

# Triple P and Attachment

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# Conflict of Interest

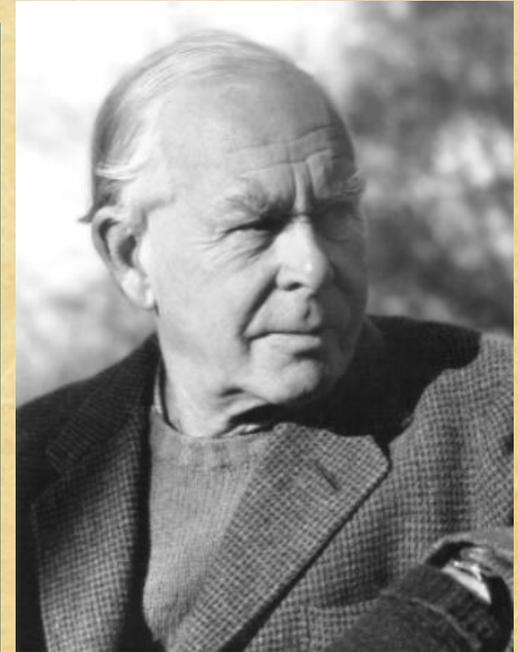
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# Attachment

- ♦ **Attachment** is a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space (Ainsworth, 1973; **Bowlby**, 1969).  
**Attachment** does not have to be reciprocal. ...  
**Attachment** theory provides an explanation of how the parent-child relationship emerges and influences subsequent development.
- ♦ According to both the psychoanalytic and behavioural perspectives feeding was seen as a central context in which the care-giver and babies developed attachment.

# JOHN BOWLBY (1907-1990)

- ◆ British Child Psychiatrist & Psychoanalyst.
- ◆ He was the first attachment theorist, describing attachment as a "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings".
- ◆ Bowlby believed that the earliest bonds formed by children with their caregivers have a tremendous impact that continues throughout life.
- ◆ According to Bowlby, attachment also serves to keep the infant close to the mother, thus improving the child's chances of survival. Not determined by food but by care and responsiveness



# Attachment Theory

- ♦ Psychologists have proposed two main theories that are believed to be important in forming attachments.
- ♦ The learning / behaviourist theories of attachment (e.g. Dollard & Miller, 1950) suggest that attachment is a set of learned behaviours. The basis for the learning of attachments is the provision of food. An infant will initially form an attachment to whoever feeds it.
- ♦ They learn to associate the feeder (usually the mother) with the comfort of being fed and through the process of classical conditioning, come to find contact with the mother comforting.
- ♦ They also find that certain behaviours (e.g. crying, smiling) bring desirable responses from others (e.g. attention, comfort), and through the process of operant conditioning learn to repeat these behaviours in order to get the things they want.

# BOWLBY'S ETHOLOGICAL THEORY

- ♦ Ethological Theory of Attachment recognizes infant's emotional tie to the caregiver as an evolved response that promotes survival.
- ♦ John Bowlby applied this idea to infant-caregiver bond.
- ♦ He retained the psychoanalyst idea that quality of attachment to caregiver has profound implication for child's security and capacity to form trusting relationships. The central theme of attachment theory is that mothers who are available and responsive to their infant's needs establish a sense of security in their children. The infant knows that the caregiver is dependable, which creates a secure base for the child to then explore the world.

