

From Trauma Aware to Therapeutic Child Care
Matching Understanding to Task

 **Wrexham University**
2nd May 2025

Three questions the 'person in the parenting role' should ask to be an agent for positive therapeutic change for the child in their care

Presented by **Colin Maginn**
Director of 'The Pillars of Parenting'

Good Relationships are key
Attachments and
Attunements

Relationships

Empathy
Attachments and
Attunements

Meaningful relationships

Making bonds for life, attachment and attunement

Science can explain the delightfully rewarding and emotionally fulfilling reciprocation which the sensitive, kind, responsive, parent or adult in the place of a parent, receives when a child 'gets' that they care about them.

Our actions toward a child directly impact the child's response toward us. When we modify our behaviour, the 'hypothesis testing' child learns and responds. We too learn and respond. With kindness, openness, mutual respect, trust and empathy our brain and the child's brain produce oxytocin (a hormone which, among other things, plays a role in social bonding) making each more responsive to the other and leads to increased connection and bonding, referred to in psychology as attunement.

When the child and the adult are attuned to each other, (on the same wavelength) they spot subtle non-verbal cues to each other's emotions, feelings and **both will go out of their way to build and protect the relationship.** Maginn (2019)

The three questions: Question 1

1) What are Amy's strengths?

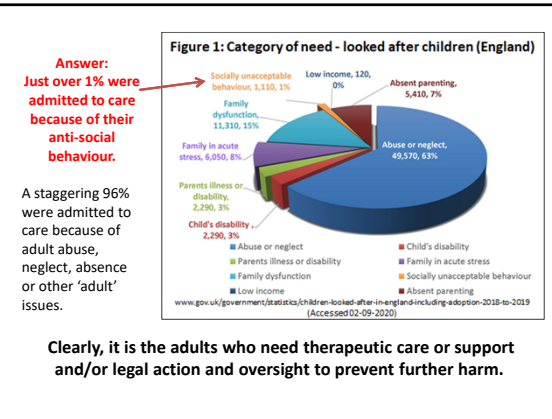
Question 2

2) What are Amy's parenting needs?

Question 3

3) Where is Amy in her trauma journey?

Question:
What percentage of children in care are there because of their anti-social behaviour?



The three questions: Question 1

1) What are Amy's strengths?

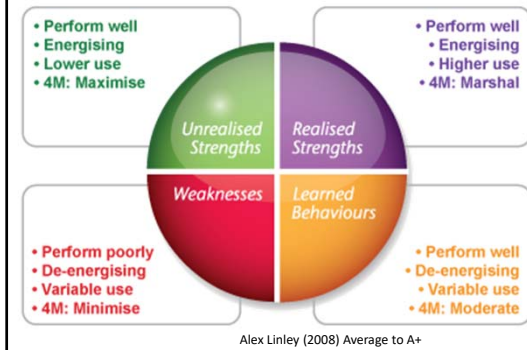
Gopnik, A. (2016). *The gardener and the carpenter: What the new science of child development tells us about the relationship between parents and children.* Farran, Strauss and Giroux.

Also:
The Philosophical Baby
The Scientist in the Crib

Alison Gopnik - The Amazing Minds of Very Young Children

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCB_BcyWgBk

Question 1: What are Amy's strengths?



What is 'Flow'?

Flow is that great feeling that we get when we are doing something that we love doing, an activity that is challenging and involves using our strengths and skills.

M. Csikszentmihalyi (1990)

Question 2

2) What are Amy's parenting needs?

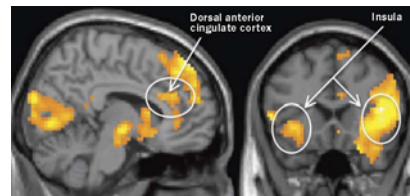
The 8 Pillars of Parenting

1. Primary care & protection
2. Secure attachments/close relationships
3. Positive self-perception
4. A sense of belonging
5. Resilience
6. Self-management/ self efficacy skills
7. Emotional competence.
8. Personal and social responsibility.

