

THE RESEARCH



REVIEW OF LITERATURE SUPPORTING THE PARENTING BY CONNECTION APPROACH: AT-A-GLANCE SUMMARY

By Rebecca Aced-Molina, M.A.

PARENT CHILD CONNECTEDNESS		
MAIN SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS:	SOURCES:	QUOTES:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are born with a genetic predisposition to bond physically and emotionally with parents. This is generally referred to in the literature as “attachment theory.” Children who show a secure attachment with their primary care giver show the most likelihood to develop positive outcomes later in life. Social, emotional and cognitive functioning is dependent on experiencing a secure attachment early in life. 	<p>Brazelton, T. Berry M.D. and Greenspan, Stanley, M.D.; 2000</p> <p>Goldstein, Sam and Brooks, Robert; 2002</p> <p>Lezin, N., Roller, L., Bean, S. and Taylor J. ETR Associates; 2004</p> <p>Siegel, Daniel J. M.D. and Mary Hartzell M. Ed.; 2004</p> <p>Siegel, Daniel M.D.; 2001</p>	<p>“Longitudinal studies have found that securely attached children appear to have a number of positive outcomes in their development.” (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999)</p> <p>“These include enhanced emotional flexibility, social functioning and cognitive abilities” (Siegel, 2001; p. 77)</p> <p>“Children need such joining experiences because they provide the emotional nourishment that developing minds require. Relationships that are “connecting” and allow for collaboration appear to offer children a wealth of interpersonal closeness that supports the development of many domains, including social, emotional, and cognitive functioning.” (Siegel, 2001; pg. 78)</p>
<p>New Directions in Parent Child Connections Research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent child connectedness is critical throughout child and caregivers life, not just years 0 – 5. The parent child connection is not unilateral but requires a give and take between child and parent/caregiver. The parent child connection can be re-established even if suffered a breaks or disruptions in a child and caregivers' past. 	<p>Lezin, N., Roller, L., .Bean, S. and Taylor J. ETR Associates; 2004</p> <p>Siegel, Daniel J. M.D. and Mary Hartzell M. Ed; 2004</p>	<p>“...seeing the interaction between parents and children not just as individuals but as part of an on-going, dynamic relationship.” (Lezin, N., Roller, L., Bean, S. and Taylor J., 2004; ETR, p. 5)</p>
Special Time		
MAJOR SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS:	Sources:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applied Research recognizes that parents often are consumed by demands other than providing attention to their children. Experts suggest parents devote at least four, 20- minute periods of undivided attention to their children a day. 	<p>Brazelton, T. Berry M.D. and Greenspan, Stanley, M.D.; 2000</p>	<p>“Parents or caregivers who tend to get preoccupied and structured with their tasks may need to set aside more and more special times for the facilitated or direct nurturing interactions. At minimum, there should be four 20-minute or longer opportunities for direct interaction simply because these kinds of interactions help babies learn to have an emotional dialogue and eventually an intellectual dialogue with their caregivers over longer stretches of time.” (Brazelton, T. Berry M.D. and Greenspan, Stanley, M.D, 2000; p. 41)</p>