# 4 PHASES OF ATTACHMENT DEVELOPMENT

- ♦ Babies are born equipped with behaviour like crying, cooing, babbling and smiling to ensure adult attention and adults are biologically programmed to respond to infant signals.
- ♦ Bowlby viewed the First 3 years as a very sensitive period for attachment
- The 4 phases of attachment according to Bowlby are as below:
  - ♦ Preattachment Phase (Birth – 6 Weeks)
  - ♦ “Attachment in Making” Phase ( 6 Weeks – 6 to 8 Months)
  - ♦ “Clear Cut” Attachment Phase ( 6-8 Months to 18 Months-2 Years)
  - ♦ Formation Of Reciprocal Relationship (18 Months – 2 Years and on)

# STYLES OF ATTACHMENT

- ♦ Attachment is not an 'all or nothing' process
- ♦ There may be variations, or individual differences between children in the attachments they form
- ♦ Ainsworth and Bell (1978) assessed about 100 American infants and their primary caregivers for the quality of attachment
- ♦ They found there are different styles of attachment:
  - ♦ Secure attachment
  - ♦ Avoidant Attachment
  - ♦ Resistant Attachment
  - ♦ Disorganised /Disoriented attachment

# Secure Attachment

- ◆ Occurs when children receive consistent, emotionally attuned and contingent communication from parent/caregiver
- ◆ The parent is responsive to the child and attuned to their emotional needs
- ◆ The child seeks proximity with the parent when s/he is distressed
- ◆ Child is able to manage distress through the responsiveness of the parent
  - ◆ (Siegel & Hartzell, 2012)

# Insecure Attachment

(Siegel, 2012; Powell et al., 2014)

- ◆ Avoidant Insecure
  - ◆ Occurs when a parent is repeatedly unavailable, rejecting of the child or uncomfortable with closeness
  - ◆ The child adapts by avoiding closeness and emotional connection to the parent – **unconcerned by mother's absence and unresponsive when she returns**
- ◆ Ambivalent/Resistant Insecure
  - ◆ Child experiences parent communication as inconsistent and unreliable
  - ◆ Child develops a sense of anxiety
  - ◆ Creates insecurity in parent-child relationship – **intense distress on separation, clingy and rejecting on return**

# Disorganised Attachment

(Main & Solomon, 1990; Siegel, 2012)

- ◆ Child experiences the parent's behaviour as overwhelming, frightening and chaotic
- ◆ Confusing for the child as they are predisposed to seek comfort from the parent at times of distress, but the parent is causing the distress
- ◆ Seen in cases of child maltreatment and neglect, substance dependence, and severe mental health problems. **When the parent tries to hold them the child looks away. No consistent way to manage distress. Greatest insecurity.**

# Attachment Task Force Report

## APSSAC (Chaffin et al., 2006)

- ◆ Evaluated how to best meet the needs of children described as having an attachment disorder and their families.
- ◆ Recognised the current controversy between interventions based in behavioural theory and those with a psychoanalytic focus
- ◆ Evidence across 70+ studies suggests that the programs that have resulted in better outcomes in child attachment “focus on the parent-child relationship and teaching parenting skills” “shorter term, goal-directed and behavioural in approach”

# Attachment Parenting

- ◆ Attachment parenting: Focus is on building a strong relationship between parents and child. Based on the principle of understanding a child's physical and emotional needs and responding sensitively to these.
- ◆ This is looking at the traditional approach taken by attachment therapists **NOT** the more controversial approaches

# Aspects that Assist Attachment

- ♦ **Developing good communication with your child\*** - Listen to your child and help her learn to express her feelings.
- ♦ **Keeping your expectations of your child appropriate\*** to his development and understanding.
- ♦ **Maintaining an affectionate relationship with your child\*** appropriate to her wishes.
- ♦ **Spending as much time as possible with your children\* (caveat re quality time)**
- ♦ **Using positive discipline\*** - Explain to your child the natural consequence of his behaviour rather than using punishments.

# Parenting Style

- ◆ **Permissive parents** are low in control/demandingness but high in support.
- ◆ **Authoritarian parents** are high in control/demandness but low in support and responsiveness.
- ◆ **Authoritative parents** (not “authoritarian”) expect a lot from their children (high in control/demandingness) but also high in support and responsiveness. \*
- ◆ Finally, **neglectful** parents are low in both dimensions.
- ◆ The most positive outcomes in terms of children’s behavior occur when parents adopt the authoritative style. This means, for instance, that they show their children they care about them, but they also expect them to follow their advice and guidance- they use positive discipline.

