



Creating Favorable Conditions for Growth:

Early Childhood Social and Emotional Development

Catherine Korah, CEBM Coordinator
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Foreword by GORDON NEUFELD, PhD
DEBORAH MACNAMARA, PhD

REST PLAY GROW

Making Sense of Preschoolers
(Or Anyone Who Acts Like One)

Based on the relational developmental approach of Gordon Neufeld



“ We have become so consumed with how a young child acts and whether they are civilized that we have forgotten that they need patience, time, and care taking in order to grow. (...) The immature ways of young children are not personal – they are developmental. Young children lack impulse control because their brain is not fully developed. They are egocentric because in order to share yourself with another person you first have to have a self to share. They don’t use their words when emotionally charged because they are still trying to learn names for their feelings and lack self-control. They don’t always listen because they can only attend to one thing at a time and it isn’t always us. They need to be attached to us in order to want to follow us, but they also have instincts to resist us at the same time. This was not a mistake but part of a sophisticated developmental plan aimed at unfolding a mature human being. While we may be often confused by their behaviour, they are only being true to their instincts and emotions. (...) When I step back to consider young children in all their baffling and immature ways along with how we treat them, I see clearly that we have lost our way somehow. ”

Deborah MacNamara in *Three Things I Discovered Writing Rest, Play, Grow*

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Who are our K4-K5 children?



DELIGHTFUL

CURIOUS

JOYFUL

IMPULSIVE

INCONSIDERATE

NEEDY

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How they’re designed developmentally



They have BIG emotions!
1 thought – 1 feeling – at a time
very little filter (brain immaturity)



For them fair is they get it ALL!
don’t yet have the concept of sharing



“NO! I do it myself, but don’t make me!”
don’t have the capacity for independence

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When it comes to social-emotional development, our K4-K5s are like tomato plants!



- The young tomato plant looks nothing like the eventual fruit but has within it everything it needs to mature
- We cannot expect the young child to regulate his/her emotions independently or to behave in a socially mature way



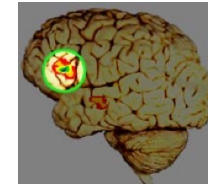
It takes time, patience and guidance from the adults who care for them

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Children in K4-K5 are IMMATURE

Their brains are under construction!

- Young children have an undeveloped pre-frontal cortex, which means their emotions aren't filtered or slowed down
- They can have **only ONE** thought or emotion at a time
- They have great difficulty with perspective because they cannot consider someone else's point of view when they're focused on their own



Immaturity is a NATURAL and NORMAL condition

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Growth comes from SAFETY and REST

Judgment last to develop

The area of the brain that controls "executive functions" — including weighing long-term consequences and controlling impulses — is among the last to fully mature. Brain development from childhood to adulthood:

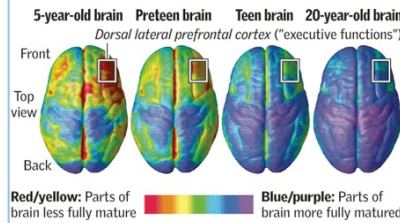


Image from the National Institute of Mental Health; Paul Thompson, Ph.D., UCLA Laboratory of Neuro Imaging

- Maturation is NOT inevitable
- Only in ideal conditions can a child be disposed to maturation (trauma can stunt brain development)
- In those conditions the prefrontal cortex debuts its growth between 5-7 years old and continues well into the 20's and 30's
- If a child is **hypersensitive** the 5-7 gap of development will rather be at 7-9 years old

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4-year-old versus 5-year-old

At four years old

- prefrontal cortex has not yet started to develop
- Big raw emotions (only one emotion at a time), unable to regulate emotions, tears are very common, difficulty with verbalizing emotions
- Increasing imagination gives them the ability to anticipate bad things happening to self or others (this triggers many fears but struggles to verbalize them)
- Impulses without filter

At five years old

- Prefrontal cortex development has barely begun (if the 'right' conditions are in place)
- Also, big raw emotions (only one at a time) – starting to verbalize emotions
- May have a better ability to play out fears and voice concerns
- Impulses with little filter depending on the day and emotion being triggered

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4-year-old versus 5-year-old

At four years old

- Little or no tolerance for separation (especially in a new environment or with new adults) – has not yet developed a good enough ability to hold on when apart
- Short attention span, needs to move (high energy)
- Needs to rest (may still be taking naps)
- Needs to play (may still parallel play)

At five years old

- May have some tolerance for separation (this will depend on the child and their ability to attach)
- May have a slight better attention span (but still short), also needs to move
- Needs some respite/downtime
- Needs to play (may have a better ability to play with others)
- May have better fine motor and gross motor abilities
- May have better language development

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The IMMATURE child has a hard time:

1. Finding information efficiently and quickly (not yet sufficiently developed **Cerebellum**)
2. Seeing the “whole” picture (not yet sufficiently developed **Corpus Callosum**) – difficult communication between the left and right hemispheres of the brain
3. Tempering their instinctual reactions with conflicting thoughts and feelings. (not yet sufficiently developed **Prefrontal Cortex**)

As a result, they often KNOW better but cannot DO better as Emotion overwhelms REASON.

