An Introduction to Attachment and the implications for Learning and Behaviour

"By building a child's social and emotional capabilities we enable children to be happily engaged with others and with society, and to learn, to develop fully, to attain and to achieve. In essence, it delivers school ready, life ready, and child ready members of society"
(The Allen Report 2011)

Before we start…

I want all children to have the best possible start in life. Children, such as those who are in care or adopted from care, who have been neglected, or failed to form secure attachments with adults in their early years, exhibit a variety of behaviours at school and as teenagers. If not recognised, it can lead to exclusion, educational underachievement and wasted lives. This module demonstrates a commitment to increasing teachers' awareness of attachment issues and to developing strategies to break this cycle of deprivation.

Edward Timpson MP, Minister for Children

Every teacher, and every school, should be so aware and so practising, because it is the duty of the public body to adapt to the child, not the other way round.

Dr Maggie Atkinson, Children's Commissioner for England

2

Background to this training resource

These materials have been developed through a partnership between Bath Spa University, Bath and North East Somerset Council, the National College for Teaching and Leadership, a range of third sector organisations, attachment specialists and local schools. The materials are informed by research and based on evidence from classroom practice.

At the heart of this training tool is a concern to do our best for all children in school, not solely those who exhibit symptoms of trauma and unmet attachment needs, and a conviction that schools which are truly 'attachment aware', are those where all children are ready to learn and achieve.

Introduction: why attachment matters

- Most children enjoy life and are successful in school and in relationships. This lasts into adult life.

- But a significant minority struggle from an early stage and especially in adolescence. These children can be:
  - Unfocussed
  - Disruptive
  - Controlling
  - Withdrawn
  - Destructive

- These children tend to underachieve in school and are often punished and even excluded. Little that schools do seems to work.

Introduction: why attachment matters

- As a result, these children may not fulfil their potential as adults, either in employment or relationships
- Those adults who enjoyed success in school can find these children hard to engage and motivate
- Research shows that a child's ability to form relationships and to learn is shaped by the child's early experiences
- So, if we can better understand **WHY** and **HOW** some children behave the way they do, we can then find ways to help them enjoy and succeed in their education
- It is a fascinating area of research with major implications for how schools support all children to succeed

Why attachment matters video clip

Key learning points about attachment

The nature of a child's primary attachments to caregivers lay the foundations for socio-emotional well-being and therefore children's capacity to learn

Educators themselves need to establish an attachment-like relationship with their pupils, particularly with challenging and vulnerable pupils, in order to enhance learning opportunities for all

Secure attachment relationships correlate strongly with higher academic attainment, better self-regulation and social competence

Outline of this online training

1.What is attachment?

- an introduction to the research on attachment and the neuroscience of attachment

1.Why do educators need to know about attachment?
- the implications for learning and behaviour

2.What can leaders do?

- signposts for theory into practice

Section 1

What is attachment? – an introduction to attachment theory and the neuroscience of attachment

Attachment theory in a nutshell

The theory of attachment was first proposed by John Bowlby who described it as a 'lasting psychological connectedness between human beings' (1988). He considered that children needed to develop a secure attachment with their main caregiver in their early years. This theory has been revised to acknowledge that multiple attachments can occur with other adults throughout the lifespan, although early experiences may continue to have an impact.
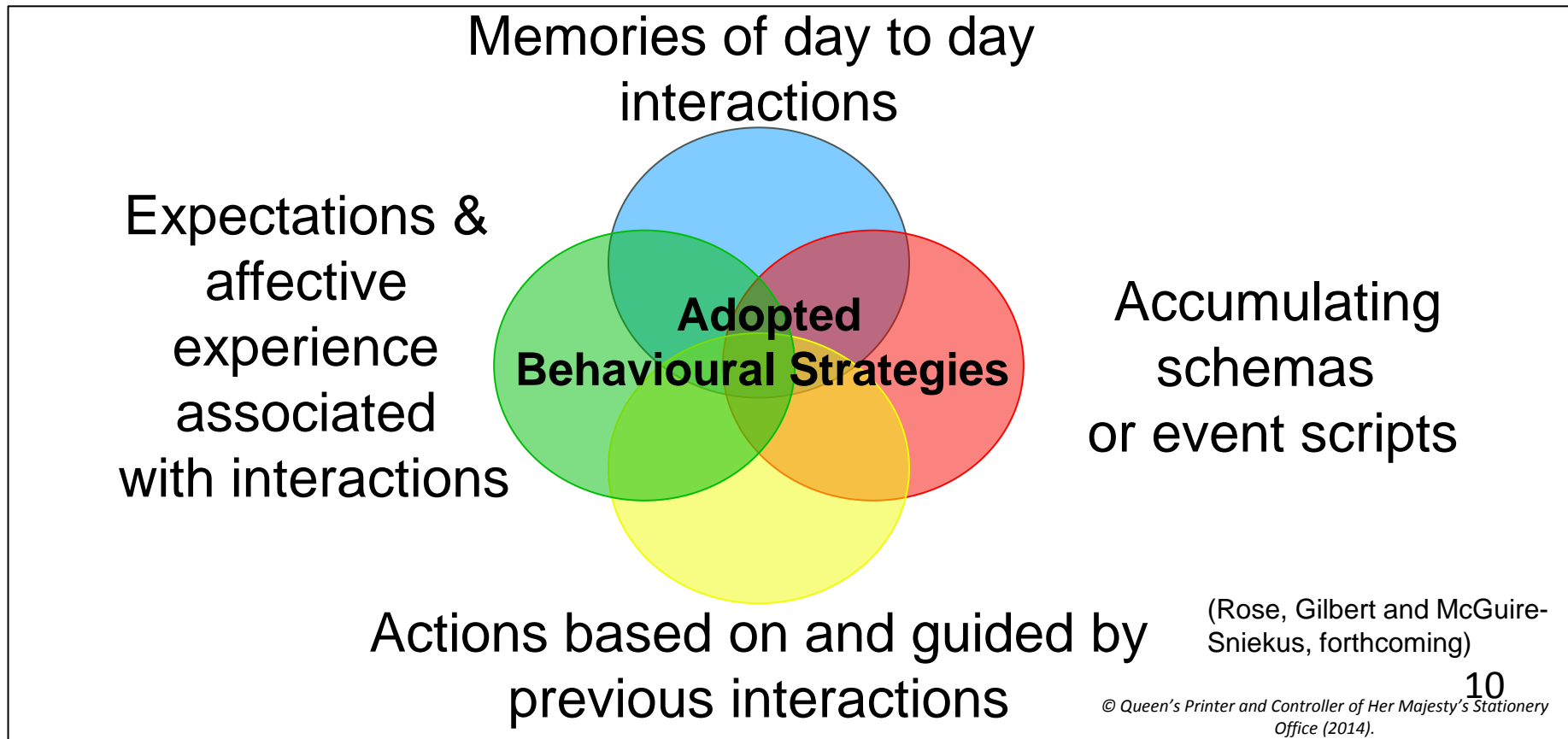
Secure attachments support mental processes that enable the child to regulate emotions, reduce fear, attune to others, have self-understanding and insight, empathy for others and appropriate moral reasoning (Bowlby called these mental representations the internal working model). Insecure attachments, on the other hand, can have unfortunate consequences. If a child cannot rely on an adult to respond to their needs in times of stress, they are unable to learn how to soothe themselves, manage their emotions and engage in reciprocal relationships.

