

HIDDEN KEYS TO Student Engagement

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JACK HIROSE SEMINARS

*Developmental & Emotional Challenges
with Children & Adolescents*

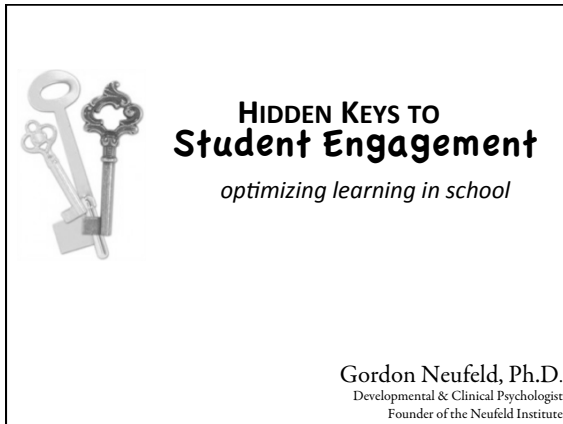
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Current educational practice assumes that any student could or should be engaged by ...

a) the experience of failure and futility
... so we try to teach lessons by arranging experience and by correcting them - pointing out the error of their ways including their mistakes, failures, and the futility of certain endeavours

b) the unfamiliar and unknown or by giving a choice
... so we inform them about new things, instruct them about a world they are not familiar with, and give choices in learning

c) information that conflicts with their current thoughts & feelings
... so we confront them with what they have not considered and with on-the-other-hand thoughts and feelings

Engage through failure and futility

- by setting the stage for experience to do the teaching -

- using trial & error as the primary instrument of learning (estimated to be about 80% of all school learning)
- providing opportunities to get things wrong so feedback or correction can be provided
- setting the stage for making mistakes or experiencing failure and letting that inform the child
- pointing out what doesn't work, can't work, shouldn't work
- setting limits and restrictions and then imposing consequences on infractions to teach a lesson

The PROBLEM is that it only works for those who can feel futility (and so become ADAPTIVE) while making matters worse for all the others

Engage through interests and agency

- draw out what exists within the child and add to that -

- make room for initiative, creativity and originality
- place in charge of their learning whenever possible
- provide options and solicit intentions to get them in the driver's seat
- discover their aspirations and make teaching facilitative
- give interests the lead when providing information
- generate questions before providing the answers
- provide opportunities for experimentation and exploration
- do not preempt emergent energy with praise, rewards & incentives

The PROBLEM is that it only works for those who are EMERGING as viable separate beings while making matters worse for all the others

Engage through dissonance & inner conflict

Set the stage so that resolution cannot be reached without considering 'on-the-other-hand' and taking a 'this-and' approach.

- presenting different points of view
- confronting with the element(s) not considered
- cooperative learning
- using argument, debate and the dialectic
- forming thesis and antithesis
- revealing the subjective nature of 'truth'
- defining and differentiating various perspectives & reference points


The PROBLEM is that it only works for those who can feel conflicted and so develop INTEGRATIVE functioning, while making matters worse for the rest

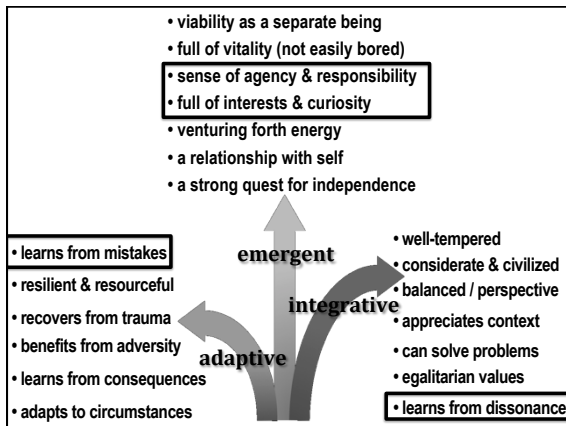
In reality, these engagements are far from universal. Certain capacities need to be brought to school in order for the student to be engaged by ...

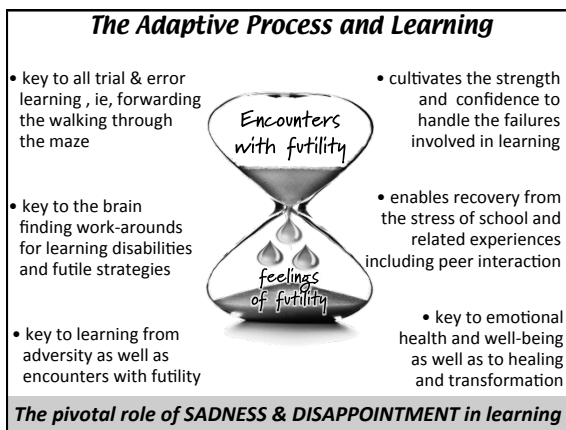
... new information and choices regarding their learning → **curiosity and sense of agency**

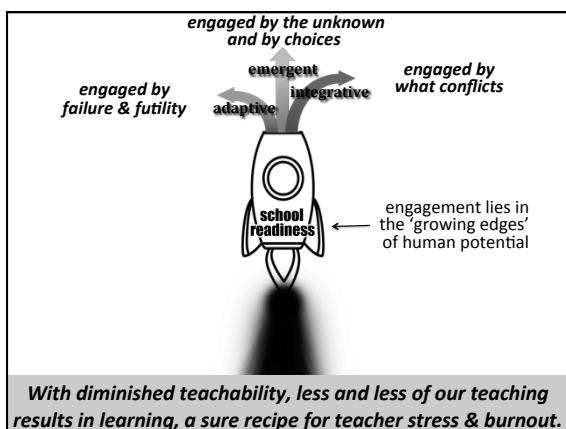
... experiencing failure and futility → **ability to learn from mistakes and failure**

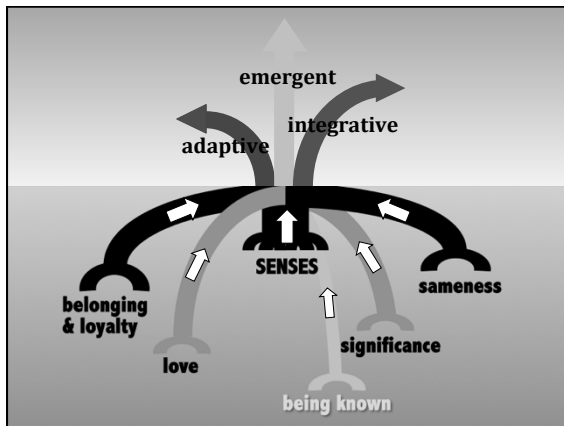
... information that conflicts with their thoughts, feelings & viewpoints → **ability to process dissonance and feel conflicted**