Behaviour will improve when maturation occurs, but this takes time.

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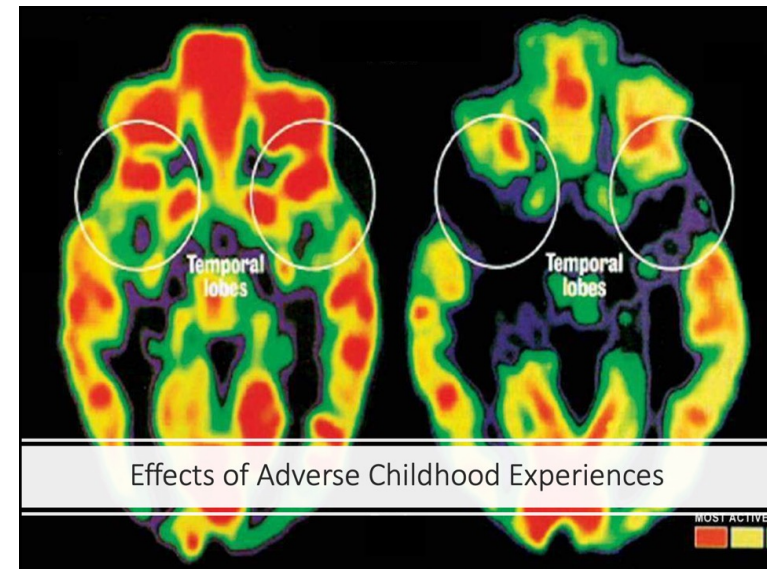
Impact of sensitivity and emotional intensity



Greater children are hypersensitive and emotionally intense:

- More easily they are affected and moved by their emotions
- More easily they are overwhelmed by their emotional experience
- More likely they are to be “stuck” emotionally:
 - Emotional intensity evokes more defenses
 - Intellectualization of experiences (escape of emotions)
 - Loss of tears necessary for adaptation
- More adults attempt to calm the child in order to avoid emotional eruptions, which doesn’t help the situation

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Maturation process

- curious
- own ideas and values
- sense of responsibility
- independent
- aware of other's boundaries

- learns from mistakes and failures
- accepts limits and restrictions
- resilient
- resourceful

- considerate
- self-controlled
- patient
- courageous
- has perspective

These 'fruit' of maturation cannot be taught or pushed. They will spontaneously grow with the right conditions in place.

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They are not like us

Personality in K4-K5

their **UNTEMPERED** nature

A **PURITY** and **CERTAINTY** of emotion
No room for shades of grey
An innocent belief in **MAGIC**

IMPULSIVE and **UNRELIABLE**
They know better than they behave.
And their good intentions are easily eclipsed by the impulse of the moment.

SHORTSIGHTED and terrible at **PROBLEM SOLVING**
Unable to take more than one factor into consideration at a time.

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What is missing and why

their **UNTEMPERED** nature

All impulses felt are expressed. Youngsters cannot do dissonance. They register only one feeling or impulse at a time. All conflicting impulses and thoughts are momentarily eclipsed.

WHY?
This is Nature's way, making it as easy as possible for youngsters to find their dominant feeling by removing any confusing elements or complicating signals.

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They are not like us

Personality in K4-K5

their **INCONSIDERATE** relating

An innocent **EGOCENTRISM** that renders the whole world about themselves.

A purity of action which leads to a lack of **DIPLOMACY**: Saying things like "she stinks!" while pinching their nose.

A SINGLE-MINDEDNESS and a take on **UNFAIRNESS** that is definitely **ONE-SIDED** in nature that renders another's reference point irrelevant.

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What is missing and why

Youngsters cannot do togetherness without a loss of separateness for one or the other.

When thinking of others, they cannot hold onto themselves



When thinking of themselves, they cannot consider another

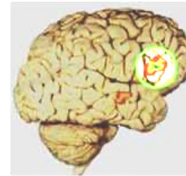


WHY?

This is Nature's way, protecting a child from any social considerations that could overwhelm and undermine the emergence of a tender new self. There could be no true community without the prerequisite personhood of the individuals involved.

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Nature's solution to being untempered, egocentrism and inconsiderateness



The development of the **Prefrontal Cortex** which only starts to engage at the age of 5 to 7 years-old

Until the Prefrontal cortex engages, it is VERY DIFFICULT for a young child to truly get-along with others. "Social skills" are the result of **brain development**.

However, a stuck child who does not feel their emotions will have difficulty developing this capacity.

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Why does the brain develop slowly?

This is Nature's way to make it as easy as possible for young children to **fully** experience each of their:

- **emotions**
- **preferences**
- **thoughts**

protecting a child from any social considerations that could overwhelm and undermine the **emergence of a tender new self**.

They are egocentric because in order to share yourself with another person you first have to have a self to share.

Deborah MacNamara

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Why does the brain develop slowly?



The child's brain needs time to become oriented to the world and who they are.

To do this they are present in the moment with their dominant thought or emotion, and no other thoughts or emotions coming in.