A child's initial dependence on others for protection provides the experiences and skills to help a child cope with frustrations, develop self-confidence and pro-social relationships - **all qualities necessary to promote positive engagement with learning. Research has inextricably linked attachment to school readiness and school success** (Commodari 2013, Geddes 2006).

Attachment theory in a nutshell, Robin Balbernie video clip

Internal Working Models

These are the mind's internalized pictures of the physical and mental experiences of attunement with caregivers. They are established in childhood and are used to inform behaviour in all of the significant relationships in a child's and adult's life. They serve as filters for understanding current and future interactions and are used to help the child evaluate, predict and choose what behaviour to present. They reflect :-

Memories of day to day interactions

Expectations & affective experience associated with interactions

Adopted Behavioural Strategies

Accumulating schemas or event scripts

Actions based on and guided by previous interactions

(Rose, Gilbert and McGuire-Sniekus, forthcoming)

10

Attachment theory – the key messages

- Nurturing adult attachments provide children with *protective, safe havens* and *secure bases* from which *to explore* and *engage* with others and their environment (Bowlby 1988)

- Early care-giving has a *long-lasting* impact on development, the ability to learn, capacity to regulate emotions and form satisfying relationships (Siegel 2012)

- Attachment is crucial to children's *psychological welfare* and forms the *basis* of personality development and socialisation (Bowlby 1988)

- *Teachers*, **youth workers and significant adults in a child's life can provide** *important attachments* **for children** (Bergin and Bergin 2009, Riley 2010)

- *"The biological function of attachment is survival; the psychological function is to gain security"* (Schaffer 2004)

11

What are the risk factors affecting attachment and who are the vulnerable groups?

The following factors may present a risk to the quality of attachment between child and parent:

- Poverty

- Parental mental health difficulties

- Exposure to neglect, domestic violence or other forms of abuse

- Alcohol/drug taking during pregnancy

- Multiple home and school placements

- Premature birth

- Abandonment

- Family bereavement

Vulnerable groups may include:

- Children in areas of social and economic deprivation
- Children in care
- Adopted children whose early experiences of trauma continue to affect their lives
- Disabled children
- Children with medical conditions or illness
- Children who have moved home frequently during the early years e.g. forces families
- Refugees and children who have been traumatised by conflict or loss

BUT …

insecure attachments may occur within non-vulnerable children as well

12

Attachment types can be seen as self – protective behavioural strategies

There are 4 identified attachment types:

- **Secure** – *'I'm ok, you're there for me'*
- **Insecure avoidant** – *'It's not ok to be emotional'*
- **Insecure ambivalent** – *'I want comfort but it doesn't help me'*
- **Insecure disorganized** – *'I'm frightened'*

*The **nature** of attachment type is a **predictor** of emotional responses and **later** social behaviour and resilience*

Note: Some research uses just two categories of attachment styles — secure vs. insecure—whilst other research uses a ***continuum* of security in attachment** (Bergin and Bergin 2009)

Current research suggests that:

- At least **one third** of children have an insecure attachment with at least one caregiver (Bergin and Bergin 2009)

- As many as 80% of children diagnosed with ADHD have attachment issues (Clarke et al 2002; Moss and St-Laurent 2001)

- 98% of children surveyed experienced one or more trauma event – for one in four this trauma resulted in behavioural and/or emotional disturbance (O'Connor and Russell 2004)

