



2-5 september 2025 ISCTE CAMPUS, Lisbon, Portugal

Advancing comprehensive early childhood intervention

What parents, professionals, science, and national systems can tell us.



Recognize what you bring to the interaction **Integrating Family-Centered Helpgiving Practices** **with the Touchpoints Model** **to Build Comprehensive Training Pathways**

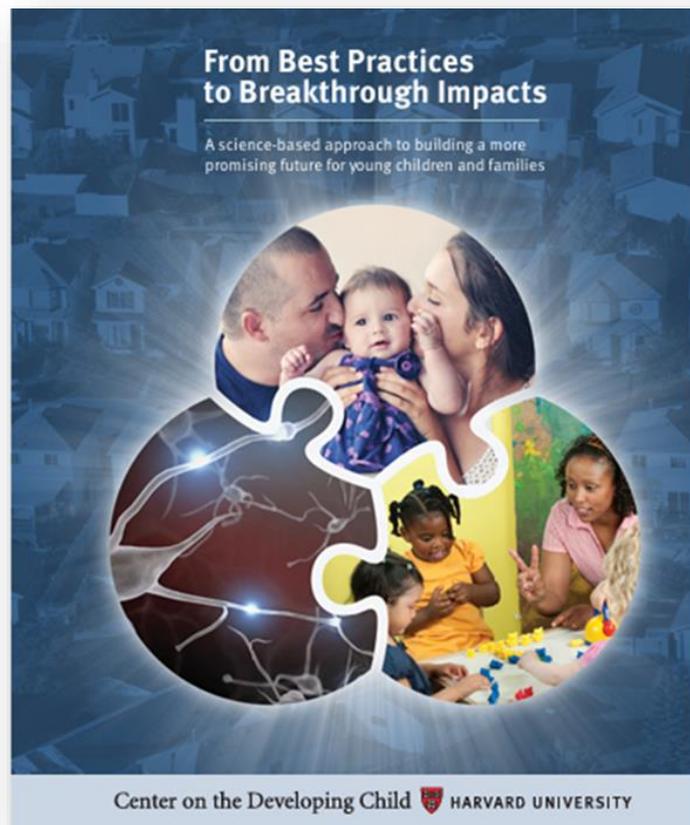
Ana Teresa Brito, EDUNOVA.ISPA, Ispa-Instituto Universitário

Fundação Brazelton Gomes-Pedro para as Ciências do Bebê e da Família





Silver and gold



From Best Practices to Breakthrough Impacts

A science-based approach to building a more promising future for young children and families

Decades of behavioral and social sciences and recent discoveries in neuroscience, molecular biology, and epigenetics combine to help explain how healthy development happens, what can send it off track, and what we can do to restore it:

Relationships with caring, responsive adults and early positive experiences build strong brain architecture for children.

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2016). *From Best Practices to Breakthrough Impacts: A Science-Based Approach to Building a More Promising Future for Young Children and Families*. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.

“The role of caregivers and providers is critical in fostering good mental health, so we must support the needs of the adults who care for children, through both individual and systems level approaches.”

Dr. Lindsey Burghardt

Chief Science Officer, Center on the Developing Child

January, 2025

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/articles/early-childhood-mental-health/>