They are lost in examination and cannot see more than they can handle.

They don't always listen because they can only attend to one thing at a time, and it isn't always us.

Deborah MacNamara

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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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They are not like us

Personality in K4-K5

their **SEPARATION** problems

A need for togetherness that eclipses everything else

A **FEAR** OF SEPARATION that can be overwhelming and crippling.
A **HUNGER** for CONTACT and CONNECTION that takes precedence over any other need.

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What is missing and why

Youngsters cannot do SEPARATION.

WHY?
Their capacity for relationship is not yet sufficiently developed enough to enable them to hold on when apart. For humans, this is such an important development that the first six years of life are primarily devoted to this task.

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The hunger for connection

"The young child's hunger for his mother's love and presence is as great as his hunger for food."
John Bowlby (1958)

Attachment is our most important instinct because it ensures our survival.

"A hunger for contact and connection takes precedence over any other need." Gordon Neufeld (2006)

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Nature's solution to not being able to handle separation

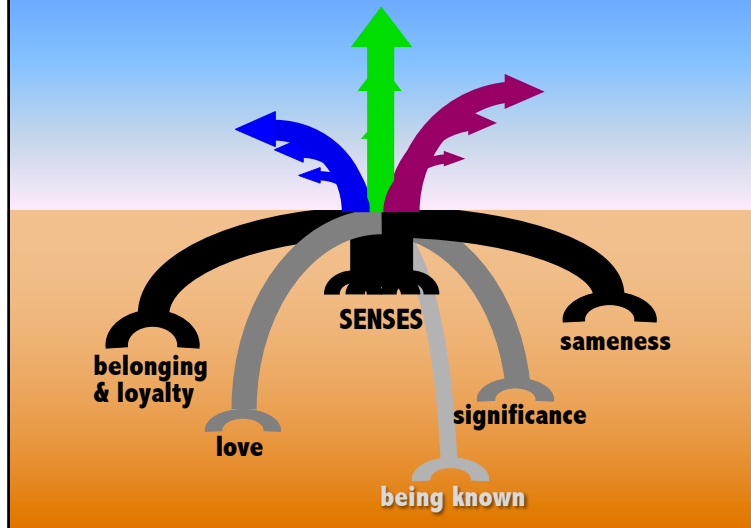
MORE ATTACHMENT, not less!

- the more ways a child has of attaching, the less need for contact and closeness and physical proximity

- children do not need to learn how to handle separation, instead they need to develop the ability to hold on when apart

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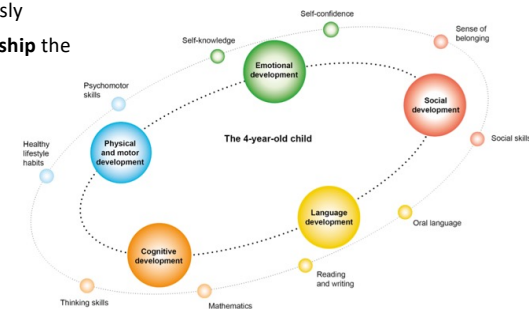
All growth emanates from a place of ATTACHMENT and REST



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All development begins with ATTACHMENT

- Children first need to feel **safe**
- Adults must provide **care** and **guidance** generously
- Make the **relationship** the priority



Cannot move forward and focus on social and emotional development without having a strong relational foundation

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Attachment practices

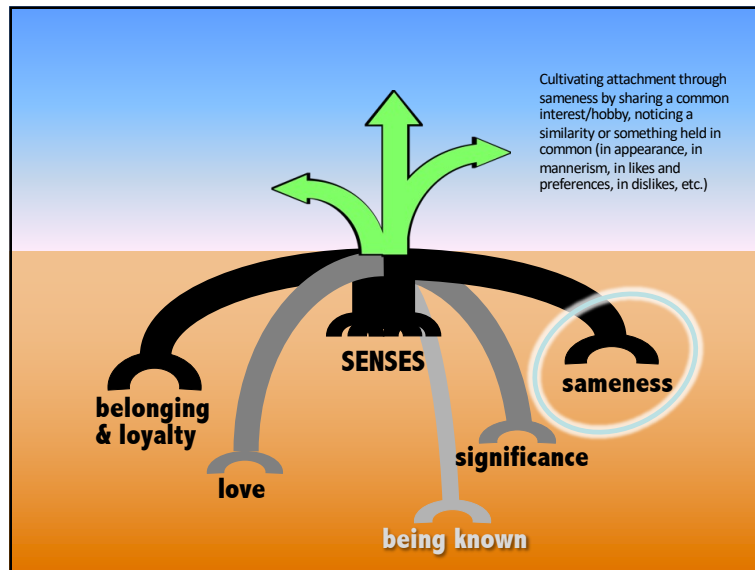
- Greeting and **engaging** the children individually and/or as a group – getting at their eye level – attachment is not influenced by our role, but who we ‘are’ to the children
- Exhibiting verbal and non-verbal cues that you are **delighted** to be in their presence (being in physical proximity, smiling and laughing with them, being in the present moment with them, being attuned to their needs, etc.)
- Displaying **genuine connection** by getting actively involved in the activities with them, taking interest in their lives beyond school
- knowing all the children’s **names**
- Organizing games and activities that foster a sense of **belonging**

