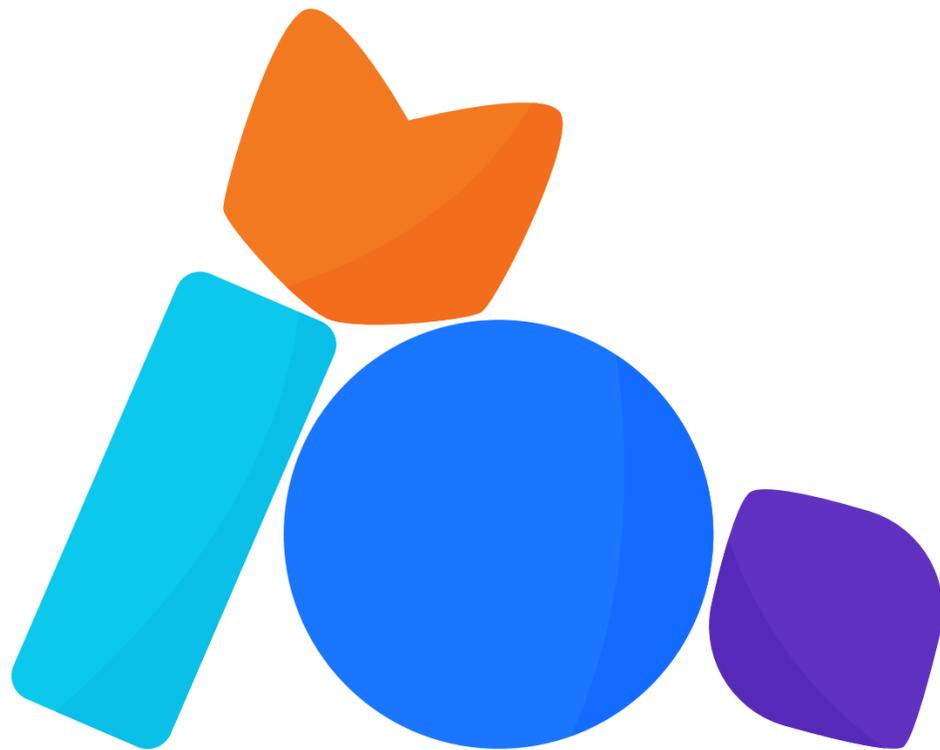




Restacking the Odds:

The what, why and how of attachment-focused ECI for
children with a disability or developmental delay

Dr Stacey Alexander



WHY?



Picture by Jim Walker

- **Child Protection**
- **Out of Home Care**
- **Mental Health**
- **Behaviour**
- **Self-regulation**



