



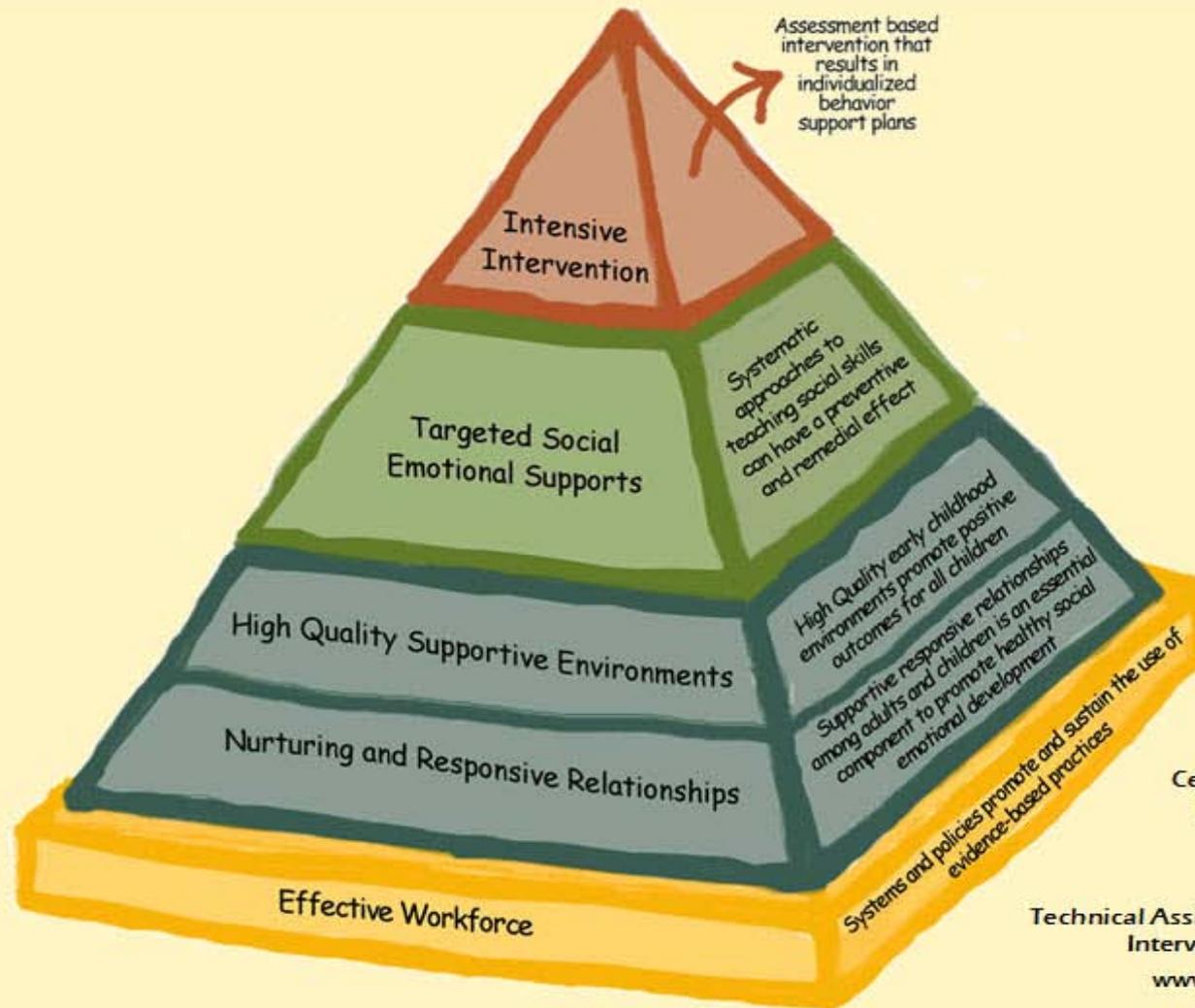
Caregiver-Child Relationships

*Laying the Foundation for
a Successful Life*

Betty Rintoul, Ph.D.

Pyramid Model

for Promoting **Social Emotional** Competence
in Infants and Young Children



Center on the Social and Emotional
Foundations for Early Learning
www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel

Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional
Intervention for Young Children
www.challengingbehavior.org

“There is no such thing as a baby...”



“...there is a baby and someone.”