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Attachment practices

- Inquiring about their **specific interests** and bringing these back in future conversations to show you’ve paid attention
- Sharing some of your interests, hobbies, and adventures
- Highlighting **points in common** (deepening attachment through the root of sameness, which is the less vulnerable way to connect)
- Noticing and naming their good intentions and efforts
- If needed, **matchmaking** through the child’s significant adults
- When the child is upset, **bridging** the relationship by not making the behaviour the bottom line
- Communicating with parents to help increase **family engagement**

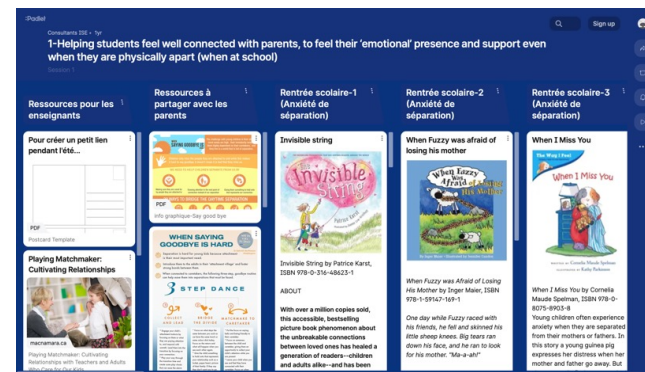
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Children’s Literature & Hands-on Activities

Greeting and engaging the children – on PADLET



<https://padlet.com/ConsultantsISE/1-helping-students-feel-connected-with-parents-to-feel--efcf4iw0bf13lv2>

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They are not like us

Personality in K4-K5

their SEPARATION problems

THEIR NEED FOR DEPENDENCE MUST BE FULFILLED



The more we push for independence (getting dressed on their own, accomplishing tasks by themselves, etc.), the more they will become concerned with the need to depend.

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Fundamental NEEDS



To feel a sense of SAFETY
- being taken care of and protected

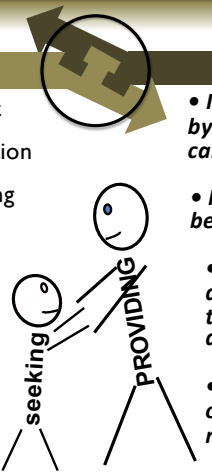


To feel a sense of CONNECTION
- building relationships and experiencing togetherness



To feel a sense of BELONGING
- deepening relationships and experiencing delight and comfort when part of the group

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<p>SEEKING CARE dependent instincts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for an invitation to exist • for contact and connection • for sameness & belonging • for safety and comfort • to get one's bearings • for warmth & love • for recognition • for significance • for understanding • for a relational 'home' • for a sense of togetherness 		<p>PROVIDING CARE alpha instincts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INSPIRE dependence by taking a strong caring alpha LEAD • INVITE dependence & be worthy of that trust • make it SAFE to depend, never using their relational needs against them • be GENEROUS with one's care, providing more than is pursued • DON'T BE FOOLED by the myriad illusions of independence
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Setting up the 'right' conditions

- **Intentional setup** of the physical and social environment
- Fostering a **good attachment** – making sure the children are oriented towards the adults rather than their peers
- Strong **adult posture**
- Consistent and predictable **structures and routines** – making sure adult expectations are developmentally appropriate and **inclusive** to the ranging needs and individual differences
- Making sure **basic needs** are being met and that the structures help them be more successful (play, movement, respite and downtime, room for emotional expression, fewer adults, fewer transitions, etc.)

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Setting up the 'right' conditions

- Adequate **supervision** – keeping **safety** in mind
- Accompaniment during **transitions** – giving the children enough advance notice to help prepare them before transitioning to the next activity
- **Outdoor** opportunities to switch gears
- Working **proactively** and in **prevention** (not waiting for problems to arise to address them) – adults are regulated and reflective in their practices
- Relying on the power of **teamwork** – clear division of roles, shared responsibility, good communication, common vision, team support and adult co-caring practices

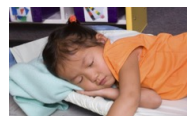
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Fundamental NEEDS