The Key Worker

noahsarkinc.org.au

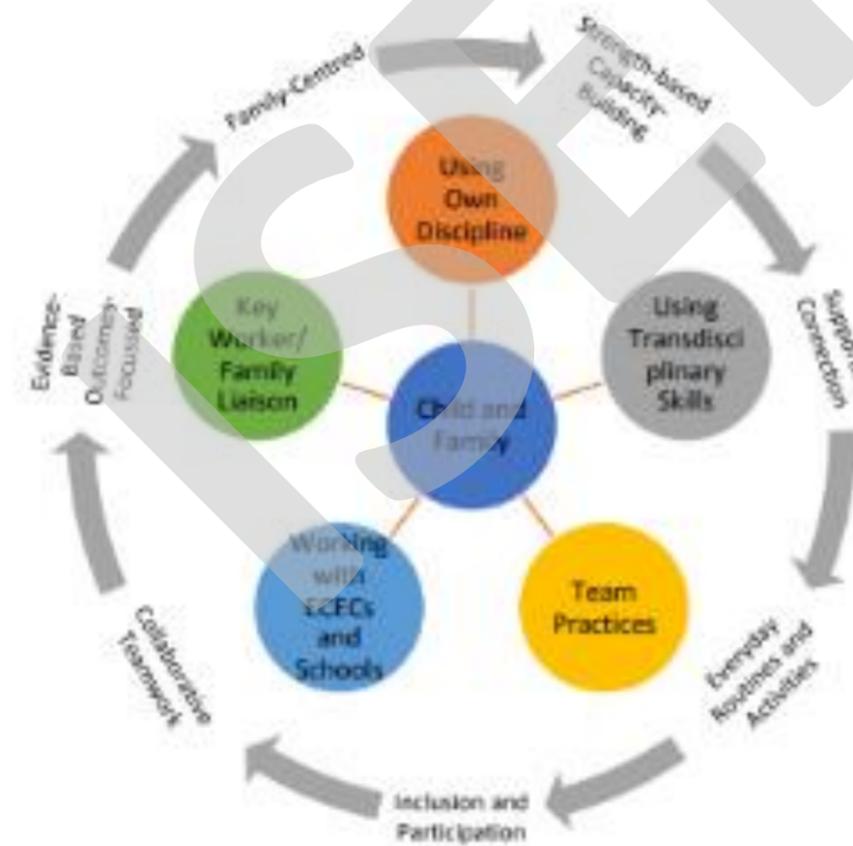
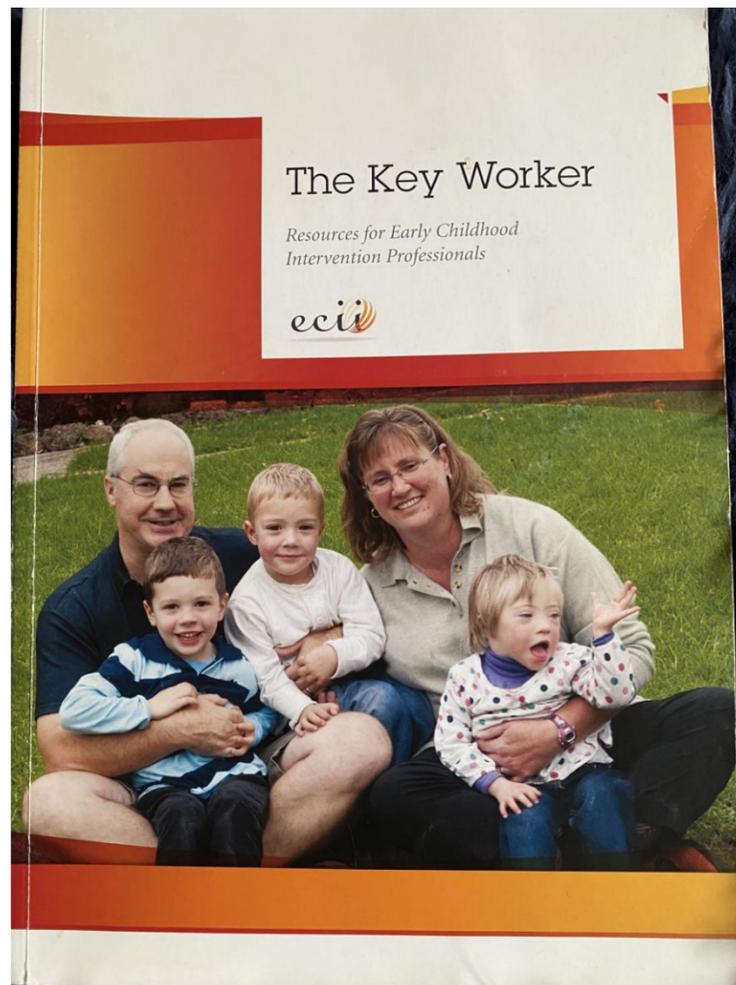


Figure 1: The Transdisciplinary Key Worker Role

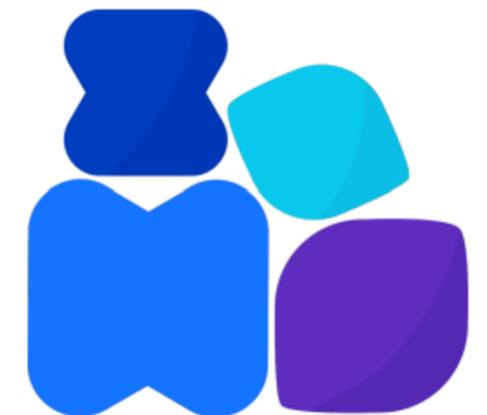


Attachment

- Behaviour
- Communication
- Learning
- Maltreatment
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Play skills
- Self-regulation
- Social skills



Photo by [Isaac Quesada](#) on [Unsplash](#)



What is attachment security?



