Early Brain Development

The impact on Social Emotional Health
A Model for Collaboration

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Many thanks to…
Learning Objectives

• To understand the compelling case for social emotional health promotion in early childhood
• To identify the unique roles and opportunities for Child Care Health Consultant to promote social emotional health
• To identify concrete next steps and tools to integrate into practice
The Foundation of a Successful Society is Built in Early Childhood

- Responsible Citizenship
- Lifelong Health
- Educational Achievement
- Economic Productivity

Strong Communities
Healthy Economy

HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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Infant mental health is:

• “The developing capacity of the children from birth to 3 to experience, regulate, and express emotions; form close and secure interpersonal relationships; and explore the environment and learn – all in the context of family, community, and cultural expectations for young children.” (Zero to Three, 2002, pg.2)
Brats are built over time, starting in the earliest years of life. Simple skills come first; more complex skills build on top of them.

Cognitive, emotional, and social capabilities are inextricably intertwined throughout the life course.

A strong foundation in the early years improves the odds for positive outcomes. A weak foundation increases the odds of later difficulties.

Video #1
700 New Neural Connections Every Second

Foundation for Executive Function Skills is Built in Early Childhood

- **Self-Control** – ability to filter thoughts and impulses to resist temptations and distractions
- **Working Memory** – ability to hold and manipulate information in our heads over short periods of time
- **Mental Flexibility** – adjusting to changing demands, priorities, or perspectives
Critical Factors in Developing a Strong Foundation for Executive Function Skills

- **Children’s Relationships** – consistent reliable adults who support and protect them, and model and engage them in building executive function skills
- **Activities** - the opportunity to engage in activities that reduce stress, foster social connection, incorporate physical activity, and increase the complexity of skills at the right speed for each child
- **A safe and stable environment**
What’s the big deal?
Why is this so important?

• Scope of social emotional/behavioral issues
• Expulsion rates
• Teacher turnover
• Tools and Techniques that do work
• Impact on school success/failure
• Lifelong health
Barriers to Educational Achievement Emerge at a Very Young Age

Data Source: Hart & Risley (1995)
National Health and Safety Performance Standards

- **Standard 2.1.2.1:** Personal Caregiver/Teacher Relationships for Infants and Toddlers
- **Standard 2.1.2.2:** Interactions with Infants and Toddlers
- **Standard 2.1.2.3:** Space and Activity to Support Learning of Infants and Toddlers
Serve & Return Builds Brains and Skills

- Ongoing, reliable interaction with trusted adults is essential for the development of healthy brain circuits
- Systems that support the quality of relationships in early care settings, communities, and homes help build brain architecture
- [Video #2](#)
Key Factors of Serve & Return

- Security and trust
- Warm, responsive interactions between caregivers/staff and children
- Emotional availability
- A language rich environment
- Video #3
Component 6: Active and Responsive Caregiving

PAIR and SHARE

• Example of when this went right or wrong during your work with children and early care providers

• Strategies for promoting serve and return/language rich interactions
Early Childhood Stress Influences Developmental Outcomes

- Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels; important to development in the context of stable and supportive relationships
- Serious and temporary, but impact buffered by supportive relationships and safe environments
- Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships; disrupts brain architecture, increases the risk of stress-related physical and mental illness
### Prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)

#### Abuse
- Emotional: 13.1% (n=9,367), 7.6% (n=7,970), 10.6% (17,337)
- Physical: 27.0% (n=9,367), 29.9% (n=7,970), 28.3% (17,337)
- Sexual: 24.7% (n=9,367), 16.0% (n=7,970), 20.7% (17,337)

#### Household Dysfunction
- Mother Treated Violently: 13.7% (n=9,367), 11.5% (n=7,970), 12.7% (17,337)
- Household Substance Abuse: 29.5% (n=9,367), 23.8% (n=7,970), 26.9% (17,337)
- Household Mental Illness: 23.3% (n=9,367), 14.8% (n=7,970), 19.4% (17,337)
- Parental Separation or Divorce: 24.5% (n=9,367), 21.8% (n=7,970), 23.3% (17,337)
- Incarcerated Household Member: 5.2% (n=9,367), 4.1% (n=7,970), 4.7% (17,337)

#### Neglect *
- Emotional: 16.7% (n=9,367), 12.4% (n=7,970), 14.8% (17,337)
- Physical: 9.2% (n=9,367), 10.7% (n=7,970), 9.9% (17,337)

*Wave 2 data only (n=8,667)