They need to PLAY

- to practice life in a space free of consequences



They need to REST

- from having to make things work



They need to have their TEARS

- the outward manifestation of the adaptive process at work

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Strong adult posture

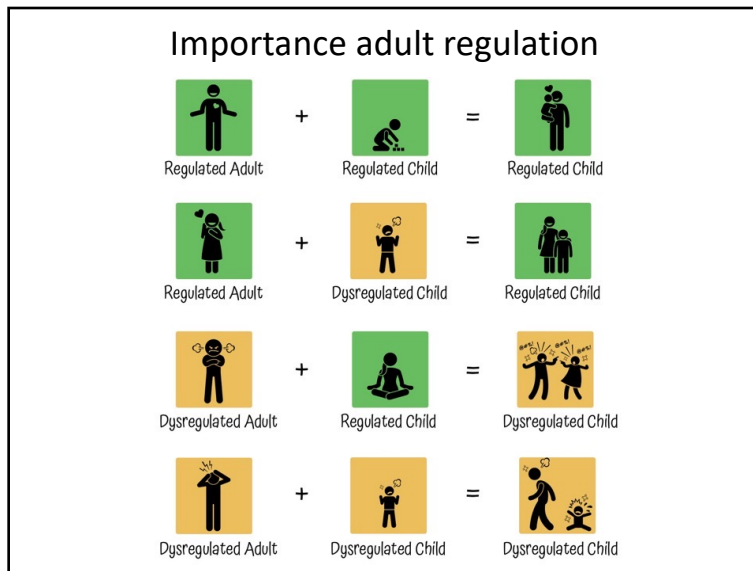
- Providing an '**Alpha**' posture (being confident, taking the lead, being grounded, being warm and welcoming, taking care of them, taking responsibility)
- Establishing **clear limits and boundaries** (without getting upset if the children push back)
- Being **calm and grounded** before responding to an upset child, and not taking their behaviour personally
- Being mindful about **displaying neutral/gentle** facial expressions, a non-threatening stance, a stable voice volume, tone, speech rate, or talking too much

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Strong adult posture

- **Backing away** from conventional discipline and ultimatums, which may trigger the child further
- **Adjusting** when things don't go as planned (making it look like as if it was your plan all along)
- Relying on **co-regulation**, and **managing the circumstances** and the environment, rather than trying to directly control the child's behaviour
- Relying on the power of **teamwork** to share the weight and responsibilities (this will help adults keep their posture intact) – we must **take care of ourselves** first in order to be able to support the children and be available to answer to their needs

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Developmentally friendly discipline for the IMMATURE

- Imposing order rather than trying to teach behaviour.
- Using structure and routine to orchestrate behaviour
- being proactive to prevent problems – traffic director
- being minimally reactive - just enough intervention to deal with the situation.
- avoiding too much talking about behaviour.

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Assume RESPONSIBILITY for the child who often gets into trouble

When a child frequently gets into trouble ADULTS ask themselves:

- When does this child have a difficult time?
- Where does this child have a difficult time?
- With whom does this child have a difficult time?

When a child frequently gets into trouble ADULTS find ways to keep the child out of trouble

- Guide them to a different activity
- Provide extra supervision
- When a misbehaviour happens, consider it to be a non-intentional “accident”

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Assume responsibility for maintaining a caring relationship

When things are not going well, and **emotions** are high:

Treating the incident as an accident

by helping them out instead of correcting them

- when we take care of the upset child, we are showing the others that we respect emotions thus building a culture of emotional safety in the classroom.



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Emotional development

Emotional development in the early years focuses on fostering emotional growth and well-being, through:

- Getting to discover one-self in relation to emotions
- Exploring, experiencing and developing the abilities to express, feel and begin to temper emotions
- Recognizing different bodily sensations related to each emotion
- Building comfort and confidence in working through emotions

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Emotional development

Being emotionally MATURE means to have the ability to “**temper**” one’s emotions. However, before a child can build the capacity for self-regulation, they need to have sustained experiences of emotional co-regulation with a caring adult.



Younger children still need the support of adults around them to develop recognizing, naming, expressing and managing their emotions.

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Relationship with caregivers are crucial for this development

- All **caring behaviour** develops in the context of the deep connection between a child and his or her caregiver
- A deep and secure attachment is needed for healthy **emotional** development to occur



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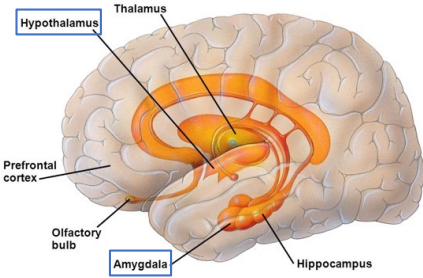
Defining EMOTION

- **Emotion** means “to be stirred up and to be moved” (happens to us and pushes us around)
- Children’s experience and awareness of emotions will develop as they age **if we provide the right conditions**



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Where does EMOTION come from?



BRAIN'S LIMBIC SYSTEM :

- **Amygdala** registers the threat (like a smoke detector)
- **Hypothalamus** orchestrates the response (it links the nervous system to the endocrine system via the pituitary gland)
- Which triggers the **SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM**

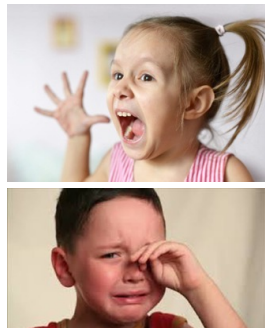
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Children's emotions are **BIG** and shift quickly


With an event such as starting school, there will likely be some big emotions that shift quickly

Adult's role:

- Accept child's emotions
- Normalize child's emotions
- Make room for emotions



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What happens when emotions are SUPPRESSED?


