

Expectant Fathers, Infant Co-Regulation, and the Importance of Relationship in a Father's Prenatal Class

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DAD ALLIES: PROVIDER LEARNING SERIES

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Land Acknowledgement

- ▶ I acknowledge that I live and work on the traditional homelands of the Puyallup Tribe [puyaləpabš] part of the Duwamish, a First Nations people.
- ▶ The Puyallup people have lived on and stewarded these lands since the beginning of time and continue to do so today.
- ▶ I recognize that this land acknowledgement is one small step toward true allyship, and I commit to uplifting the voices, experiences, and histories of the Indigenous people of this land and beyond.

Outline

- ▶ Some content, lists, explanations
- ▶ Some videos
- ▶ "Let's Chat" - questions posed for you to answer in the chat box
- ▶ Emojis

A joyous, life-changing moment....



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"Oh sh*t! Now what?!"

- ▶ Changes an expectant father (EF) may experience during pregnancy:
 - ▶ Emotional
 - ▶ Physical
 - ▶ Hormonal
 - ▶ Mental/Cognitive
 - ▶ Social
 - ▶ Professional
 - ▶ Personal
- ▶ When and how do we expect or allow men to "process" and prepare for this significant transition in their lives?

Let's Chat - Part 1

Use the chat box to share your thoughts

What are some of the ways that expectant fathers prepare for the transition to becoming a father?

Let's Chat - Part 2

Use the chat box to share your thoughts

Where do first time fathers get information about becoming a father?

Where do they get information about caring for their baby?

Prenatal Class for Dads

- ▶ A prime time period to set new dads up for success.....
 - ▶ With the right kind of information
 - ▶ In a format that is easy to learn and remember
 - ▶ For how to create a relationship with their baby,
 - ▶ While being a loving, nurturing, mindful caregiver,
 - ▶ As well as a co-parent (not just "mom's helper")
 - ▶ And addresses dad's needs too
 - ▶ IE, reduce their stress/anxiety, build confidence/competence, contribute to their excitement to meet their new baby
 - ▶ and fall in **love!**

From "Big Picture" to "Close Up"

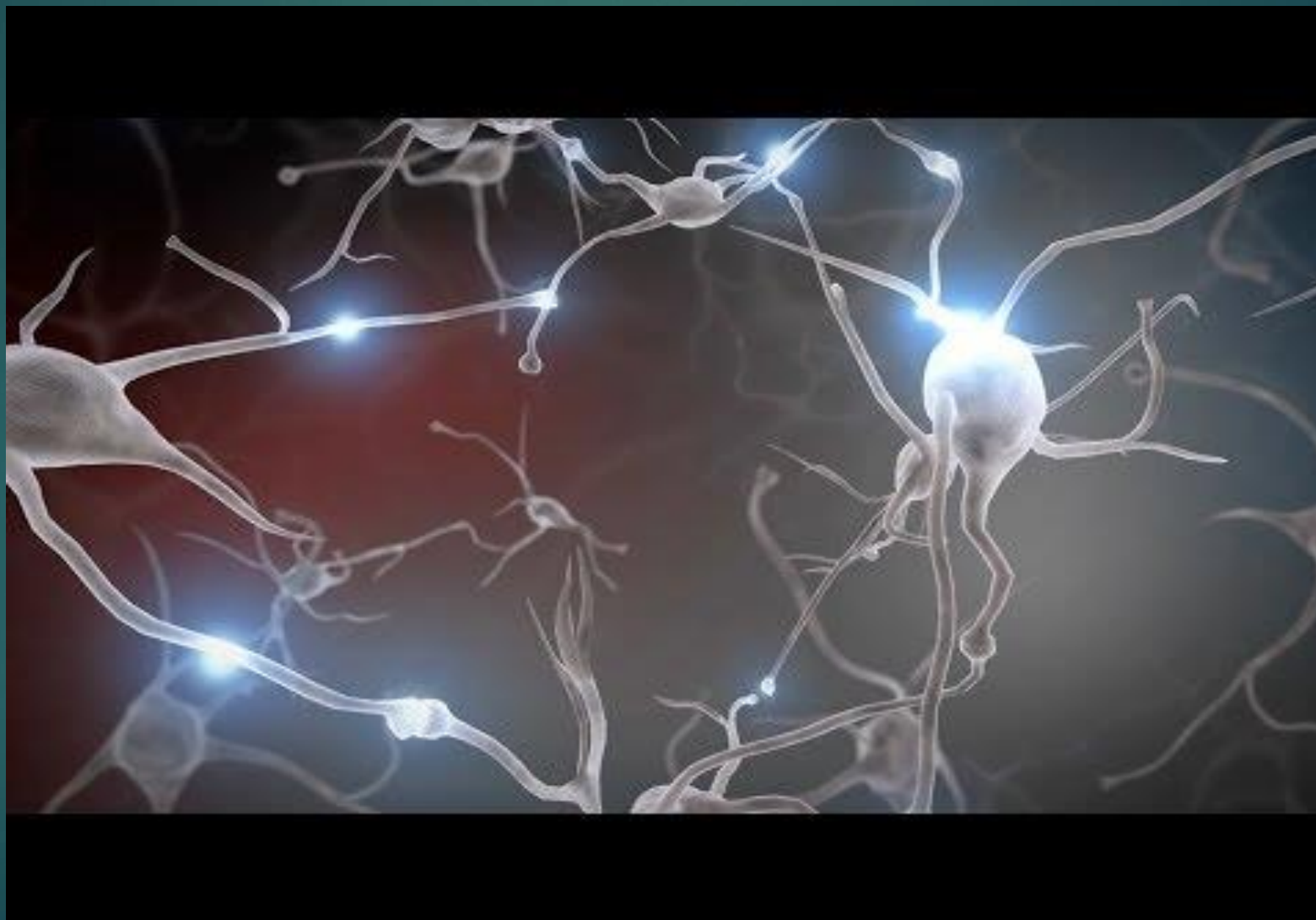
- ▶ Start with larger, over-arching concepts to provide a context
- ▶ Present it in bullet point format – listed, concise, to the point
- ▶ Scaffold and layer information from larger concepts to specific details
- ▶ "Reference in reverse" to reinforce earlier information, solidify foundational principles
- ▶ Repetition, repetition, repetition..... bullet points
- ▶ Storytelling – gives real world examples that are relatable
- ▶ Analogies and metaphors using "father familiar" topics
 - ▶ (eg, sports, cars, engines, engineering, building/construction, etc)
- ▶ Which should mitigate and minimize their anxiety, worry, and/or stress....