- Enduring emotional bond
- Secure base – Safe haven
- Innate psychobiological system
- Species survival

- A- Insecure-avoidant
- B – Secure
- C – Insecure – ambivalent
- D – Insecure – disorganised

- Central to socio-emotional regulation, sense of self, and future relationships with others

- Photo by Ana Tablas on Unsplash



The Research Project

- Evidence-informed framework
- How can ECI professionals improve the attachment security of children with a disability or developmental delay?
- Mixed methods
- Questionnaire
- Context
- Systematic Review
- In-depth interviews
- Constructivist Grounded Theory



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Key Findings



- **42% learnt about attachment in their discipline training**
- **Nearly half not confident to address attachment in their work**
- **Significantly less likely to develop secure attachment (42% v 62%)**
- **Significantly more likely to develop a disorganised attachment (29% v 15%)**
- **Promising findings re: interventions**

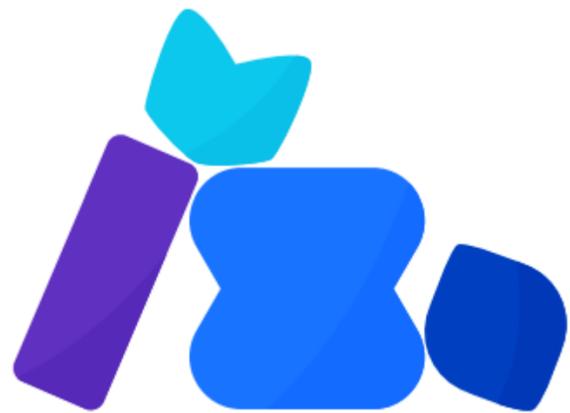


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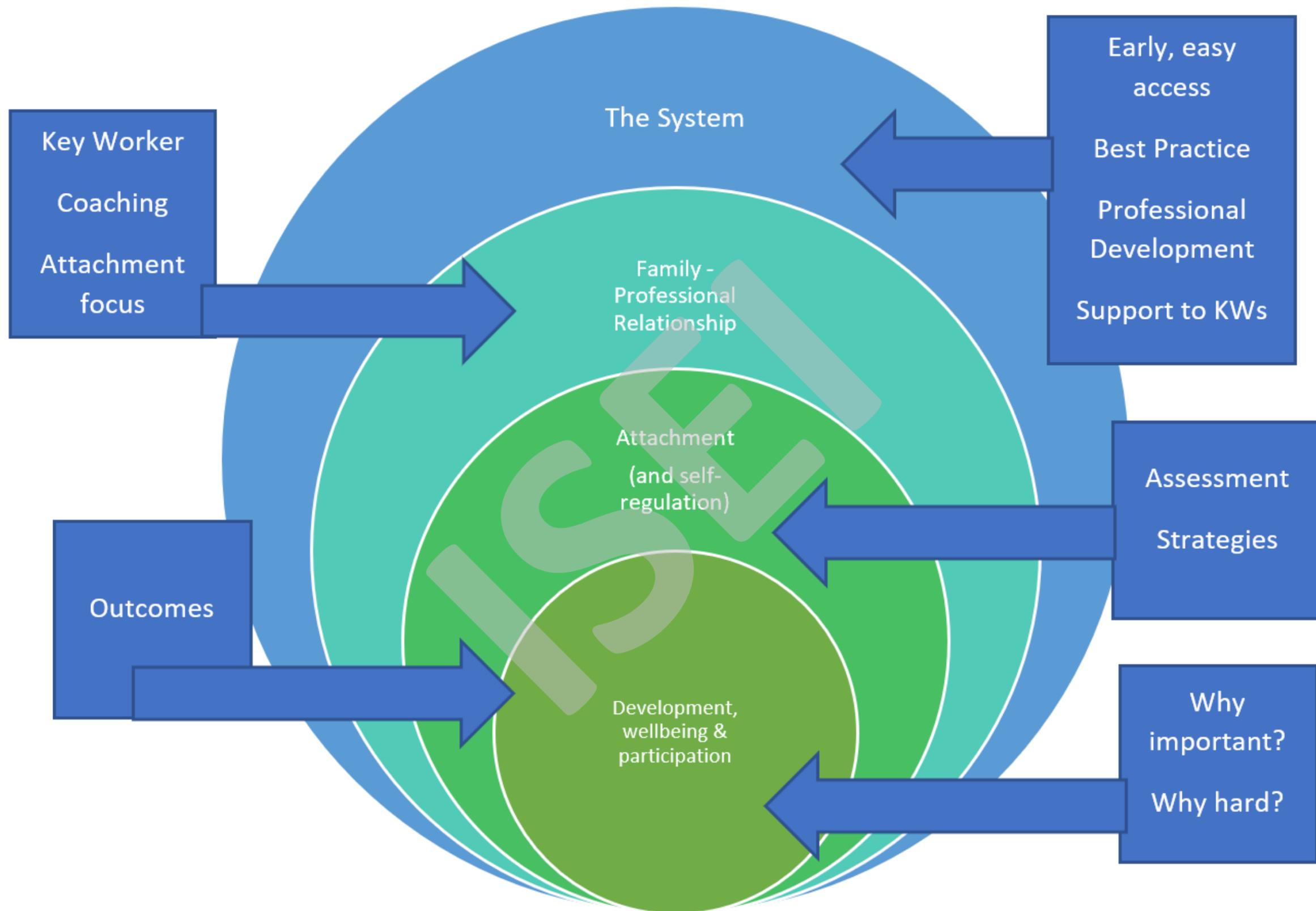


