

DIR:Floortime and Relationships



SPOTlight
Trust 5.0

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The Importance of Relationships and Affective Interactions

Kate Bailey

At this time more than any other, we need to be aware of the influence SCREEN TIME has on relationships.

Relationships and the importance of **affect** – emotional expression conveyed by our eye gaze, facial expression, tone of voice, speed and rhythm of speech, gestures, body movement and positioning, type of touch – is the cornerstone of DIR/Floortime.

This is how we connect with one another, building the foundation for the social skills of being present for another with empathy and compassion, picking up on our own and another's feelings, and responding.

Those of you who know me, know that I have a passionate interest in babies and early childhood development, the first few weeks and years of life. Having recently completed the "Stimulate your Baby" series together with Liz Senior of Clamber Club, and experienced the birth of my third grandchild, I am again intrigued by the nuances of affect in early relationships – something I had always taken for granted and thought came naturally. Using affect when working with parents and children with special needs has taught me to watch for the subtle cues, and observe the impact of how we use our faces, voices and bodies. I observe that it comes more easily with babies, however we may be working with a child with whom we or a caregiver are not connecting. We have to go back to lower

• Serena Wieder, pioneer of DIR and director of Profectum Foundation, says, "Special needs are the same needs we all have, to have responsive relationships, to be understood, to be respected, to be included." •

Meet our team

Debra Wallace



*Preschool Teacher,
SPOTlight Treasurer*

What do you like to do in your free time – *I don't have any... but I love to walk on the beach, go for a hike or do a good wine tasting*

One positive outcome of COVID and lockdowns – *we have learnt to adapt and be flexible as well as having to make more effort in relationships*

Your favourite breakfast – *I don't typically eat breakfast but I do enjoy Shatshuka*

Your favourite drink – *Gin and Tonic or a good Red Wine*

Your favourite person – *My granddaughters Lily and Kently*

functional emotional developmental levels of regulation and engagement – which occur in the first 6 months of life. Even if the child is 6 years old, we need to increase affect and decrease language to connect and communicate.

Yet again, I get a chance to study affect and its impact on early development with my third granddaughter, Ava. Each time deepening my appreciation and understanding of the implementation of affect. I watch a video – over and over again - of my daughter and her husband bathing their two week old who is becoming a little overwhelmed (dysregulated) by the unfamiliar sensory experiences. As mom pours warm water slowly (pacing) over her baby’s tummy, she uses soothing sounds “oooh” in time with her pouring (rhythm). Ava suddenly flings her arms outward and splays her fingers, Jenna slows down and drops her voice tone “oooh, was that too much”. She watches and waits for Ava to regain her ‘centre’; bringing arms back to the midline. Mom notices she is slumped down and looking uncomfortable so she places her hand under Ava’s head to give her more stability and deep pressure touch to support her and feel more secure. She pours a little water over Ava’s head who startles a little, and Jenna responds with a soft giggle and “uh ah, you’re not sure, is this too much”. She slows down again, and as Ava relaxes, “there you go, there you go”; responding to her baby’s movements and facial expressions. Ava looks up at her dad who holds her gaze and harnesses this moment of connection “hey you, hey beautiful”.

The words are not important, what counts is the AFFECT used by her parents that mirrors what Ava may be experiencing, as they attune to and respond to her signals. By using a reassuring and soothing emotional tone, adapting their pace and rhythm, pausing, watching, shifting body positioning and responding; they communicate to their tiny baby that she is seen, she is respected, she is safe, she is loved. I marvel and I learn as I watch from this attunement of parents to their new born baby; setting the stage for a life-long relationship of connection – Mirroring the beautiful, connected relationship I have with my daughter which brings me such joy. This is what I want to achieve when working with families. Life is not all about the next motor milestone, it is not about buying the latest toy to stimulate cognitive skills. Fundamental to development is our environment of connected relationships.

Listen to what this child has to say about connecting and playing.

https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=506167110670065&_rdr

With sensory-affective interactions in mind, we need to be aware of the impact of screen time on our young children versus the richness of time spent interacting through play.

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SCREEN TIME FOR BABIES LINKED TO HIGHER RISK OF AUTISM-LIKE SYMPTOMS LATER IN CHILDHOOD

“In this peer reviewed publication the authors suggest that these findings come at a critical time during this coronavirus pandemic with many children at home all day and parents juggling working from home or other new responsibilities while watching their children.

The authors note that their study did not find an association with ASD risk, but rather with ASD-like symptoms. Future studies should explore whether this relationship is determined by children predisposed to ASD being drawn to the screens or screens contributing to ASD-like symptoms. In the meantime, the authors suggest that parents adhere to the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation to avoid screen time in children younger than 18 months and limit screens to one hour daily through age 5 years, co-viewed to help children understand what they are seeing.”

To read this article, go to the link below

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2020-04/du-stf041620.php

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