- ▶ All in the foundational context of the **relationship!**

"Welcome to class...."

- ▶ First – 3 short videos, each less than 2 minutes that will provide an overview that will be helpful for the rest of the class content
- ▶ After the videos, we will have introductions then get into the class

"Experiences Build Brain Architecture"

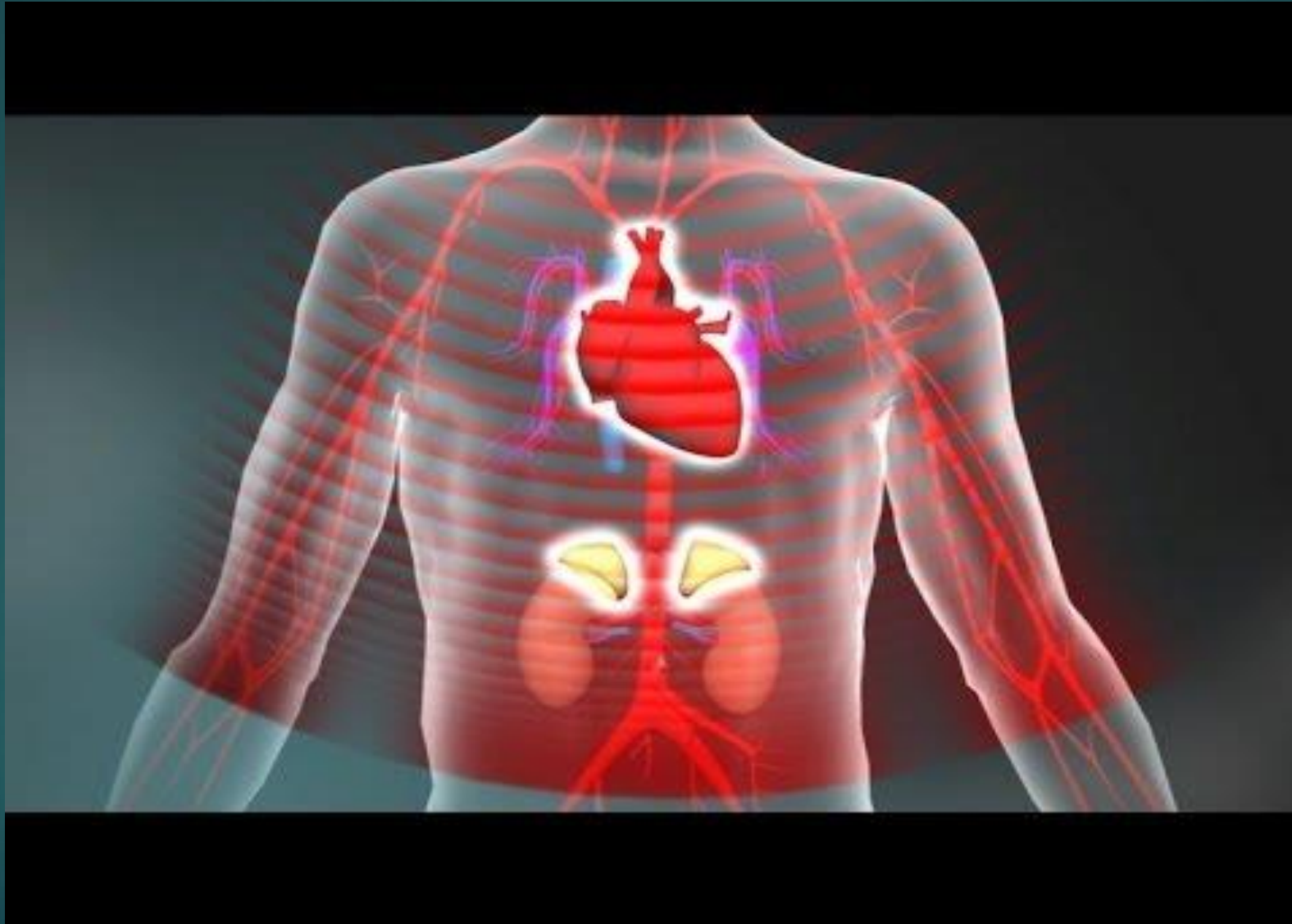


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"Serve and Return Interaction Shapes Brain Circuitry"



"Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development"



"Introductions"

- ▶ *Any thoughts or comments about the videos? Or questions?*
- ▶ Please share -
 - ▶ Your name
 - ▶ Baby's due date
 - ▶ Gender – (if you know it and want to share)
 - ▶ What burning question do you have or what worry have you been carrying around with you?

"Agenda"

- ▶ Help build confidence in basic skills, mostly prepared (2 strategies)
- ▶ Emphasize the relationship with your baby
- ▶ Be aware of equity/balance with partner, so not just a “helper”
- ▶ Topics to discuss with your partner; a list will be in the email I send
- ▶ Class only covers Birth-3 months, unless stated otherwise
- ▶ Class schedule
- ▶ Dads can do everything to care for baby, except breastfeed – BUT they are a significant factor in breastfeeding success!

"General Strategies"

- ▶ Detective Role – “mystery to be solved”
 - ▶ Look for patterns, gather evidence, collect, data, interrogate witnesses, run statistics, conduct little experiments, use deductive reasoning
 - ▶ Piece it together like a puzzle; it will give a better picture OR you can rule out what it is not
