

Social and Emotional Development


Foundations for Learning in Preschool



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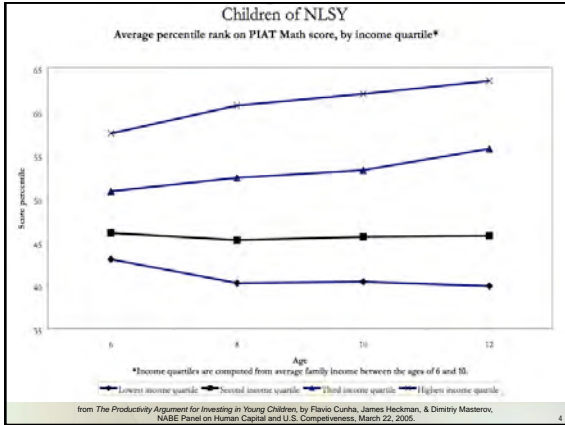
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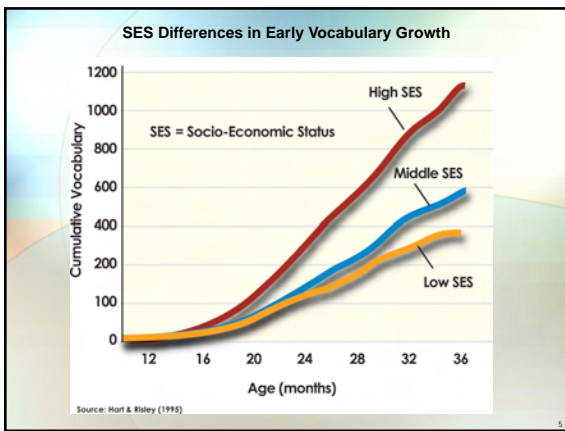


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**Social and emotional problems
can impair early learning and competence**

- Roughly 10% of children in kindergarten show disruptive emotional or behavioral problems. For low-income children, the prevalence is double or triple this estimate.
- Head Start teachers report that their children exhibit signs of serious emotional distress, including depression, withdrawal, and problems with aggression and antisocial behavior.
- Early childhood mental health disorders like depression, PTSD, and conduct disorders are being identified as early as age 2 and at surprisingly high prevalence.
- Children who are disruptive, have emotional or behavioral problems, or are absent do not succeed academically.

7

**Developmental neuroscience,
developmental psychology,
and educational efforts to close the
achievement gap
are yielding a common focus on
development in the early years**

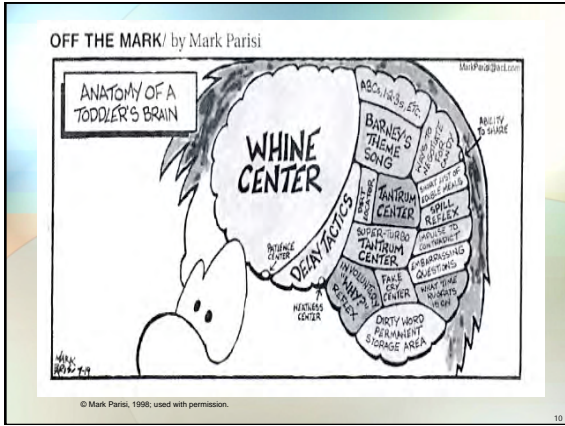


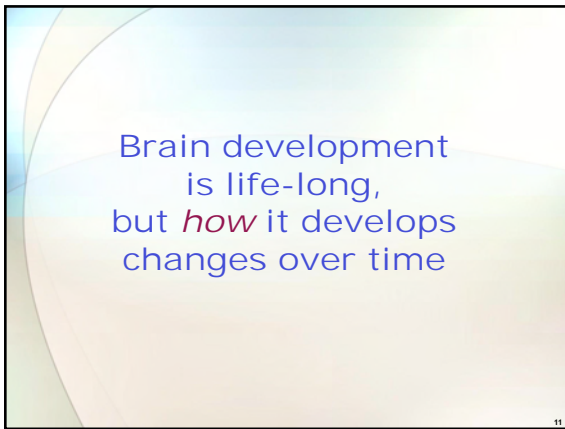
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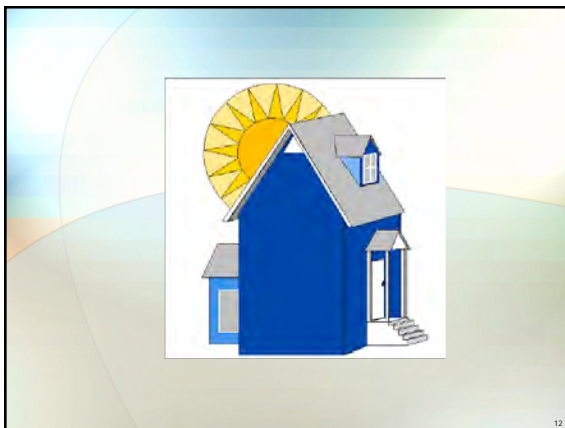
Social and Emotional Development

- The developing brain
- Stress, brain development, and social and emotional growth
- Development of:
 - Self-regulation
 - Cooperation and responsibility
 - Peer relationships
 - Relationships with teachers

