



**Parenting Skills:**  
**Understanding Your Child's Behaviour**



# What is 'Good Enough Parenting?'

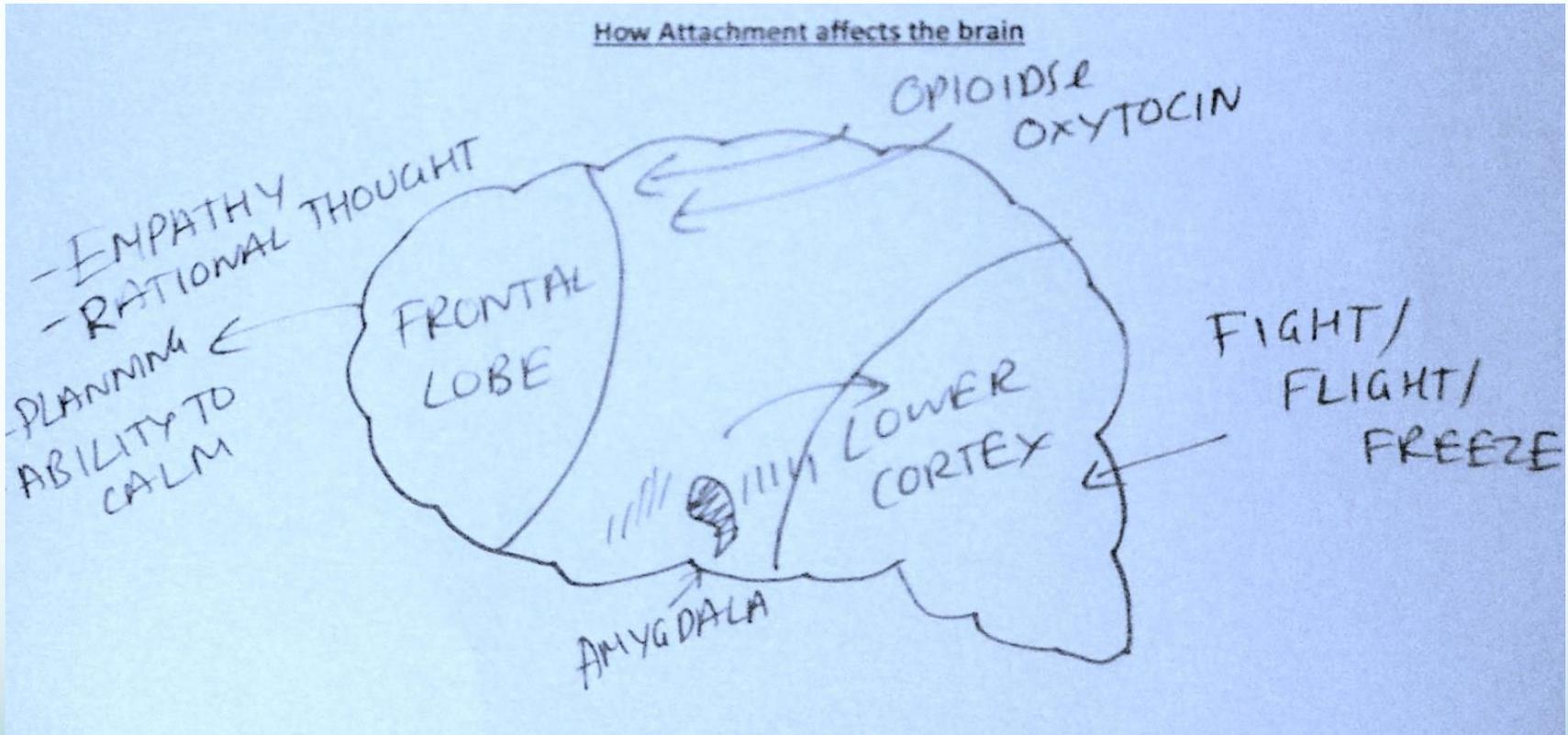
- Baby child has **physical needs met** when they need them met as a baby- fed, soothed, played with, kept warm, nappy changed.
- The parent is striving to do **the best they can** to care for the baby. **(This does not mean we can't make mistakes/find things hard!)**
- **Attunement:** Parent and baby will do lots of mirroring of facial expression, sound and body movements.
- The baby/ child has **firm boundaries with gentle direction.**
- The baby/child has their **feelings reflected** and is helped to think about their actions.
- The baby/ child experiences **mutual joy states** with their attachment figure.

# Maslow's Hierarchy Of Needs

How do you practically fulfill these needs for your children?



# Explaining Brain Function and Behaviour



# Empathy

**Empathy definition:** *Empathy* is the experience of understanding another person's condition from their perspective. You place yourself in their shoes and feel what they are feeling.

Ways to start an empathic statement:

*I wonder if...*

*It sounds like...*

*I'm guessing...*

**MAKING THE EFFORT TO GUESS HOW  
THINGS ARE FOR THE OTHER  
CAN BE AS GOOD AS GETTING IT RIGHT!**

# Empathy works because.....

- It gives a person the sense that someone is really trying to see into their world- increases their desire for healthy relationship.
- It provides a powerful tool for increasing a child's emotional literacy.
- When a child is emotionally met, Opioids and Oxytocin are released in the brain and a child can function using their frontal lobe.

