

Promise and Peril in Pregnancy and Early Infancy-Relational Foundations

Foundations of Infant Mental Health-Central California Children's

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Mary Claire Heffron Ph.D.

Children's Hospital and Research Center Oakland
Mheffron@mail.cho.org

Every child's birthright



- ★ Joy
- ★ Delight
- ★ Secure relationships
- ★ Opportunities to learn and grow in a safe environment

Parenting as the Mechanism for Childhood Adversity

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE):
 - Emotional, physical or sexual abuse
 - Domestic violence against the mother
 - Household member with mental illness
 - Household member with substance abuse
 - Household member ever imprisoned
- Predict 10 leading causes of adult death/disability (ACE Study, Felitti et al. 1998)

Childhood Adversity Predicts Future Dysfunction

- Physical Illness
 - Mental Illness
 - School Failure
 - Aggression
 - Substance Abuse
 - Criminal Behavior
-
- (Cook et al., 2003; Felitti et al., 1998; Pynoos et al., 1999)

The Birthright: Relationships that are Central to Development,



- Each child deserves to be “Seen and Held” and to have caregivers who are crazy about him/her.

Relationships are dynamic processes over time for
both promoting optimal development & healing
early adversity



Pregnancy-The Prequel-No Ordinary Time –Relationships in the Making



Fantasy of Love and New Beginnings



Realities of Pregnancy



- Relationships are shifting
- Resources are needed
- Identity is confused
- Existing concerns

like depression/anxiety/

PTSD can be amplified

Complex Processes Related to Relationships

- Pregnancy may awaken negative feelings about self and relationships that impact maternal identity
- Descriptions of relationships in pregnancy can predict security of attachment at the end of the first year of life. (Zeanah & Benoit)
- Relationship with mother particularly important in terms of identity consolidation

Factors across cultures that increase risk for depression

- Past episodes of depression, anxiety,
- PTSD/trauma
- Family history of depression or other mood disorder
- Ambivalence about or unplanned pregnancy
- Pronounced fear of childbirth
- Low SES/chronic stressors
- Low social support or marital satisfaction
- Significant loss or life stress in the last year
- Infant temperament; health/obstetric problems; multiples
- Beck, 2001; Goldbort, 2006; Gorman et al., 2004; Zayas, et al., 2002

Higher Incidence of Depression & other Mental Health Concerns

- Low income mothers of young children, pregnant and parenting teens report depressive symptoms in the 40 – 60 % range

(Knitzer, et al, 2008)

23% of women
with PPD had
symptoms that
began in
pregnancy

Depressed mood
in pregnancy
associated with
poor attendance
to prenatal visits,
substance abuse,
low birth weight
and pre-term
delivery



Early Relationships and Emotion Regulation



- Experience of positive emotion helps infants to organize their experience
- Infant-caregiver face-to-face interactions help baby learn to regulate emotions particularly in the context of face-to-face interactions

Cole, Michel & Teti, 1994

Biology & Environment

Work together to shape the brain.



Plasticity-The Good News

The brain's ability to change as a result of experience. Relationships are a series of experiences.



The Bad News. Babies Can Suffer in Relationships and the Impact can Last..



Learning about
Emotions Right
Brain to Right
Brain



Affective Transmissions in Mutual Gaze Transactions

- attunement
- reflecting internal state
- moment-to-moment matching of affective direction
- important for joint attention
- precursors of attachment
- Precursors to moral development

Babies need presence to learn

- Patricia Kuhl, at the University of Washington, found babies had a unique ability to learn a foreign language
- *But* when the babies listened to language tapes, without an emotional connection, they treated it like a sound from a vacuum cleaner

www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2XBIkHW954

Brain Development

- Myelination of prefrontal cortex occurs with engagement in purposeful back and forth interaction
- Neuroimaging shows emotionally meaningful learning interactions involve many more areas of the brain than circumscribed discrete skill-based exercises

