



**Understanding Children’s  
Puzzling Behavior using  
the Touchpoints  
Developmental  
Framework**

*Mindy May  
Program Manager, National Trainer  
July 30, 2014  
18<sup>th</sup> Annual Birth to Three Institute*



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**Brazelton Touchpoints Center**



- Boston Children’s Hospital
- Touchpoints Professional Development
- OHS National Center on Parent, Family, Community Engagement
- Newborn Behavior Observation

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**What is the Touchpoints Approach?**



A way of providing care to families by:

- *understanding development* and
- *supporting relationships.*



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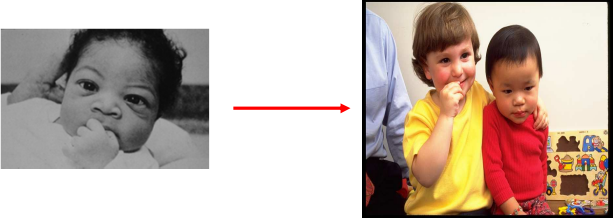
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## Developmental Framework



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## Temperamental Dimensions: The “How” of Behavior



- Activity Level
- Approach-Withdrawal
- Adaptability
- Rhythmicity
- Mood
- Response Threshold
- Intensity
- Distractibility
- Attention Span/Persistence



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## Developmental Agenda



Knowledge ↔ Skill ↔ Judgment



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“As young children develop, their early emotional experiences literally become embedded in the architecture of their brains.”



J.P. Shonkoff, Chair  
National Scientific Council on the  
Developing Child; Working Paper 2;  
Winter 2004



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**Social/Emotional goals of the first year**

- State regulation
- Attachment to care giver /development of trust
- Sense of self
- Causality and object permanence







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**Idealized Characterization of Normal Interactions**

1. Large proportions of expressed positive affect, and little anger, sadness or distress
2. Large proportions of time (some urged 100% of the time) that caregiver and infant are matching affective and attentional states
3. Therefore the interaction can be characterized as a simultaneous and synchronous “dance” within a narrow range of positive affect.
  - Courtesy of Edward Z Tronick, PhD



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Infants learn to:



- Feel different emotions
- Link emotions to events and people
- Communicate emotions
- Recover from uncomfortable emotions/be soothed and self-soothe
- Be available for attention, attachment, and reciprocal interaction
- **TRUST**, in emotions and in relationships

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Developing trust and problem solving



- Visual cliff



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Toddler Goals



- Sense of self, autonomy, loss of omnipotence
- Mastery, self control
- Separation/exploration from a secure base
- Social rules, relationships, empathy



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Toddlers:

- Develop a sense of autonomy and self; independent skills
- Test Limits: Battle for control
- Develop more awareness of their feelings and intentions
- Feel opposing feelings at the same time
- Learn to self-soothe and regulate
- Socially relate
- Play symbolically



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Preschool Competence

- Able to feel a full range of emotions
- Able to recognize emotions in self
- Able to label emotions to self
- Able to express and communicate feelings
- Symbolize and practice through social play
- Use magical thinking



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Knowledge (Idea) >Skill>Judgment



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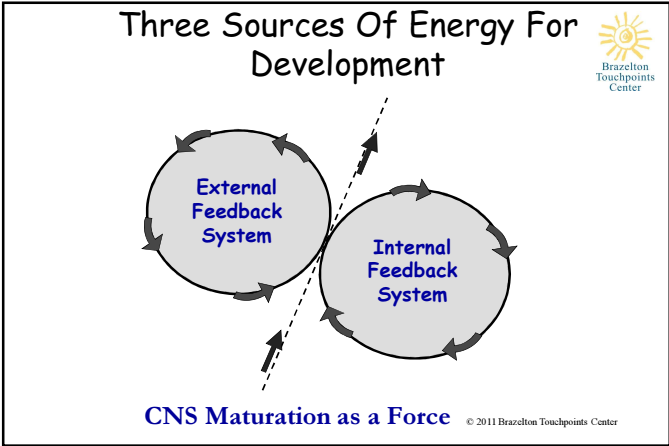
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Development as a Process

Think of child you know who has learned a new skill.

What did the process of learning that skill look like?

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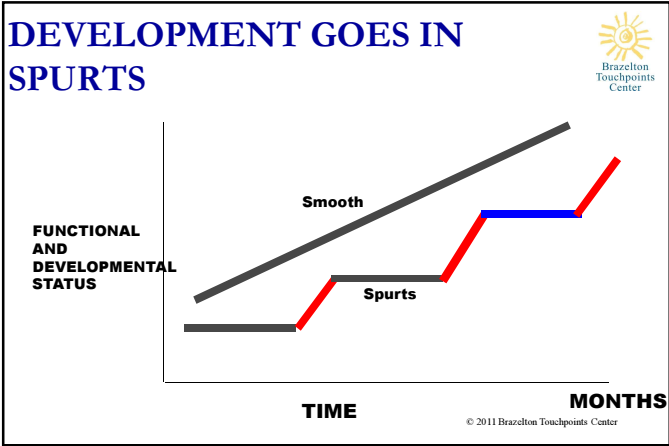
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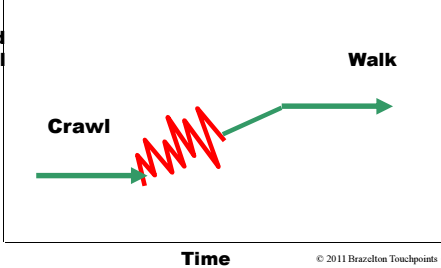
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Development is Not Smooth But is Characterized by Disorganization, Spurts and Pauses



Child's Functional and Developmental Status



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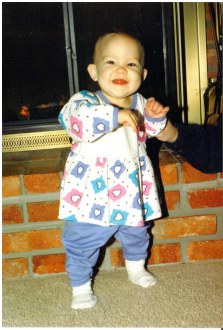
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Developmental Framework



Development is characterized by regressions, bursts, and pauses.