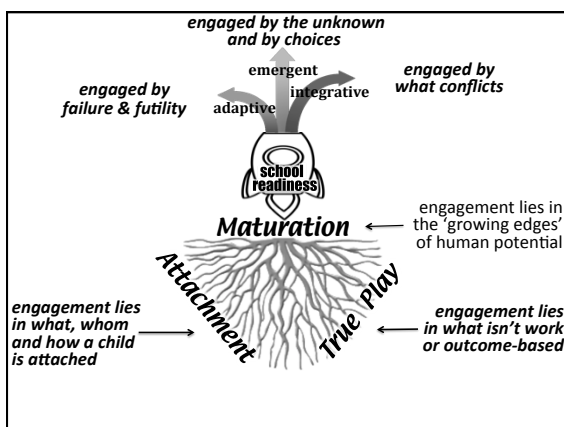


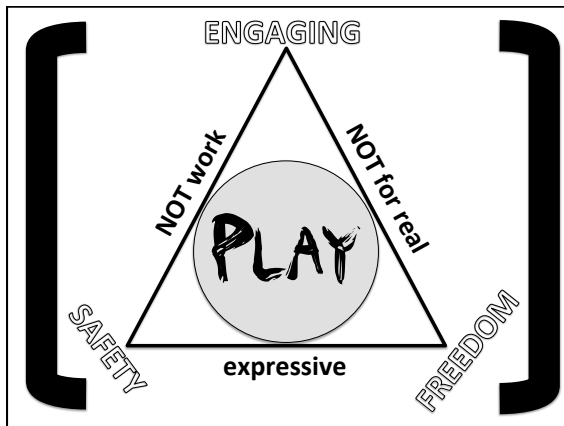


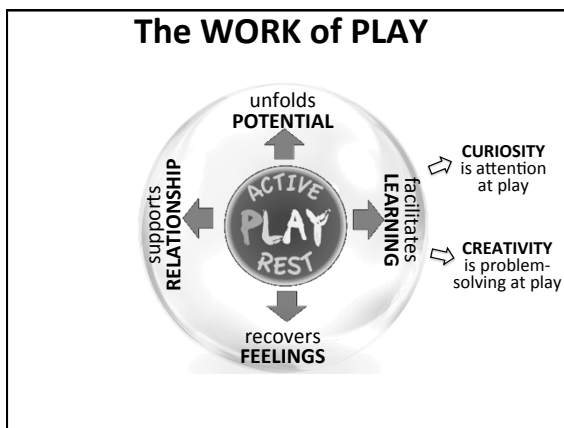


about ATTACHMENT

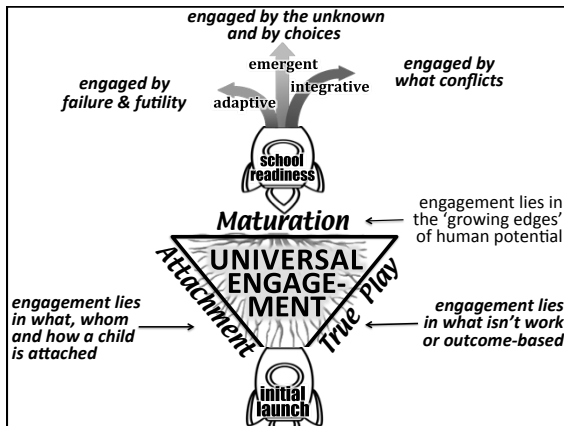
- attachment is about the drive towards **TOGETHERNESS** in all its various forms
- attachment is powerful, primal, primordial and **PREEMINENT** – with priority over the PLAY and ACHIEVEMENT drives
- its **primary** purpose is to move us to take **CARE OF** each other – *attachment replaces survival in mammals*
- its **optimal** purpose is to nurture the spontaneous realization of inherent **POTENTIAL**
- attachment is the **CONTEXT** in which all mammals (including humans) are meant to be raised (including parented & taught)
- the primary purpose of **LEARNING** is to support attachment
- facing separation is our greatest threat, the essence of **STRESS** and emotionally evocative
- the **PRIMAL EMOTIONS** (alarm, frustration, separation-triggered pursuit) serve attachment as automatic wired-in attempts to reduce the separation faced

