERWHELMED

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Learning & Behaviour
RESOLUTIONS

⇧

Healthy
DEVELOPMENT

⇧

Emotions can be FELT
and MOVE the child

⇧

SAFETY reduces the need for
EMOTIONAL DEFENSES

⇧

RELATIONAL SUPPORT

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DEVELOPMENTAL INTERVENTIONS

1. Maximize **ATTACHMENT**
   • Adults need to take the responsibility for creating strong attachments
2. Compensate for the effects of **IMMATURITY**
   • Provide the structure required to prevent problem behaviours
3. Build a **VILLAGE** of Attachment
   • Work as a team to create the environment that children need to thrive
4. Allow for **EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION and PLAY**
   • Favour interventions that get to the root of the problem and don't just treat the symptoms

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THE DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Maturation

Behaviour changes as the brain matures

Vulnerability

Behaviour changes when vulnerability is protected

Attachment

Behaviour changes when children are attached to adults

Emotions

Behaviour changes when emotions are felt

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CHILDREN GROW AND MATURE WHEN ADULTS CREATE A RELATIONAL GARDEN

We are gardeners, not sculptors.

We create the environment and wait patiently for the growth.

The consistency that children need is the knowledge that they can count on the adults in their world to provide what they need.

We must have faith in the developmental plan.
Gordon Neufeld, PhD.

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Eva de Gosztonyi, Martine Demers, Catherine Korah
Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management

www.cebm.ca

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THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT (CEBM)

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

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

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