# Dangers of Traditional Discipline

- ◆ Instilling fear in children serves no purpose and creates feelings of shame and humiliation. Fear has been shown to lead to an increased risk of future antisocial behavior including crime and substance abuse
- ◆ Studies show that spanking and other physical discipline techniques can create ongoing behavioral and emotional problems
- ◆ Harsh, physical discipline teaches children that violence is the only way to solve problems
- ◆ Controlling or manipulative discipline compromises the trust between parent and child, and harms the attachment bond
- ◆ It is a sign of strength and personal growth for a parent to examine his or her own childhood experiences and how they may negatively impact their parenting, and to seek help if they are unable to practice positive discipline

# A gentler approach to discipline

- ♦ Positive discipline begins at birth. The bonds of attachment and trust that are formed when parents consistently and compassionately respond to an infant's needs become the foundation of discipline\*
- ♦ Positive Discipline involves using such techniques as prevention, distraction, and substitution to gently guide children away from harm\*
- ♦ Help your child explore safely, seeing the world through his eyes and empathizing as he experiences the natural consequences of his actions\*
- ♦ Try to understand what need a child's behavior is communicating. Children often communicate their feelings through their behaviour\*
- ♦ Resolve problems together in a way that leaves everyone's dignity intact\*
- ♦ Understand developmentally appropriate behaviour, and tailor guidance to the needs and temperaments of your child\*
- ♦ Children learn by example so it's important to strive to model positive actions and relationships within a family and in interactions with others\*

# Triple P

- ◆ A criticism leveled at behavioural parenting programs is that the approach fails to take account of the importance of attachment
- ◆ A further criticism is that behavioural programs fail to take account of the feelings of the parent and of the child
- ◆ Issues with the use of rewards to encourage positive behaviour
- ◆ Issues with the use of Quiet Time and Time Out – withdrawal of attention

# What is Positive Parenting\*

- ◆ Having a safe, interesting environment\*
- ◆ Having a positive learning environment\*
- ◆ Using assertive discipline (authoritative\*)
- ◆ Having realistic expectations\*
- ◆ Taking care of yourself as a parent\*

# Skills to Encourage in Children\*

- ◆ How to communicate and get along with others\*
- ◆ How to manage feelings\*
- ◆ How to be independent\*
- ◆ How to solve problems\*

# Strategies to Promote Attachment\*

- ◆ Developing Good Relationships
  - ◆ Spend time with your child\*
  - ◆ Talk with your child\*
  - ◆ Show affection\*
  
- ◆ Encouraging Good Behaviour
  - ◆ Praise your child
  - ◆ Give your child attention\*
  - ◆ Have interesting activities\*
  
- ◆ Teach new Skills and Behaviours
  - ◆ Set a good example
  - ◆ Use incidental teaching\*
  - ◆ Use Ask-Say-Do\*
  - ◆ Use behaviour charts