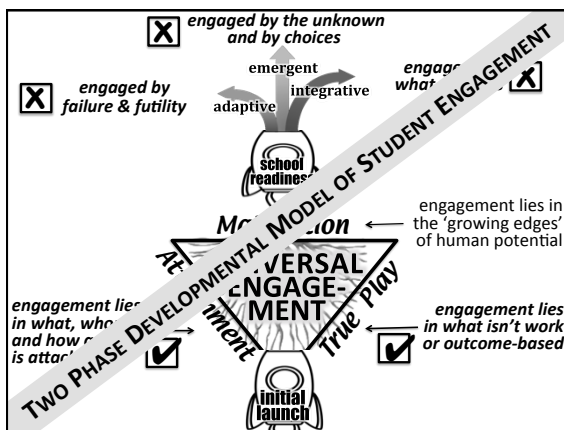


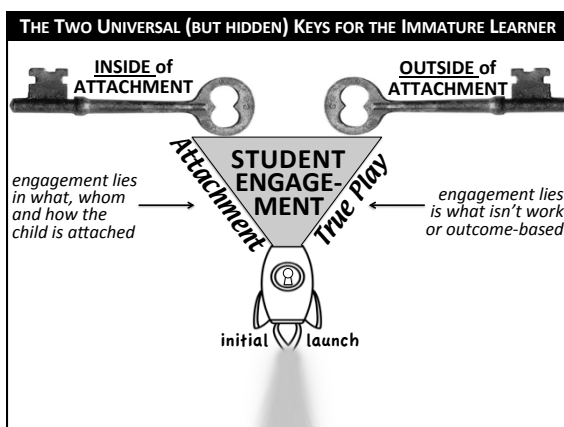


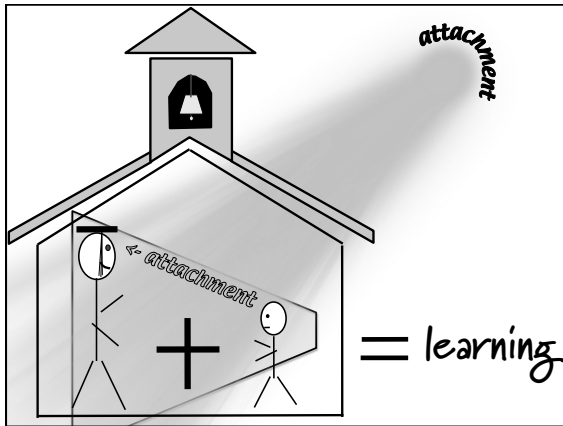


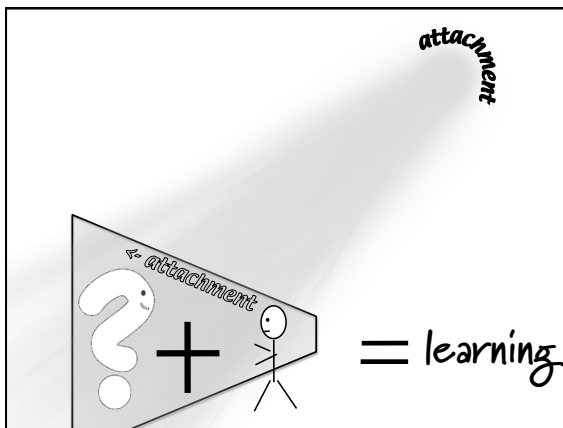
- Role of PLAY in learning and development**
- play is a state of **ACTIVATED REST** where the achievement and attachment drives, including related instincts and emotions, can still be active but disengaged from their actual work
 - play is the **GREENHOUSE** for all tender new growth, the portal into possibility and potential, Plato's '*leap ahead into frames unknown*'
 - the more complex the creature, the more play is required to **develop & optimize** all the systems & processes, including emotion & learning
 - play also **optimizes performance** as long as outcome is not the focus
 - **BRAINS** are constructed in the rest or play mode – only play can build the brains that are required to truly benefit from a formal education
 - play is **NATURE'S 'school'** as well as the natural *educational system* employed by traditional cultures including indigenous cultures





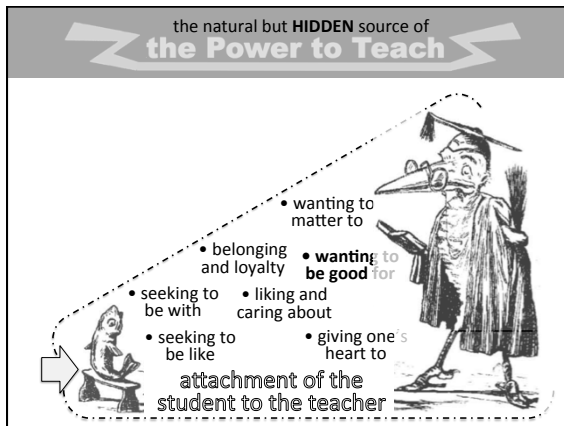


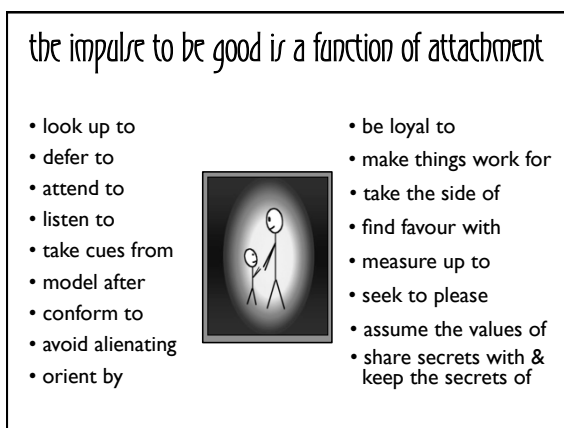


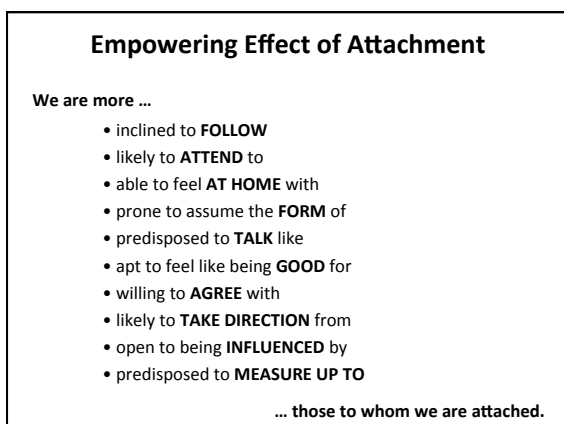


The Relational CONTEXT for Learning

- **optimizes** learning by harnessing the **power** of attachment and tapping into the ultimate priorities of the brain
- most learning is **automatic** and **spontaneous**, not formal or planned
 - **harnesses** attention, memory and motivation
- creates the **models** to emulate
- is a 'bottom-up' arrangement - students designate their true 'teachers', for better or for worse
- if the attachment of a student is person-based versus role-based, learning is also **specific** to the person and therefore not transferable

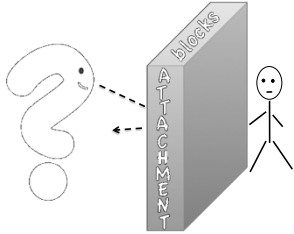






The Relational IMPEDIMENTS to Learning

- in addition to the lack of attachment power when students are not attached to their teachers, a student's attachment instincts can also work to actively prevent learning from the teacher



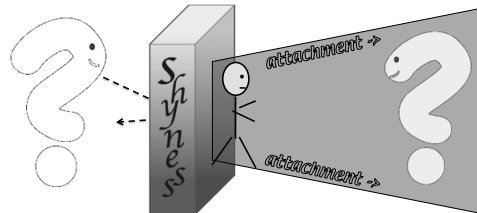
- SHYNESS
- COUNTERWILL
- ALPHA INSTINCTS

If attachment is not working FOR the teacher, it will most likely be working AGAINST the teacher.

The Relational IMPEDIMENTS to Learning

reserved for one's people (ie, those attached to)

- is meant to keep our children close to us as well as to protect against outside influence



- shyness can 'dumb down' a student considerably, interfering with both the receiving and retrieving of information

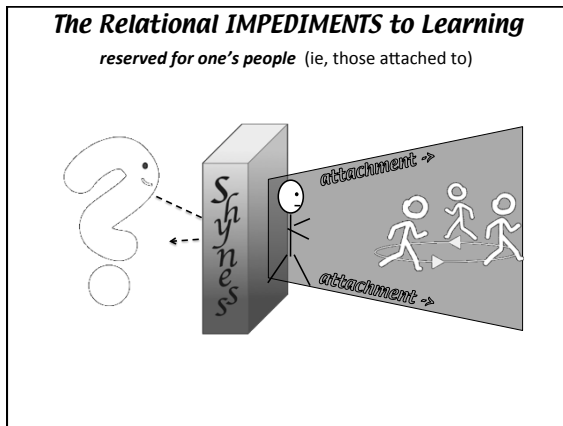
- the greater the incompatibility of attachments, the more likely that shyness will interfere with learning and performance

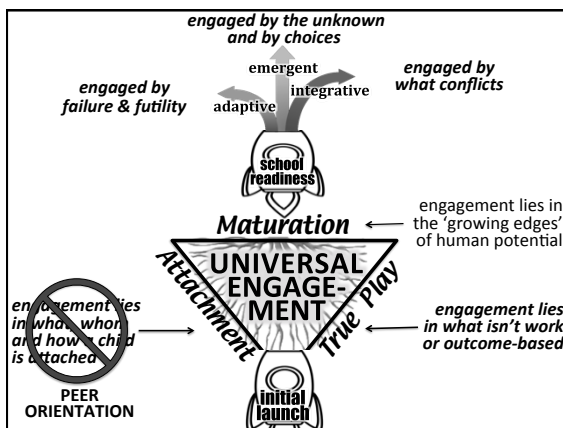
SHYNESS as a defensive attachment instinct