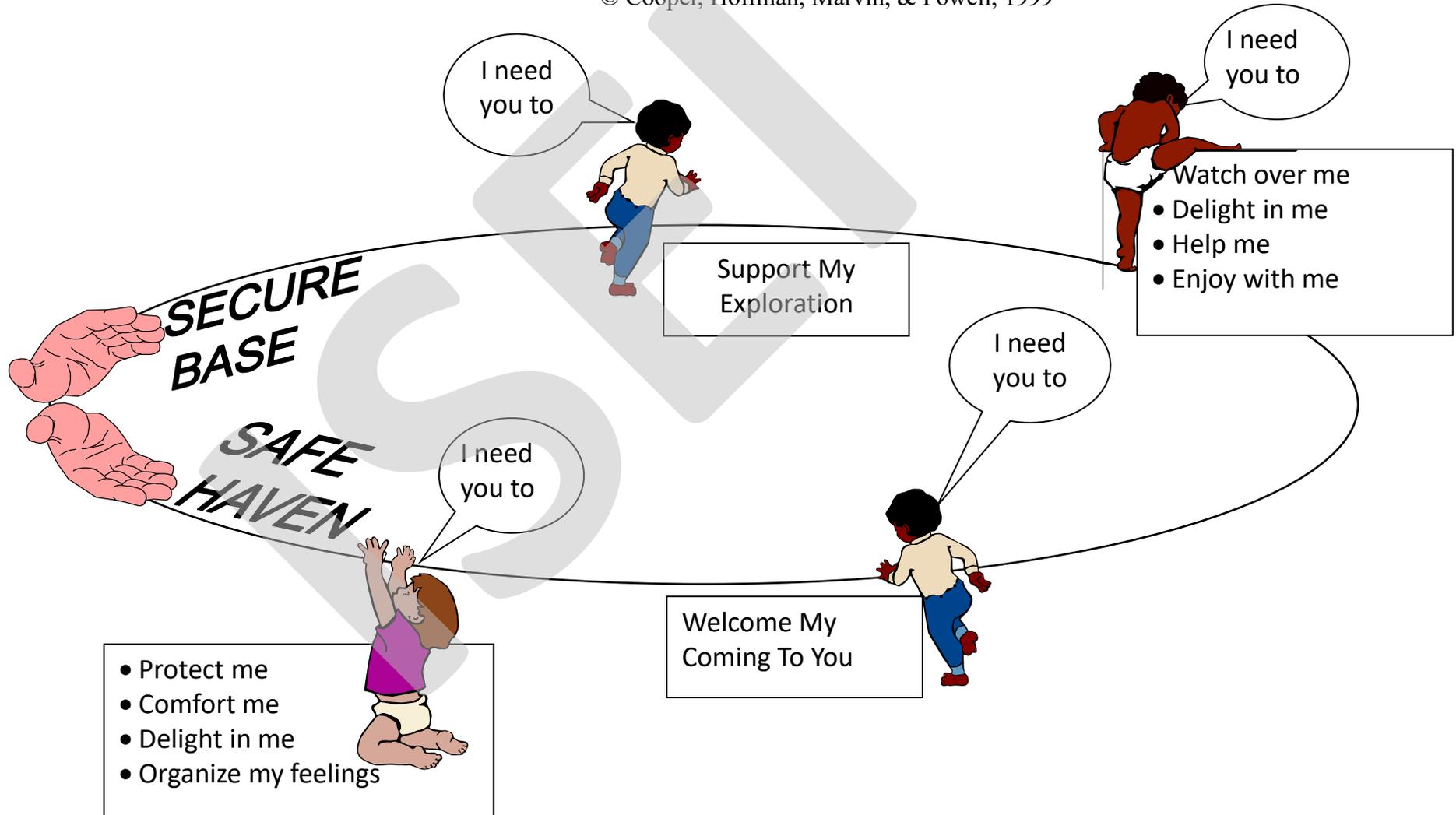
Building Babies' Brains Through Play

Circle of Security

Parent Attending to the Child's Needs

© Cooper, Hoffman, Marvin, & Powell, 1999

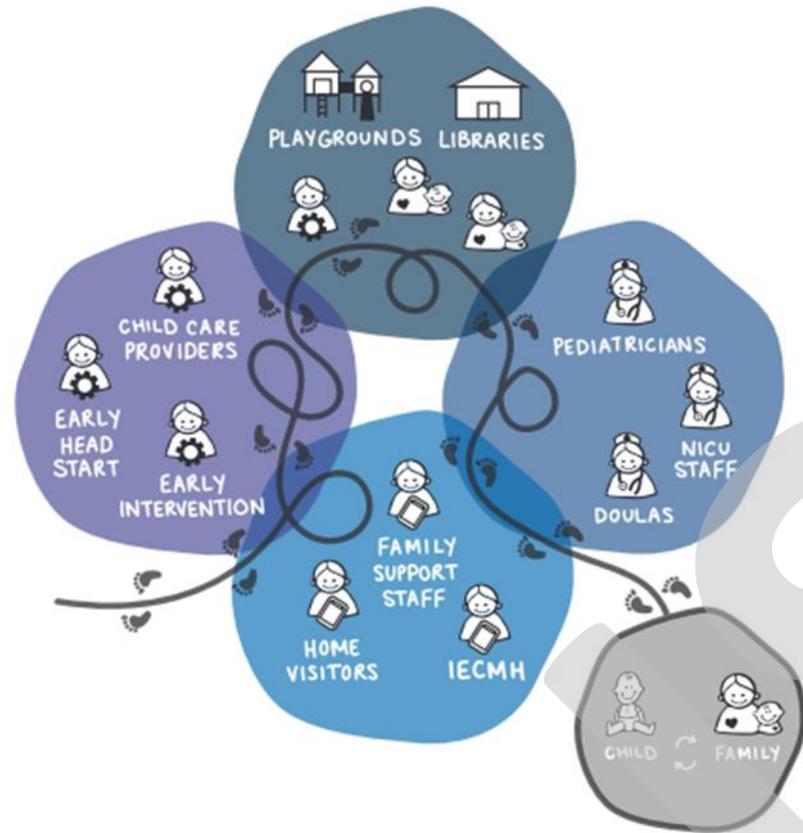
Community resources,
professionals...



Cascade of care
Gomes-Pedro, 2017

FIGURE 5

Early Relational Supports

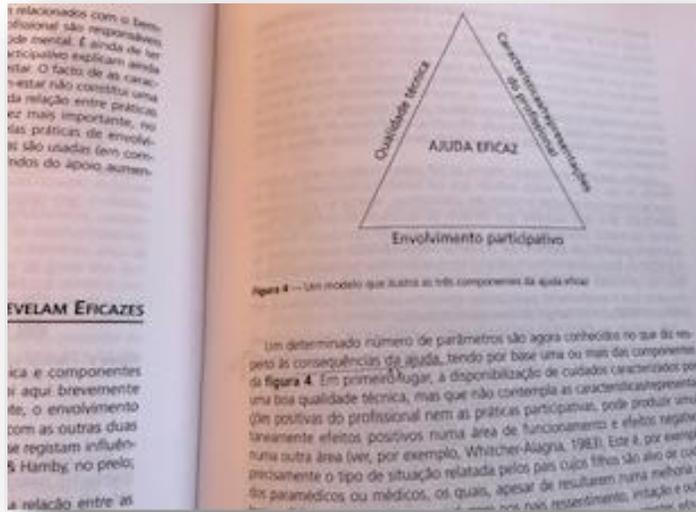


Yet, How?

Namely concerning...
initial training in Early Childhood Education
and professional development in Early
Childhood Intervention...

