

Creating More Functional Environments

Developed and provided by John K Kriger, MSM, LCADC

Brain development

Hippocampus

- Collects & converts information into more permanent memory
- Relates information to experience
- Works with Frontal Cortex for rational decision making
- Works best in noncompetitive environment

Amygdala

- Fear driven
- Short sighted
- Reads threat levels
- Assigns level of emotional response

Neural connections, or synapses

- Those exercised are retained
- Neurons can share responsibility

Mirror Neurons:

- Brain tends to mirror what it sees
- Can share experience by watching it

- Brain scans environment for threats 1/17th of a millisecond
 - Attends to environmental stimulus
 - Amygdala driven
 - Hypersensitive in chronically toxic environments
- Emotions are contagious
 - Emotional result from all interactions
 - Attitudes are caught more than taught

Impact of Constant Stress

- Continual high levels of stress
 - Catecholamine - mobilized as biological fuel *in moderation* to speed healing & handle emergencies
 - Increase catecholamine levels = fight or flight
 - Increased heart rate
 - Elevated blood pressure & blood sugars
 - Impairs immune systems by borrowing resources as needed in an emergency
 - Destroys dendrites in the hippocampus
 - Causes the amygdala to override the hippocampus to sloppily over generalize perceived information
 - May increase infertility & impact gene expression

ACE Study

- 10 year study
- Adverse Childhood Experiences show up in adults as elevated risk for disease or in disease

Environmental Issues

Negative Environments

- Model inconsistency & incongruence
- Promote, engage or allow hostility
- Fail to prepare or buffer transitions
- Fail to support those with troubles at home
- Support, cause or replicate inconsistency

Positive & Supportive Environments

- Support the organization and the individual
- Provide predictability in:
 - o Transitions
 - o Supportive positive dynamic relationships
 - o Safe workplace environments
 - o Expectations
 - o Communications
- Promote appropriate responses rather than automatic reactions

Brain Builders

Destress

- Use calming music
- Develop a climate where humor is appropriately used
- Model positive behavior

Consistency Creates Safety

- ✓ Keep promises
- ✓ Be fair
- ✓ Be consistent
- ✓ Model respect
- ✓ Model appreciating differences

Environments

- Bright posters
- Inspirational art
- Add flowers
- Play music to set tone
- Paint in bright colors
- Keep it clean