

# Utilizing Play to Support the Nurturing and Healing of Young Children

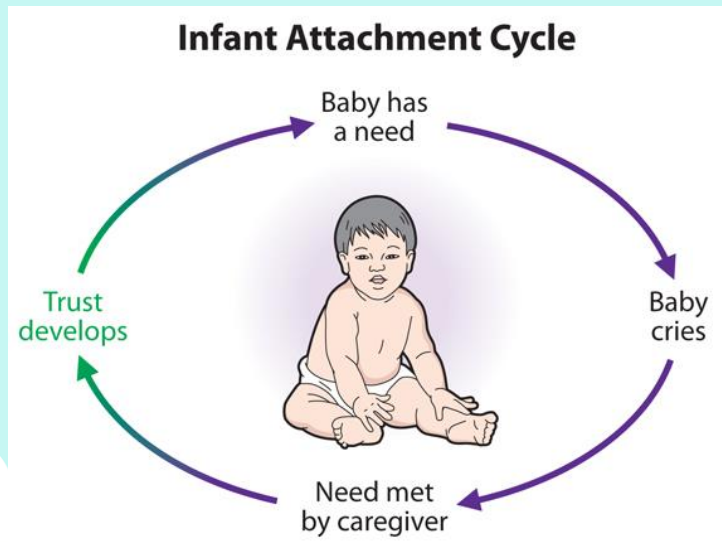
We Can't Wait Conference 2024

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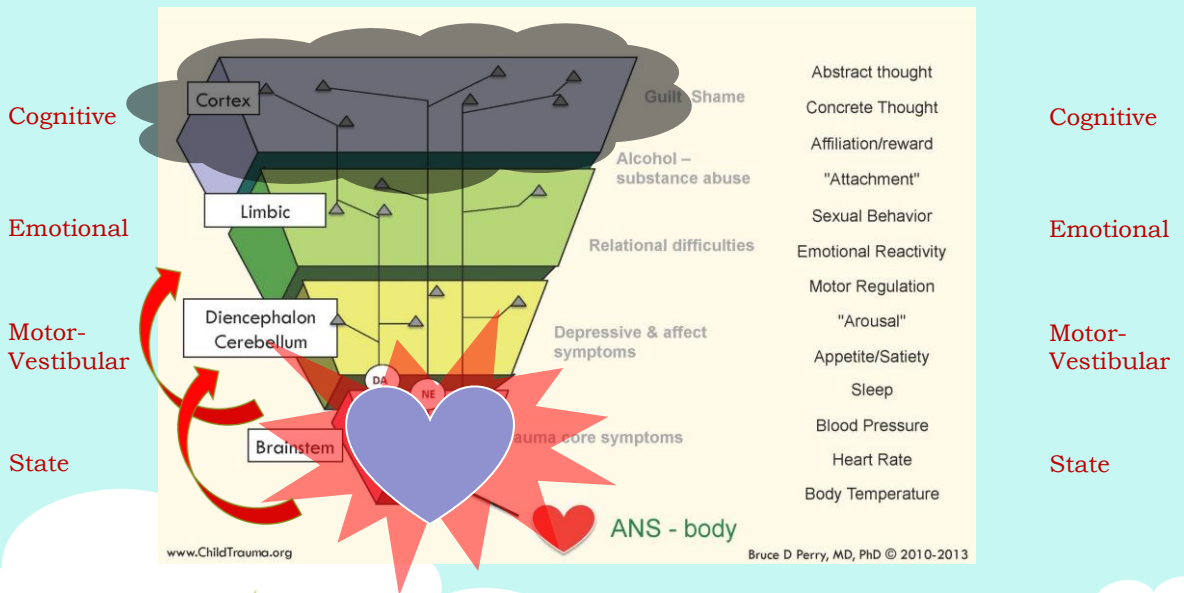
- Understand the Circle of Security as it relates to nurturing a young child
- Identify two ways that play can be therapeutic in a child's development
- Identify fun activities which support a young child's social-emotional development

