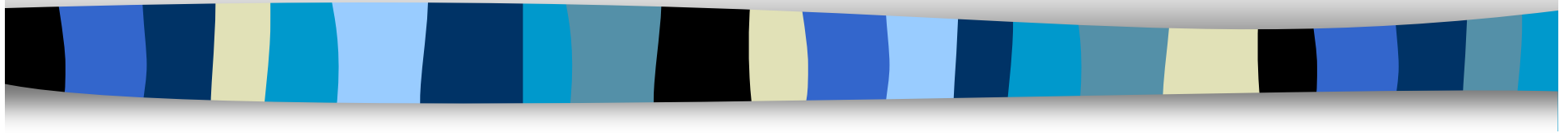


# Infant Massage and Occupational Therapy



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# Why it is our core business to support parents and babies!

- Occupational role of parenting
  - As occupational therapists we recognize the significance of occupational roles and want to support people to be able to perform their roles to the best of their ability
  - Parenting is a most significant occupational role



# Why it is our core business to support parents and babies!

- Growing evidence of the impact parent and child relationship on
  - learning
  - health
  - behaviourall of which occupational therapists are keen to facilitate best outcomes for children



# Why infant massage fits with OT practice

- Fits with Occupational Therapy philosophical beliefs
  - Enablement- empowerment focused
  - Client centred
  - Mastery orientated
  - Activity basedas infant massage is about supporting parents around an activity with their child



# Research demonstrates the power of touch

- Benefits of infant massage can be seen in
  - Stimulation of physiological systems
  - Relaxation and relief from physical pain such as colic
  - Benefits for parent and baby
  - Promoting good parent infant interaction: more information to follow!



# Attachment

- Attachment is how an infant expresses a need for safety and care ( to come to) and its need for exploration (to move away from).
- The quality of attachment is dependent upon the child's characteristics and the caregivers capacity to **accurately read the cues** of the infant and to have the state of mind that allows them to be emotionally available and **respond congruently and effectively** to the child's cues.
- Infant massage gives the opportunity to support the attachment process



# A difference that makes a difference!

30 years of research has shown that children that have strong relationships with parents:

- Enjoy more happiness with their parents
- Feel less anger at their parents
- Get along better with friends
- Have stronger friendships
- Are able to solve problems with friends
- Have better relationships with siblings
- Have higher self esteem
- Know that most problems will have an answer
- Trust that good things will come their way
- Trust the people they love
- Know how to be kind to those around them



# Experience of relationship effects child's behaviour

- Attachment experiences provide a road map for how to respond to stress and our need for comfort
- These memories are laid down neurologically and come back at times of vulnerability and are acted upon



# Relationships can positively influence children's experience

- Motivation: anticipated reward
- Engagement with the world
- Stimulation of neurons- increased growth
- Supports maturation of right prefrontal cortex that regulates affect



# Relationships can negatively influence children

- Arousal super-highway
- Dissociation super-highway



# Basis of strong relationships

When individuals get the message that:

“You are not alone”

“I'm here and you're worth it”

True for children from parents and for  
parents from therapists!



# Within our relationship with parents and children

Messages that are given to families

- You are not alone and you're worth our full attention
- We will work together to support your relationship with your child
- Everyone has struggles in relationship at some time
- Repair and rupture can lead to stronger relationships



# Approaches to strengthening relationships

During infant massage sessions it is about:

- Structuring experiences to promote relationship: ie parent -child activities rather than therapist-child activities
- Honoring parent's knowledge about their child
- Facilitating sharing of stories about their unique relationship
- Connecting parents to their child's and their own history of strengths, capacity and coping
- Supporting parents to read their babies cues



# Babies cues and communication

- Physiological cues eg color changes, tremors, startles
- Motor state eg tone, reflexes
- Behavioural state eg alertness
- Skin state eg response to stimulation

In particular you learn a lot by observing gaze, vocalizations, smiling, movements

Watching for the **dance** of parent and child-working in synchronicity



## As occupational therapists:

- Can we afford not to have this tool in our kit bag when working with parents and children?
  - Has particular application for unwell, premature infants, special needs infants
  - Can be beneficial across the age groups- not just for babies!



# Infant massage and IAIM

- Training is available from the International Association of Infant Massage Australia which enables you to be certified an instructor
- Qualified to teach infant massage to parents and caregivers
- Involves a four day training with a certified IAIM trainer and completion of practical teaching and successful completion of an open book exam



## For more information:

- Contact IAIM on 02 43 693 668
- Or go to web site: [www.iaim.com.au](http://www.iaim.com.au)