PART 2

Growing the Owl Brain

Felt Safety

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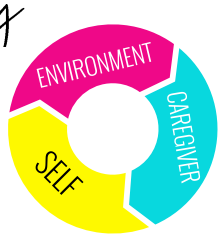
Felt-Safety

A subjective experience based on

Alan Sroufe, PhD



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Inside

3


FEED THEM!!
Brains with a history of trauma use more calories
A dip in blood sugar increases cortisol (stress)
Give food at least every two hours
Increase Protein

4


EASY, SOMETIMES UNLIMITED, ACCESS TO FOOD
• Snack Drawer
• Snack shelf in pantry
• Snack box in room
• Fanny pack with snacks
• Snacks in car
PROTIP: Make food visible

5


WATER THEM!!!
Dehydration leads to an increase in excitatory neurochemicals
• Always carry a water bottle/drink
• Flavor water with fruit
• Carbonated/flavored water
• Mix with high quality fruit juice
• Avoid Caffeine

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Movement Every 15 minutes- even just SMALL movement

NEVER EVER EVER LOSE RECESS

Gross Motor Movement - Even Just WALKING - every two hours

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Outside

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Structure
Routine
Predictability

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Overwhelming Environment?

- Sound- Is it too loud? Too quiet?
- Sight- Is there too much visual stimulation?
- Feel- Temperature? Clothing? Chair too hard?
- Smell- too stinky?
- Taste? Too strong? Spicy? Yucky?

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In Between

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Connection

Our own owl brain
Cues of Safety

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Delight!
Taking joy IN your child for who they are rather than enjoying an activity WITH your child.
Circle of Security International by Hoffman, Powell, & Marvin

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Welcome!
I'm so glad you are here!

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Make the mundane playful.
Playfulness sends 'cues of safety.'

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Growing the
Owl Brain
with connection &
co-regulation

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Parenting with
connection & co-regulation

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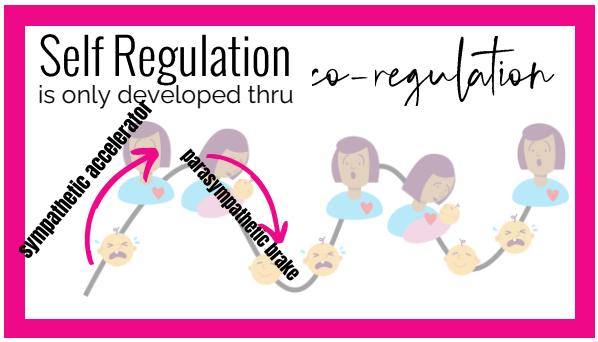
Self Regulation
is only developed thru
co-regulation
sympathetic accelerator
parasympathetic brake

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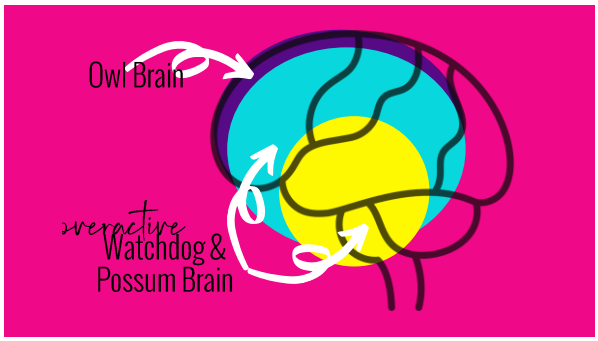

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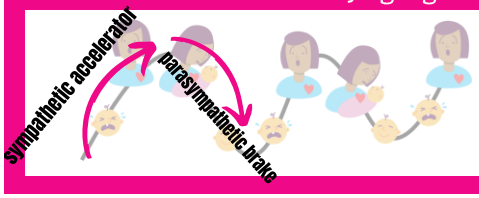
Co-Regulation based parenting means looking at the behavior through the lens of activation & felt safety

Meet the need while staying regulated.



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Regulation
Connection
Felt-Safety
Skills

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CALM?!?

Regulated

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CoRegulation can feel like holding fire instead of putting it out.
It's brave and a leap-of-faith.

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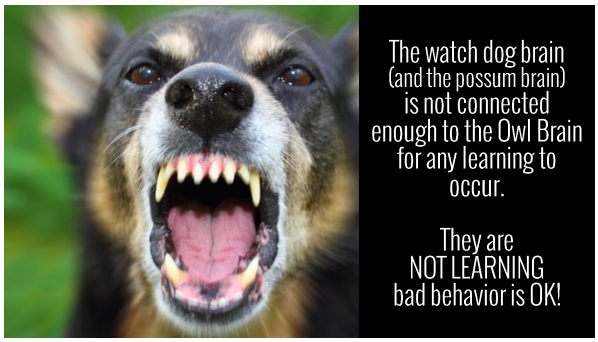
The watch dog brain (and the possum brain) is not connected enough to the Owl Brain for any learning to occur.
They are NOT LEARNING bad behavior is OK!

