Therapeutic Parenting

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What do we mean by 'Therapeutic Parenting'?

To understand this we need to first understand what we mean by 'Parenting'

- Parenting is less about what we do and more about how we are being within the caregiving relationship
 - "Being not Doing"

How can parents 'Be'?

Authoritative

Child Centred / Demanding & High Communication

= good mental health, well engaged with a level of overall competence

Permissive-Indulgent

Accepting / Undemanding

= good self esteem & poor behaviour

Authoritarian

Parent Centred / Demanding Controlling & Punitive

= poor mental health

Rejecting-Neglecting

Parent Centred
Low Communication & Demands
Rejecting, Ignoring, Uninvolved

= poor mental health and poor behaviour

The Objective of the Optimal Parenting Relationship:

- To meet a child's needs (Child Centred)
- Through a warm, consistent, and reliable caregiving relationship
- By providing attuned responses **attunement** is the timely, sensitive response to whatever is going on, even if the child is expressing a need through dysregulated behaviour.
 - Co-regulating responses
 - High parent-child communication eg emotional literacy, boundaries
 - WIGO+WIN
 - 2GO+WIN

- Parenting is a relational process relational connection is central
- Connection builds our nervous system, brains and our minds (self-esteem, our sense of self etc)
 - The quality of the relational connection shapes social, emotional and cognitive development

"High quality social relationships correspond with longer, happier and healthier lives"

Holt-Lundstat et Al

What is Therapeutic Parenting?

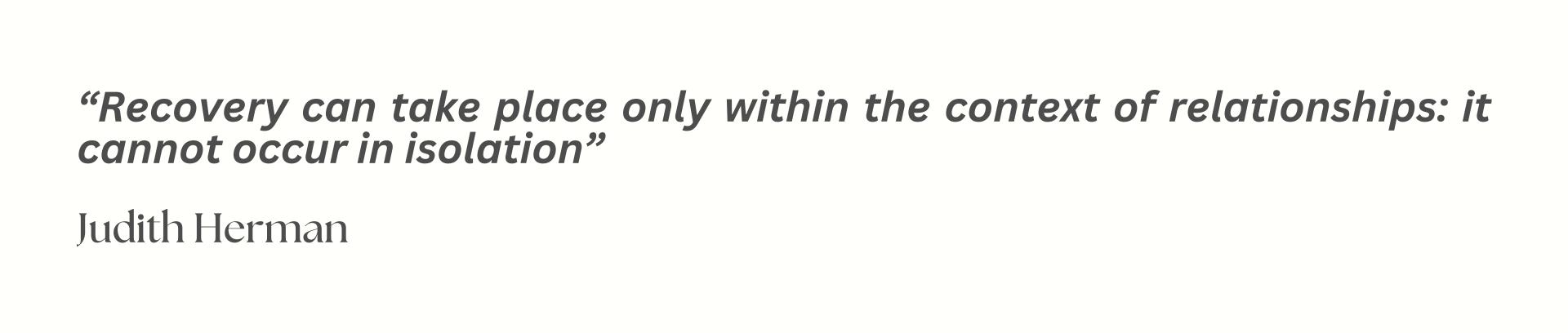
- A formal approach designed for foster carers, adoptive parents & kinship carers It's particularly applicable to children who have experienced trauma It can inform the approach that a child needs by all professionals, including in schools
 - Focusses on a nurturing environment
 - There is an acceptance and **empathic understanding** of **behaviours** rather than traditional judgements and behavioural consequences .e.g., Time-out, grounding
 - Responses are empathic -empathic understanding of the behaviour and what drives the behaviour, even if the behaviour is dysregulated
 - Reflective & Authoritative not Authoritarian
 - Consistency in connection (parental availability) and co-regulation (soothing the dysregulated child)
 - There is a focus on repairing the attachment relationship

Why is Therapeutic Parenting needed?