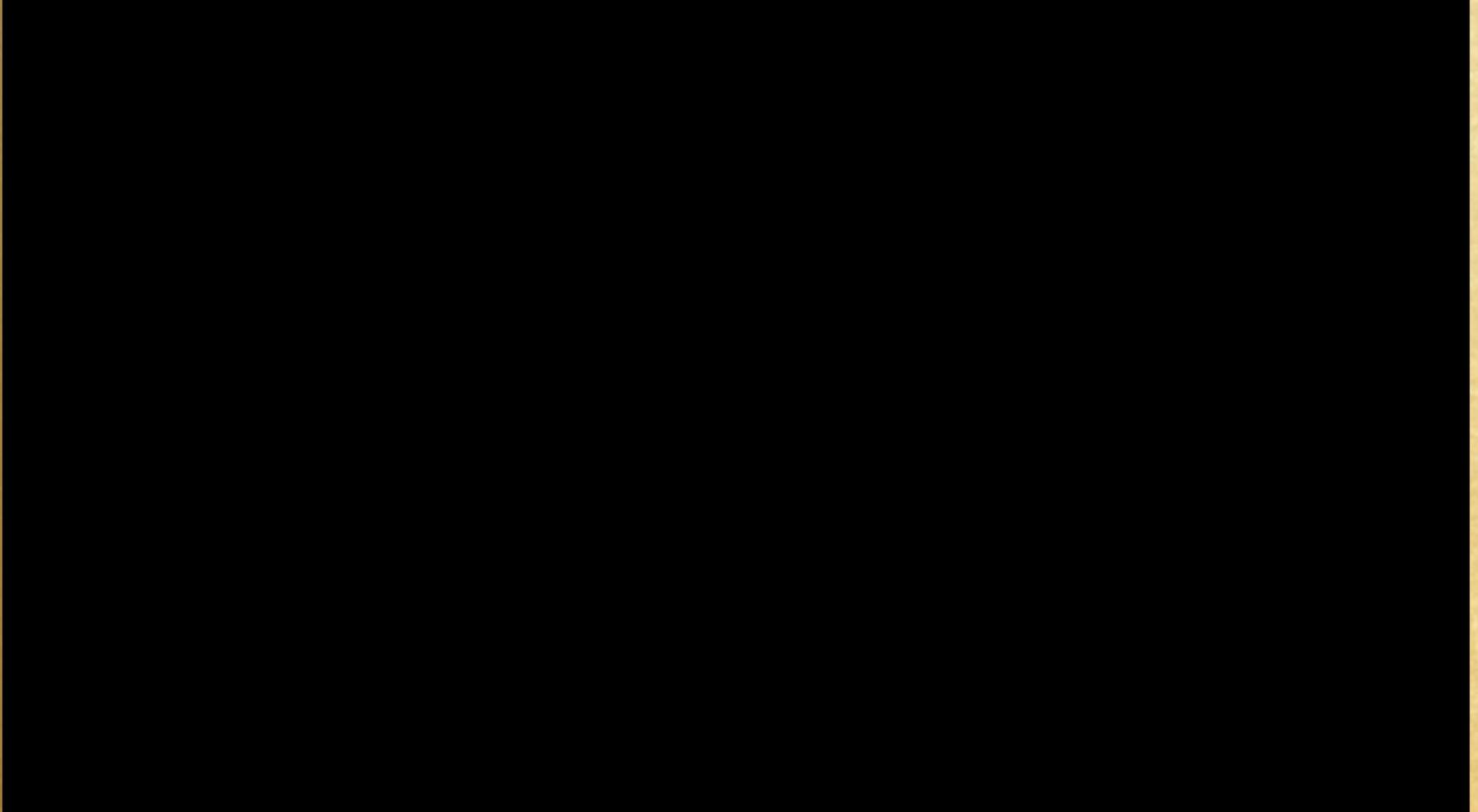
# Rewards can be Attachment Rich

- ◆ It is suggested that the best quality reward for a child is time spent with a parent in a favoured activity rather than a tangible reward
  - ◆ Going for a walk/trip to the park, playground, beach
  - ◆ Reading stories, doing a puzzle, building with Lego
  - ◆ Doing chores together, planting in the garden or in a pot
  - ◆ Baking or cooking together; sharing a snack
  - ◆ Visiting grandparents or going to the library for books
  - ◆ Singing favourite songs in the car

# Parent and Child Emotions

- ◆ When a child misbehaves this can elicit distress in both the child and the parent
- ◆ This is managed in Triple P by several strategies that parents can choose to use
  - ◆ Ground rules
  - ◆ Directed discussion
  - ◆ Clear, **calm** instructions
  - ◆ Logical consequences
  - ◆ Provides parents with a non-aggressive way to manage child behaviour; assists children to learn; helps parents to stay calm