Secure Attachment: Securely attached children have experienced sensitive and attuned caregiving. They are able to trust and rely on teachers to meet their needs. As a result they feel confident to form meaningful relationships with others, to make the most of learning opportunities, to engage in productive activities, problem-solve and explore the wider world. These children are emotionally resilient and self-aware.	**Insecure Avoidant Attachment**: Avoidant attached children have experienced insensitive, intrusive or rejecting caregiving. They appear to be independent of their teachers and seek to meet their needs on their own as they have not been able to trust or rely on their caregiver. They are task orientated, self-reliant and high achieving in some aspects but are generally socially uncomfortable, exhibit indifference and avoid close relationships. They may find it difficult to seek help, have limited creativity and may be prone to sudden outbursts.
Insecure Ambivalent Attachment: Ambivalent attached children have experienced inconsistent and largely unresponsive caregiving. They are easily frustrated and may present as both clingy or rejecting of a teacher as they seek both comfort from but are unable to be comforted by adults. They may present as immature, fussy, helpless, passive or whiney or they may be angry or petulant. They may also present as attention-seeking, hyperactive and have difficulty recovering from upset.	**Insecure Disorganised Attachment**: Disorganised attached children are usually from neglected, abusive and/or chaotic homes. The child is likely to feel confused by teachers and experience them as frightening or frightened. These children are often highly vigilant, easily distracted, have a strong sense of fear, panic, or helplessness and may present with bizarre, extreme, unpredictable or distressing behaviour, which adults may find shocking and difficult to manage. They often present as sensitive to criticism, defiant and/or controlling and are easily overwhelmed.

(Bergin & Bergin 2009; Bombèr 2007; Geddes 2006)

14

What does neuroscience tell us about emotions and learning?


The Brain

The Mind

*"Recent advances in neuroscience are highlighting connections between emotion, social functioning, and decision making that have the potential to revolutionize our understanding of the role of affect in education. In particular, the neurobiological evidence suggests that the aspects of cognition that we recruit most heavily in schools, namely **learning, attention, memory, decision making, and social functioning**, are both profoundly **affected by and subsumed within the processes of emotion**."* (Immordino-Yang and Damasio 2007).

Our minds are **continually shaped** by emotions, experiences, relationships, opportunities, attitudes, values and beliefs, knowledge and genes. However, there is an **instinctive priority of attachment over the brain's exploratory system** – feeling *Safe* and *Secure* is *more important* than *learning*

Neuronal Networks in the brain

- *'Our minds are complex systems constrained in their activity by neuronal connections, which are determined by both constitution and experience'* (Siegel 2012)

- Secure, nurturing environments and stimulating, engaging experiences support the development of neuronal networks – they help to build brains

- Empathetic, supportive attachments and relationships are essential to optimize brain development as *'the attunement of emotional states is essential for the developing brain to acquire the capacity to organize itself more autonomously as the child matures'* (Siegel 2012)
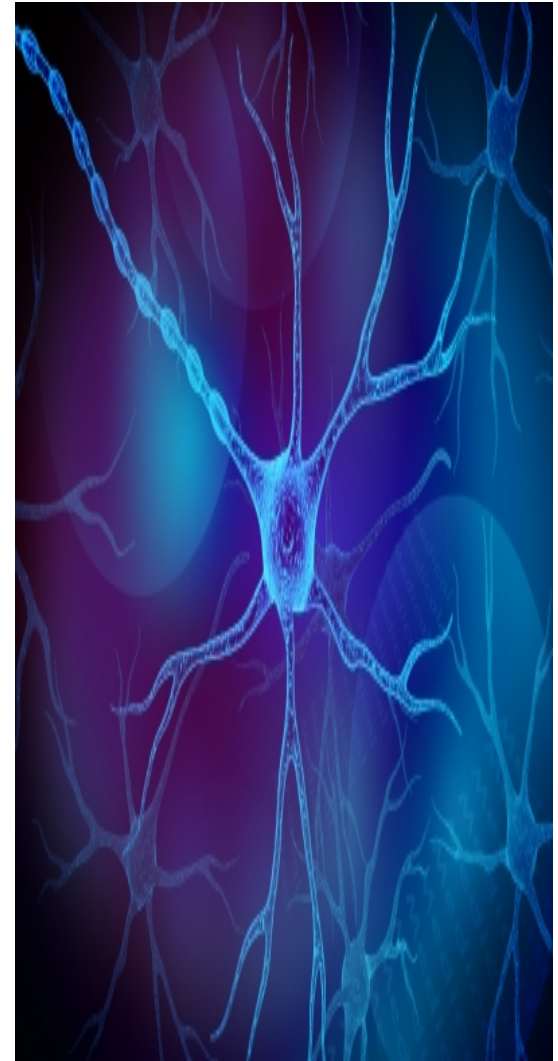
Mirror Neurons- encode information about the external world and goal-directed behaviour
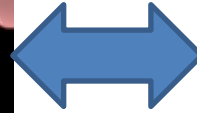
These neurons are thought to enable humans to emulate others and thereby **empathise** & ***understand others'*** intent. This ability is essential for the **socialization** of children and has significant implications for the adult role.

Toxic Stress

➤ The extent to which stressful events have lasting adverse effects is determined in part by the individual's biological response (mediated by genetic predispositions and the availability of supportive relationships that help moderate the stress response) and by the duration, intensity, timing, and context of the stressful experience

➤ **Constant** activation of the body's stress response systems due to chronic or traumatic experiences in the **absence of caring, stable relationships** with adults, especially during sensitive periods of early development, can be toxic to brain architecture and other developing organ systems

➤ Connections in the brain are **reduced and lost** through toxic stress

➤ Fewer connections means it is **more difficult to** utilize the brain capacity and learn effectively

(Cozolino 2013; Siegel 2012)

The neuroscience of attachment – key messages

- Recent neuroscientific evidence demonstrates that **warm, responsive relationships and interactions** (attunement) build children's brains, and help them to learn to self-regulate their behaviour

- Securely attached children build **positive internal working models** of others as trustworthy and of the self as valuable and effective

- Connections, relationships and attachments **are vital for the development of the brain and mind** and support **learning** at an anatomical, physiological, psychological, social and environmental level