** when emotions are suppressed, they come out in in challenging behaviours*

EMOTIONS NEED TO BE RELEASED AND EXPRESSED

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FIVE STEPS

to emotional health and maturity



Dr. Gordon Neufeld

- Young children have little **conscious awareness** of their emotions
- This awareness develops over the years (in ideal conditions)
- For this to happen, children need lots of **room to express their emotions**, which is the first step towards emotional maturity

Self-regulation starts with CO-REGULATION and an invitation to express oneself emotionally

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Co-regulation is essential

- Emotional regulation starts by co-regulation.
- Emotional health and growth in children requires the support and collaboration of adults.
- Resilience can develop only in a context of safety and trust.



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Emotional development practices

- Setting up the context to **accompany emotional development** by using:
 - ✓ children’s books and games on emotions,
 - ✓ photographs (using real faces to help children read actual facial expressions)
 - ✓ emotional creative art activities, dress-up, puppets, role playing, imaginary play, etc.
- Providing opportunities for **emotional release** (Hannah Beach Inside-Out Handbook)
- Offering a variety of tools and materials to discover **body sensations** (body silhouette, sensory box, etc.)

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Emotional development practices

- Creating the context to help the children ‘experience’ a **comforting and calming feeling** through the senses (e.g. play soft music, dim lighting, soft comfy textures, sensory materials, calming nature scenes, comforting scents, etc.)
- Providing measures to allow for **play, movement, respite,** and time **outdoors**, which helps with emotional support
- Being careful with categorizing emotions, which may bring out guilt and/or shame around their expression – all emotions are important and play a key role
- Providing opportunities for emotional development, which goes beyond the focus of self-regulation (inviting the children to explore and express their emotions)

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Playing out emotions

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

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Children's Literature & Hands-on Activities

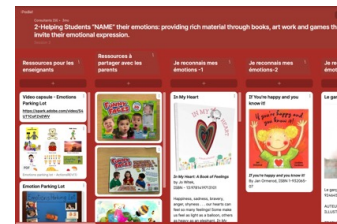


<https://www.cebmmember.ca/children-s-literature/>
<https://www.cebmmember.ca/play-drama-dress-up>
<https://www.cebmmember.ca/emotions-intervention-materials>

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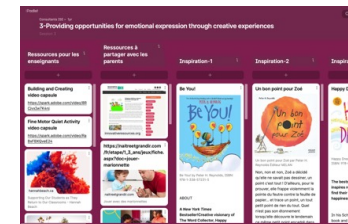
Children's Literature & Hands-on Activities on PADLET

Naming Emotions



<https://padlet.com/ConsultantsISE/2-helping-students-name-their-emotions-providing-rich-material-lhxwqenqho7q3ow>

Ways to express emotions



<https://padlet.com/ConsultantsISE/3-providing-opportunities-for-emotional-expression-through-creative-experiences-r7bhpkuy3nev3>

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Emotional Release Activities

Examples:

- Scribble Time!
- Drawing the music
- Be the Conductor, You Are the Music
- Which leaf am I?

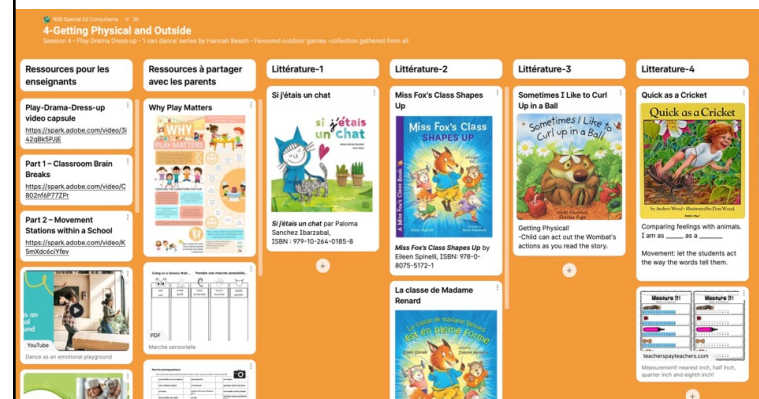
Check out [Hannah Beach's blog](#) for samples of Emotional Release Activities



You can find numerous ideas in the Inside-Out Handbook which is free (password is "experience") when you click on this website:
<https://reclaimingourstudents.com/>

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Padlet with resources to PLAY OUT emotions through getting physical and outside



<https://padlet.com/SpecEdConsultantsRSB/gwbsr6o0h5hfmce>

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Social development

Social development in the early years focuses on experiencing who they are and what to expect when interacting with others, through:

- Exploring and engaging with the environment
- Establishing a sense of belonging (creating connections with other children, with adults, participating in group activities)
- Forming a sense of self and begin to develop relationships
- Progressively exploring and practicing social abilities to interact positively with others

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Social development

Being socially MATURE means to have the ability to consider others and “mix well” with others, which must begin with development of the SELF



Younger children still need the support of adults to gradually become aware of what is expected depending on the context.