Infants can infer what others are thinking about

Andrew Meltzoff, at the University of Washington, studies how babies follow the gaze of adults to find out what they are thinking

- By 10 months, babies use gaze following to understand the minds of others
- Babies who were not good gaze followers by their first birthday, had less advanced language skills by age 2 ► [21:24](#)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlY8DndJubo

Parent Infant Interaction: Still Face Paradigm



- By 3 months, infants actively engaged in monitoring how people relate to them
- How they feel and what they will do next
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=Btg9PiTosZg

Mirror Neurons

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzMqPYfeA-s>

Co-Regulation

- Sense of shared experience
- Helps the child with feelings of being out of control or at the mercy of his own impulses
- Interpersonal contingency creates internal coherence and a sense of agency

Quality of Mother-Infant Interaction

- In the still face paradigm, infants of depressed mothers showed:
 - less interest
 - more anger and sadness
 - greater tendency to fuss
- Depressed mothers, more than non-depressed mothers,
 - perceived interactions more negatively
 - showed more anger

Effects are Bi-Directional

- Bi-Directional Effects in Depressed Mother-Infant Interactions
- Infant's subsequent distress and unresponsiveness are likely to maintain and perhaps increase the severity of the mother's depression



What might we see when depression is present ?

● Mothers:

- Fewer overall interactions (disengagement)
- More matching of negative states than positive
- More anger
- Less positive interactions (affective flatness, irritability)
- Less consistency
- Decreased mutual cueing

● Infants

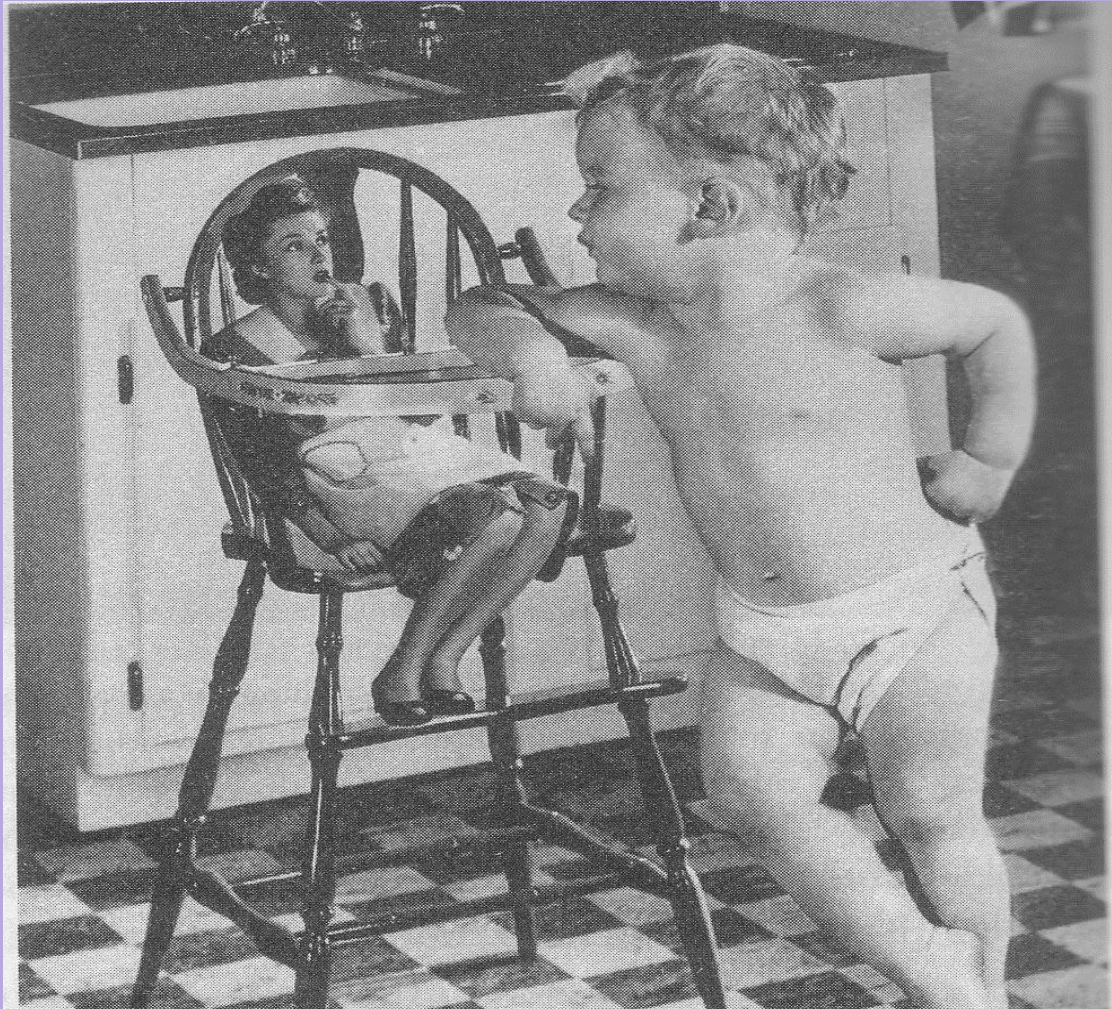
- Fewer positive/ more negative facial expressions
- Fewer vocalizations
- More fussy and tense
- More gaze aversion (over time, infant learns to look away)