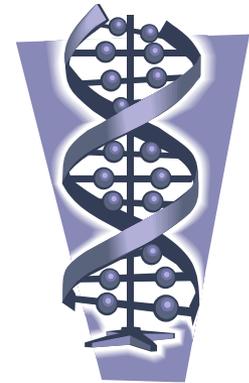
Donald Winnicott, 1987

Relationships are a Biological Need

- Ways we become and stay attached to others are biologically primed and scientists now are able to see them in the basic structure of the brain
- The brain “grows itself” for the environment it experiences
- Emotion and relationships appear to play particularly important roles in shaping the brain’s development

Nurture Activates Nature

Social environments influence the activation of specific genes – thus reducing or increasing genetically based risks.



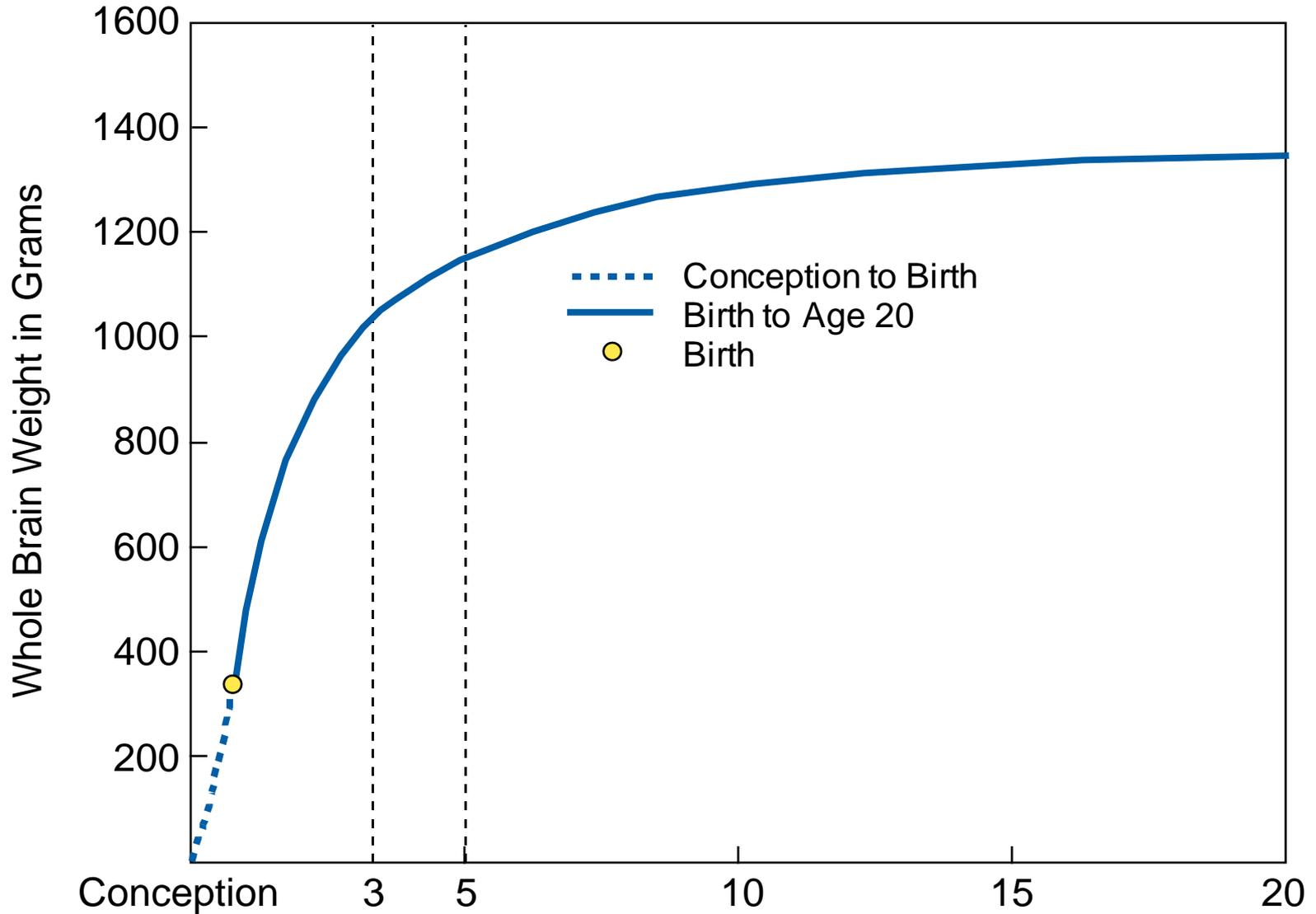
Meaney, 2001; Hane & Fox, 2006

Relationships Matter

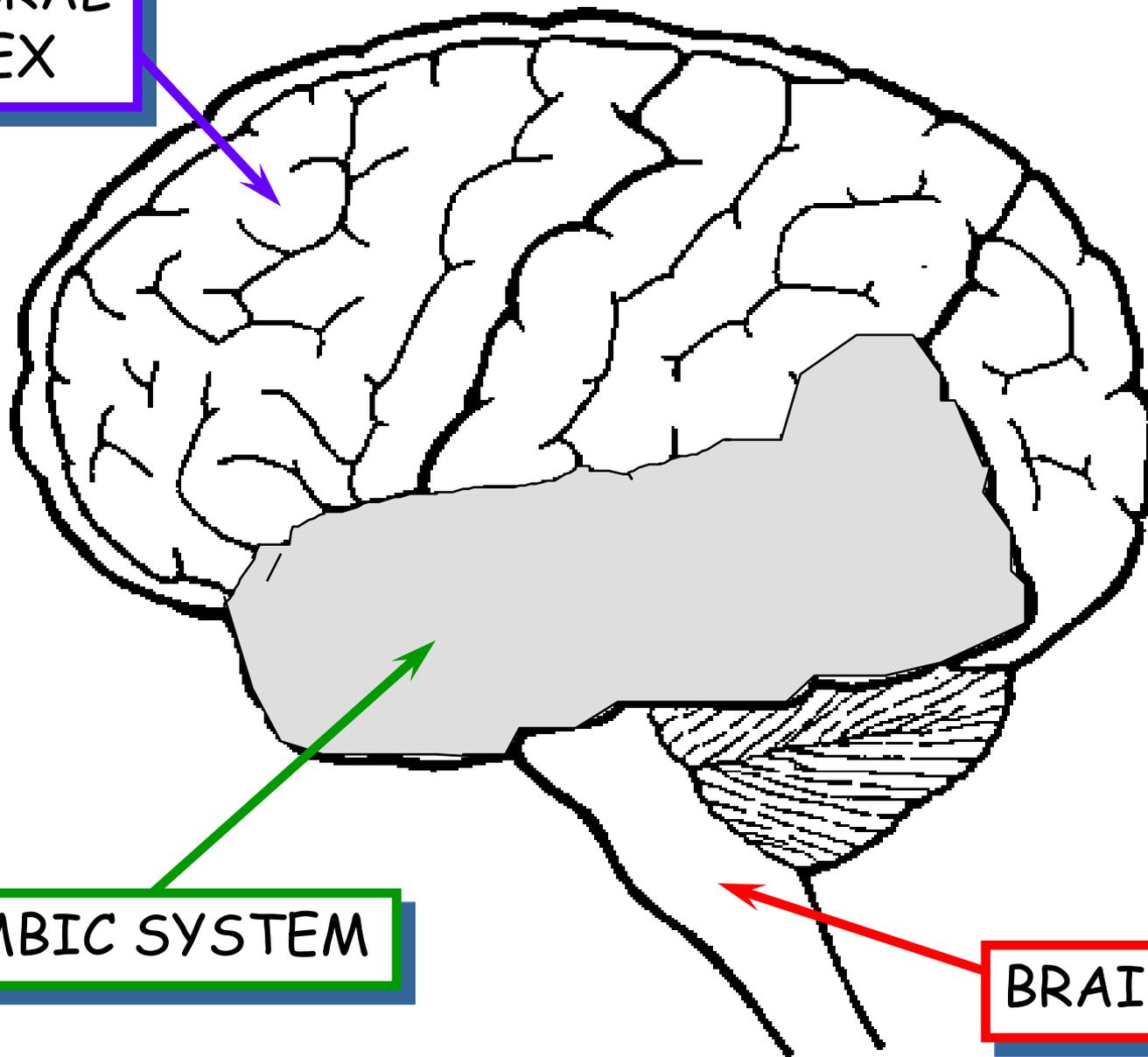
Genetic transcription can be ***changed*** by social experiences, resulting in enduring differences that may be passed on through generations.