3:1 Odds of Adult Heart Disease After 7-8 Adverse Childhood Experiences
90-100% Chance of Developmental Delays When Children Experience 6-7 Risk Factors

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Understanding Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Early Death
- Disease & Disability
- Adoption of Health-Risk Behaviors
- Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Impairment
- Adverse Childhood Experiences
Relationships Buffer Toxic Stress

• Learning how to cope with moderate, short-lived stress can build a healthy stress response system
• Toxic stress (when the body’s stress response system is activated excessively) can weaken brain architecture
• Without caring adults to buffer children, toxic stress can have long-term consequences for learning, behavior, and both physical and mental health
• [Video #4]
Structure of Program Can Help Support Healthy Relationships

- Adequate adult to child ratios
- Small group sizes
- One primary caregiver per child
- Continuity of care; one caregiver over time
- Time for parents/guardians to share information
- Time for caregivers to get to know the child through observation

The National Training Institute for Child Care Health Consultants
ONE CAREGIVER FROM ENROLLMENT TO PRESCHOOL

Because babies need stable and responsive care.
Approach to Consultation

- Getting to know you - “Mindful hanging out”
- Reflective practice – Wondering/questioning
- Readiness for change – Stage of change scale
- Techniques for learning
  - Modeling
  - Practice
- Standardized assessments
  - CLASS
  - DECA
Helping Caregivers Understand Children’s Challenging Behavior

- Examine antecedents to the behavior
- Examine the behavior for its cause
- Communicate clear, simple expectations and consequences
- Check in on your own emotional state
- Involve the family/medical home/community supports
Helping Caregivers Understand Temperament

- **Activity level** – always active or generally still
- **Biological rhythms** – predictability of hunger, sleep, elimination
- **Approach/withdrawal** – response to new situations
- **Mood** – tendency to react with positive or negative mood, serious, fussy
- **Intensity of reaction** – energy or strength of emotional reaction
- **Sensitivity** – comfort with levels of sensory information; sound, brightness of light, feel of clothing, new tastes
- **Adaptability** – ease of managing transitions or changes
- **Distractibility** – how easily a child's attention is pulled from an activity
- **Persistence** – how long child continues with an activity he/she finds difficult

From csefel handout on temperament traits
What is Emotional Literacy?

It is the capacity to:

• Identify, understand, and express emotion in a healthy way
• Recognize, label, and understand feelings in self and others (empathy)

Emotional Literacy is a developmental skill that must be learned. It is not present at birth.

Adapted with permission, Cradling Literacy, 2007
Strategies to Develop Emotional Literacy in Infants and Toddlers

- Use the adult/child relationship to expand children’s awareness of emotions or feelings
- Find opportunities in the group setting to talk about feelings
- Use enriching language tools

CSEFEL Module 2
Setting Up the Environment for Developing Play and Friendship Skills

- Evaluate the physical space to ensure that there is enough space for infants and adults to engage in social activities.
- Evaluate the physical environment for spaces for two or more children to enjoy side-by-side activity and for adults to be close for supervision.
- Evaluate the daily schedule for opportunities to develop play skills each day.
- Provide enough materials and equipment that allow and encourage two or more children to interact.
Promoting the Development of Friendship Skills

- Encourage toddlers to help each other and do routines together
- Provide positive verbal support for play between children
- Read books about friends, playing together, helping each other, etc.
- Practice turn-taking and sharing

CSEFEL Module 2
CSEFEL: Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning

- Explore website: make it a GO TO RESOURCE
  http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu

- Training Modules:
  http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/training_modules.html

- Unlimited practical caregiver resources:
  - classroom tools
  - strategizing tools
  - parent handouts
  http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html
Social Emotional Health Promotion: Curriculum

- Building Executive Function – Mind in the Making
- DECA
- Building your Bounce
- Incredible Years
Early Learning Guideline: Social Emotional Development

- A. Interactions with Adults
- B. Seek Assistance from adults
- C. Interaction with peers
  - D. Cooperation
  - E. Negotiation
- F. Adaptive Social Behavior
  - G. Group Activities
  - H. Diverse settings
  - I. Empathy
- J. Appreciating diversity
- K. Self Concept
  - L. Abilities and preferences
- M. Self Efficacy
- N. Self Control
  - O. Feelings and Impulses
- P. Emotional Expression
Pair and Share

- What is one thing you are going to do differently to enhance your promotion of social emotional health?
- What is a challenge that you would like to address around promoting social emotional health?
- What is a next step in supporting your ability to address the challenge?
- What is a long term goal in promoting social emotional health?
For More Information

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