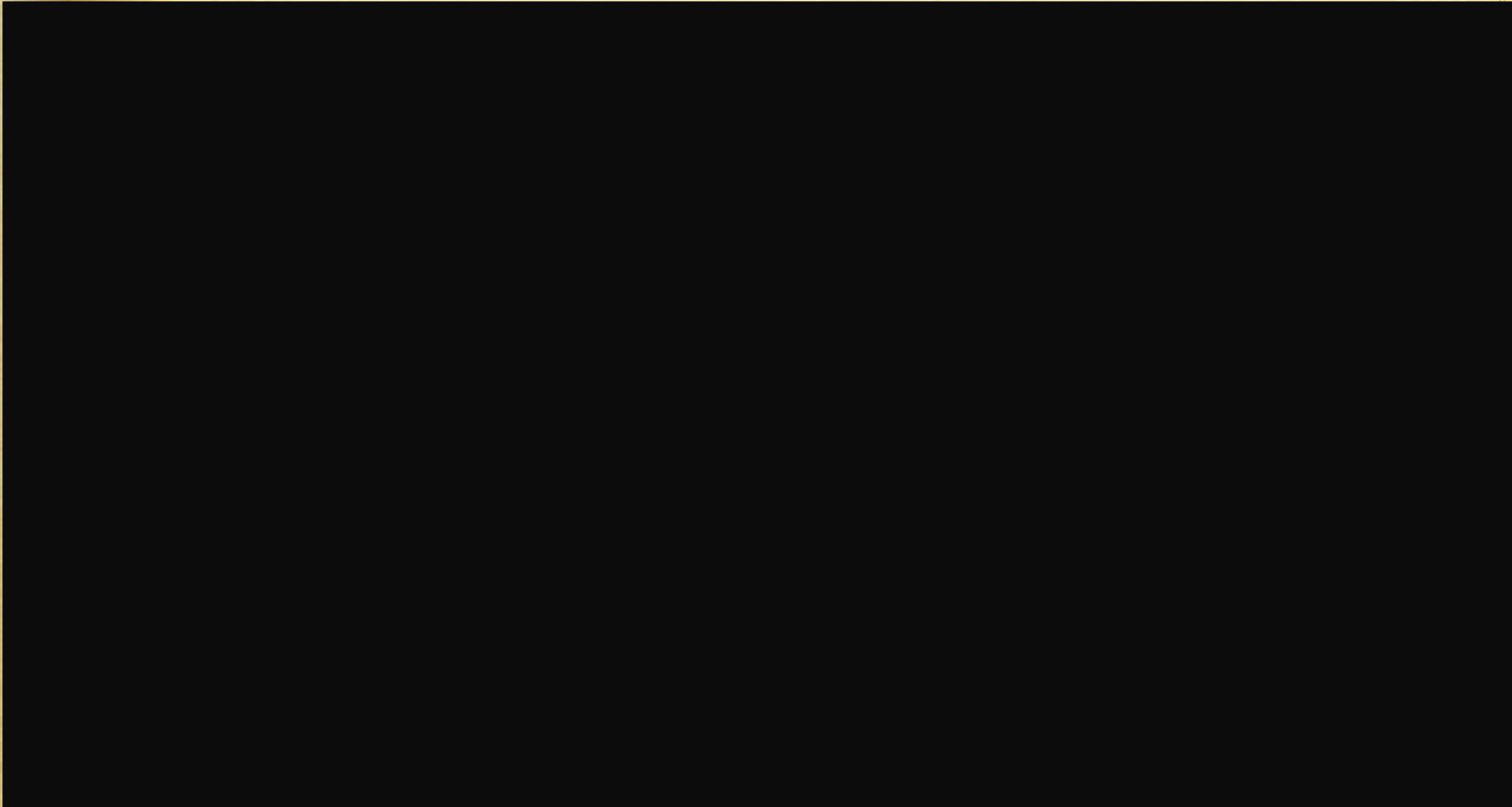
Change occurs within the  
family system