Maternal Mental Health and Child Maltreatment

- Mothers with depression and history of extensive childhood trauma reported more neglect (Banyard, Williams, Siegel, 2003)
- Some studies show 2-3 fold increased risk of physical abuse, psychological aggression, and medical neglect (Chaffin, Kelleher Hollenberg, 1996; Windham et al, 1987; Weissman et al, 1987)
- Increase in work time and addition of intimate partner to home decreased aggression; exposure to partner violence increased physical assault and neglect; increased child behavior problems (Canron et al, 2009)

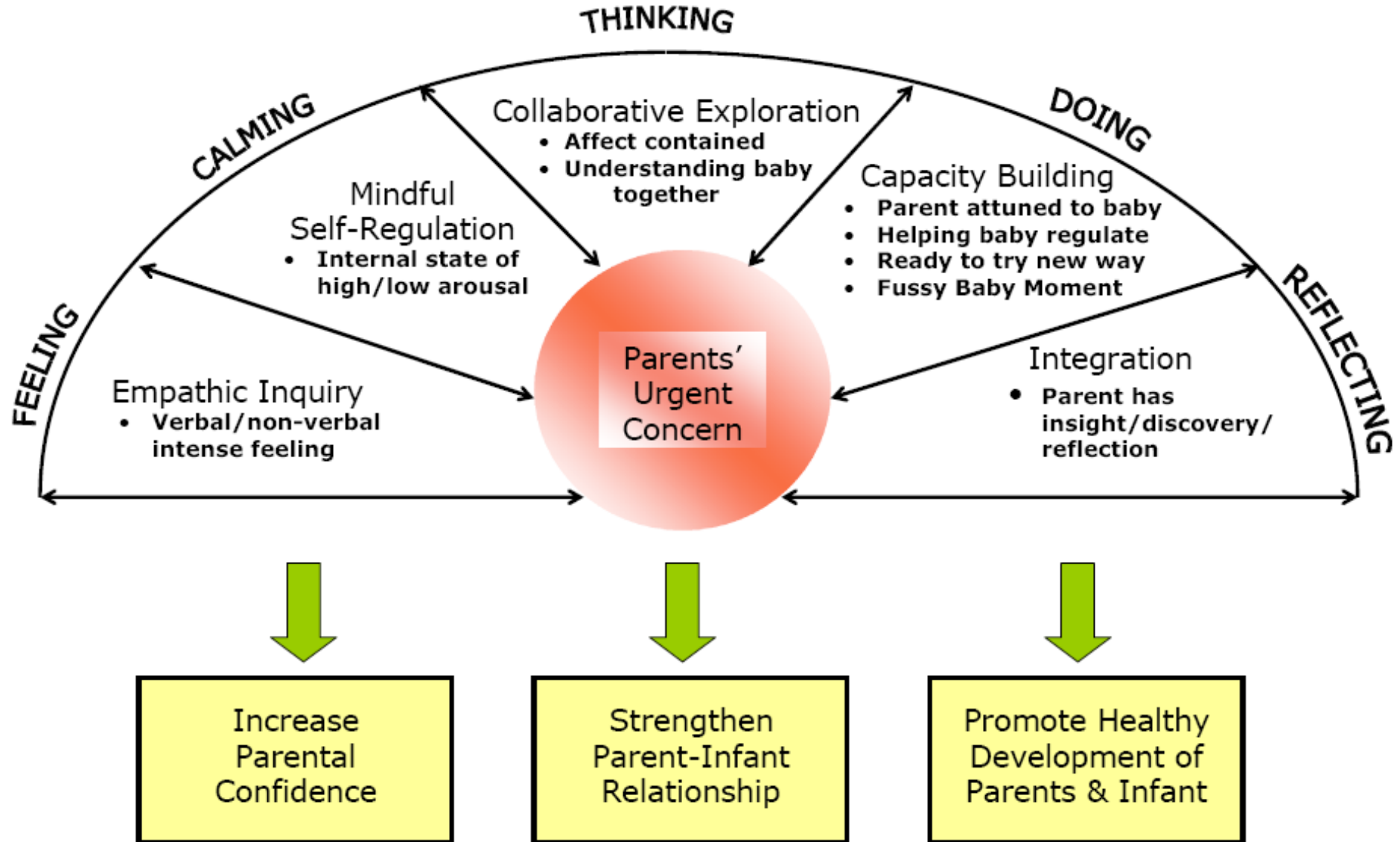
Relationships with Babies can be Overwhelming to Parents



