

GVH CAMHS Perinatal Infant Mental Health ECHO:

Development and Relationships in Infancy

Assoc Prof Paul Robertson

Mindful, Dept of Psychiatry, Uni of Melbourne



www.mindful.org.au

What is development?

Growing up! What does this mean?

- move to greater complexity and organization ..
- Includes greater (auto)regulation of physiological arousal, affect, behaviour and many other domains

The logo for Mindful, featuring the word "Mindful" in a stylized, cursive blue font.

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Domains of Development in Infancy

1. Perception
2. Gross motor development
3. Fine motor development
4. Cognitive
5. Socio-emotional skills
6. Speech, language and communication skills



Age based Phases of Development

1. Neonate
 2. Infancy
 3. Toddlerhood
 4. Latency child
 5. Adolescences
- and so on....



Normal & Abnormal Development

- How do we judge if normal? - statistically using normal distributions
- But can also see 'normal' as adjusted to the environmental context demands
- Abnormal development = developmental psychopathology
- Reasons for abnormal development maybe biological intrinsic or failure of environmental provision
- developmental pathways are not linear



Many Developmental Theories

Currently a broad eclectic **Developmental systematic theory** (including cultural) is most predominant and based on Attachment theory, system theory and blends of other theories.



Why is Development Important to Clinicians ?

Many clinical problems are understood as developmental in origin

- emotional dysregulation
- personality disorders
- neurodevelopment disorders
- Relationship capacity

Much clinical work is helping children back onto normal developmental trajectory and making use of normal developmental momentum.



Mental Health Professionals - What are we interested in?

Different professionals focus on different domains of development

- Pediatricians on physical and motor development
- Speech pathologists on language and communication
- Educational Psychologist on cognition
- Physiotherapists on motor development

Mental Health Professional are particularly interested in:

- **Socio-emotional development** - the regulation of arousal, emotions, relationship capacity, sense of self, mentalization and
- communication and interaction as intrinsic to successful socio-emotional development



Socio-emotional Skills

- regulation of arousal (and behaviour)
- regulation and differentiation of emotions
- Effective reciprocal communication
- Capacity for relating to others
- emerging sense of self
- mentalisation or reflective functioning



**Socio-emotional Development occurs in the
context of intimate relationships and is
relationship dependent!**

Especially child-caregiver relationships early in life.

**The infant-parent relationship is the
primary Context of Socio-emotional
Development**



Attachment Security and Organization

What does this mean for an infant?

- Security and safety
- Predictability and reliability

Security provides the capacity to explore and learn



Development & Childhood Trauma

The infants needs to adaption to adverse environments that are:

- inadequate or depriving
- Frightening and dangerous

These adaptations can enable survival in the adverse environment but maybe not in a typical environment

But we see failure of usual socio emotional development



Early Child-Parent Relationships in a Broader Social Relational Context

Child-Parent and family relationships are the proximal environment for development.

Parents and families relationships sit in a broader social relational context that impacts on the child's development mediated through the child-parent relationship - to support or hinder development

Environmental context may impact though contemporary supports or
impingement

Or through historical factors ie unresolved parental past trauma or cultural trauma carry into the present



Being relational in our work and
connections with children and
families and with our many
colleagues



Resources on Internet

raisingchildren.net.au - The Australian Parenting Website
(<https://raisingchildren.net.au/>)

Zero to Three (<https://www.zerotothree.org/>)

Center on the Developing Child Harvard University
(<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/>)



Available Infant Mental Health Training

Introductory Options

1. Mindful Introduction to Infant Mental Health (MIIMH) - half day online, on demand training
2. RCH Engaging Infants 2 day workshop on IMH
3. Bouverie Family Therapy Center Mertil (My Early Relational Trauma Informed Learning) Training

Some more advanced options:

IMHAT (Mindful & RCH) and Foundations of Attachment Observations with Infants (Bouverie Center)