## Learning Objectives

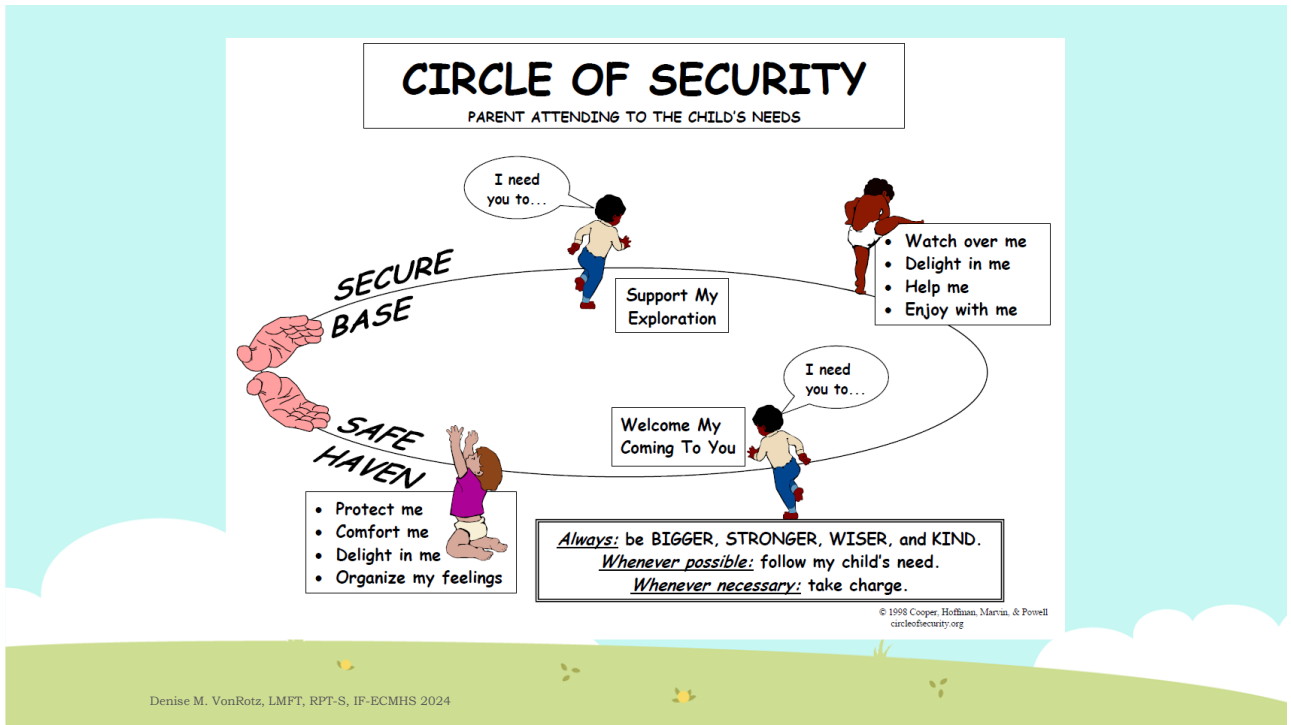
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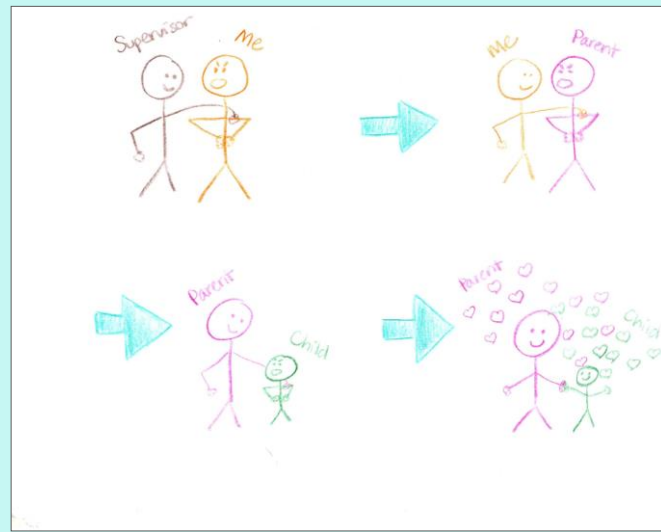


## Provider's Role

- Relationship – create a safe haven/secure base
- Support Affect – help caregivers to accept and hold painful emotional states
- Reflection – increase caregivers' reflective capacity



## Parallel Process



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## Objectives for Parent-Child Dyad:

- Support mutually satisfying interactions
- Follow child's lead in play themes and provide safety and reassurance in play
- Provide "corrective emotional experiences"
- Point out moments of parent and child enjoyment of one another
- Encourage frequent physical touch (when speaking with child, when child walks nearby, during play)
- Encourage direct eye contact when speaking with child
- Mirror and reflect emotions to validate and model positive expression

## \*\* Caution / Common Mistake:

We often feel the pressure to **DO, DO, DO** to make something happen...

when often what is most helpful is to mellow out and just **BE**...



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- "Play also serves as a language for the child – a symbolism that substitutes for words. The child experiences much in life he cannot as yet express in language, and so he uses play to formulate and assimilate what he experiences."
- "Through the safety of play every child can try out his own new ways of being."

## Why Play?

Windows to Our Children ~ Violet Oaklander



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- In Child-Parent Psychotherapy, "the basic assumption is that the most immediate and direct threat to the young child's psychological well-being is an explicit or implicit parental message that the child is not good enough"
- "When the parent and the child play together, the spontaneity and joy of the play may be therapeutic in itself"

## Why Play?

Psychotherapy with Infants and Young Children ~ Lieberman and Van Horn



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## Attachment Interventions: Theraplay Activities

- **Structure** (organize child's world so that child feels safe and secure and knows what to expect)
- **Engagement** (play and have fun with child)
- **Nurture** (caring for child so that the child feels loved and feels good about self)
- **Challenge** (help the child to learn new things)



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www.theraplay.org

- Bean Bag Catch
- Body Drawings
  - hands, feet, whole body
- Cotton Ball Hockey
- Measuring
- Mirroring
- Play Dough Squeeze or Prints

## Structure



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- Beep and Honk
- Blow Me Over
- Checkups
- Hide and Seek
- Peek a Boo
- This Little Piggy

## Engagement



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- Cotton Ball Touch
- Face Painting
- Guess the Goodies
- Lotion and Powder Prints
- Lotioning
- Lullaby

## Nurture



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- Balance on Pillows, Jump Off
- Balloon Tennis
- Clap Patterns
- Cooperative Cotton Ball Race
- Crawling Race
- Newspaper Punch, Basket Toss

## Challenge



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California Center for Infant-Family and Early Childhood Mental Health

<http://cacenter-ecmh.org>

The Theraplay Institute

[www.theraplay.org](http://www.theraplay.org)

Circle of Security International

[circleofsecurity.net](http://circleofsecurity.net)

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning

[csefel.vanderbilt.edu](http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu)

Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention

[www.challengingbehavior.org](http://www.challengingbehavior.org)

Zero to Three

[www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)

## Helpful Websites



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