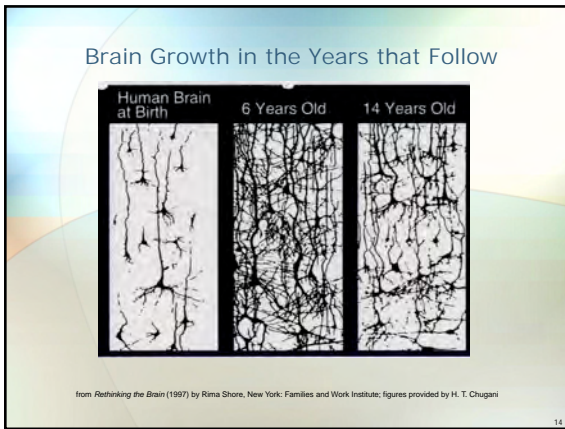
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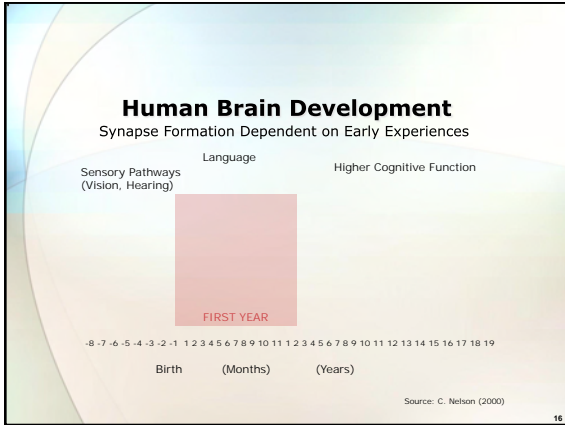


Experiences

- positive and negative -
are incorporated into the
developing brain architecture


- Common human experiences
- Unique personal experiences
- Abusive, traumatic experiences

15



The developing young mind is remarkably active, capable, and self-organizing

Knowledge grows through the brain's activity in response to events that elicit interest and attention -- not through passive instruction



Cognitive, social, and emotional development are deeply interdependent in the early years

Emotional health and social competence are a strong foundation for emerging cognitive abilities





Early childhood stress influences developing brain architecture

Chronic, severe, and/or uncontrollable stressful experiences (“toxic stress”) and can lead to stress management systems that respond at lower thresholds, and may impair learning and memory

19

But what is stress?

20

Positive Stress

- Moderate, short-lived stress responses cause brief increases in heart rate and mild changes in stress hormone levels.
- Causes might be the challenges of meeting new people, dealing with frustration, getting an immunization, or adult limit-setting.
- An important and necessary aspect of healthy development that occurs in the context of stable and supportive relationships.

21

Tolerable Stress

- Stress responses that could disrupt brain architecture, but are buffered by supportive relationships that facilitate adaptive coping.
- Causes might be the death or serious illness of a loved one, a frightening injury, parent divorce, terrorism, a natural disaster, or homelessness.
- Generally occurs within a time-limited period, which gives the brain an opportunity to recover from potentially damaging effects.

22

Toxic Stress

- Strong and prolonged activation of the body's stress management systems in the absence of the supportive protection of adult support.
- Causes might be extreme poverty, physical or emotional abuse, chronic and serious neglect, enduring maternal depression, substance abuse, family violence.
- Disrupts brain architecture and can lead to stress management systems that respond at relatively lower thresholds, thus increasing the risk of stress-related physical and mental illness.

23

Persistent Stress Changes Brain Architecture

Normal

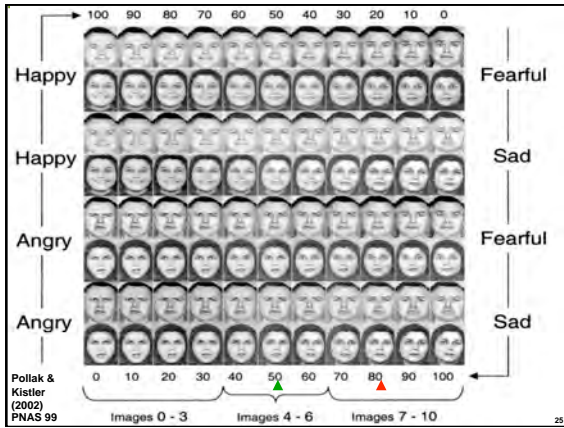
Chronic stress

Prefrontal Cortex and Hippocampus

Amygdala


Source: C. Nelson (2008)

24

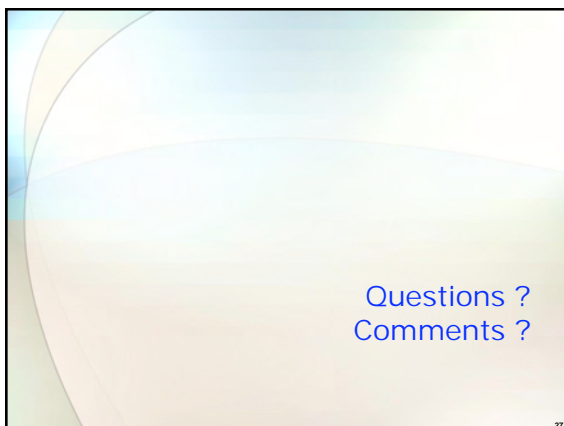


Early childhood mental health is vulnerable to stress

- Early signs of depression, PTSD, conduct disorders, anxiety disorders, ADHD in children as young as two, possibly earlier
- Vulnerability associated with: family disruption and parental mental health difficulties; socioeconomic distress; temperamental vulnerability is also important
- These children are often first identified in early childhood programs as emotionally dysregulated and disruptive (expulsion findings)
- These children are at risk for academic failure



26



Questions ?
Comments ?

27