- The Allen Report (2011) and the Marmot Review (2010) advocate that parents and key professionals need to have the understanding and knowledge of how to build social and emotional capability within children and therefore empower individuals to break inter-generational cycles of dysfunction and **underachievement**

- More research is needed to demonstrate how Attachment Aware Schools can help to close the attainment gap

The neuroscience of attachment, Jeremy Holmes, video clip

Pause for thought

1. How might a securely attached and an insecurely attached child experience school life differently?

2. In what ways do schools provide 'safe havens' for children? When might they not be safe havens for some children?

3. How might the behaviour of children with each of the four attachment styles manifest itself in school?

Section 2

Why do educators need to know about attachment? - the implications for learning and behaviour

Two views on why educators _**must**_ know about attachment

"**Attachment influences students' school success**. This is true of students' attachment to their parents, _as well as to their teachers_. Secure attachment is associated with higher grades and standardized test scores compared to insecure attachment. Secure attachment is also associated with greater emotional regulation, social competence, and willingness to take on challenges, and with lower levels of ADHD and delinquency, each of which in turn is associated with higher achievement"

(Bergin and Bergin 2009)

In most classrooms, in most schools, there are children for whom this vital secure attachment did not develop, and the attachment pattern which developed was insecure or even a 'disorganised' one: the parent's response to the child has been inconsistent, neglectful, unskilled, manipulative, cruel or simply absent. Some of those children will now be living in care, but not all of them are, and we should not blindly equate the two states of being... If you understand the theory behind this phenomenon; if you learn that the nature of their attachment pattern is an important factor at the core of the problems you are dealing with in some children; if you can focus your practice on assuring them you are not going to let them down no matter what, and that you will support them without blaming yourself or the child; if your school has structures and practices in place to help and support you and the child alike, given that some days will be hard for both of you; and if together you work with the family or the carers and professionals who are also trying to help and support the child – then you and your school may well succeed where others fail.'

Maggie Atkinson, Children's Commissioner
Maggie Atkinson, video clip

Emotions and learning are inextricably linked

"Research demonstrates that emotions fundamentally drive cognitive learning and, in order to generate successful learning, educators need to engage the affective dimensions of pupils' minds." (Immordino-Yang and Damasio 2007).

Research draws attention to the significance of the pupil-teacher relationship in order to develop a positive emotional climate and an effective learning environment.

Children who can regulate their own emotions and responses are more popular, have fewer behavioural problems, are more emotionally stable, have fewer infectious illnesses and achieve more academically in schools (Gottman et al 2007).

To be able to engage in learning a pupil needs to be able to take risks, to learn new things and face new challenges. A good learner needs to be able to manage frustration and anxiety, have good self-esteem, be willing to take risks and be able to ask for help when needed.

Attachment relationships therefore have a direct bearing on children's capacity to succeed in school.

The Learning Relationship

The interaction between the teacher, the pupil and the learning task is a fluid dynamic whereby the task is a reflection of the teacher's awareness and understanding of the pupil and the pupil is able to seek reliable support when challenged by the task. Each relates to the other in a way that fosters curiosity and supports the uncertainty that can be created by the challenges of 'not knowing' which is at the heart of all learning.

(Geddes 2006)

Secure attachment and learning profile

Securely attached children are more likely to be:

- ✓ better problem-solvers
- ✓ more curious
- ✓ have increased quality and duration of learning
- ✓ **have higher academic achievement**

Securely attached children are more likely to be:

- ✓ co-operative and self-regulative
- ✓ less likely to develop emotional and behavioural problems
- ✓ more socially empathetic and less biased in interpreting behaviour of others
- ✓ more self-aware (self-knowledge)

The Insecure Avoidant pupil in the classroom

The pupil with Insecure Avoidant attachment experience can find trusting the teacher a challenge and may focus on 'what to do' – the task – rather than who to ask for help.

The behaviour and learning tends to be led by **self-reliance** which can inhibit creativity and exploration of the unknown – hence underachievement.

(Geddes 2006)

Interventions with Insecure Avoidant pupils in the classroom

- The nature of the task is important as the pupil needs to feel sure that the task is 'do-able' without triggering the need for help.

- A shared focus on the task can protect the pupil from exposure to the relationship.

- Over time this enables the pupil experience the sensitivity of the teacher to their anxiety and to begin to feel understood and hence the beginnings of a more secure experience.

- Greater trust in the teacher makes it more possible to ask for help and so over time learning can be greatly enhanced.

(Geddes 2006)

The Insecure Ambivalent pupil in the classroom

The behaviour and learning responses of a pupil who has experienced an Insecure Ambivalent attachment is likely to be led by **separation anxiety.** The attention of the teacher is the primary need and pre-occupation and the task can seem an intrusion and a threat. The teacher can experience this as relentless attention seeking and often they are given one to one support. This can be a form of collusion with their anxiety rather than achieving greater independence and autonomy.

(Geddes 2006)

Interventions with Insecure Ambivalent pupils in the classroom

- To enable greater engagement in the task, the task needs to be differentiated into small and do-able steps with repeated reminders that they are 'held in mind' by the teacher.

- Gradually, the pupil experiences a sense of their own independent thoughts, ideas and actions – an identity of their own, enhancing their experience of autonomy and independence and so the possibilities of learning.

(Geddes 2006)

The Insecure Disorganised pupil in the classroom

- To pupils of such uncertain early experiences, the task is an unbearable challenge to their vulnerability, low esteem and limited resilience. Their engagement in the task is impaired by mistrust of the adults, an inability to tolerate the humiliation of not knowing and fear of what they do not know.