Question three: Where is Amy on her trauma journey?

Agree on the support Amy needs
at the different stages of her
trauma journey.

(5643), 290-292 <https://www.wisebrain.org/papers/RejectionHurt.pdf>



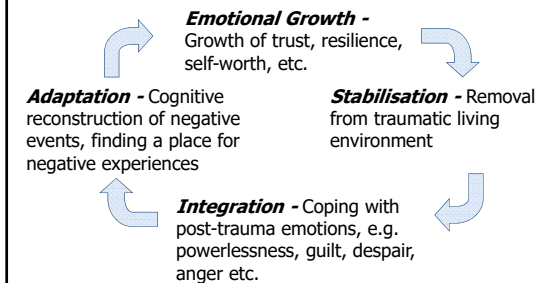
Being ignored and left out activates the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex, a region linked with the emotional aspects of physical agony, and the insula, an area instrumental in judging pain severity. Taking acetaminophen (*paracetamol in the UK*) squelches both these neural responses to ostracism.

Williams, Kipling D. (2011) 'The Pain of Exclusion' Scientific American Mind <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24943221>

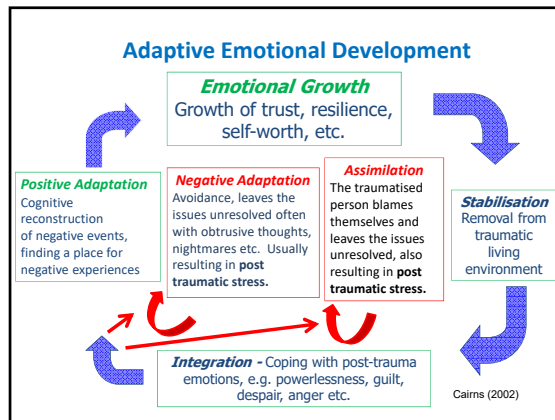
DeWall, C. Nathan (et al) (2010) 'Acetaminophen Reduces Social Pain...' Psychological Science 21(7) 931-937

Question 3: Where is Amy in her trauma journey, to support her recovery?

Adaptive Emotional Development



Cairns (2002)



Positive Adaptation's, Negative Adaptation's and Assimilation?

We are intrinsically motivated toward growth. However, a traumatic event impacts our view of the world.

For emotional growth to occur the traumatised child (or anyone) needs to have a **positive adaptation** which can be achieved with support from people close, the person in the parenting role, a kind friend or teacher, supporting the traumatised person to take control and deal with the trauma. Then with time, achieving **post traumatic growth**

A **negative adaptation** (often avoidance) leaves the issues unresolved often with obtrusive thoughts, nightmares etc. Usually resulting in **post traumatic stress**.

Assimilation also leads to **post traumatic stress** as the traumatised person blames themselves and leaves the issues unresolved.

Joseph, S., & Linley, P. A. (2005). Positive Adjustment to Threatening Events

This is one of the most important principles of any trauma-informed approach: You have to help the frontline adults who will be working with the children and youth.

Oprah Winfrey, Bruce D. Perry
What Happened to You?: Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing

“Protecting the child’s connections is far more important than is realised or accepted by child protection authorities, family courts and others involved in childcare, it is protecting an evolutionary mechanism. John Cacioppo (2014) puts it succinctly: *“Early in our history as a species, we survived and prospered by banding together—in couples, in families, in tribes to provide mutual protection and assistance. The pain of loneliness served to prompt us to renew the connections we needed to ensure survival and to promote social trust, cohesiveness, and collective action.”* Imposing separation from friends, family, school and community, activates the pain of loneliness and is a pathway to the dismal life outcomes frequently reported for children in public care. To maintain the child’s sense of belonging and self-esteem, they need to remain connected to it’s source, family, friends, school and community.”

References

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