# Mutual Joy States

“At times of intimacy- shared delightful play states...the brain’s emotion chemicals and the body’s hormones, which are released in both people, feel exquisite. When flowing strongly, it is these chemicals and hormones that make a child or adult feel warm and tender, deeply content, and that all is well in their world.” (Sunderland, 2003: 29)

How do you create joyful experiences with your children?

*How could you do this more?*

# ***How do we manage our anxiety and help our children calm and think during heightened emotion/ stress?***

*We need to  
increase the flow  
of Opioids and  
Oxytocin to their  
brain!*

*We need to use  
our frontal lobe  
first to enable  
this!*

**How do you calm down? What could you try?**

# Managing Tantrums

Two types of tantrums:

**DISTRESS Tantrums**

**POWER Tantrums**

*It is important to know the difference and manage each type of tantrum differently.*

# DISTRESS Tantrums

**When a child has a tantrum as a response to something that has distressed them:**

- They dropped their ice cream
- They do not want to be strapped in the car seat/buggy
- They have fallen over/ another child hit them
- Mummy left for work

*It is important to provide comfort and acknowledge the powerful feeling states that are causing distress in order for the child to learn to regulate the feeling they are having.*

**Discuss- what are the feelings may a child have as a result of these incidents?**

**How can you respond in an empathic way?**

# How to respond to Distress tantrums

**Help them handle it, the child will need safety, comfort and reassurance.**

- Use simple, calm actions, keep your talking short and simple.
- Distract: This activates the seeking system in the child's brain which naturally over-rides the rage and distress brain systems. They will move into motivation.
- Use emotionally reflective language.
- Be tender in your touch: Hold them, sit close to them, rock them and soothe them, have your calm body against theirs. The child's breath will slow to match yours and they will be able to calm down.
- Remind yourself the child's distress is genuine.

# POWER Tantrums

**POWER tantrums are all about CONTROL. If we respond to power tantrums in the same way we do distress tantrums the child will become more dominant than us in the relationship....**

**....which is ultimately terrifying for the child!**

Incidents that may cause a power tantrum:

*The child wants a biscuit and you have said no, it's almost teatime.*

*The child continues to draw on the table when you have calmly asked them not to, so you take the crayon away.*

*You have said no to having the television on just before bedtime.*

# Managing Power Tantrums

- Don't give the tantrum an audience, leave the room (inform the child you are leaving and where you are going), the child's tantrums are fuelled by others looking and you interacting.- This includes no trying to reason with the child in this state.
- It is important the child knows they cannot control you, do not give in. The child will start to learn that showing uncontrollable rage gets them what they want.
- Use humour where appropriate: Mirror the behaviour back to them, boss around some of their toys and role play their feelings back.
- Give firm clear 'nos' and try to manage your own rage/ strong feelings.
- Use time out as a last resort- it is appropriate if the child is physically hurting another.
- Give information on what may work better: "if you boss people around they won't want to help you, can you think of a better way to ask for what you want?"

# Discipline

- Time-in vs. time out- check yourself, have you been giving enough time-in?
- Time-out is appropriate only when a child has bit, kicked or hit another (acted violently).
- Try not to shout- all this does is trigger fight, flight freeze.
- Use discipline that involves staying in relationship so that you can REPAIR it.....Examples: The child has to hang the washing out with you the next three times, they need to un-stack the dishwasher with Dad for the next week etc.
- Reward good behaviour.
- Have clear family rules.

# Choices and Consequences

When giving consequences for actions try to engage your child's thinking brain (frontal lobe)

*Example: Matt (age 6) has thrown his brother's toy car because he is jealous of him having it, it now has a large crack in it. This behaviour is not okay. The consequences are presented in a choice to Matt either he can do jobs around the house until he has earned enough money to buy his brother a new car or he can give his brother his own toy car, which his brother would be delighted with.*

**Do not feel pressure to think of a consequence right away, model thoughtfulness by saying you are thinking about it.**

Recipe for  
the **BEST** relationship with our  
children

**B**oundaries

**E**mpathy

**S**tay Calm

**T**ime-In

# Time-In

- 10 minutes 3 X per week intensive one-to-one play.
- Timetable it and time it.
- Theraplay games focused on building up relationship bonds.
  - ✓ *Hide and seek games*
  - ✓ *Tactile touch games*
  - ✓ *Games that encourage imagination, creativity and regression in age*

**No phones, no TV, no cancelling for discipline, don't give it up!**

# Boundaries

***“Be strong in our gentleness and gentle with our strength”  
(Louise Bomber)***

*What does that mean to you?*

- **Boundaries keep children safe in an often unpredictable world.**
- **Non-shaming language- okay and not okay.**
- **Boundaries reassure children we are looking after them.**
- **It is easier to relax a firm boundary than it is to strengthen a wobbly one.**

# Stay Calm

- By being open to thinking about your role as a parent you are doing the best you can!
- Remember what helps you stay calm.
- Talk, play, make time for yourself.
- It's okay to make mistakes. Can you forgive yourself?

# Recommended Reading

- *What Every Parent Need to Know-*  
Margot Sunderland
- *How to Talk so Kids can Listen and Listen so Kids Can Talk-* Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish
- *The Parent/ Child Game-* Sue Jenner
- *The Mummy Glue-* Tee Dobinson