

# What is Mental Health Consultation?

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Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant

# Infant Mental Health?



“Lahwaah, buwha buwhaah, gullygah abawaa mey ayeeyaah. Is that normal?”

“There is no such being as an infant, only an infant/mother couple.”



D.W. Winnecott

# What is Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health?

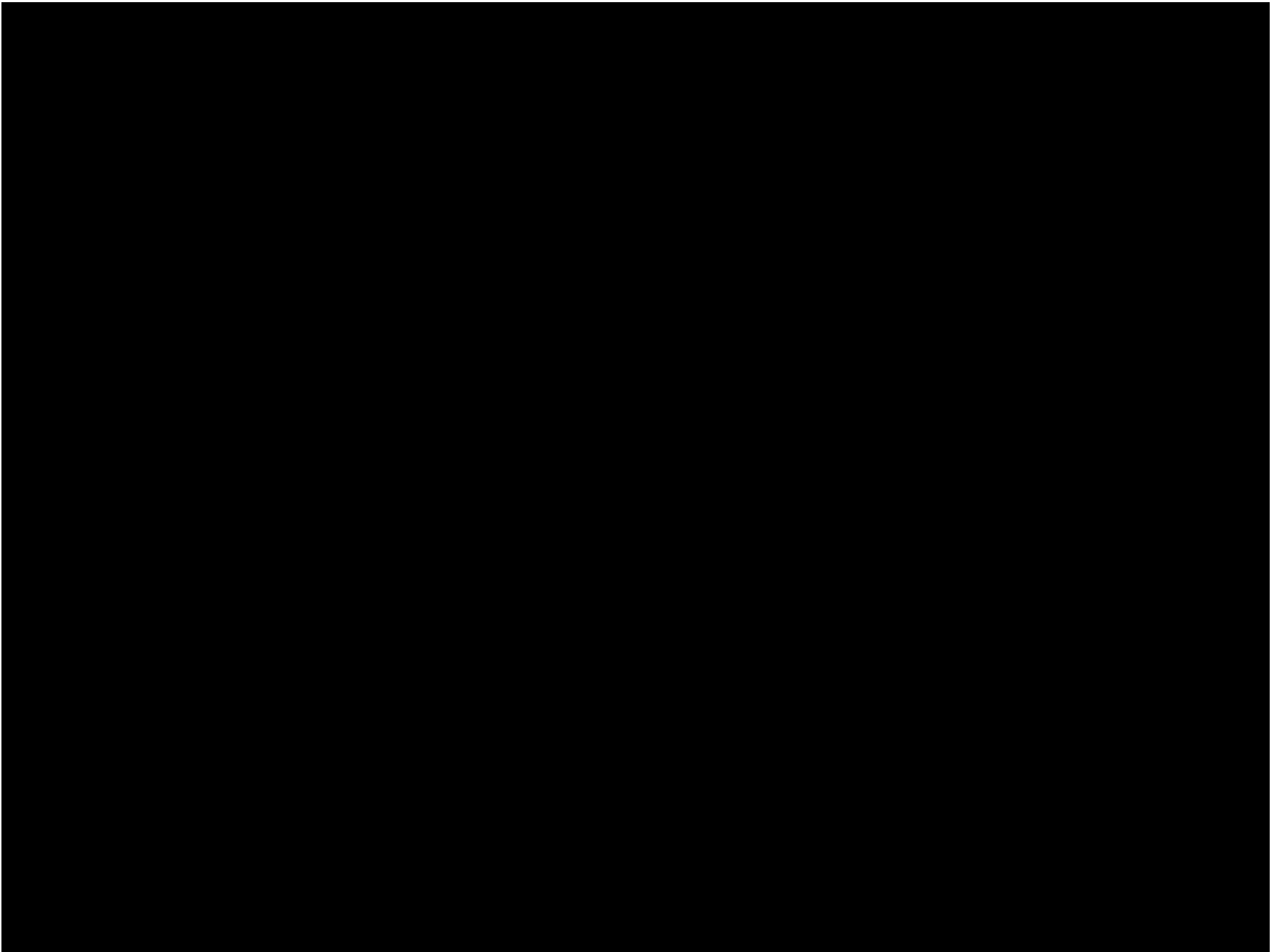
- *“The developing capacity of the child from birth to age five to form close and secure adult and peer relationships; experience, manage, and express a full range of emotions; and explore the environment and learn – all in the context of family, community, and culture.” (Zero to Three)*
- Strengths-based perspective: *health, not illness*