Figure 1. Attachment-focussed ECI framework

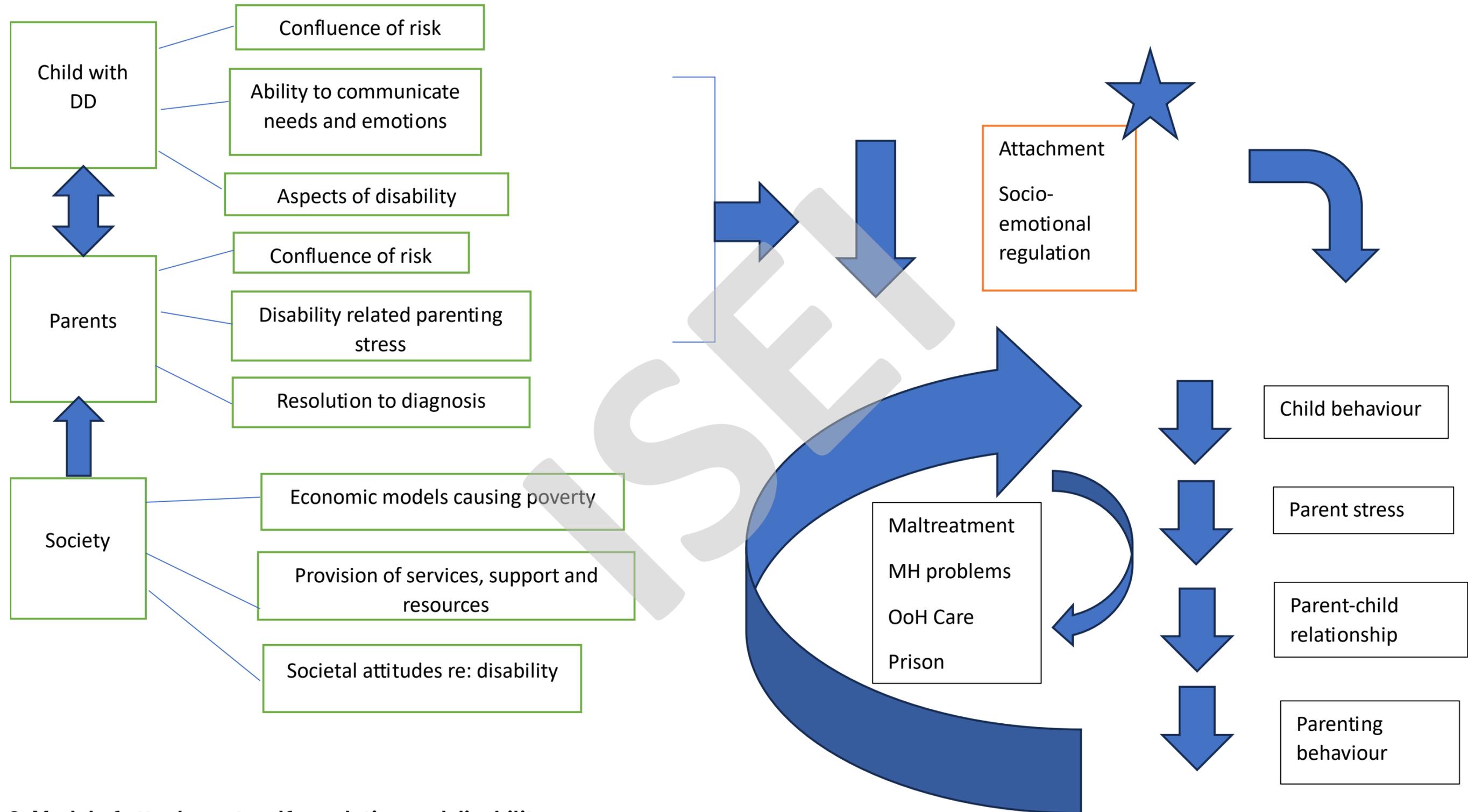


Figure 2. Model of attachment, self-regulation and disability

Translation to Practice Pyramid



Family-professional relationships

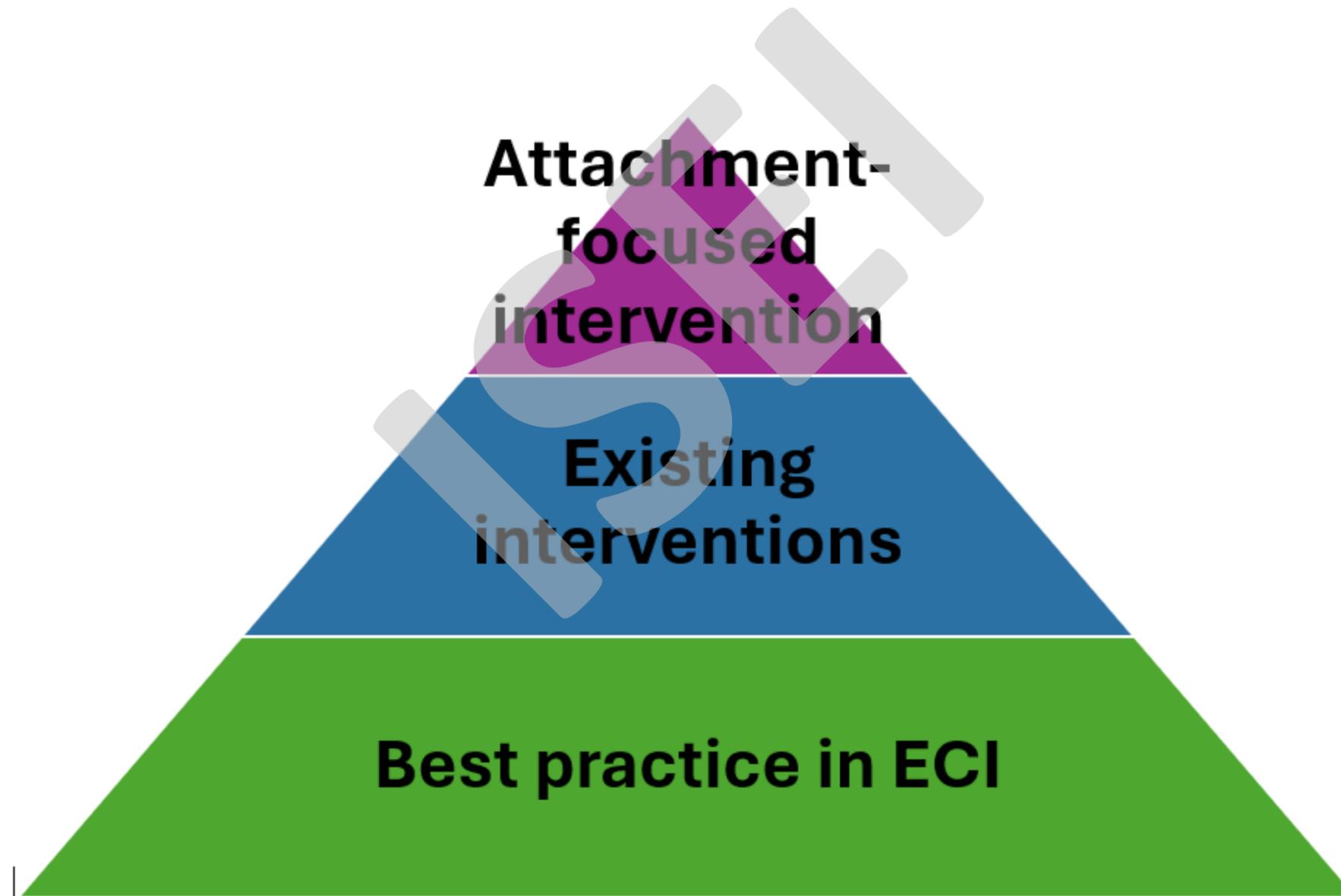


Figure 3. Translation to practice pyramid