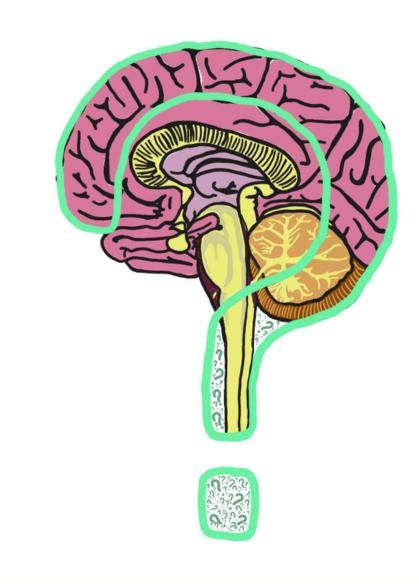
- Childhood experiences of **loss**, **neglect** and **maltreatment** can have a profound effect upon a young child's cognitive, social and emotional developments.
- E.g., impacting their attachment and all other relationships affecting their nervous system (e.g., heightened sympathetic arousal) and also cognitive development (acquired neurodiversity)

"Trauma is a chronic disruption of connection" - Stephen Porges

• When a child has been consistently in receipt of an attuned and reparative relationship, they are more able to change their previous expectations of relationships. (University of East Anglia, Secure Base; Howe 1996, Wilson et al 2003, Cairns 2003, Beek and Schofield 2004).



Trauma is a chronic disruption of connection- Porges Reactivity is key to survival and happens at a subconscious level.



Therapeutic Effects:

- Lowers cortisol & Increases immune function
- Increases flexibility in heart rate
- Optimises the regulation in gene expression
- Slows the ageing process
- Oxytocin activates the parasympathetic nervous system towards rest, calm and sense of safety Repatterns the nervous system
- Repatterns the attachment behaviours
- Promotes wellbeing & healthy relationships

What does Therapeutic Parenting look like? 1/2

- It's child-centred not adult/parent-centred
- It consists of warmth (e.g., a warm maternal gaze, not a critical gaze)

What does Therapeutic Parenting look like? 2/2

What Is Needed -parental/caregiver/professional resources:

- Physical / practical availability presence, time, attention
- Emotional availability the intention to hear in a non-judgmental manner
- Emotional capacity capacity to accept whatever comes up, to accept the experience

Therapeutic Parenting Requires

Therapeutic Parenting requires noticing the way that a child has been shaped by their early relationships (e.g. the impact of relational trauma /the trauma in the caregiving relationship)

Reactivity is key to survival and happens at a subconscious level What is the reactive/dysregulated behaviour communicating?

Once we notice, then we reflect and hypothesise to decode the underlying need (e.g. the unmet need that drives the behaviour)

We *attune* (or attend) to the need by providing the warm, consistent and reliable caregiving that all children need Attending to both layers -the here and now & the historical

A caring approach involving caring behaviours that create caring bonds.

Applications of a therapeutic approach:

- An approach with all children
- Trauma-informed approach for children who have experienced trauma
- An approach for schools by teachers with all students
- A professional approach with parents
- An approach with colleagues and other professionals

Therapeutic Parenting - What get's in the way?

- -Lack of Sleep & Stress in general or being in a rush
- -Traditional parenting eg. Authoritarian approach e.g., punitive, scolding, shaming "its bad behaviour, they need to learn societies expectations" Demands and commands, "Should" and "Ought" "Do as I say" "Don't do that"
- -Dismissing the feeling/the need/the child "You'll be fine" "It's just a scratch" Rational explanations "You can't keep it, it's not yours" "It's the school rules"
- -Expectations that are not age appropriate (emotional age)
- -Fear of being judged

What gets in the way of connection?

- Judgement
- Minimising
- Dismissing
- Reassurance
- Criticising
- Impatience

- Disconnection occurs at times of our own disconnection and/or dysregulation
- Multi-tasking
- Compassion fatigue
- Not listening but waiting to talk
- Problem-solving, fixing

Relational Trauma gets in the way

we need to consider the relational dyad

Reactivity is key to survival and happens at a subconscious level