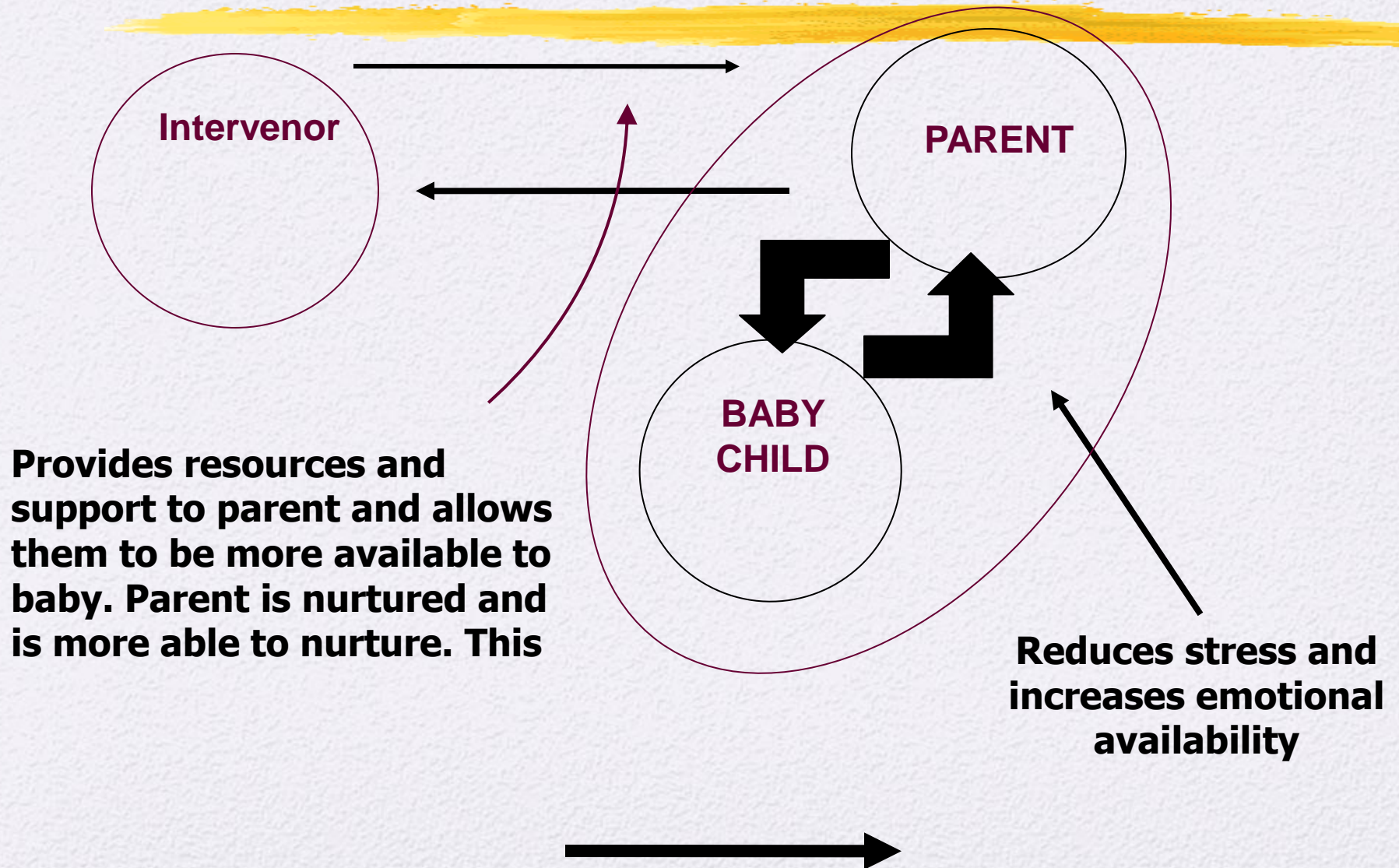


SO, WHAT WORKS?? Holding
a model in mind.