Attachment-focused strategies

Talking about attachment:

- What attachment is
- How important attachment is to child development and wellbeing
- How to recognise attachment behaviour
- Helpful responses to attachment behaviour



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Attachment-focused strategies continued

Supporting co-regulation:

- Identifying emotional states
- Calming techniques
- Mindfulness strategies
- Tuning in to Kids

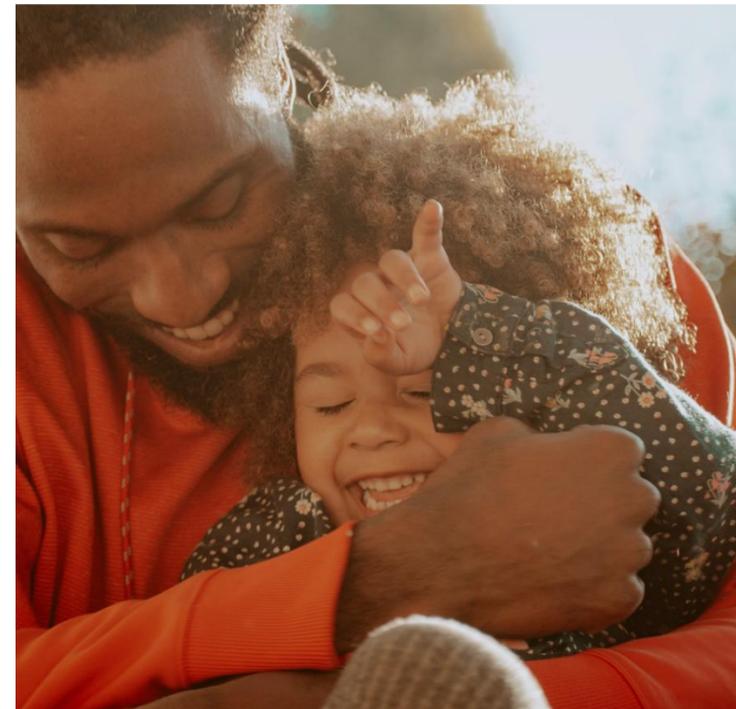


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Attachment-focused strategies continued