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Defining the sense of SELF



Around the ages of 6 or 7, a child **develops a sense of self** with boundaries (*what I feel, what I like etc.*)



After approx. the age of 7, a child **begins** to be able to mix with others without “fusing and losing” themselves

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Social development VS. behaviour goals

- As the psychologist Ross Greene has written ‘*children do well when they can*’.
- When a child doesn’t consistently comply with what we ask of them, we must understand that the child is probably not making a deliberate choice to misbehave, but rather adapting to an immature social-emotional system that is still developing.
- When adults react to problematic behavior by issuing consequences for the child’s ‘poor choices’, they assume the child can choose to behave otherwise. However, this requires executive function capacity and many vulnerable children, teens—and even young adults—require years of experience to acquire it.
- Social-emotional development cannot be taught, but rather GROWN and CULTIVATED. Children must first experience it through caring, attuned relationships with adults. If vulnerable children haven’t experienced the warmth of co-regulation, our efforts to teach them self-regulation will inevitably fall short.

Dr. Mona Delahooke (2017)

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Social development practices

- Using playful ways to **introduce, model and prompt** adult expectations through cues, stories, chants, role-playing, games, etc.
- Using story books to accompany the children in **exploring** a range of social situations
- Using games and activities to **practice** a range of social situations, by using:
 - ✓ LEGO, puppets, masks, role-playing, etc.
 - ✓ The adults model the expected social interactions and narrate the positive examples

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Social development practices

- Providing the **‘right’ social and environmental conditions** to help the children better succeed in their social interactions and stay out of trouble (intentional setup of the physical space, strong adult posture, consistent and predictable structures and routines, adequate supervision, accompaniment during transitions, outdoor opportunities to switch gears, etc.)
- Providing opportunities for social development, which goes beyond the focus of getting along
- Being careful with attributing behavior to the child’s identity – normalizing and validating the emotions behind the behavior

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Familiarize them with social concepts... through PLAY!

- Being in a line-up
- Listening to instructions
- Taking turns



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What do they need from us?

To **COMPENSATE** for what is missing in them

Be their PREFRONTAL CORTEX

- to accept responsibility for keeping them out of trouble instead of asking them to control their impulses
 - ✓ Creating structures and routines that prevent problem
- keep them out of situations that are beyond their developmental level
- script appropriate behaviour instead of expecting social sensitivity

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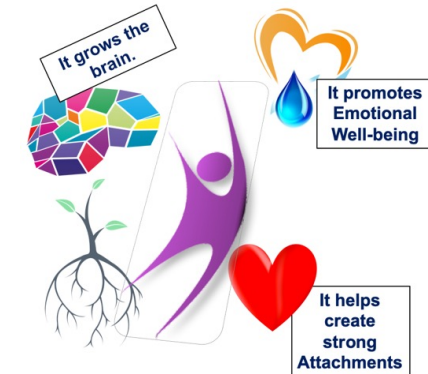
Minimize the influence of peers

- Expecting poor behaviour when young immature children spend unsupervised time with peers
- Making room for the child to spend time in the presence of those more mature
- Finding “dignified” ways of keeping children apart when it is too overwhelming and triggering:
 - ✓ by creating pre-determined small group activities
 - ✓ by setting up blocs of time where the child can have respite/downtime
 - ✓ by having the child be a ‘helper’ to the adult

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Why is PLAY important?

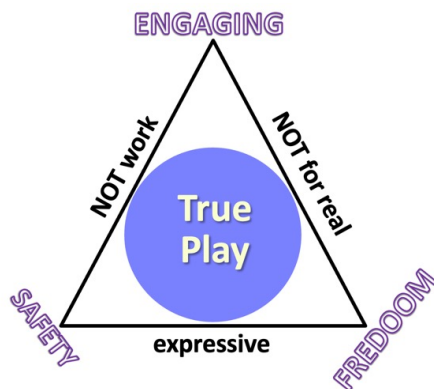
- Helps children make sense of their world
- Builds the brain through experiences not lessons
- Allows children to work through their emotions
- When play is interrupted, emotional well-being and brain development are affected



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What is true play?

A spontaneous activity that cannot be taught or commanded



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Benefits of PLAY on brain development

Studies have shown that self-regulation skills were better in those children who were allowed to play without interruption.

When children are engaged in a play activity they stay selectively focused on the situation at present, tune out distractions, and hold the information in their heads.

This then allows children to develop the capacity to reflect, look, listen, and feel before acting on primary emotional urges.

Studies have also shown that ADHD seems to be related to a deficit in play time.

A lack of play in the early years seems to affect mental health, behavioural and academic outcomes

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The joy of learning through PLAY

- Play is the best way to learn.
- Play contributes to enjoyment and involvement in learning.
- It fosters children's curiosity, autonomy, social skills, creativity and ability to find solutions to the problems they encounter.

When children play, all their senses are awakened, and their minds develop in extraordinary ways.



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Making time for PLAY

When children play alone, they are creating an identity, and/or creating opportunities to express their emotions.

When children play with each other, they practice how to get along with one another, and/or are working through their emotions.

When children play with adults, attachment increases, and they are experiencing how to feel their emotions in a safe context.



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Making time for PLAY

‘True’ play programs the brain’s problem-solving networks

- It is playful activity, not stimulation or instruction, that makes a positive difference in brain development.
- Play builds the brain that can then be used to receive instruction or solve problems.
- The most impressive brain growth happens when play is in the context of warm human connection.