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Developmental Framework



- Development is **multidimensional**.
- **Bursts** in one domain of development cause **regressions** in other domains.

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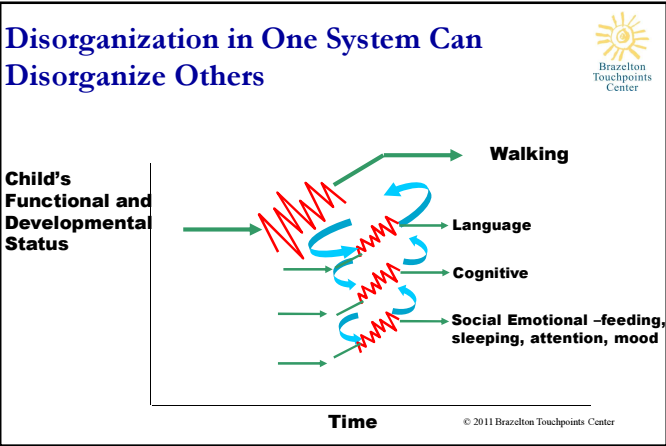
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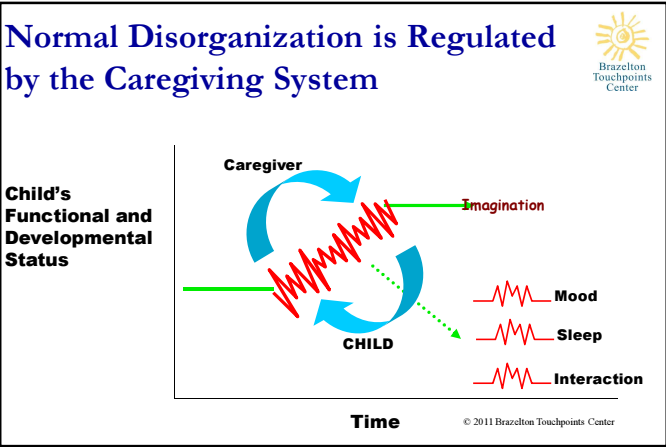
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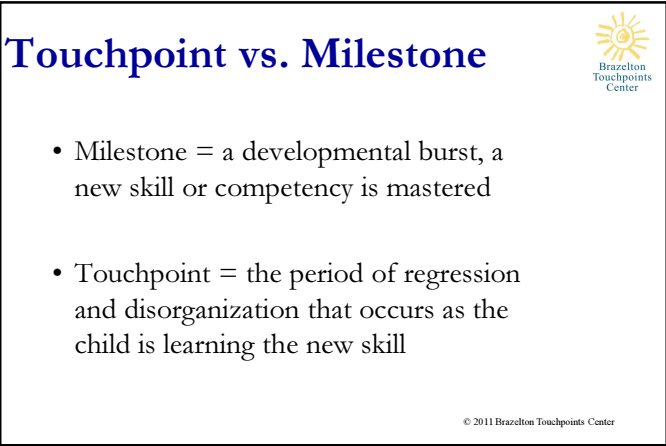
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Disorganization is Not  
Error...

*Disorganization is the  
Wellspring of Change*

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TOUCHPOINTS

- The Ideal Baby - Pregnancy
- The Real Baby - Newborn
- The Energy Sink - 3 weeks
- The Rewarding Baby - 6-8 wks
- Looking Outward - 4 months
- Up at Night - 7 months
- The Pointer - 9 months
- The Walker - 12 months
- The Clinger - 15 months
- Rebel With a Cause -18 months
- Getting to “No!” - 2 years
- “Why?” - 3 years
- What I Do Matters - 4 years
- Who I Am Matters - 5 years
- Entering the Real World – 6 yrs.

All children at their own pace



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Value  
Disorganization

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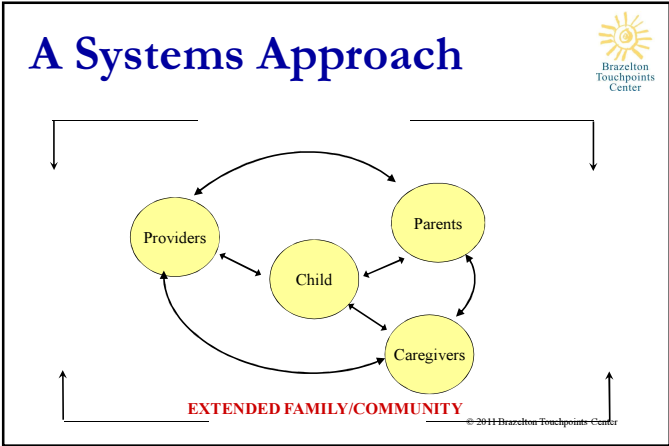
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### In Sum:

- Focus in on the process of development
- Disorganization (i.e. regression) is a normal part of the developmental process.
- The child contributes to this process.

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