- Their behaviour is led by **Omnipotence** – their defence against their helplessness can be to accuse others of being stupid and useless – the teacher and the task and others who can achieve, can be the target of their anger and frustrations.

(Geddes 2006)

Interventions with Insecure Disorganised pupils in the classroom

- Interventions need to start with whole school practices of safety, reliability and predictability. Only when they are safe enough and calm enough can we begin to affect their insecurities by consistent caring relationships which understand their profound uncertainties.

- The tasks in the classroom need to be do-able and calming actions can create a useful beginning to arrival in the classroom.

- Such pupils may also have experienced prolonged absences and their sense of time and distance can be confused. The use of diaries and calendars in the classroom can begin to establish a sense of dates and times and forthcoming events – especially endings and beginnings of the week and terms.

- Over time the reliability of the classroom and the whole school become the secure base and enhance emotional development and so engagement in learning.

(Geddes 2006)

Trauma from insecure attachments can lead to various disorders

Regulatory disorders
 (creating challenging behaviour)

-Toxic stress: high levels of stress hormones leads to hyperarousal (fight-flight) and dissociation (tuning out)
-Inability to manage behaviour
-Shame- hypersensitivity to criticism/ apparent lack of remorse

Social function disorders
(creating social difficulties)

- Impaired understanding of others and difficulty with empathy
-Feelings of worthlessness and poor self-esteem
- Lack of capacity for joy

Processing disorders
(creating cognitive difficulties)

- Impaired understanding of the world
- Difficulty making sense of sensory information
- Difficulty making sense of feelings

(Cairns 2006)

This means that…

- Neural systems in the brain (mirror systems) are frequently employed **to defend** rather than cooperate

- Regulatory systems become biased/primed **towards arousal and fear** rather than relaxed and ready for learning

- Neural brain patterns (attachment schemas) are used **as battle plans** for apparent survival rather than for ways of connecting

- Reward systems **seek alternatives** (e.g. drugs) rather than contact with attachment figures (Cozolino 2006)

Recovery from Trauma: what is needed?

1. Feeling safe and secure physically and emotionally

2. Relationships and secure attachments

3. Being able to express what has happened – creating a narrative to make the memories safe

Successful intervention is based on providing a structured environment with firm boundaries and nurturing empathic relationships. From this secure foundation other areas – developing social skills, self-esteem, emotional literacy, autonomy and self-identity - can be developed. This in turn will promote **readiness to learn.**

So this means that…

- *Teachers* and other significant adults in a child's life can provide *important attachments* for children

- Positive associations are found between *quality* of *practitioner- child relationships* and **achievement**

- **High quality** practitioner-child relationships help **buffer** children from the *negative effects* of insecure attachment on *achievement*

- Emotional resilience *and* the ability to learn are *inextricably linked*

- **Secure attachment** relationships correlate strongly with **higher academic attainment**, **better self-regulation** and **social competence**

So schools and teachers need to...

✓ Be **child-centred** and acknowledge children's **different attachment styles**

✓ Create **nurturing relationships** to promote children's learning and behaviour and satisfy children's innate need to have a secure **'sense of belonging'**

✓ **Acknowledge** adults' roles as a potential *secondary* attachment figure who can help to *reshape* insecure attachment behaviours and support the development of more secure ones.

✓ Create **additional infrastructures** for children with emotional and behavioural impairments (as we do for physical and learning impairments)

So schools and teachers need to..., video clip

A Challenge

"Close and supportive relationships with teachers have demonstrated the potential to mitigate the risk of negative outcomes for children who may otherwise have difficulty succeeding in school" (Driscoll and Pianta 2010)

The YIPPEE project (Jackson and Cameron 2014), investigating the post compulsory education of children and young people in care across five different European countries, reported that children in all countries **saw school as a safe haven, where they felt secure – except for one country**.

That one exception was …… the United Kingdom.

Pause for thought

1. What does a basic understanding of attachment tell you about your school's approach to interpreting children's behaviour? Why might some existing behaviour management systems in schools not work for children with unmet attachment needs or trauma?

2. What are the links between attachment and educational attainment?

3. Think of a class of children you teach or know. How might an understanding of attachment affect how this class is supported to learn more effectively?

Section 3

What can leaders do? – signposts for theory into practice

The important role of schools

"Emotional well-being must be a larger part of any learning, and by association, the educational agenda…. Schools may be the optimum sites for buffering the impact of stress, building resilience and enhancing individual capacities for learning"
(Nagel 2009)

Schools need to meet a spectrum of needs to improve learning outcomes and behaviour

Children who have experienced
severe trauma & neglect require

Specialist Support
e.g. Educational Psychologist

Children with unmet attachment needs
require

Targeted Support
e.g. nurture provision or additional
tutor support

All children need support for their emotional well-being

A whole school approach

A whole school approach changes thinking and practice by...