# Parent and Child Emotions

- ◆ Emotion regulation is extremely important – indicated in the attachment literature and the behavioural parenting literature
- ◆ Strategies to help a child achieve emotion regulation include
  - ◆ Quiet Time
  - ◆ Time Out
- ◆ There is often a misconception about these strategies
- ◆ Sometimes incorrectly described as punishment

# Time Out



# A Trial with Parents who Report a Poor Relationship With their Child

Wiggins, T., Sofronoff, K., & Sanders, M.R. (2009). Pathways Triple P-Positive Parenting program: Effects on parent-child relationships and child behavior. *Family Process*, 48(4), 517-530.

- ◆ Rationale – it is suggested that behavioural programs may not impact on the quality of the parent-child relationship
- ◆ If a parent-child relationship has broken down it is the parent who will need to change their behaviour in order to repair that relationship
- ◆ Pathways Triple P was developed for parents with problematic attributions about their child's behaviour and issues managing their own emotions-at risk for child maltreatment

# Participants

- ◆ 60 parents recruited with a child aged 4-10 years
- ◆ Outreach targeted parents who reported a problematic relationship with their child
- ◆ Phone interview used to establish inclusion (T-score below 41 on the Parenting Relationship Questionnaire – 31-40 indicates significantly below average).

# Questionnaires

- ◆ Parenting Relationship Questionnaire (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2006)
- ◆ Parenting Scale (Arnold, O'Leary, Wolff, & Acker, 1993)
- ◆ Parent's Attributions for Child's Behaviour Measure (Pidgeon & Sanders, 2004)
- ◆ Child Behaviour Checklist (Achenbach & Rescoria, 2000, 2001)
- ◆ Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman & Scott, 1999)

# Pathways Triple P

- ◆ A nine week group program
- ◆ Parents asked to set relational goals for change in themselves and their child at the beginning of the program
- ◆ Four sessions – core parenting strategies
- ◆ One session planned activities training
- ◆ Four sessions CBT for attributional issues

# General Results

- ◆ Significant improvements on attachment, involvement and parenting confidence (as reported by parents)
- ◆ Significant reductions in child internalizing and externalizing behaviours on the CBCL
- ◆ Significant reduction on parent attribution of blame and intentionality towards the child
- ◆ Significant improvement on parenting style – lower scores on laxness, over reactivity and verbosity