# Imagine an infant, Leonardo



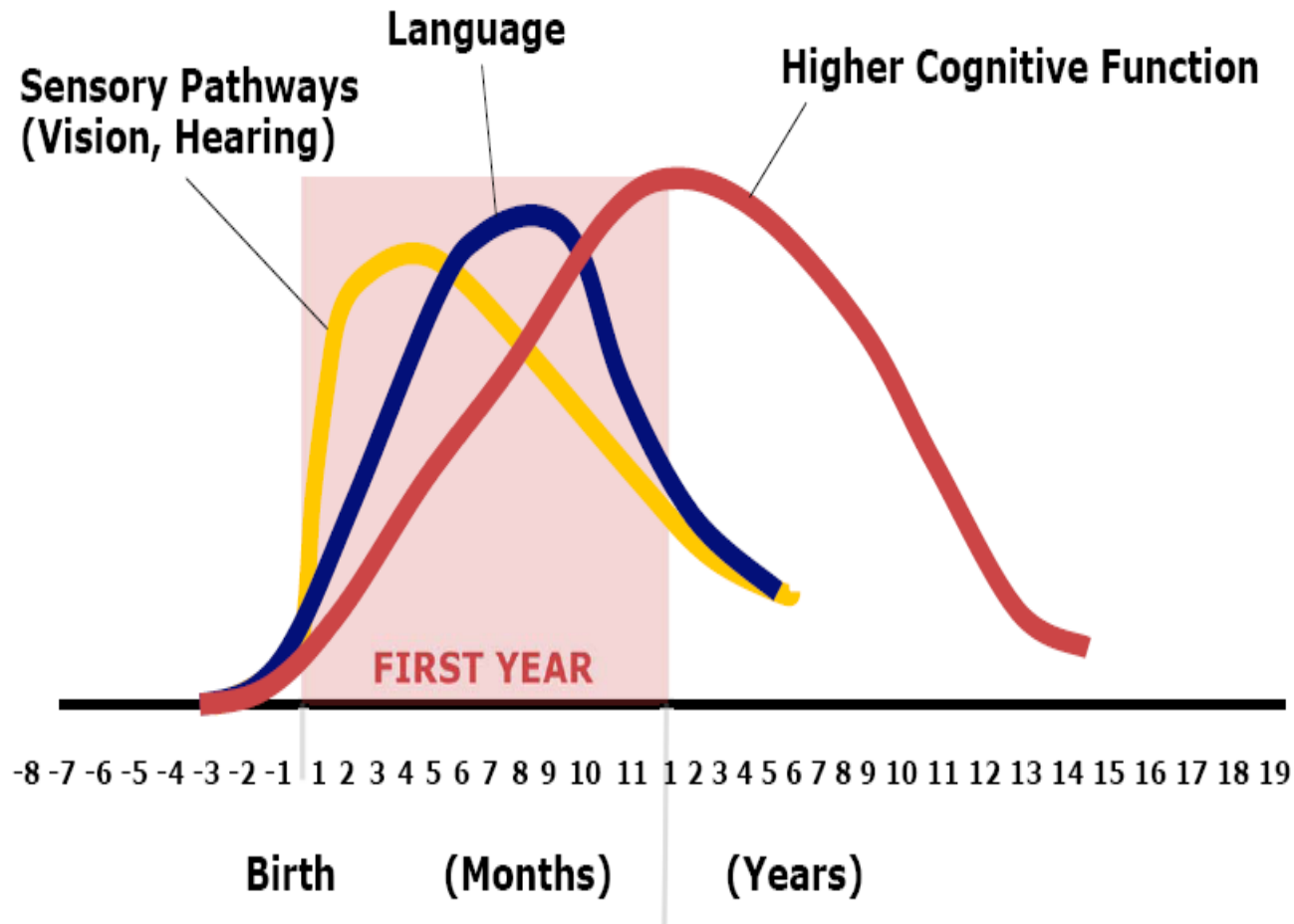
Imagine another scene...





# It's Neuroscience!

Synapse Formation is Most Rapid Early in Life





# Toxic Stress/Trauma/ACES

- Looks like Challenging Behaviors, Anger, Aggression, ADHD, etc.
- Changes Brain Structures and Pathways
- Children suffering from trauma *MAY* be less engaged and less ready to learn than their peers
- *MAY* diminish concentration, memory, and organizational and language abilities

# Resiliency or Protective Factors

## Core Protective Systems

Capabilities

Attachment  
&  
Belonging

Community  
Culture  
Spirituality

**“Nurturing the healthy development of these protective systems affords the most important preparation or ‘inoculation’ for overcoming potential threats and adversities in human development. Similarly, damage or destruction of these systems has dire consequences for the positive adaptive capacity of individuals.”**

*Ann Masten, 2009*

# Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

- Teachers with access are half as likely to report expelling
- Decreases in teacher-rated acting-out behavior problems
- May be related to lower staff turnover, improved teacher effectiveness, and higher program quality

# Mental Health Consultation

- About building the capacity of the caregivers in a child's life.
- Prevention and early intervention approach
- Promotes children's social emotional development, health, and well-being.

# Mental Health Consultation

- Currently available in Head Start, Early Head Start, Child Care, MCHIEV,
- Programs receiving Preschool Development Grant (PDG), Expansion programs, and Prevention Initiative (PI) funding may also access it using their professional development line item.

# What are the qualifications of an I/ECMHC?

- Master's + 5 years of experience
- Ability to maintain consultative stance
- Collaboration skills
- Cultural humility
- Commitment to ethical behavior and reflective practice

# What does an I/ECMHC do?

- Wonder with you
- Focus on strengths (teachers, environment, staff, child, family)
- Seek to understand
- Allow time and space for problem solving
- Provide professional development trainings
- Assist and empower in referral processes

What three ways could a  
I/ECMHC be of use to you?



# Thoughts or Questions?



**Thank You!**

**Cris Stanek, LCSW**

**Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant**

**Caregiver Connections**

**[www.CrisStanek.com](http://www.CrisStanek.com)**