- promoting **consistent thinking and practice** across all school staff, parents and partner agencies

- recognising the significant role played by the **key adults and the place the child and young person encounters every day**

- committing to **initial and continuing professional development** in the rapidly developing research on attachment and achievement so that all staff and partner agencies can 'work with the brain'

- using evidence-informed approaches to meet the **spectrum of needs** of all children to:

    - promote the **emotional well-being**, development and learning of all pupils

    - **manage behaviour** and build children's capacity for self-regulation, resilience and confidence

    - respond to the needs of those children and young people who have **unmet attachment needs and have experienced trauma and loss**

- continually **monitoring and evaluating** the effectiveness of its work

A whole school approach changes thinking and practice by..., video clip

Implementing a whole school approach

A school which is attachment aware will have <u>at least</u> the following characteristics:
- Active support from **senior leaders and school governors**
- **Whole staff training by trained and acknowledged experts** in attachment, to provide a shared understanding of why schools need to be attachment and trauma aware, strategies to use and the support the school needs from its partner agencies (who should also participate in the training)
- The consistent **implementation of attachment strategies** by all staff, especially **Key Adults** who support targeted children
- An **Attachment Lead or Champion** at a senior level, to continue leading the school's training and development of attachment practices and to support staff to implement strategies
- Involvement of **parents and the wider community** e.g. at specially organised training events
- Continual **monitoring, evaluation and development** of strategies
- **Support for all staff** through meetings and individual supervision
- **Induction for new staff** into the school's shared attachment knowledge and practices
(Bombèr 2007 and 2011)

Implementing a whole school approach, Mike Gorman, video clip

Managing transitions

Transitions can be difficult for children, particularly those with unmet attachment needs and may trigger painful memories of loss or rejection, feelings of high anxiety, fear, grief or even terror. If poorly managed, these changes may lead to a serious setback or trauma. When managed well, a positive experience of change provides a valuable opportunity for learning and recovery from trauma.

With significant transitions (e.g. starting school, changing school, moving up year groups, changes in key staff or attachment figures), the following should be noted:

- Importance of home-school partnership and views of the child

- Transition planning should take place 4-6 months prior to the transition event

- Introduce new staff in plenty of time before new beginnings

- Where possible the key adult should remain consistent through transitions

- If the key adults leave or change it is important to mark goodbyes and prepare the child for the change e.g. by creating a memory book, card or letter

- Maintain links after transitions so that the child knows they are 'held in mind'

- Ensure information is shared between staff to provide consistency and limit the number of changes

- When moving schools, create several opportunities for visits by the child and staff

(Bombèr 2007 and 2011)

Pause for thought

1. What does your school do to help pupils:
   - promote emotional resilience?
   - enhance individual capacities for learning?
   - develop nurturing relationships?
   - manage transitions?

2. Are schools currently fulfilling their public duty to support the needs of all children?

Working with trauma: impact on staff

School leaders need to be aware of the 'secondary stress' symptoms that can impact on staff who are working with children who have experienced trauma and loss. Professional supervision meetings provide an essential opportunity for staff to understand and manage intense feelings and projections.

'When working with disturbed children, one might find oneself feeling hurt, abused, angry, frustrated, intolerant, anxious, de-skilled and even frightened. One of the reasons that working with children experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties is so disturbing is that such intense and painful feelings are somehow pushed [or projected] into the staff (as well as other children). Sometimes it might feel as if it is difficult to know where the feelings are coming from, and the intensity of them might lead one to question one's own competence and professional worth'

Greenhalgh (1994)

Staff Support: considerations for school leaders

Why staff support is essential

- To ensure the highest quality of support for children with attachment needs through consistent approach by all staff
- To enable staff to step back from intense interactions with children and reflect on the needs of the child and implications for their practice
- Responsibility of schools to ensure the emotional well-being of all staff
- To minimise the risk of 'secondary trauma' or 'burnout' for staff who are working closely with traumatised children

Effective staff support systems

- Whole school approach
- Monthly Team supervision from a line manager or outside professional who understands Attachment work and staff support requirement
- 1:1 staff supervision if high levels of trauma involved
- Informal 'debriefs' for staff to problem-solve as required
- Staff supervision policy
- High quality ongoing CPD in 'Attachment and Learning' to ensure that best practice is shared and embedded in whole school approaches

(Bombèr 2009 and 2011)

Pause for thought

Training on attachment can trigger uncomfortable and upsetting memories for participating adults.

How will you prepare for this and how will you manage it, if this occurs?

Attachment and Leadership

Interestingly…..

- Dr Geoff Taggart at Reading University has highlighted how leadership styles can be affected by attachment styles

- For example, leaders who have avoidant attachment styles often depend on achievement for their self-esteem which invariably leads to stress-related 'burn out'

- Research into leadership and attachment styles found that 'secure-base' leadership did not lead to burn out, with leaders maintaining a healthy balance of stress and other hormones in their system

(Kohlrieser 2012)

Pause for thought

Having reflected on the implications of attachment for learning and behaviour, how might the leadership and management of your school change?

How aware are you of your own attachment style? How does this affect your leadership?

Evaluating attachment approaches

Schools that are attachment aware should assess how effective they have been in:

1. Raising standards of achievement
2. Reducing disruption and exclusions
3. Increasing a sense of belonging for all children
4. Increasing well-being for all
5. Increasing effective partner agency working

Pause for thought

How might your school measure impact of attachment based approaches in these five different areas?

Different frameworks for supporting behaviour

- Research on attachment suggests that a **relational** rather than behavioural framework for supporting children's behaviour is more effective in supporting children's behaviour (Bergin and Bergin, 2009, Riley, 2010, Cozolino, 2013)

- A behavioural framework which relies entirely on rewards and sanctions to modify children's behaviour is not necessarily the most effective model and does not always work

- A relational framework promotes universal well-being, learning and behaviour and can be especially helpful with children who have attachment difficulties or other vulnerabilities

- A relational framework acknowledges that all behaviour is a form of communication and adopts a 'no-blame' ethos

- Relational frameworks include the strategy of **Emotion Coaching** – This is a useful tool for supporting children's well-being, learning and behaviour

Promoting well-being: a model for supporting children's learning and behaviour

***Emotion Coaching** is about helping children to become aware of their emotions and to manage their own feelings particularly during instances of 'misbehaviour'. It enables practitioners to create an ethos of positive learning behaviour and to have the confidence to de-escalate situations when behaviour is challenging.*