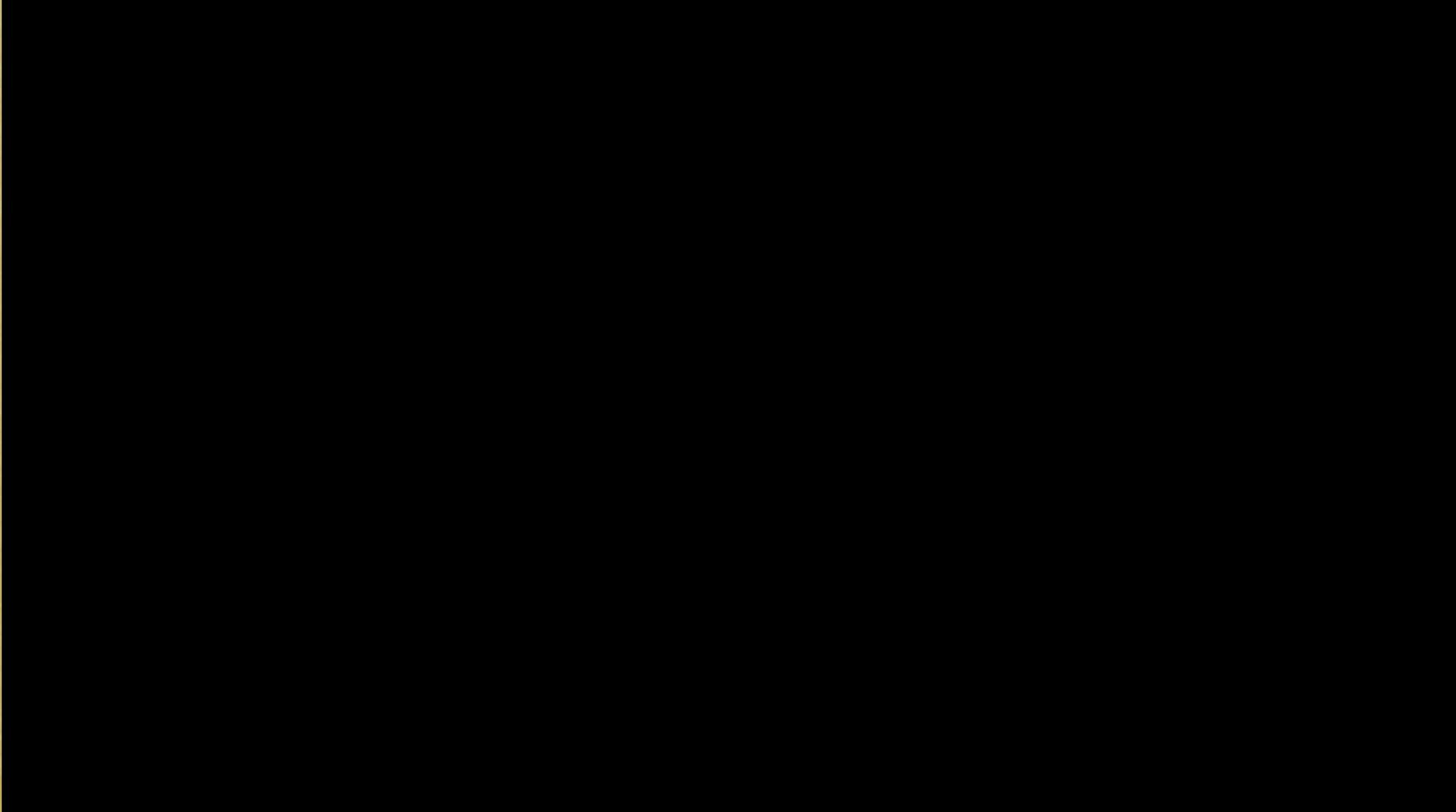
# Attachment



# Attribution – Blame/Intentionality



# Triple P changes lives



# Looking at the Changes in Parent-Child Relationships

- ◆ When child behaviour is not well managed parents do struggle to maintain a positive relationship with their child
- ◆ Children who have poor ability to regulate their own emotions struggle in many settings
- ◆ The evidence for Triple P interventions is consistent with parent reports and observational data collected
- ◆ You can see the improved relationship between parent and child

# When Parents do not Know How to Respond



# When Parents use Strategies Successfully



# When Parents Use Successful Strategies



# Take Home Messages

- ◆ There are different ways to parent successfully
- ◆ Triple P programs do address attachment needs
- ◆ Building a positive parent-child relationship is central to Triple P programs
- ◆ Empowering parents-> confident to use strategies, using a self-regulatory framework, working together
- ◆ Encouraging independence by teaching new skills is important
- ◆ Teaching and encouraging emotion regulation is imperative for a child to be resilient and to successfully engage with others
- ◆ Individual strategies must be understood in the context in which they are used (Quiet Time and Time Out)

# Families with a Child with a Developmental Disability

- ◆ Stepping Stones Triple P programs are available free in NSW. Programs rolled out as part of an NHMRC funded project and will be free until end July 2017.
- ◆ Face-to-face seminars and Primary Care
- ◆ Online seminars
- ◆ Webinars
  - ◆ Syndrome specific confirmed with more to be announced
  - ◆ Fragile X syndrome – May 2017
  - ◆ 22q11.2 deletion (VCFS) – May 2017
- ◆ Contact [fhs.steppingstones@sydney.edu.au](mailto:fhs.steppingstones@sydney.edu.au)

**THANK YOU**

◆ **QUESTIONS?**

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