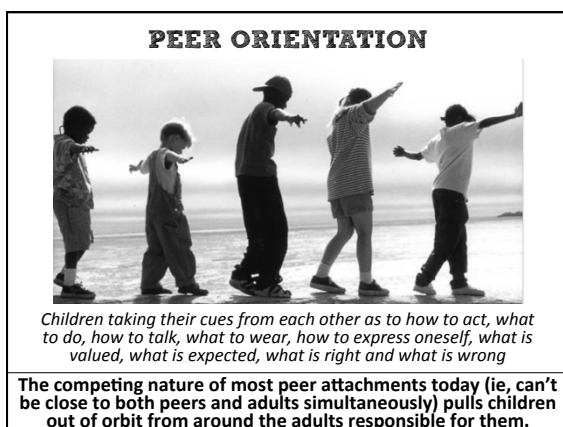
- no matter how shy a child may be to the outside world, they are not shy **INSIDE** their attachments
- has a significant **GENETIC** component as well as shaped by culture and child-rearing factors
- becomes more **PRONOUNCED** & potentially incapacitating as the child's village becomes smaller, attachments become more exclusive, and society increasingly relies upon 'outsiders' to help raise children
- in children, is typically **MISINTERPRETED** as social deficits, social anxiety, rudeness or insolence, introversion, antisocial nature, selective mutism, parent alienation syndrome and reactive attachment disorder
- creates huge **CHALLENGES** for role-based teaching, child-care, step-parenting, foster parenting, and adoptive parenting

to be **SHY**
is to be **RESERVED**
for one's people

- what is typically **RESERVED** are certain forms of connectivity like eye-contact, talking, touch, receiving comfort, and even smiles
- the instinct is **ELEVATED** when dependency needs are high as in the young & immature









THE PROBLEMS WITH PEER ORIENTATION

- does **NOT** serve survival as children were not meant to take care of each other
- **destroys** the natural **context** for raising & educating children
- robs adults of the **power** they need to parent, teach and treat
- the more peers matter, the more separation to be faced, resulting in escalating **wounding** and **distress**
- robs children of the shielding and protection they need to live in an wounding world
- breeds **ALPHA** children, with all the problems that ensue
- fuels an obsession with digital devices and **social media**, which further compete with family & education
- can result in chaotic polarization & **tribalization** which in turn can create a 'lord of the flies' scenario



Teachers go to school to teach ...

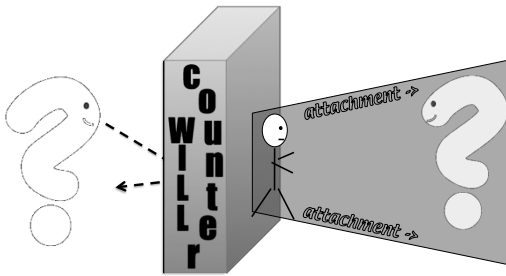


... but students go to school to be with their friends.

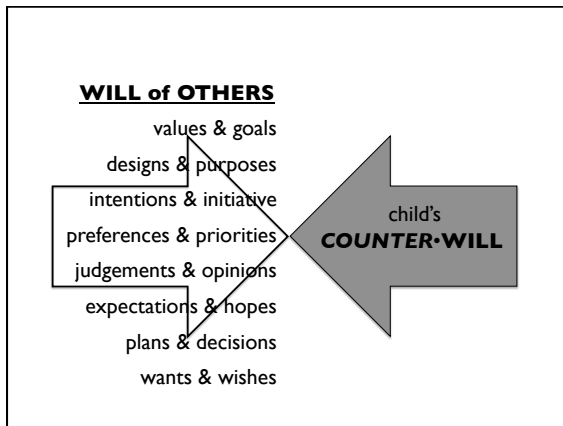
When the primary agendas of teachers and students are in conflict, stress results.

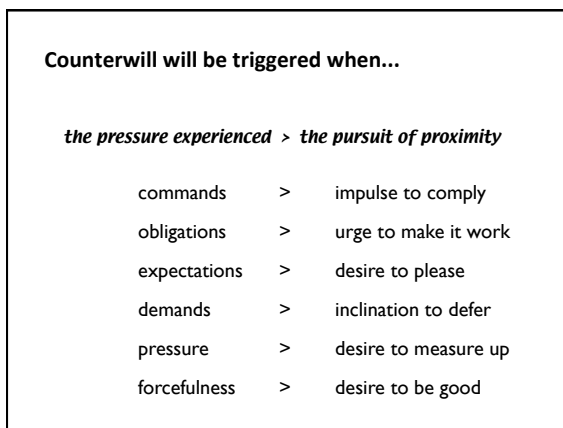
The Relational Impediments to Learning

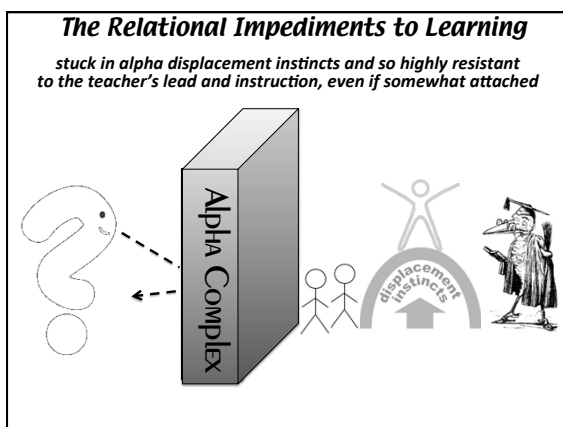
- an automatic and instinctive resistance to influence and felt coercion when attachment instincts are not engaged -

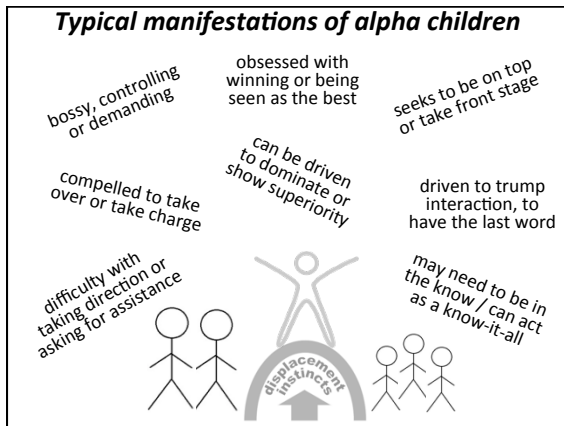


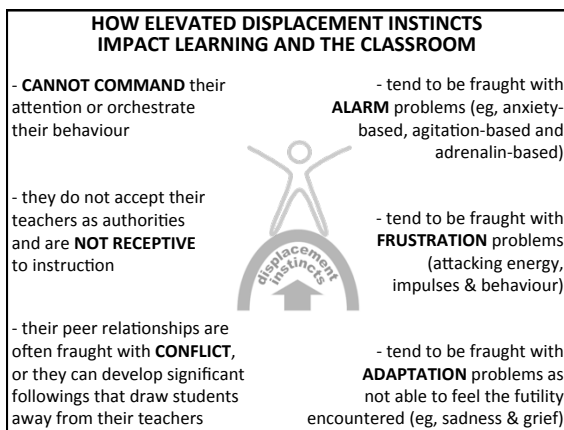
Counterwill is meant to protect children from being influenced, taught, or managed when outside a context of engaged attachment.