"Emotion Coaching is a very useful in the moment strategy and is supporting improved behaviour" (Head Teacher)

'When people, like, take the mick out of me, like, in class I'd just get angry and I'd just hit 'em. Now the teacher talks to me and it calms me down – the other kids don't really pick on me now because they know that I don't react'
(Boy aged 13)

Behavioural frameworks

Emotion Coaching provides a relational rather than behavioural strategy for supporting children's behaviour focusing on building a child's **self-regulation** of their behaviour rather than relying on external frameworks to regulate a child's behaviour

External Frameworks

Internal Frameworks
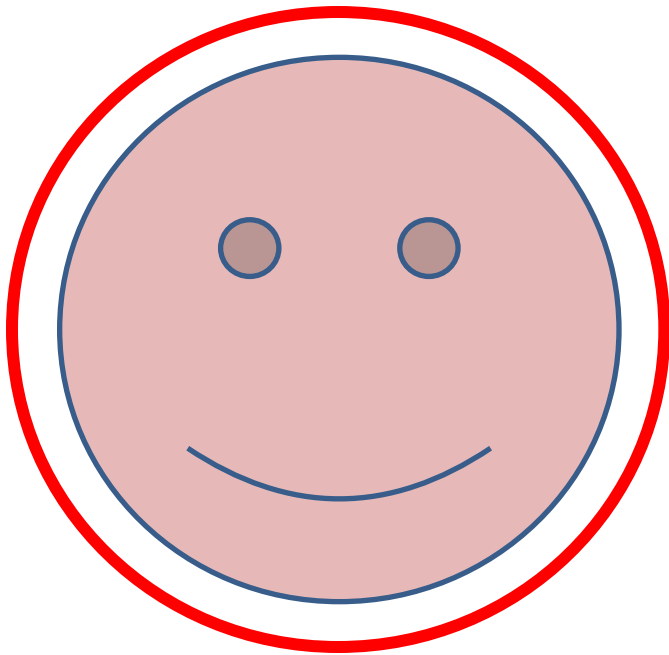
External regulation
(Sanctions and Rewards – Behavioural)
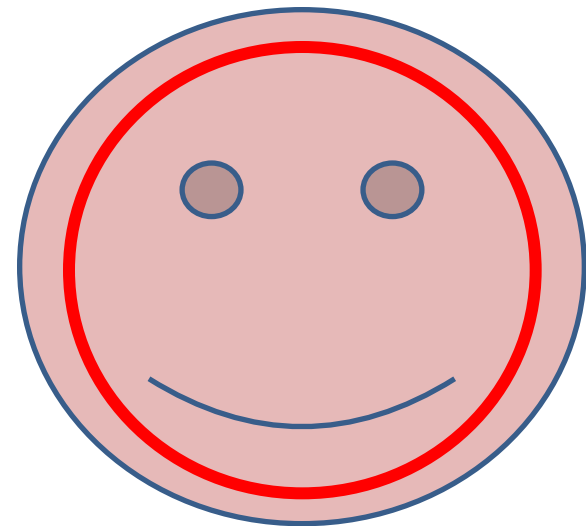
Internal regulation
(Emotion Coaching – Relational)

57

Emotion Coaching involves…

- Teaching children/young people about the world of emotion 'in the moment'

- Giving children strategies to deal with ups and downs

- Empathising with and accepting 'negative' emotions as normal (but not the behaviour)

- Using moments of challenging behaviour as opportunities for teaching

- Building trusting and respectful relationships with children/young people

(Gottman et al, 1996)

[Emotional coaching involves…, video clip](#)

Pause for thought

1. What attachment aware practices are already in place in your school?
2. How else might your school adapt to support the full spectrum of needs of your children?
3. Why is it important for training to be carried out by trained and acknowledged attachment experts? What are the likely benefits and potential pitfalls of such training?
4. How will you ensure there is whole school support for attachment aware approaches? Do you anticipate any resistance and if so **how** will you overcome it?
5. How will **you** provide effective supervision for staff?
6. How will you assess the effectiveness of the new strategies implemented at your school?

Closing: pause for thought, video clip

Health Warning

An Attachment Aware School is not:

- A quick fix

- A panacea

- A substitute for specific interventions

- A therapy

Specialist Training and Consultancy

For advice about where you can source specialist training and support, please contact:

- your local authority Virtual School Headteacher

- Centre for Education Policy in Practice, Bath Spa University attachment@bathspa.ac.uk

- www.attachmentawareschools.com

Further Reading

- Bergin, C. and Bergin, D. (2009) Attachment in the Classroom. *Educational Psychology Review,* 21, 141-170.

- Bombèr, L.H. (2007) *Inside I'm Hurting: Practical Strategies for Supporting Children with Attachment Difficulties in Schools.* London: Worth Publishing.

- Cozolino, L. (2013) *The Social Neuroscience of Education: Optimizing attachment and learning in the classroom.* London: Norton & Co.

- Geddes, H. (2006) *Attachment in the Classroom: the links between children's early experience, emotional wellbeing and performance in school.* London: Worth Publishing.

- Rose, J., Gilbert, L. & Smith, H. (2012) 'Affective teaching and the affective dimensions of learning' in Ward, S. (ed) *A Student's Guide to Education Studies*. London: Routledge.