 - ▶ Patterns will most likely evolve over time as needs change, be adaptable
- ▶ Unexpected Happenings – They WILL happen!
 - ▶ Tap into your Inner MacGuyver

"Parenting C.P.R."

- ▶ C-onsistent
 - ▶ P-redictable
 - ▶ R-eliabile
-
- ▶ Babies with Parenting CPR -
 - ▶ Feel safe/secure, learn to trust, can be relaxed, ready to learn - "serve & return"
 - ▶ Babies without Parenting CPR -
 - ▶ Don't feel safe/secure, don't learn to trust, can't relax – get stressed out, end up in fight, flight, freeze, or faint – but babies can't fight, babies can't flight! (only freeze or faint)
 - ▶ That's what gets programmed into their nervous system - "experiences build brain architecture"

"Amendments"

- ▶ "Ways to Calm a Baby" in the handout
 - ▶ "Try a vacuum cleaner – the noise may be soothing" - CROSS IT OUT!
 - ▶ I will email you a list of 25 ways to calm a baby – you will have many choices from which to choose!
- ▶ If you need to calm your baby, pick one from the list.....
 - ▶ If it works, keep using it until it doesn't work
 - ▶ If it doesn't work, pick something else from the list until you find what works – then use that one until it doesn't work
 - ▶ Then find another one that works and use it until it doesn't work....
 - ▶ If something didn't work in the past, try it again – it may work this time

Cycle of Care

- ▶ Baby's basic needs

1. Eat
2. Sleep
3. Poop
4. Play

- ▶ "Repeat!"

- ▶ Communicate ("Cues".....**crying** is last phase of communication)

- ▶ Held, loved, nurtured, cared for (safety, security, trust, rest/digest, learn)

"Memorize these 4 things....."

(Eat, Sleep, Poop, Play – repeat!)

