

MORE RECENT RESEARCH AND FINDINGS – THE NEUROBIOLOGY OF ATTACHMENT

The Neurobiology of Attachment and Personality Organization

“Early experiences clearly affect the development of the brain. Yet the recent focus on “zero to three” as a critical or particularly sensitive period is highly problematic, not because this isn’t an important period for the developing brain, but simply because the disproportionate attention being given to the period from birth to 3 years begins too late and ends too soon... The mechanisms of neurodevelopment are designed specifically to recruit and incorporate a broad spectrum of experience into the developing architecture of the brain...Yet despite a small number of examples, we know remarkably little about the role of experience and the existence (or lack thereof) of time-limited sensitive periods during which specific experiences are obligatory for normal human brain development...It does appear, however, that that development of the neural systems supporting cognitive, social, and emotional competencies remains open to experience at least through adolescence. In fact, the brain’s ongoing plasticity enables it to continually resculpt and reshape itself in response to new environmental demands well into adulthood. It is important to emphasize that these findings do not in any way diminish the importance of the early years. They simply remind us of the continuing importance of the years that follow.”

Nat’l Research Council and Institute of Medicine, *Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development* (Shonkoff and Phillips, eds., Nat’l Academy Press 2000), Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development, Board on Children, Youth and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, Chapter 14, Conclusions and Recommendations, p. 391. <http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=9824&page=391> [as of January 17, 2012].