Playlisting		
MAJOR SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS	Sources:	Quotes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play is the primary way children learn. • Play is associated with enhanced language development, creative thought, and abstraction. • Linked to increase in IQ. • Play has therapeutic value, especially when linked to laughter, i.e. stress release. • Role reversal between parent and child allows parents a mode of communicating with children in a way children understand, thus promoting a closer connection between parent and child and preventing behavior problems. 	Brazelton, T. Berry M.D. and Greenspan, Stanley, M.D.; 2000 Cohen, Lawrence J., Ph.D ; 2001 Solter, Aletha J., Ph.D.; 1989 Stegelin, Dolores A.; 2005	<p><i>"...research has shown that socio-dramatic play enhances language development."</i> (Solter, 1989; p. 93)</p> <p><i>"Fantasy play requires and fosters symbolic thought, abstraction, and creative imagination."</i> (Brazelton and Greenspan, 2000; p. 125)</p> <p><i>"Playful parenting is a way to enter the child's world on the child's terms, in order to foster closeness, confidence and connection."</i> (Cohen, 2001; p. 2)</p>
Setting Limits		
MAJOR SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS	Sources:	Quotes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authoritative Parenting is documented as most effective. This approach is a balance between establishing firm limits and high degrees of warmth. • Discipline approaches that promote children making their own good decisions vs. escaping punishment are associated with the most resilient (successful in adverse situations). • Spanking and verbal abuse are associated with various negative outcomes such as aggression, anti-social behaviors and mental health problems. • Neglect is the factor most highly associated with negative behaviors in children. 	Cohen, Lawrence J., Ph.D; 2001 Crary, Elizabeth; 1979/1993 Lezin, N. Rolleri, L., Bean, S. and Taylor J. (ETR); 2004 Goldstein, Sam and Brooks, Robert; 2002 Siegel, Daniel J. M.D. and Mary Hartzell M. Ed.; 2004 New York Times, Associated Press. 7/9/02, "A New Look At Effects of Spanking". New York Times, Bonnie Rothman Morris. "Scream at Your Own Risk (and Your Children's)" November 9, 2004.	<p><i>"The parenting style most frequently and solidly associated with healthy, well-adjusted children in the existing literature is authoritative parenting, which has become the benchmark for comparing and assessing different styles. Authoritative parenting combines high levels of warmth with moderate levels of control."</i> (Lezin, N. Rolleri, L., Bean, S. and Taylor J. (ETR); 2004, p.7)</p> <p><i>"The ways in which parents discipline children will either reinforce or weaken self-esteem, self-control, and resilience..."</i> (Goldstein, Sam and Brooks, Robert; 2002, p. 16)</p> <p><i>"After six decades of expert research on corporal punishment, Dr. Elizabeth Gershoff found links between spanking and ten negative behaviors including aggression, antisocial behavior, and mental health problems."</i> (NYT 7/9/02)</p>
Staylisting		
MAJOR SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS:	Sources:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While a child has a tantrum or a parent is maintaining a limit, the best thing to do to promote learning and maintain a close connection is to listen to the child cry. • Crying has cognitive benefits; by alleviating stress the brain is freed up to function more effectively on reasoning and is more alert for learning. 	Brazelton, T. Berry M.D. and Greenspan, Stanley, M.D.; 2000 Siegel, Daniel J. M.D. and Mary Hartzell M. Ed.; 2004 Siegel, Daniel M.D.; 2001 Solter, Aletha J., Ph.D; 2001 Solter, Aletha J., Ph.D.; 1989	<p><i>"Letting your child have his emotion and letting him know that you understand it's hard not to get what he wants is the kindest and most helpful thing you can do for your child at that moment."</i> (Siegel, 2001; p. 190)</p> <p><i>"Another long-term benefit of allowing babies to heal from early trauma through crying is that this helps them be more attentive and alert for learning..."</i> (Solter, 1989; p. 54)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crying has physical benefits associated with alleviating stress and decreasing chances of stress related disease (high blood pressure, tumors, and others). • By listening to their child/ren the parent communicates that they cares about their child, that the child's feelings are important. 		<p><i>"Allowing your baby to cry freely (in your arms) will help him form a habit of crying when he needs to, instead of suppressing his emotions. This will continue to adulthood. This will help him stay healthier, because pent up stress is a contributing factor to many illnesses..." (Solter, 1989; P. 55)</i></p>
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Listening Partnerships

MAJOR SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS:	Sources:	Quotes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While we know from research that the parent-child connection is the best predictor of children's success later in life, many still ask what is the best predictor of a parent's ability to attach. We now know that it's the parents ability to come to a sense of understanding about their past (the good and bad) through talking and being listened to that helps a parent attach to their children. • Dr. Daniel Siegel has found that parents' unresolved emotional experiences have a huge impact on their interactions with their children. He has also found that even parents who have had very difficult childhoods can offer their children a very secure attachment if they can talk about their life story and be listened to. This does not have to occur in a professional setting. • Research examining prevention of child abuse has also found that one of the best strategies for parents to avoid hitting their child is to call a friend, or talk to another parent about their stress. 	<p>Siegel, Daniel J. M.D. and Mary Hartzell M. Ed.; 2004 Crary, Elizabeth; 1979/1993 Cohen, Lawrence J., Ph.D; 2001</p>	<p><i>"Having a history of trauma or loss does not by itself predispose you to having a child with disorganization. It is the lack of resolution that is the essential risk factor. It is never too late to move toward making sense of our experiences and healing your past."</i> (Siegel, 2004; p. 107)</p> <p><i>"The shadows that implicit mental models cast on us can be made explicit through focused self-reflection."</i> (Siegel, 2004, p. 17)</p> <p><i>"Effective discipline rarely happens in the heat of the moment. Before you try to deal with a problem, count to ten, take a break, wait a few hours for things to settle down, call a friend"</i> (Cohen, 2001; p.232)</p>

Parent Resource Groups

MAJOR SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS:	Sources:	Quotes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Resource Groups employed in at risk communities have been found to reduce juvenile delinquency in the children of participating parents. • Parent Resource Groups are a way for parents to build support in order to build social ties and support whole communities. 	<p>Lally, J., P., Mangione, A., Honig and D. Wittner; 1988 www.familysupportamerica.org</p>	<p><i>"After three years a participant group received higher cognitive and social/emotional ratings than those in a control group.</i></p> <p><i>After 10 years, 6% of youth in the participant group had records with the juvenile justice system versus 22% of you in the control group."</i> (Lally, J., P. Mangione, A. Honig and D. Wittner; 1988, p. 13 – 18).</p> <p><i>"These [support groups] provide information on and instruction in child development, and opportunities for parents to share their experiences and concerns with peers."</i> (www.familysupportamerica.org)</p>