Li, J., & Ramirez, T. (2023). *Early Relational Health: A Review of Research, Principles, and Perspectives*. The Burke Foundation.

The three components of effective help



Dunst, 1998, 2000

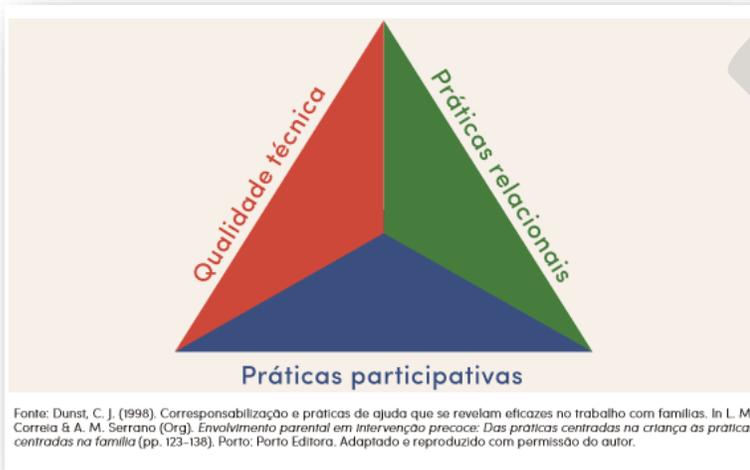
Technical Quality – theoretical and practical

knowledge of the professional in the area in which he/she works;

Relational Practices – active listening, empathy, authenticity;

Participatory Practices – more action-oriented;

involves power sharing – sharing information, encouraging parents to make their own decisions, to use their knowledge and skills.