Contributors and Acknowledgements

Dr Maggie Atkinson – *Children's Commissioner for England*
Robin Balbernie – *Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist*
Louise Bombèr – *Attachment Disorder Specialist*
Kate Cairns – *Specialist on Attachment, Trauma and Resilience*
Adam Crockett – *Care Leaver and Graduate*
Keith Ford – *Headteacher, St Martin's Garden Primary School, Bath*
Ruth Fergusson – *Educational Psychologist, Brighter Futures Social Enterprise, Bath*
Dr Heather Geddes – *Educational Psychotherapist*
Louise Gilbert – *Research Associate, Bath Spa University*
Michael Gorman – *Headteacher, Bath and North East Somerset Virtual School*
Rosemary Heald – *Independent legal adviser*
Professor Jeremy Holmes – *Visiting Professor, Exeter University*
Professor Sonia Jackson – *Thomas Coram Fellow, Institute of Education, London*
Sonia Mainstone-Cotton – *Children's Society*
Kieran McCarthy – *CEO Brighter Futures Social Enterprise, Three Ways School, Bath*
Julia McDonald - *Early Years Consultant, Bath and North East Somerset*
Richard Parker – *Director, Centre for Education Policy in Practice, Bath Spa University*
Dr Janet Rose – *Programme and Award Leader, Bath Spa University*
Sara Strickland – *Director, Suited and Booted Studios CIC*
Dr Geoff Taggart – *Director, Children's Development and Learning, Reading University*
Felicia Wood - *Associate, Bath Spa University*

63

References

Allen. G. (2011) *Early intervention: the next steps: an independent report to HM Government*. London: The Cabinet Office.

Bergin, C. and Bergin, D. (2009) Attachment in the Classroom. *Educational Psychology Review,* 21, 141-170.

Bombèr, L. (2007) *Inside I'm Hurting; Practical Strategies for Supporting Children with Attachment Difficulties in Schools.* London: Worth Publishing.

Bombèr, L (2011) *What about me? Inclusive strategies to support pupils with attachment difficulties make it through the school day*. London: Worth Publishing.

Bowlby, J. (1988) *A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development*. London: Routledge.

Commodari, E. (2013) Preschool teacher attachment, school readiness and risk of learning difficulties. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 28 (2013) 123– 133.

Clarke, L., Ungerer, J., Chahoud, K., Johnson, S., and Stiefel, I. (2002). Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is associated with attachment insecurity. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 7*.2, 1359-1045.

Cozolino, L. (2013) *The Social Neuroscience of Education: Optimizing attachment and learning in the classroom.* London: Norton & Co.

Driscoll, K. and Pianta, R.C. (2010) 'Banking Time in Head Start: Early efficacy of an intervention designed to promote supportive teacher-child relationships', *Early Education and Development*, *21*(1), 38–27.

Geddes, H. (2006) *Attachment in the Classroom: the links between children's early experience, emotional wellbeing and performance in school.* London: Worth Publishing.

Gottman, J.M., Katz,L.F. and Hooven,C. (1996) 'Parental Meta-Emotion Philosophy and the Emotional Life of Families: Theoretical Models and Preliminary Data', *Journal of Family Psychology,* 10.1, 243-268.

Greenhalgh, P. (1994) *Emotional Growth and Learning*. London: Routledge.

Cairns, K. (2006) *Attachment, Trauma and Resilience*. London: BAAF.

Kohlrieser, G. (2012) *Care to Dare: Unleashing Astonishing Potential Through Secure Base Leadership.* San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

Immordino-Yang, M.H. and Damasio, A. (2007), We feel, therefore we learn: The relevance of affective and social neuroscience to education. *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 1.1, 3-10.

Marmot, M. (2010). *Fair society, healthy lives. The Marmot review Executive Summary*. London: The Marmot Review.

Moss, E., & St-Laurent, D. (2001) Attachment at school age and academic performance. *Developmental Psychology, 37*.6, 863-874.

Nagel, M. (2009) Mind the Mind: Understanding the links between stress, emotional well-being and learning in educational context. *International Journal of Learning*, 16.2, 33-42.

O'Connor, M. and Russell, A. (2004) *Identifying the incidence of psychological trauma and post-trauma symptons in children*. The Clackmannanshire Report. Clackmannanshire Council Psychological Service.

Riley, P. (2010) *Attachment Theory and Teacher Student relationships*. London: Routledge.

Shaffer, H.R. (2004) *Introducing Child Psychology*. London: Blackwell.

Rose, J., Gilbert, L., McGuire-Sniekus, R. (forthcoming) Emotion Coaching - a new strategy for schools, early years settings and youth centres to promote behavioural self-regulation in children and young people: A pilot study, *International Journal of Pastoral Care and Education.*

Siegel, D. (2012) *The Developing Mind: How relationships and the brain interact to shape who we are.* New York: Guildford Press.

Photographs and illustrations

slide 6: mother and child - image courtesy of phanlop88 / FreeDigitalPhotos.net

slide 6: children – image courtesy of Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES)

Slide 6: teacher and student - image from attachment awareness project courtesy of B&NES and Bath Spa University (BSU)

Slide 15: brain - image courtesy of ddpavumba / FreeDigitalPhotos.net

Slide 15: mind - image courtesy of Victor Habbick / FreeDigitalPhotos.net

Slide 16: image from *'In Care, In School'* courtesy of BSU

Slide 17: image courtesy of renjith krishnan / FreeDigitalPhotos.net

Slide 18: mirror neurons – image courtesy of Salvatore Vuono / FreeDigitalPhotos.net

Slide 18: bikes - image courtesy of arztsamui / FreeDigitalPhotos.net

Slide 22: image from attachment awareness project courtesy of B&NES and BSU

Slide 27: secondary school students – image courtesy of Melksham Oak School

Slide 27: children talking – image courtesy of St George's CE Primary School, Semington

Slide 41: image from *'In Care, In School'* courtesy of BSU

Slide 58: image from *'In Care, In School'* courtesy of BSU

© Queen's Printer and Controller of HMSO (2014)