Relationships as the Context for Development

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Goals

• Discuss the importance of relationships and how they form the foundation of infant development.

• Describe the impact of relationships on a child’s social/emotional development.

• Describe key concepts of relationship-based practices that impact the social/emotional development of infants and toddlers.
Take a moment and think about a very satisfying relationship you have with another person. What is it, specifically, that makes it satisfying?

Turn to a friend and discuss at least three things about your relationship that makes it satisfying.
“All Learning takes place in the context of relationships and is critically affected by the quality of those relationships.”
# A Temperament Primer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thomas &amp; Chess</th>
<th>Program for Infant/ Toddler Caregivers (PITC)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>Child is regular in biological rhythms, adaptable, approachable, generally positive in mood of mild intensity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>Feisty</td>
<td>Child is irregular in feeding and sleep schedules, not easily adaptable, withdrawing, negative, intense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow to warm-up</td>
<td>Fearful</td>
<td>Child is low in activity, withdrawing in new situations, slow to adapt, mild in intensity, shy</td>
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The Impact of Culture on Infant Development

Examples of practices closely tied to a family’s culture include many that are related to infant/toddler development and learning, such as:

• Feeding and nutrition,
• Sleep patterns and arrangements,
• Positioning of the infant or toddler,
• Use of language and the parent and child role in communication,
• Values, goals, and priorities related to child development, and
• The role of extended family networks.
## Erikson’s Psychosocial Stages 1 and 2

| Birth to 1 year | **Trust vs. Mistrust**  
|                | When a child experiences warm, responsive care, he will learn that the world is dependable and good. He learns to trust his significant caregiver(s). If a child experiences harsh interactions, or receives care that is not responsive to his needs he learns to mistrust his caregiver(s). |
| 1 to 3 years   | **Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt**  
<p>|                | As motor, cognitive, and language skills develop, the child gains the capacity to make choices and act with increasing independence. Autonomy is nurtured when caregivers respect a child’s emerging independence and exploration (within reasonable limits) and provide opportunities for this important aspect of growth during a period of incredible change. A child who is forced or shamed in her attempts to exercise new skills may emerge from this conflict with a sense of shame or doubt, rather than autonomy. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Scenario</th>
<th>Potential Barrier To Developing Trust</th>
<th>Trust-Promoting Caregiver Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah, a 3-month-old, wakes from her nap, gazes around the room for a few minutes, then cries.</td>
<td>Example: In a 1:4 ratio, the caregiver may be engaged with multiple other infants or toddlers, and not able to reach the awakening infant to provide assurance before she begins to cry.</td>
<td>Example: Caregiver (rocking a second infant) scans room to check sleep/wake status of infants in cribs. Goes to crib of waking infant while holding other infant, watches her become alert, talks gently to her to assure infant that she is present, transitions second infant to floor play area, picks up now-awake infant, talking to her quietly about her actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-month-old Juan is new to the program. He cries when his mother leaves after dropping him at the center.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Andrea is intently engaged in the sandbox. It is time for the group to go inside to begin preparing for lunch.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In an infant/toddler room, Ms. Sally is leaving to attend a class. Ms. Tara enters to cover for her, and has brought a new book she is excited about sharing with the children. Ms. Tara loudly asks the children to come to the reading area so she can read them the new book. The children are not interested.</td>
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</table>
Attachment Relationships

A secure attachment occurs when the child perceives “the attachment figure as available and responsive when needed”
Influence of Relationships on Development and Learning

Young children’s relationships with their primary caregivers have a major impact on their cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social, and moral development.

These relationships are most growth-promoting when they are warm, nurturing, individualized, responsive in a contingent and reciprocal manner, and characterized by a high level of ‘goodness of fit.’

(National Research Council, 2000, p.341)
Interpersonal experiences directly influence how we mentally construct reality. This shaping process occurs throughout life, but is most crucial during the early years of childhood.

Patterns of relationships and emotional communication affect the development of the brain.  
(Siegel, 1999)
“...many infants and toddlers are cared for by someone other than their mothers at a critical period of development.

Although the parent/child relationship will remain the primary influence on the child’s sense of self and security, it is also true that “infants and toddlers in child care form attachment relationships...with their child care providers.”
A positive caregiver/parent relationship can enable several important processes:

• Continuity Across Settings for the Child
• Caregiver Entrée to the Parent/Child Relationship
• The Parallel Process
• Strengthening Families
Power of the Parallel Process

- Directors
- Staff
- Parents
- Children

Thoughts
Feelings
Interactions
Experiences
Relationship-based Practice

- Respect for the Person
- Sensitivity to Context
- Commitment to Evolving Growth and Change
- Mutuality of Shared Goals
- Open Communication
- Setting Standards for Staff
- Commitment to Reflecting on the Work

Bertacchi, 1996
A bright idea I have from today is ............