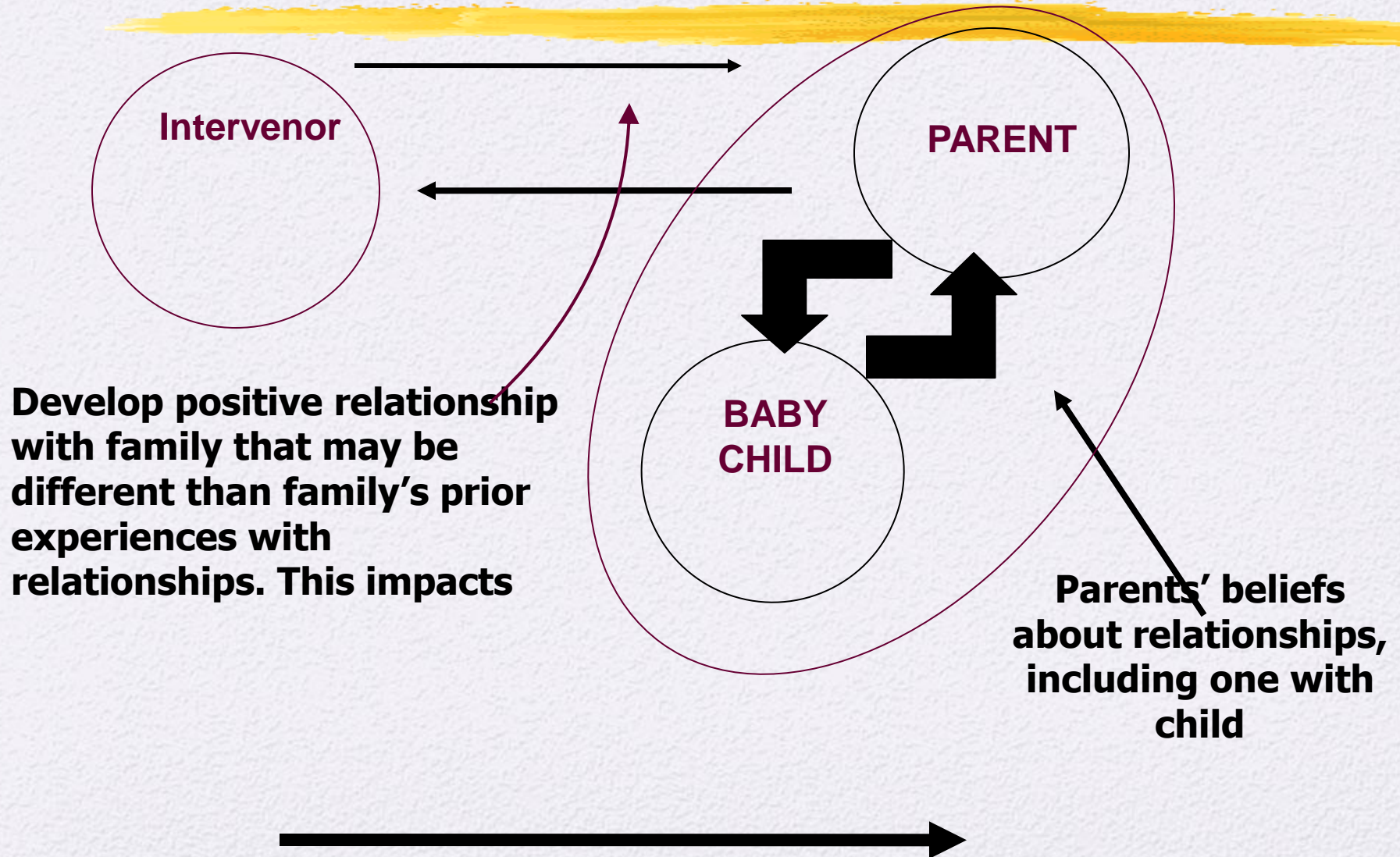
Fussy Baby Network® Approach



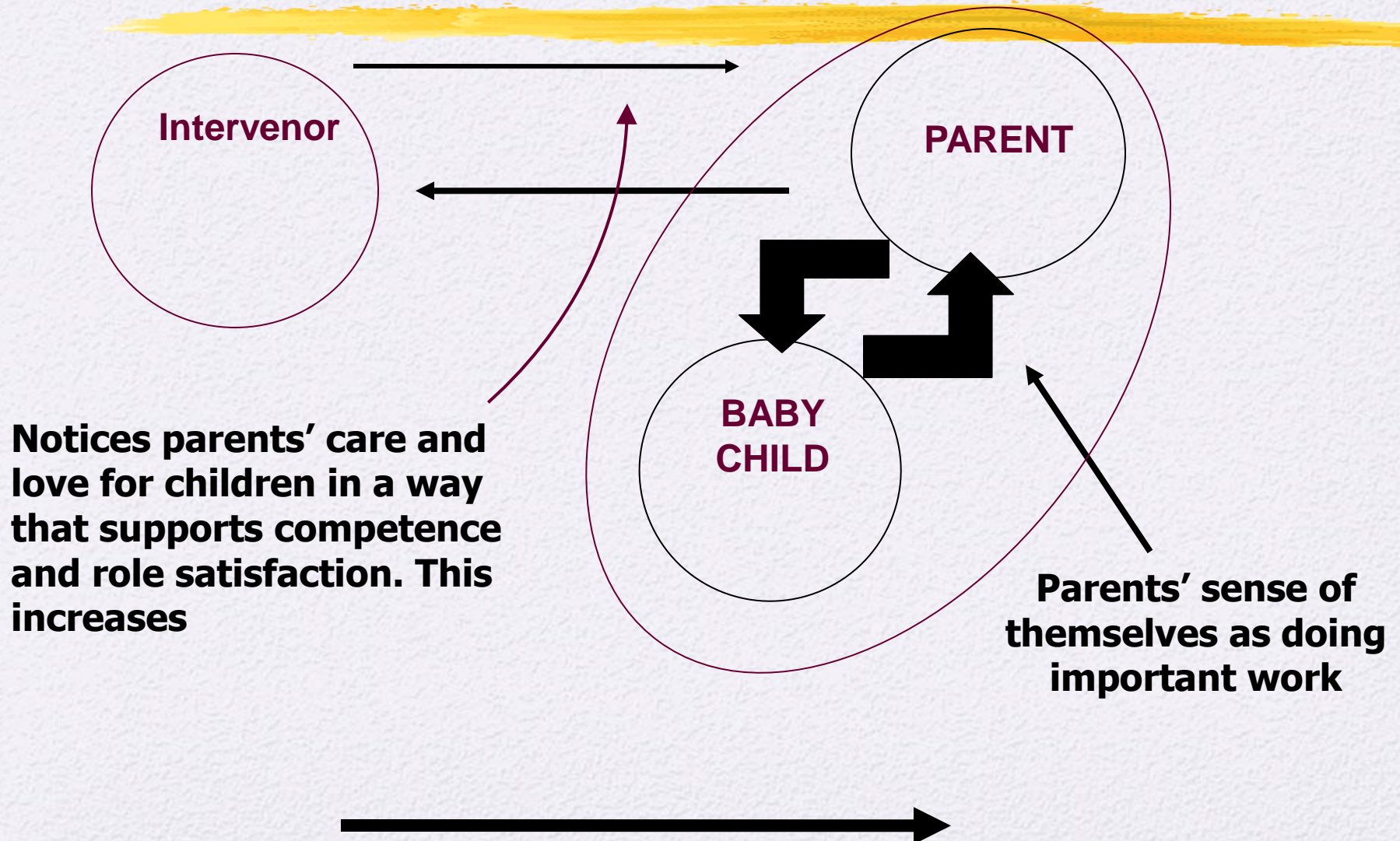
One Way “Intervenor”-Family Interaction Impacts Parent-Child Relationship



How Intervenor-Family Interaction Impacts Parent-Child Relationship



How Intervenor-Family Interaction Impacts Parent-Child Relationship



- How do you know something works?
- Why might certain practices work?
- Outside vs. inside interventions

Activating the Parent's Capacities to See and Attune

- Move beyond words
- Notice babies pace, body based cues, & responses
- Learning to support parent follow the lead of the baby & not overwhelm with efforts to soothe
- Learning to explore and wonder with the parent about the baby



Parent-Infant psychotherapy & related services

- Dyadic parent-infant intervention
- Identifies and builds on strengths; explores past history; helps parent separate past from present , helps parent disentangle baby from distortions (Fraiberg, S)
- Goals
 - Increase attention to baby's nonverbal cues
 - Increase ability to respond appropriately to cues
 - Increase empathy with the child's experience
 - Decrease distorted perceptions of the child

Fathers/partners are a critical part of services

S



- **Work to promote father's engagement with baby and support of mother**
- **Work on communication and problem-solving in their relationship**
- **Pruett, Lamb, Cowan**

How Does a Relationship-Based Approach Support Mental Health and Social Emotional Development?

- ❖ Builds positive relationships between caregivers and children to promote wellness and success. Focusing on affective right brain to right brain elements is critical.
- ❖ Relationship as a necessary vehicle and VALUE ADDED for many kinds of service delivery
- ❖ The belief that relationships with families can become a corrective emotional healing experience

Creation of a

Community Holding Environment for Families

A “way of being” that involves careful listening and thoughtful waiting, allowing the participants to discover solutions and explore concepts and perceptions without interruption.

Do unto to others as you would have others do unto others

Community members who are “held” in this way are more likely able to hold and nurture the complexity of parent-child relationships.