

THERAPEUTIC PARENTING

It's been shown repeatedly within the literature that the emotional quality of a child's earliest attachment experience is perhaps the single most important influence on human development. Simply stated, children with histories of secure attachments are less vulnerable to stress and are better able to take advantage of opportunities for growth.

What happens in the first year of a child's life however does not determine what happens for the rest of a child's life. Change is possible, and drawing from the seminal work of Dr. John Bowlby, and expanded upon by contemporary attachment researchers, "every starting point, however early one looks, is also an outcome; every outcome is also a starting point".

Caregivers receiving services at Merrymount - Family Support and Crisis Centre may present with "starting points" that challenge their ability to foster caregiving environments that promote feelings of confidence, security and healthy regulation skills. A history of abuse, neglect, poverty, mental illness, social isolation, substance use and family violence are examples that have been shown within the literature that negatively impact the quality of parent/child relationships and are associated with poor child outcomes.

Therapeutic Parenting, a treatment service provided at Merrymount - Family Support and Crisis Centre is founded on contemporary theory and research in the areas of child development, development within relationships, attachment/caregiving and trauma. The aim of Therapeutic Parenting is to enhance caregiver's feelings of confidence and capacity to provide emotionally attuned, consistent and predictable care to their children.

Therapeutic Parenting moves beyond offering basic parenting and child development information to providing evidence based intervention to help caregivers pay attention to and tune in to their child's signals, make sense of their child's signals, experience their child's "inner life" and respond in a timely and sensitive manner. Services are provided in collaboration with, and are integrated within, on-site therapeutic childcare services and other clinical programs designed to build caregiver capacity and confidence.

Children aren't born resilient. Resilience develops within the context of secure relationships. Therapeutic Parenting, founded upon decades of attachment research, empowers and awakens within caregivers their innate ability to respond sensitively and responsively to their children's needs. It's through secure and healthy relationships with primary caregivers that children are afforded opportunities to grow, develop and realize their potential.

Submitted by

Katherine Rupert, MSW, RSW, ACTP
Merrymount, Family Mental Health Coordinator