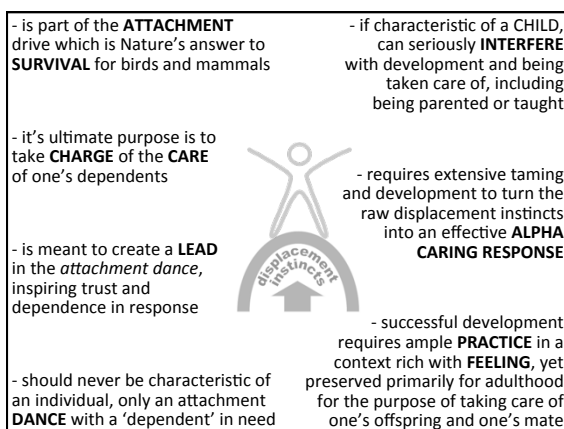













DEVELOPING THE CARING ALPHA RESPONSE


"neurons that FIRE together WIRE together"



CARING ALPHA

True play is the perfect medium for knitting together the displacement instincts with feelings of caring and responsibility (ie, where alpha instincts seek safe expression, high engagement ensures caring, and the sense of agency ensures ample feelings of responsibility)

DIVERSE MANIFESTATIONS of UNTAMED ALPHA



unrelenting drive to dominate & displace
narcissism
chronic resistance or oppositionality
drive for superiority and supremacy
obsessed with winning, placing, status, coming out on top

moved to exploit the vulnerable & needy (the bully response)
driven to be the centre of attention
competing with spouse or children for care
unable to depend, submit or take direction
authoritarianism, racism, imperialism, and colonialism
fuels the impulse to 'lord it over'

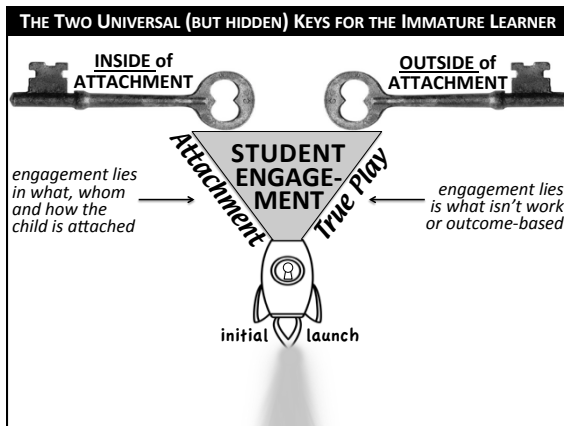
the making of the bully response

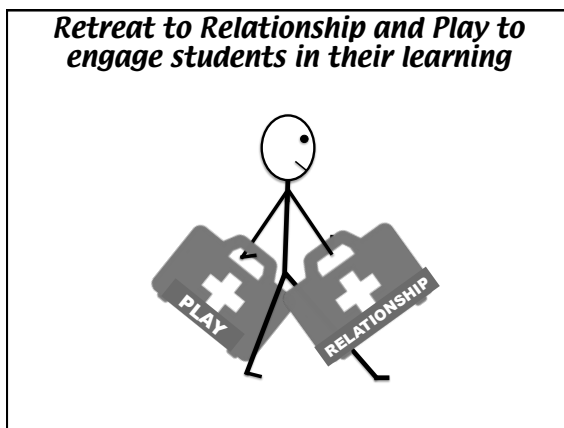
highly moved to displace + **Lacking feelings of caring & responsibility** = **the BULLY response**

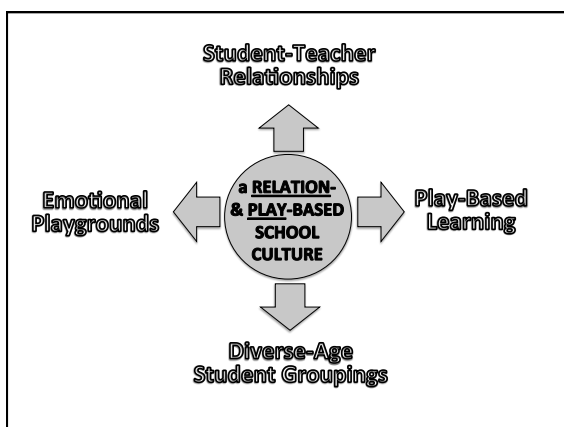
to perceived needs, weakness, threat or vulnerability

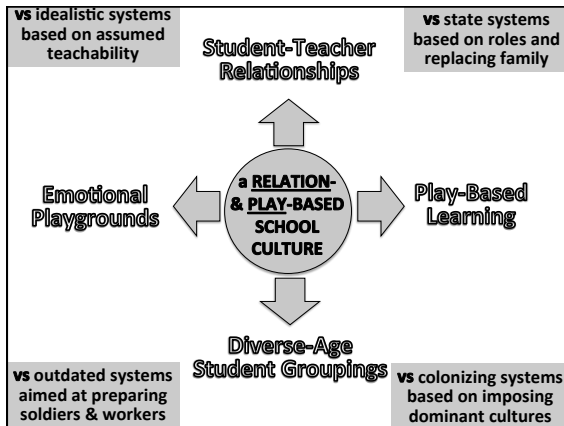
- to assert dominance by exploiting vulnerability -