Fonte: Dunst, C. J. (1998). Corresponsabilização e práticas da ajuda que se revelam eficazes no trabalho com famílias. In L. M. Correia & A. M. Serrano (Orgs). *Envolvimento parental em intervenção precoce: Das práticas centradas na criança às práticas centradas na família* (pp. 123-138). Porto: Porto Editora. Adaptado e reproduzido com permissão do autor.

Carvalho et al., 2016

***Inviting* Touchpoints to *dialogue* with the three components of effective help**

Goals of Touchpoints

Optimal child development

Healthy, functional families

Competent and healthy professionals

Strong communities

Brazelton 
Touchpoints Center™

What is Touchpoints?

Touchpoints is a **strengths-based approach to family engagement** that combines a unique model of child development with communication skills and strategies that respect the importance of key caregiver relationships in a young child's life.

Brazelton 
Touchpoints Center™

Developmental Framework

DEVELOPMENT IS NOT LINEAR

Development is characterized by **disorganizations, bursts, and pauses**

Disorganization in a child's behavior causes disorganization for parents

Touchpoint vs. Milestone

Milestone = a developmental burst, a new skill or competency is mastered

Touchpoint = the period of disorganization that occurs as the child is learning the new skill

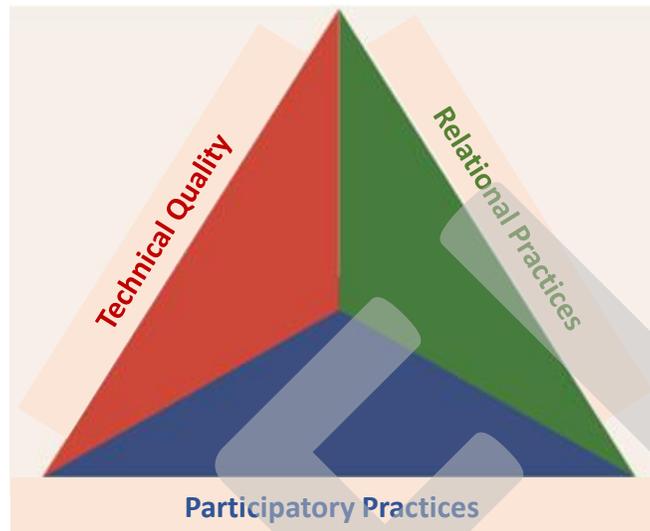
Relational Framework

- A Touchpoint is an **opportunity** for the professional to join with a parent to form a supportive partnership
- **Collaboration** between the parent and the provider is key to the relationship
- Interactions focus on **parental strengths**
- The Touchpoints Approach uses the child's behavior as our language with families.

Touchpoints Tools

Assumptions as strength-based attitudes

Guiding Principles as relational strategies



| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Components of effective help (Dunst 2013, in Carvalho et al., 2016, pp.94-95)</p> | <p>Touchpoints principles & assumptions (Brazelton & Sparrow, 2002; Brazelton Touchpoints Center, 2023)</p> |
|---|--|

Technical Quality in ECI

Knowledge about child developmental milestones.

Knowledge of evidence-based practices.

[Completed by] Touchpoints perspective – a nonlinear, emergent developmental phenomenon:
Use the behavior of the child as your language
 (TP Principle);
 Focus on the parent child relationship (TP Principle)

Technical Quality in ECI | Use the behavior of the child as your language



The child's behavior provides us with the language to communicate - their movements, crying, laughter, and reactions give us the words we need for our dialogue with parents.



Our *fluency* in this development language allows us to have meaningful conversations with families.

Components of effective help
(Dunst 2013, in Carvalho et al., 2016, pp.94-95)

Touchpoints principles & assumptions
(Brazelton & Sparrow, 2002; Brazelton Touchpoints Center, 2023)

Relational Practices in ECI

Treat the family with dignity and respect at all times.

The parent is the expert on his/her child (TP Assumption); Parenting is a process built on trial-and-error (TP Assumption).