- Using video to reflect
 - Coaching
 - Parent identifying positive parenting behaviours
 - PICCOLO, VIPP, Attachment & Bio-behavioural Catch-up (ABC), Make the Connection
- Cognitive strategies
 - Strengths-based practice (SBP)
 - Tuning into child's thoughts, needs, and feelings

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Assessment

General risks

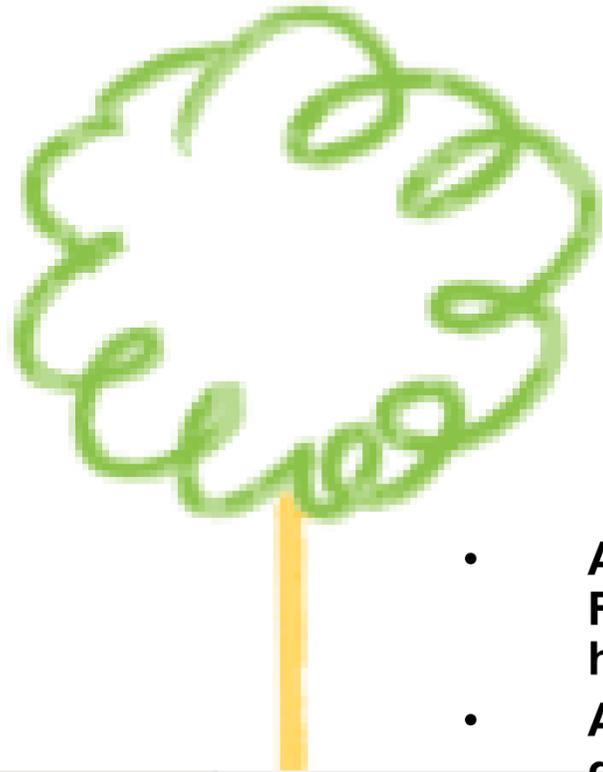
- Parental Stress
- Poverty
- Mental health
- Family & domestic violence
- Social isolation
- Teen parents
- Trauma history

Parent child interactions

- Ease
- Joy
- Engagement
- Control
- Repair



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Publications

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- Alexander, S., Frederico, M., Long, M., & Vicendese, D. (2023). Attachment security in children with disability or developmental delay: Systematic review of quality and interventions. *Journal of Occupational Therapy, Schools & Early Intervention*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19411243.2023.2177237>
- Alexander, S. (2022). *Building better futures for children with a disability or developmental delay: An attachment-focussed early childhood intervention framework*. La Trobe University [https://opal.latrobe.edu.au/articles/thesis/Building Better Futures for Children With a Disability or Developmental Delay An Attachment-Focussed Early Childhood Intervention Framework/21902190](https://opal.latrobe.edu.au/articles/thesis/Building_Better_Futures_for_Children_With_a_Disability_or_Developmental_Delay_An_Attachment-Focussed_Early_Childhood_Intervention_Framework/21902190)
- Alexander, S., Frederico, M., & Long, M. (2019a). Attachment security, children with disabilities, and the role of Early Intervention professionals. (March). <https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/attachment-security-children-with-disabilities-and-the-role-of-early-childhood-intervention-eci-professionals/>
- Alexander, S., Frederico, M., & Long, M. (2019b). Attachment security, early childhood intervention and the National Disability Insurance Scheme: A risk and rights analysis *Children Australia*, 44(4), 187-193. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cha.2019.39>
- Alexander, S., Frederico, M., & Long, M. (2018). Attachment and children with disabilities: Knowledge and views of Early Intervention professionals. *Children Australia*, 43(4), 245-254. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cha.2018.38>



Questions?



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