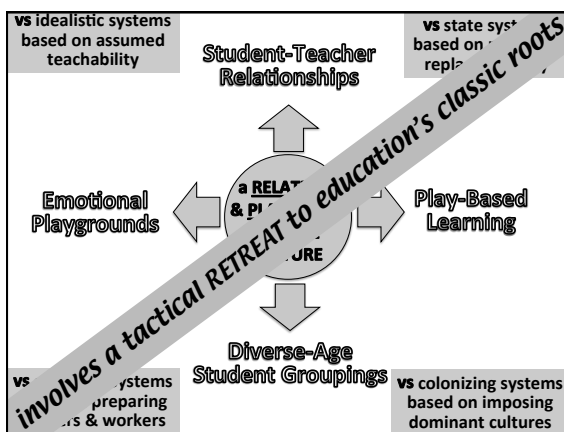
NEUFELD'S ALPHA-AWRY TWO-FACTOR MODEL OF BULLYING

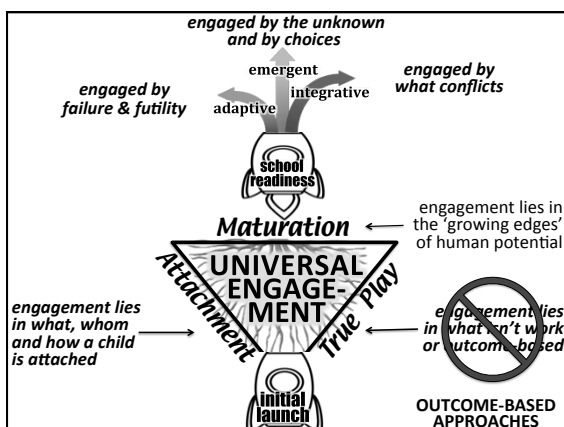












The WISDOM of PLAY

*The wisdom of play
is that its purpose is **HIDDEN**.*

*PLAY is always **INDIRECT** as
'direct' rarely works with children.*

*PLAY also **HIDES** the agendas of adults
as well as the potential purpose and outcomes
of learning activities, turning the work of
development and learning into
playful engaging activity.*

Engage students in, and through, PLAY

- A) to optimize attention, learning and performance
- B) to resolve the three primary relational impediments to learning: shyness, counterwill and alpha
- C) to keep frustration from disrupting the classroom, wounding others, and getting students into trouble
- D) to foster emotional health and well-being
- E) to prime student-teacher attachments

Engage in learning through PLAY

PLATO – “Do not keep children to their studies by compulsion but by play”

- inject a dose of play or playfulness into activities that feel coercive, trigger alarm, are experienced as pressure, or are too much like work
- create playful activities (eg, games, rituals, routines) to open up the student to new information & to practice the skills involved in learning
- use a playful gesture or voice (eg, singing, silly voice) to camouflage coercion when orchestrating behaviour or when student is 'out of line'
- remember that when attention becomes playful, attention problems resolve and learning just happens (curiosity = attention at play)
- preserve a learning environment by giving primal emotions & instincts plenty of room to play (ie, generous access to emotional playgrounds)

When primal emotions and instincts can express themselves through play, trouble is averted, relationships are preserved, development is fostered, and well-being is realized (eg, frustration, alarm, pursuit, sadness, caring, alpha, counterwill, detachment)

Reverse ATTENTION problems by engaging in PLAY

- in play, attention is automatically captured, thus compensating for a lack of engaged attachment or a peer orientation problem
- **CURIOSITY** is '**attention at play**', so one can harness play to forward interest in the unknown as well as the exploration of new learning territory in students who normally lack curiosity in real life
- in play, the deficits of attention caused by shyness, counterwill and alpha instincts are temporarily reversed
- in play, the deficits of immaturity - can't attend to what conflicts and lacking a 'back of the mind' - will first resolve if developmentally ready
- in play, the adverse effects of alarm (can't concentrate) and its defenses (can't attend to what alarms) are greatly mitigated

In play, most attention deficits can be temporarily reversed and the effects of neurologically rooted problems lessened

Reverse ALARM problems by engaging in PLAY

Alarm is NOT at work in the play mode, thus temporarily suspending its crippling effects on learning, memory & performance

- in play, the adverse effects of **ALARM** (eg, can't think straight, can't concentrate, can't focus, can't remember) are greatly reduced
- in play, the attention deficits that result from being **DEFENDED AGAINST ALARM** (eg, cannot attend to what alarms, can't remember what alarms, becoming agitated and restless in the face of alarm that is not felt) are temporarily reversed
- in play, **TEST ANXIETY** can be greatly reduced, enabling educators an alternative way to assess the learning that has occurred
- in play, **PERFORMANCE ANXIETY** is significantly reduced, thus providing a way of getting the best out of students when it matters

Temporarily suspend SHYNESS through PLAY

SHYNESS is suspended in the play mode as the attachment drive is temporarily put into 'neutral'

- use playful interaction to reverse the instinctive resistance to attending to and interacting with, those not attached to
- harness the power of play to engage in learning activities when the child is outside their own village of attachment
- reverse the effects of shyness on intelligence and performance when in the presence or company of those they are not attached
- use the protective bubble of play to shield against the crippling feelings of being exposed when the object of others' attention
- resolve selective mutism by engaging in play, especially where not able to cultivate a working attachment with the student

<i>Circumvent COUNTERWILL by engaging in PLAY</i>
<i>The WILL (ie, sense of agency) is automatically preserved in play, thus preventing or instantly reversing the experience of coercion or pressure</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inject a dose of play or playfulness into activities that feel coercive, are experienced as pressure, or feel too much like work • create playful activities (eg, games, rituals, routines) to circumvent the usual resistance to practicing the skills involved in learning • use a playful gesture or voice (eg, singing, silly voice) to camouflage coercion when orchestrating behaviour or when student is 'out of line' • harness the power of play especially for children who are not sufficiently motivated by attachment for rewards to work, or where rewards backfire because the will of the adult is revealed when attachment is not engaged
PLATO – “Do not keep children to their studies by compulsion but by play”

<i>Draw ALPHA INSTINCTS into PLAY</i>
<i>... to remove from real life (including the crippling effects) as well as to give development a chance at civilizing this instinct</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use controlled games of competition and conquest to safely vent the quest for dominance and supremacy • use stories, imagination, drama, role play and theatre to invent or identify with alpha characters who always come out on top • provide playful activities where there is plenty of opportunity for leading, directing, or orchestrating • use occasional playful games and activities where students get to displace the adults in charge – eg, being the boss, having the last word, giving the orders, making the demands, making up the rules • encourage or support alpha caring play, where alpha instincts can hopefully awaken the impulse to care • provide ample access to emotional playgrounds where the feelings of caring and responsibility are more likely to be accessed

<i>Draw FRUSTRATION into PLAY in order to ...</i>
... foster constructive outlets to frustration
... take the impulses to attack or destroy out of real life (including the classroom and social interaction)
... help keep other students from being attacked or wounded, physically, emotionally or psychologically
... help keep frustrated students from getting into trouble
... reduce disruptions and thus preserve a learning environment in the classroom
... reduce frustration-rooted suicidal impulses and ideation
<i>PLAY should always be the intervention of choice with students whose frustration erupts in attack, as conventional discipline aggravates frustration and thus the resulting behaviour</i>