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CAUTION!
Play can be disrupted

The excitement of play and the defense response to threat share roots in the same branch of the autonomic nervous system. Therefore, play relies on the sense of safety to appear. (Porges & Buczynski, 2011)

When not afraid, mammals are able to engage socially and down-regulate defensive reactions using the "vagal brake" which caps the defensive system and makes social engagement possible. (Culp,2010)

The face and voice are the primary signals for communicating safety and activating the "vagal brake".

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Losing the Space to Play

David Elkind in the *Power of Play*

- over the past two decades, children have lost twelve hours of free time a week, including eight hours of unstructured play and outdoor activities.
- free unstructured play, spontaneous pickup games, and self-initiated dramatic play, are replaced by digital devices

Stuart Brown in the *Status of Play* (Encyclopedia of Play Science)

- outdoor play has decreased by 71% in one generation in both the US and the UK.

Escalating diagnoses of childhood anxiety, depression and ADHD has paralleled the loss of play (Peter Gray, 2011)

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Guidelines for handling conflict BETWEEN CHILDREN

1. Assume the lead in guiding interactions

- Tune in to situations that may turn into a “problem”.
- Don’t expect young children to be able to sort out challenging conflicts
- Listen to each child, then make a decision about what is best to do next. It won’t be possible to please both children.
- As the adult indicate that you are in charge and that you will decide how to find a way through the difficult situation e.g. whose turn it is to play with the toy.

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Guidelines for handling conflict BETWEEN CHILDREN

2. Don’t try to figure out “who did what to whom” and who was in the “right”.

- The conflict is often more than what it seems – it may be a build-up of previous frustration that spills over into the next situation.
- There is no point to focus on “who did what to whom”. We may not have the full picture (e.g. non-verbal behaviours that we may have missed).
- The immature will INSIST on their perspective as they do not have the prefrontal cortex development that allows them to see the situation from the other person’s perspective.

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Guidelines for handling conflict BETWEEN CHILDREN

3. Come alongside each child’s experience

- Try to reflect back the EMOTIONAL experience (Frustration, Alarm, Pursuit, Sadness):
 - “That really wasn’t working for you – not what you had in mind.” (Frustration)
 - “That was scary – you were worried.” (Alarm)
 - “You really wanted him to play with you.” (Pursuit)
 - “That was upsetting – you feel hurt and sad.” (Sadness)

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Guidelines for handling conflict BETWEEN CHILDREN

4. Don't try to teach a lesson and don't talk too much

- ❑ **Instead:** Do what you have to do to diffuse the situation – ACT **don't TALK**
 - Kindly separate the children – preserve their dignity
 - Give one child something else to play with
 - Or ask the children to help you with something

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Guidelines for handling conflict BETWEEN CHILDREN

5. Don't request 'sorry' unless genuine


- ❑ An insincere apology is not effective. Even young children know when it is not a genuine "sorry".
- ❑ Young children feel badly AFTER the incident even if they cannot temper themselves during the incident. They need to know we understand how hard it is for them to "control" themselves.
- ❑ **Instead:** Go to the affected child and take the time to name and validate their "pain". Model to the children by saying you're sorry the situation turned out the way it did. Let them know you are taking charge of the situation.

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BRIDGE all that can divide

Put the focus on the next point of contact

- "I am looking forward to seeing you tomorrow."
- "We'll find a way to make things better."



The message we want to give our children is that **NO MATTER WHAT** they **DO** or how they **BEHAVE**

ADULTS WILL CONTINUE TO CARE FOR THEM.

BRIDGING gives the child **HOPE**.

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BIENVENUE à la petite enfance !

On fait du bruit et des dégâts
parce que nous explorons et nous prenons des risques.

**Nous posons beaucoup de questions
et parlons beaucoup**
parce que nous sommes curieux d'apprendre.

**Nous ne sommes pas faits
pour rester assis**
parce que nous développons notre motricité.

**Nous sommes impulsifs, nos émotions
changent rapidement**
parce que notre cerveau en pleine maturation
ne peut qu'avoir un sentiment à la fois.

Nous devons jouer
parce que le jeu nourrit la créativité et la logique.

**JOUER C'EST NOTRE
FAÇON D'APPRENDRE !**



WELCOME to early childhood!

We are noisy mess-makers
... because we are explorers and risk-takers.

We ask questions and talk a lot
... because we are curious about the world and acquiring new vocabulary.

We are not built for desk sitting
... because we are developing our motor skills and need to be active.

We are impulsive, our emotions shift rapidly
... because our maturing brain can only hold one thought or feeling at a time.

We need to play
... because play nurtures creativity and logic.

PLAY IS THE WAY WE LEARN!



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Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management
www.cebm.ca



THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT (CEBM)

As a support to the 10 English School Boards of Quebec, the CEBM aims to help boards and their staff to find effective and developmentally friendly interventions for working with students who experience significant behavioural challenges in the school setting.

Also visit the CEBM Resource Center
<https://www.cebmmember.ca/>

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