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Children are generally NOT confused

about appropriate behavior.

Teaching your child appropriate behavior is almost never the real problem.

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- Decrease Distance
- Scaffolding
- Attunement
- Validate the Feeling, even if Irrational
- Connection as a strategy

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Decrease the Distance

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Misbehavior is not about a lack of trust.
It s a lack of internalized co-regulation

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- Recess
- The School Bus
- Birthday Parties
- Sports & Extracurriculars
- Being in a ROOM in the house alone

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Decreasing Distance
may be experienced as
SHAME
or
PUNISHMENT.

We cannot control someone else's experience.

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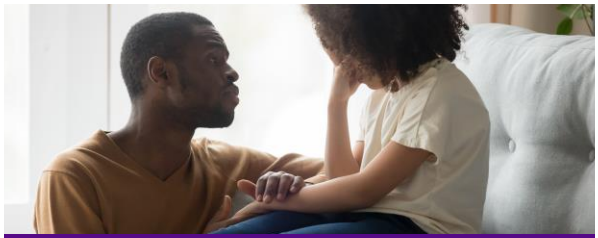

Stay in your Owl Brain and allow the feelings.
(helps to stay focused on the behavior, not catastrophize, make character judgments...)

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Scaffolding

Parenting steps taken to slowly and sequentially increase competence and independence.

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Milk

Purees

Finger foods

Fork and spoon

40

Tricycle

Training Wheels

Uneven Training Wheels

Parent Holding & Running Behind Bike

41

Clean up together

Easy-to-sort clean-up bins

"You put away books, I'll do cars!"

"You put away books, I'll be back to check!"

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Direct parent support

Homework completed in common area

Homework done independently, parent reviews

Parent logs-in to see missing homework

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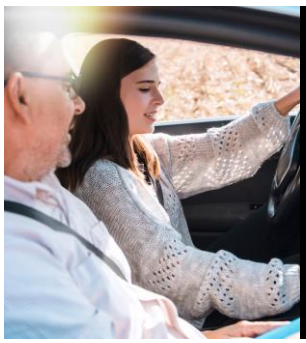

LOTs of hours watching

Driver's Training Class

Learners Permit

Age-Related Driving Restrictions

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Scaffolding is a form of coregulation

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- Decreasing scaffolding leads to mistakes
- Offer co-regulation through the 'fall'
- Recognize as a moment of growth
- Re-evaluate pace of decreasing scaffolding

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Attunement

Aligning your own internal state with that of the other. Accomplished through verbal AND non-verbal communication.

Dan Siegel, 2003
Parenting from the Inside Out

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- Tone
- Eyes
- Energy
- Body Posture
- Facial Expression

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Validate the Feeling
...even if irrational

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- Reflect back feelings- even if you don't agree.
- This validates their experience without judgment.
- "It feels like I'm being mean on purpose!"
- "It's like I like your brother more than I like you!"
- "The rules in our family are so unfair."

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- You think I'm punishing you!
- It feels like I'm punishing you.
- I hear you! You KNOW I am punishing you!
- This feels unfair!
- It IS unfair!

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Wanting you to STOP reflecting their feelings *is a valid feeling.*

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Connection as a strategy

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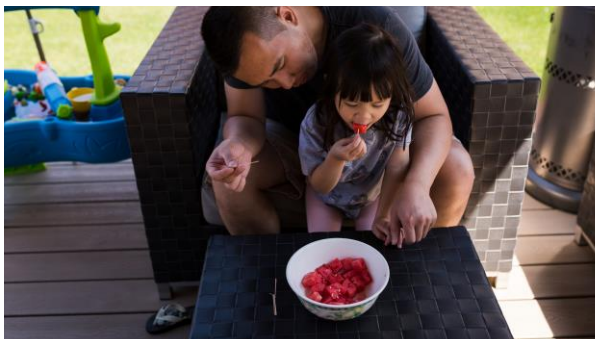

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Rewards & Consequences aren't what *changes behavior*

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Connection with a safe person is not a reward...

...it's a given- something to be always relied on.

"I want to be with you even when things are tough"

"I value our relationship more than anything else."

"You don't have to earn my unconditional love"

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