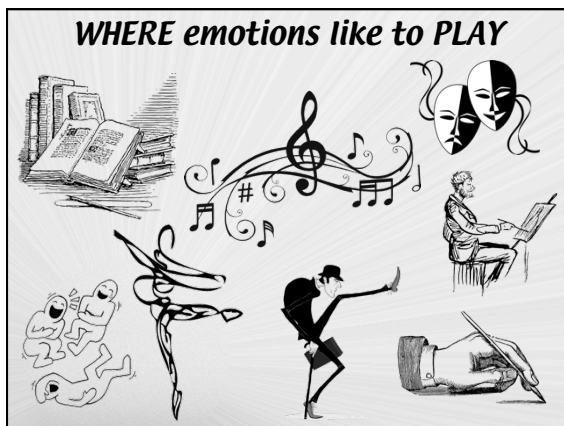
Draw FRUSTRATION into PLAY

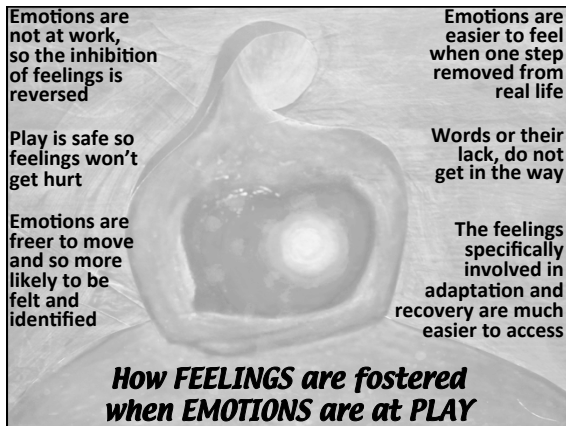
<p><i>playful construction</i></p> <p>provide a safe place to effect change & make things work where it doesn't count for real</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • constructing and crafts • organizing and orchestrating • making things work • designing perfection 	<p><i>playful destruction</i></p> <p>provide a safe place to relieve oneself of impulses to attack or destroy where it doesn't count for real</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • destroying and demolishing • hitting and throwing • kicking and screaming • war games, attacking games
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Engage in emotional playgrounds in order to foster emotional health and well-being

FEELINGS are key to emotional health and emotional PLAY is instrumental to feeling

Provide ample access to emotional playgrounds where the activity is truly playful vs outcome-based & does not count for real



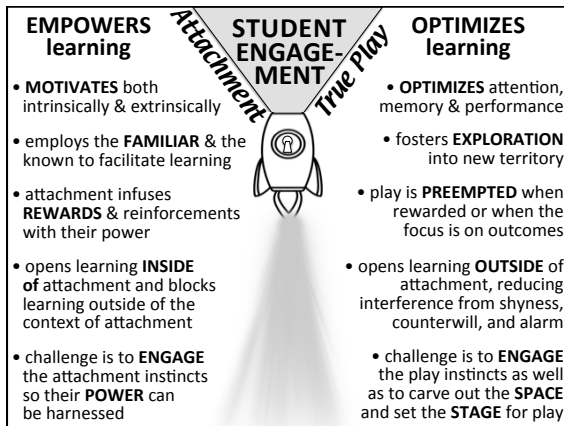


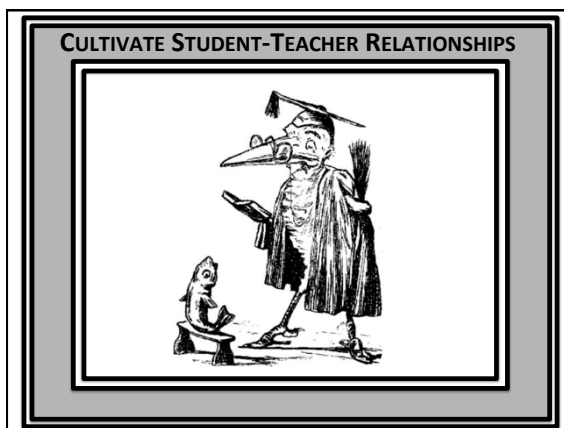
PLAY has always been hidden but now is also endangered

- was ironically **DEFINED** in science as *activity without a purpose*
- because play is NOT outcome based, it is wrongly assumed to have no outcomes and therefore a basic **WASTE OF TIME** (frivolous and nonproductive) and thus to be relegated to one's spare time
- play is typically associated with **CHILDREN** as well as with toys, games and physical playgrounds, instead of thinking of play as one of the three **primary drives** in human motivation, and thinking of playgrounds as a place where our instincts and emotions can safely come out to play, across the lifespan
- play is **WRONGLY ASSUMED** to be what children do at recess or after school **OR** as only taking place when something is actually called 'play' **OR** as actually occurring when something is labelled as 'play'
- the **WORK MOTIF** of adult society is constantly being imposed upon children, assuming this is the way to make adults of them

PLAY has always been hidden but now is also endangered

- the construct of play does not actually exist in **LEARNING THEORY** (today's prevailing paradigm in education) as behaviour is assumed to be a function of its outcome
- play's lack is not recognized by the **MEDICAL** disorder approach as the common denominator (and etiological factor) in diagnosed disorders **OR** as the universal indicator of emotional health and well-being **OR** as the most likely active ingredient of recovery and healing (and therapy)
- the engagement 'hole' that has naturally triggered play – **BOREDOM** – is now being filled instead with endless stimulation, entertainment, and false outcome-based play (including sports and videogames)
- today's pressure on outcomes has ironically led to the **REMOVAL** of the space for play as well as emotional playgrounds from our schools
- the concern of parents for their children to get ahead has ironically led to play being **SQUEEZED OUT** by outcome-based activities
- the space for play has lost the protection of traditional **CULTURE**





Engage in learning through ATTACHMENT

- take stock of a child's attachments (ie, what a child cares about) to utilize as vehicles of learning when needed
- utilize existing attachments to caring adults (eg, teachers, staff, family, extended family) to create contexts for learning
- matchmake to older mentor-type students to activate and empower contexts for learning
- create structures, rituals and routines that children can attach to and orient by, which in turn will facilitate the learning
- provide some 'grounding connection' (eg, in sight, in sound, in contact) while engaging the child in learning in order to put to rest interference from alarm and agitation

First and foremost, cultivate STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS by employing the three primordial instruments of attachment to create a context of connection and harness the power of attachment for learning (collecting, bridging, matchmaking)

Cultivate a Culture of Connection

- collect the **EYES**, some nods and some smiles
- if the eyes cannot or should not be collected, collect the **EARS** instead
- use **PLAY** as a primer for attachment as well as to circumvent shyness

the basic RITUALS of attachment

- COLLECT -
to engage attachment

- BRIDGE -
anything that could divide

- MATCHMAKE -
to embed in cascading care



Cultivate a Culture of Connection

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- use **PLAY** as a primer for attachment as well as to circumvent shyness