- ▶ Make a checklist in your mind.....
- ▶ During the first 3 months, when your baby has a need.....
- ▶ Run through this checklist - 9 times out of 10 it will be one of these!
- ▶ Therefore.....about 90% of the time, **you** will know what your baby needs!
 - ▶ *(Eat, Sleep, Poop, Play – repeat!)*
- ▶ The other 10 % could be a few other things....OR....
- ▶ Use the detective strategy to solve the mystery!

Once baby arrives.....

- ▶ Babies often have a "schedule" of their 24/7 cycle -
(Eat, Sleep, Poop, Play – repeat!)
- ▶ Most dads will figure it out within a week or two
- ▶ Do your best to figure out what is your baby's schedule, IE, the frequency of their eating and sleeping
- ▶ Most newborns will eat every 2-4 hours and sleep 2-4 hours in the first 3 months (give or take)
- ▶ If you know your baby's basic schedule, you'll be able to anticipate your baby's needs
- ▶ EG, if baby eats Q3 hrs, at 2.5 hr mark, you'll realize "baby is gonna get hungry soon, we should prepare to feed so as soon as baby shows hunger cues, we can respond.....in a way that is
 - ▶ C-onsistent
 - ▶ P-redictable
 - ▶ R-eliable

When in doubt about making a choice, ask yourself.....

"Is this best for my baby.....

.....or convenient for me?

Let's Chat

What was all that about?!

- ▶ What do you think about the content so far?
- ▶ Did you notice anything about the format and/or content?
 - ▶ Big picture to more close up?
 - ▶ Bullet points or steps?
 - ▶ Scaffold and layer information?
 - ▶ Repetition?
 - ▶ Reference in reverse?
 - ▶ Analogies or metaphors?
 - ▶ Do you think it minimized anxiety/stress and built confidence/competence?

Baby's Communication – Cues!

- ▶ Cues are gestures, behaviors, movements, or facial expressions that indicate baby's needs at any given moment
- ▶ I will give examples in later sections of eating, sleeping, etc for what baby cues might look like
- ▶ Your baby may have cues that are different – so try to learn what is your baby trying to tell you by their cues

Crying

- ▶ Crying (IMHO) is the "last phase" of communication
- ▶ Usually, baby has given many cues already for what they need and crying is their way of raising their voice, basically "yelling" at you....
- ▶ "I have a need here! You're not paying attention! McFly!"
 - ▶ It's normal for babies to cry, but not often and not for long – it's stressful
- ▶ Responding to Baby Crying:
 1. Take a deep breath, calm yourself first – babies sense stress/tension!
 2. Use a calming method that works – if not, find one that does (previously explained)
 3. Show your baby what calm looks like, what it feels like
 4. Demonstrate and model for your baby how you want them to be
 5. That's how you co-regulate!

Crying - continued

▶ Have you heard:

1. Don't pick up the baby when crying, you'll spoil them!"
2. Let the baby cry it out; it's good for their lungs."
3. "Baby needs to learn how to self-soothe so don't respond when they're crying."

▶ Answer in the chat box which ones you've heard – 1, 2, 3

▶ My response:

1. You can't spoil a baby, their brain has not developed that capacity yet; and even when they are older, if they are crying because you think they are manipulating you, they more than likely have an underlying need – fix the need and they won't need to cry
2. Babies don't need to exercise their lungs; if lungs were an issue, they would not have left the hospital – doctors most likely would be observing, giving treatments, ordering procedures, etc
3. How are babies going to "figure out" how to self-soothe? They've never been here before! - (Baseball analogy)

“We know that a dysregulated adult cannot regulate a dysregulated child.

An exhausted, frustrated, dysregulated adult can't regulate anybody.”

~ Bruce D. Perry, *What Happened to You?: Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing*

Other Strategies Introduced

- ▶ How to pick up baby and safely hold
- ▶ How to reposition baby between holds
- ▶ 3 calming methods while holding
 - ▶ Hands at midline
 - ▶ Hands to mouth - **(co-regulation example)**
 - ▶ Hands by face
- ▶ Skin to Skin
- ▶ Dads & Breastfeeding Support!
- ▶ Burping
- ▶ Diaper Changes - **(working dad example)**
- ▶ Baseball Swaddle
- ▶ Never Shake a Baby
- ▶ Perinatal Mood & Anxiety Disorders – for both mom & dad!

The Other 10%....

- ▶ Baby may be fussy because of.....
 - ▶ Temperature – too hot or too cold
 - ▶ Environment is too loud or too quiet
 - ▶ Bright Lights – we don't notice it
 - ▶ Over-stimulated from the environment including 5 senses and movement
 - ▶ Something unusual – twisted clothing, etc - **(10th baby example)**
- ▶ **You get to find out what your baby is like when you meet them!**

Thank you for your attention!

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Kids At Play Therapy

The DAD Projects