Value and respect the cultural beliefs and personal values of the family

Acknowledge and respect each family's cultures. (TP Assumption); Parenting is rooted in cultural practices, beliefs, and individual experiences (TP Assumption)

Provide complete and unbiased information to the family.

All parents want to do well by their child (TP Assumption)

Recognize and value the strengths of individual family members.

Value and understand the relationship between you and the parent (TP Principle); **Value passion wherever you find it** (TP Principle)

Relational Practices in ECI | Value passion wherever you find it



Passion - energy that parents bring with them; expression of both positive and negative feelings.

The nature and intensity of passion are the 'gateway' to understanding what is most meaningful to parents in their relationship with their children.

Children's language - enhances our ability to observe and think; parental passion - enhances our ability to feel and empathize!

Participatory Practices in ECI

Work in partnership with the family to identify their needs and to collaborate in obtaining the desired resources.

Involve the family by enabling them to make informed decisions about identifying the resources and supports that are most appropriate to meet the needs identified by the family.

Provide family members with participatory opportunities to obtain the desired support and resources.

To support and respect the family's decisions, even when they differ from the professional's opinion.

All parents have something critical to share at each developmental stage (TP Assumption); All parents have strengths (TP Assumption).

Look for opportunities to support parental mastery (TP Principle).

Be willing to discuss matters that go beyond your traditional role (TP Principle).

Recognize what you bring to the interaction (TP Principle); Value disorganization and vulnerability as an opportunity (TP Principle); All parents have ambivalent feelings (TP Assumption).

Participatory Practices in ECI | Reconheça o que traz para a Interação



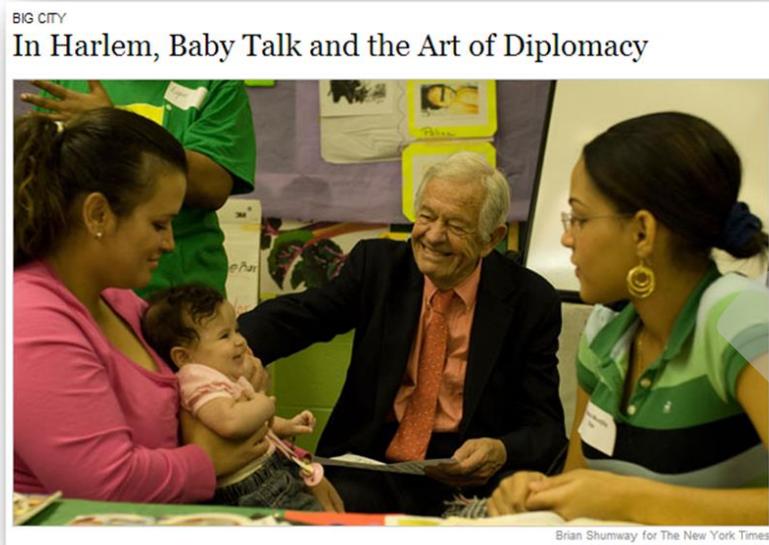
In nurturing a small baby, adults learn as much about themselves as they do about the infant.

Brazelton, 1983

Developing a ‘third ear’ - listening to our inner voice...

Developing reflexivity - reading our own reactions and responses...

A Paradigm Shift: *dialogue* between Touchpoints and Early Childhood Intervention!



| From... | To... |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Deficit Model | Positive Model |
| Linear Development | Multidimensional Development |
| Prescriptive | Collaborative |
| Objective Involvement | Empathic Involvement |
| Strict Discipline Boundaries | Flexible Discipline Boundaries |

Brazelton & Sparrow, 2002

4.

Instructions for living a life:

Pay attention.

Be astonished.

Tell about it.

Mary Oliver's instructions for living a life.



No trend is destiny.

Nenhuma tendência é um destino.

UNESCO, 2022

Muito obrigada! Thank you!

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A copy of the PowerPoint will be available on ResearchGate:
<https://researchgate.net>

Search for the PowerPoint using the title of the presentation:

Recognize what you bring to the interaction - Integrating Family-Centered Helpgiving Practices with the Touchpoints Model to Build Comprehensive Training Pathways