

FRIDAY 24TH APRIL 2020 SESSION 14 STAYING CONNECTED AND CURIOUS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Knowledge and understanding of attachment and trauma

Supporting and Scaffolding the Foundations of Child/Adult Relationships

Adoption UK asked me to speak to some of their members via a Zoom webinar last week and today's learning and reflection is based on the video of the session. In the video, I'm talking specifically to adopters, but the key messages about child/adult relationships are relevant to all parents and adults who work with children and young people, so as you watch and listen, substitute 'parent' with 'educator' and think about all the children you know who have not experienced safety and nurture in their early years.

Key points covered in the video:

The importance of building relationships with children who have experienced relational trauma;

Scaffolding and supporting by:

Moving away from the 'age-appropriate mantra' and using a developmental lens through which to view the child and their behaviour;

Developing a new narrative around behaviour;

Co-regulation as a vital step to self-regulation;

Creative activities for scaffolding the child/adult relationship.

Earlier in the Staying Curious series, we looked at the development of attachment where the caring is 'good enough'. The video briefly covers that and also covers the impact of developmental, relational trauma; that is, when the care is not good enough and the baby's needs are not met adequately. For some of you, this might be new learning.

It then considers ways to strengthen and scaffold the child/adult relationship. Today, we are considering the importance of building relationships with children who have experienced relational trauma, so please watch the video from the beginning up to 18.06. If you want to watch it all today, that's fine, but we will be returning to the video next week to reflect on scaffolding and supporting relationships.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYxlueds!Ow&feature=emb_title

Questions for reflection

1. 'Relational trauma requires relational repair' (Treisman, K 2017). Educators too, have the opportunity to change core beliefs through the provision of a nurturing, warm, consistent environment where healthy relationships

flourish and thrive, and the lengthy work of repair can begin. Are relationships between children and adults prioritised in your school/setting? Are there any barriers that can get in the way of relationship-centred practice, for example, curriculum delivery; academic progress; timetable; rules?

2. Relationship-centred practice has the potential to reduce maladaptive coping behaviours, reduce conflict, and support the development of pro-social behaviours and regulation. How can you individually, and your school as a whole, overcome these barriers and ensure that relationships are central and prioritised?
3. Core beliefs are not usually laid down in thoughts or language; rather they can be described as the unthought known, powerful non-verbal feelings laid down in our unconscious brain. Children are not sufficiently mature enough to reflect on their own core beliefs, and may not remember many or even any of his/her early experiences. Think of a child you know who may not have had her/his needs met consistently in infancy and childhood. You may need to think about his/her history and observe his/her behavior in order to understand her/him a little more. What may the child have learned about self; others and the world in general?
4. **Covid-19 relevance** How might the current situation be shaping and moulding the core beliefs of babies and young children? Can you give both positive and negative examples? How can we minimize the risk of the formation of negative core beliefs in babies and young children as we live through these strange and often frightening times?

This may be enough for today, but if you want more, reflect on the Freeze Frames below. How might these scenarios, which are not isolated incidents, but more likely frequently repeated, impact on the child's core beliefs and how might the child learn to behave in response to the experiences?

- *From infancy, Martine's parents actively disapproved and distanced themselves when she expressed anger in any way.*
- *Six-month-old Bill was happily playing with a toy dog when his dad removed it and pushed a drum in front of Bill. 'You're going to be a famous drummer, my lad, so you better get practising!' he laughed. Bill grew increasingly distressed, reaching for his toy, but dad just played the drum louder, distracted from Bill's pain by his own desires and ambitions.*
- *Four-year-old Hope made some puppets at school. When she got home, she made some more puppets out of scraps and performed a little play to herself. Her mother glared at her and pulled her into the kitchen telling her to stop annoying dad; he was drunk and would hit them both if she didn't keep quiet.*
- *Three-year-old Lukas was playing with a ball with his older brother, Lorkan. Lorkan took the ball away and Lukas began to flap his arms and cry loudly. Their dad who had been gazing unresponsively at the TV jumped*

*up from the settee and punched and hit Lorkan, shouting 'Next time somebody shits on you Lukas, you f***ing don't take it! You f***ing do this. No-one pushes my kid around!'*

- *Habib's parents scold him for leaving food on his plate and tell him that good children finish all their food. They also say that Habib is being ungrateful for not finishing his food because there are starving children in other parts of the world who are not as fortunate as he is.*

On Monday, we shall have another EYFS special, and we will be getting creative, so have your playdough, paint, collage materials ready!

Don't forget your other self-care today, particularly your exercise. Are you remembering to use your Calm Box? Are you changing the objects in it from time to time? Have a good day, keep safe and healthy and ring or email me to chat if that would help. **Jenny x**

Reference

Treisman, K, (2017) A Therapeutic Treasure Box for Working with Children and Adolescents with Developmental Trauma: Creative Techniques and Activities, JKP, London