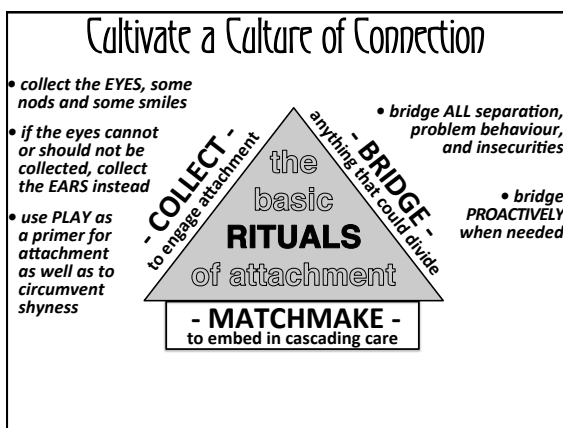
the basic RITUALS of attachment

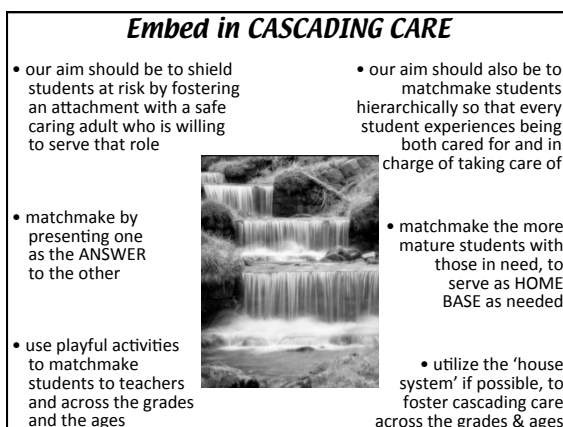
- COLLECT -
to engage attachment

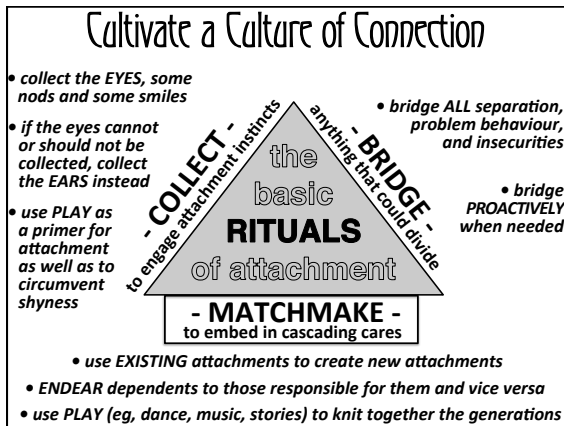
- BRIDGE -
anything that could divide

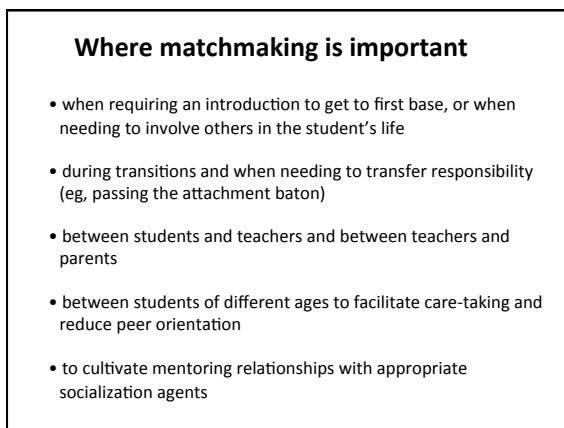
- MATCHMAKE -
to embed in cascading care

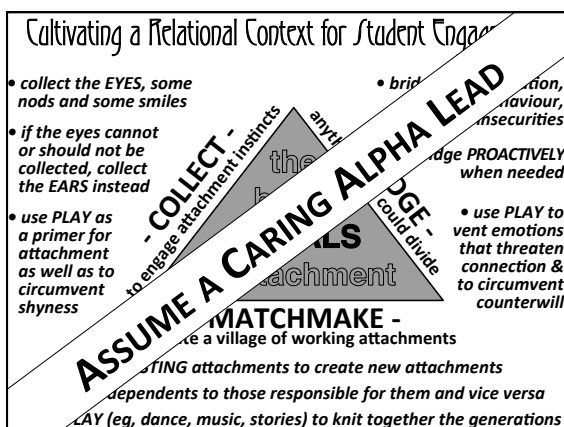






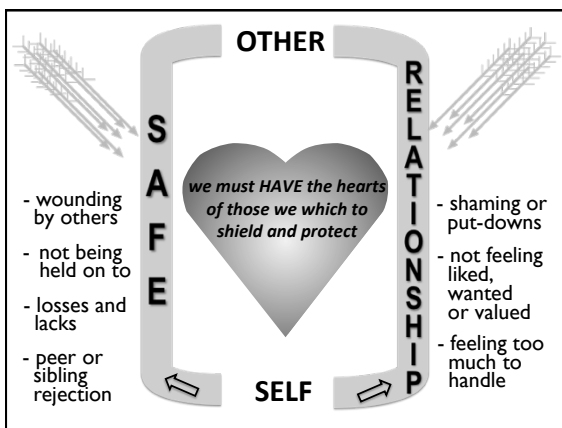






Assume a caring alpha lead in order to ...

1. **INSPIRE** the **DEPENDENCE** necessary in order to fulfill one's responsibilities and to foster healthy development
2. Render students **RECEPTIVE** to your instruction and **MOTIVATED** to be good for you, thus **OPTIMIZING** their learning as well as their behaviour
3. Possess the **POWER to SCRIPT** the behaviour of the immature
4. Serve as the **ATTACHMENT IN COMMON** in one's class in order to keep children from revolving around each other and mattering too much to each other
5. Bring the followers of charismatic **ALPHA STUDENTS** under your control and influence
6. Function as a **SHIELDING** attachment as needed (for wounding that may come from others including peers, siblings, parents or other adults)



Mastering the Lead in the dance of attachment

- assume the posture and demeanor of the **ALPHA** in charge, concealing one's own needs and insecurities
- perceive the student(s) as being **IN NEED** of you, as an **ANSWER** to their attachment needs
- **INVITE** dependence and make it **SAFE** to depend
- convey **CARING** and find a way to get the message across that you will take care of them
- be **GENEROUS** - providing more than is pursued
- seize the lead by **ANTIICIPATING** 'demands' and getting there first
- **READ** the needs & take the lead (don't ask too many questions)
- **WIN** the alpha battles you can, but avoid the rest
- invite the **INEVITABLE** to preserve one's alpha and convey that the relationship can take the weight
- **ARRANGE** scenarios where there is no choice but to depend upon you



Assume the role of being their ANSWER

- a **COMPASS POINT** to orient by (regarding what's happening but especially regarding their strengths, uniqueness & contributions)
- a **HOME BASE, GUIDE** or **COMFORTER** if needed
- for **NURTURANCE** – offering a **‘TOUCH OF PROXIMITY’** to hold on to
 - a sign of belonging, or something special that belongs to us
 - a likeness or similarity, something held in common
 - a touch of loyalty – that we will come to their side and alongside
 - a sign of significance, something beyond the role expectations
 - a touch of warmth or delight, something that suggests liking
 - a sign that we truly get them or understand them
 - some sign of being welcomed and invited into our presence

Retreat to Relationship and Play to assist increasingly distressed students and teachers