Growth of Brain



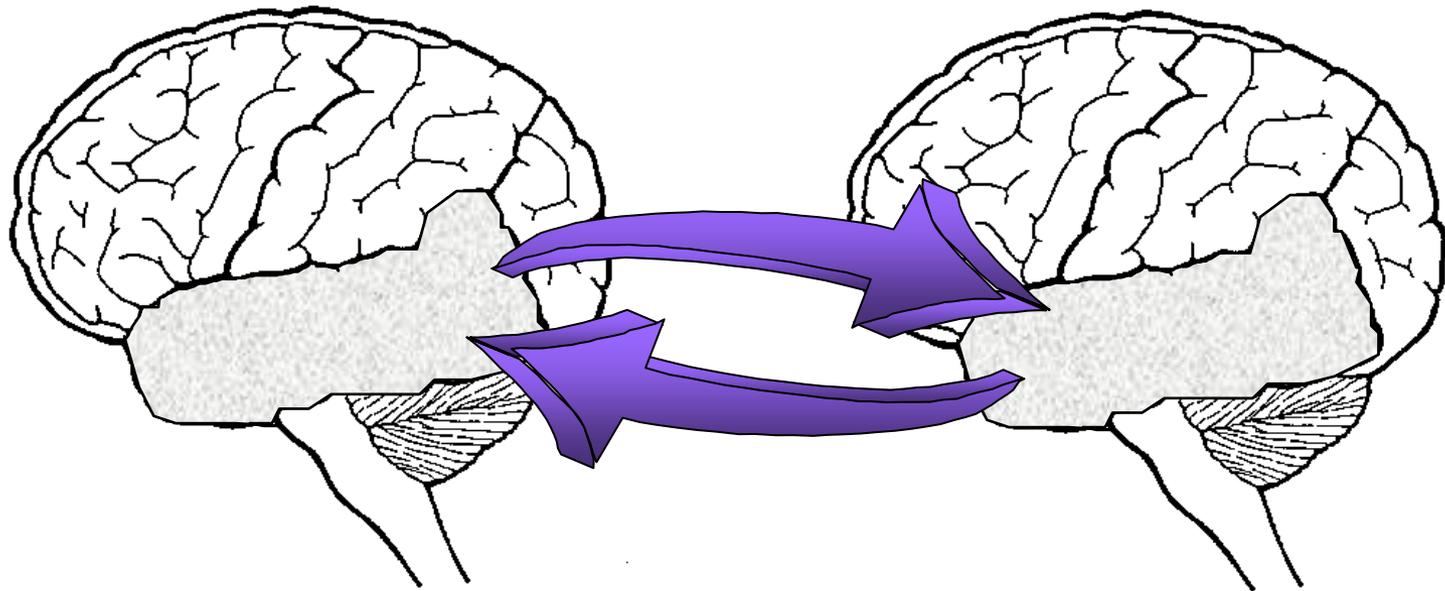
CEREBRAL
CORTEX



LIMBIC SYSTEM

BRAINSTEM

Primary Attachment Through Limbic Communication



Caregiver

Infant

Schore, 2001

Limbic (Emotional) Sensitivity

- Touch
- Tone of voice
- Facial expression
- Responsive to child's initiations



Video of Caregiver and Child

- Look for the emotional communication
- What happens when attunement is disrupted by the mother not responding?

Relationships Matter



- Secure relationships are the foundation for stress regulation, cooperation, impulse control, and motivation (the primary components of success in school and in life)
- Secure environments create **biological** protection from stress, bolster the immune system, and lead to healthy lifestyles
- Critical relationships include **all** those who have daily interaction and responsibility for care

Raver, 2002; Gunnar, 1996; Howes & Ritchie, 2002



Temperament, Genetic Traits, Biological Factors



What Research Tells Us:

Aspects of Relationship with Caregiver that...

Promote Child's Potential:

Create Developmental Risk:

➤ Gentle, responsive nurturing

➤ Neglect of physical or emotional needs

➤ Clear, consistent expectations & supervision

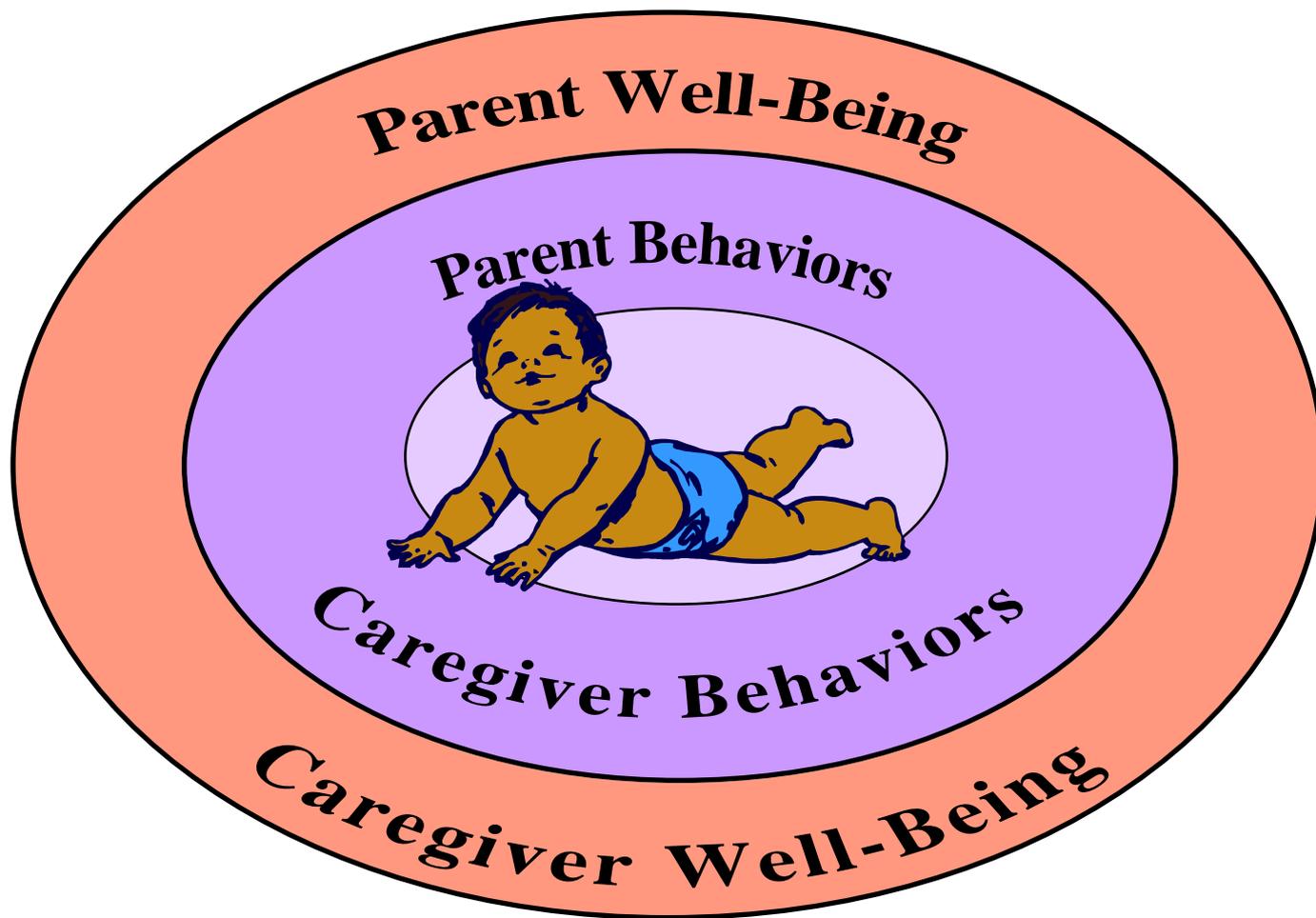
➤ Harsh or inconsistent punishment

➤ Positive & responsive verbal interaction

➤ Little expressive speech; excessive prohibitions

➤ Stable environment and caregiver

➤ Frequent changes in caregiver, routines



Parent Well-Being

Parent Behaviors



Caregiver Behaviors

Caregiver Well-Being

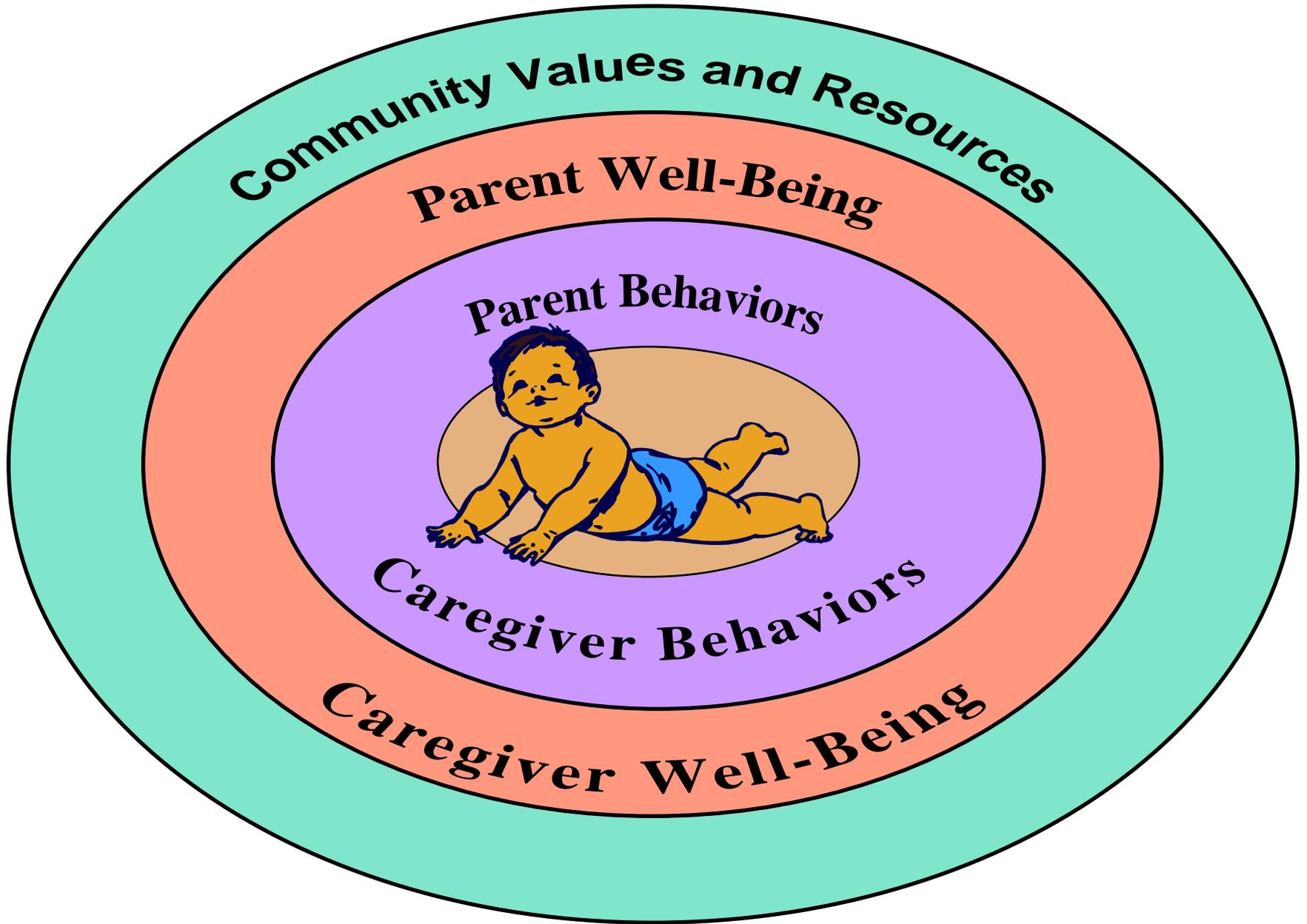
What Research Tells Us:

Aspects of Parent or Caregiver Well-being that...

Promote Good Interaction:

Contribute to Risk:

➤ Good mental health	➤ Depression; substance abuse; domestic violence
➤ Knowledge and education	➤ Less than high school education
➤ Social support	➤ Social isolation, poor relationship skills
➤ Time and energy	➤ Many children, closely spaced
➤ Adequate housing and material resources	➤ Inadequate space and play materials, excessive noise, aggressive environments



Implications for Public Policy

- Promote well-being and competence of parents, child care providers, and other frequent caregivers
- Target caregiver behaviors of warmth, sensitivity, and positive emotion
- Relationship change requires not just education, but active coaching and relationship support

Can Intervention Promote Supportive Early Relationships?

- YES – especially secondary prevention efforts (supporting and coaching high-risk dyads BEFORE problems occur)
- Since nurturing relationships create the foundation for lifelong health (mental and physical), intervention is VERY cost effective
- Recent body of research documents effective approaches

Evidence-Based Interventions

- Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP)
- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
- Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC)
- Circle of Security (COS)
- Nurse-Family Partnership (home visiting)
- Incredible Years (parent training group)

All of these approaches focus on positive parent-child interaction

Questions and Comments?

