



FIRST 3 YEARS

Our Impact Lasts a Lifetime

Infant Mental Health

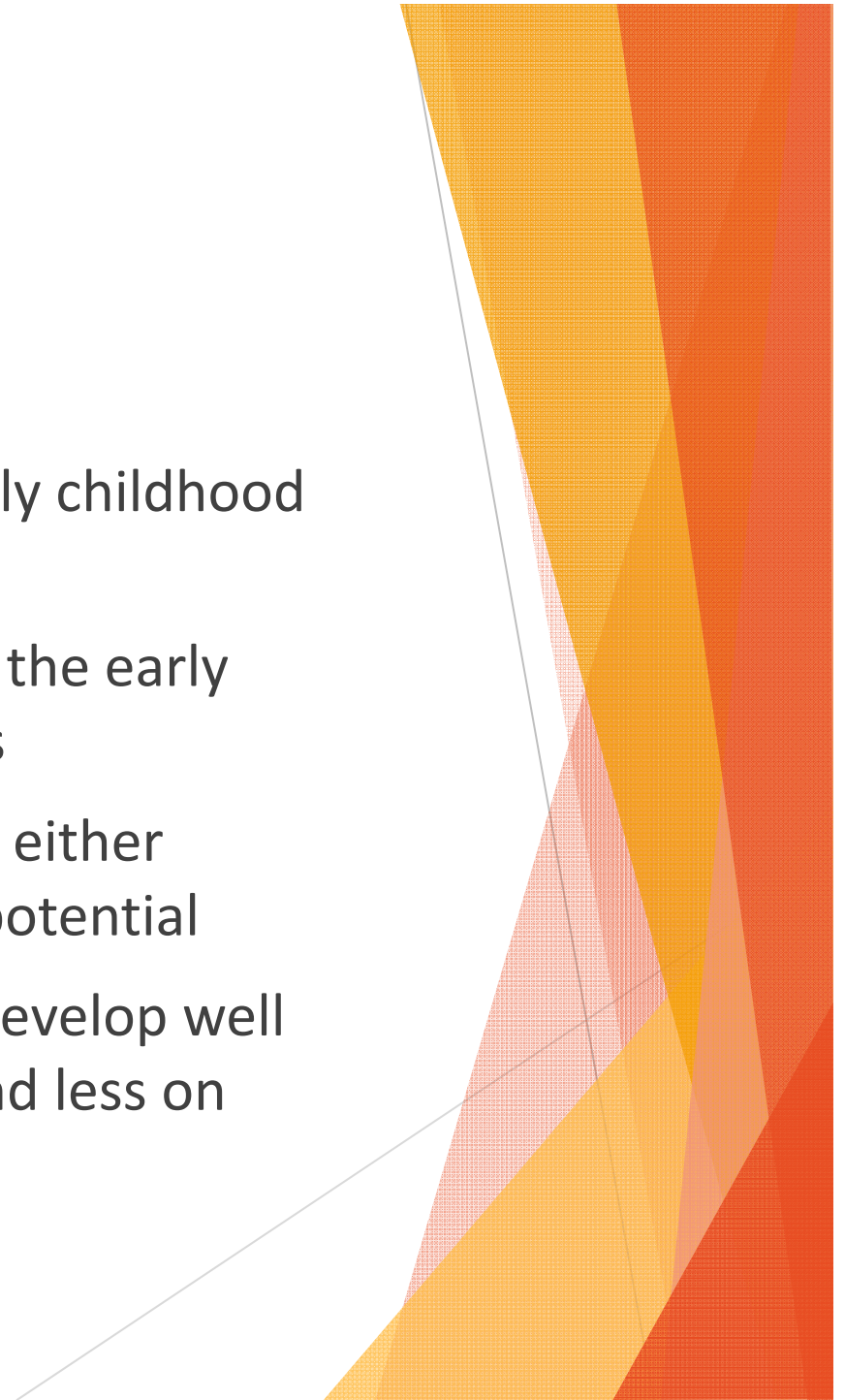
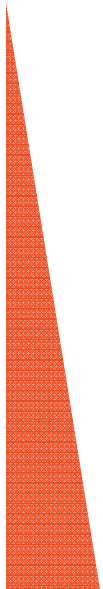
The developing capacity of a child from birth to age 3 to:

- ▶ Experience, regulate and express emotions
- ▶ Form close and secure interpersonal relationships
- ▶ Explore the environment and learn



Core Themes

- ▶ Relationships are the core of early childhood development
- ▶ Opportunities for growth during the early years also provide vulnerabilities
- ▶ Experiences of a young child will either enhance or inhibit their inborn potential
- ▶ If we focus on helping children develop well from the beginning, we will spend less on intervention

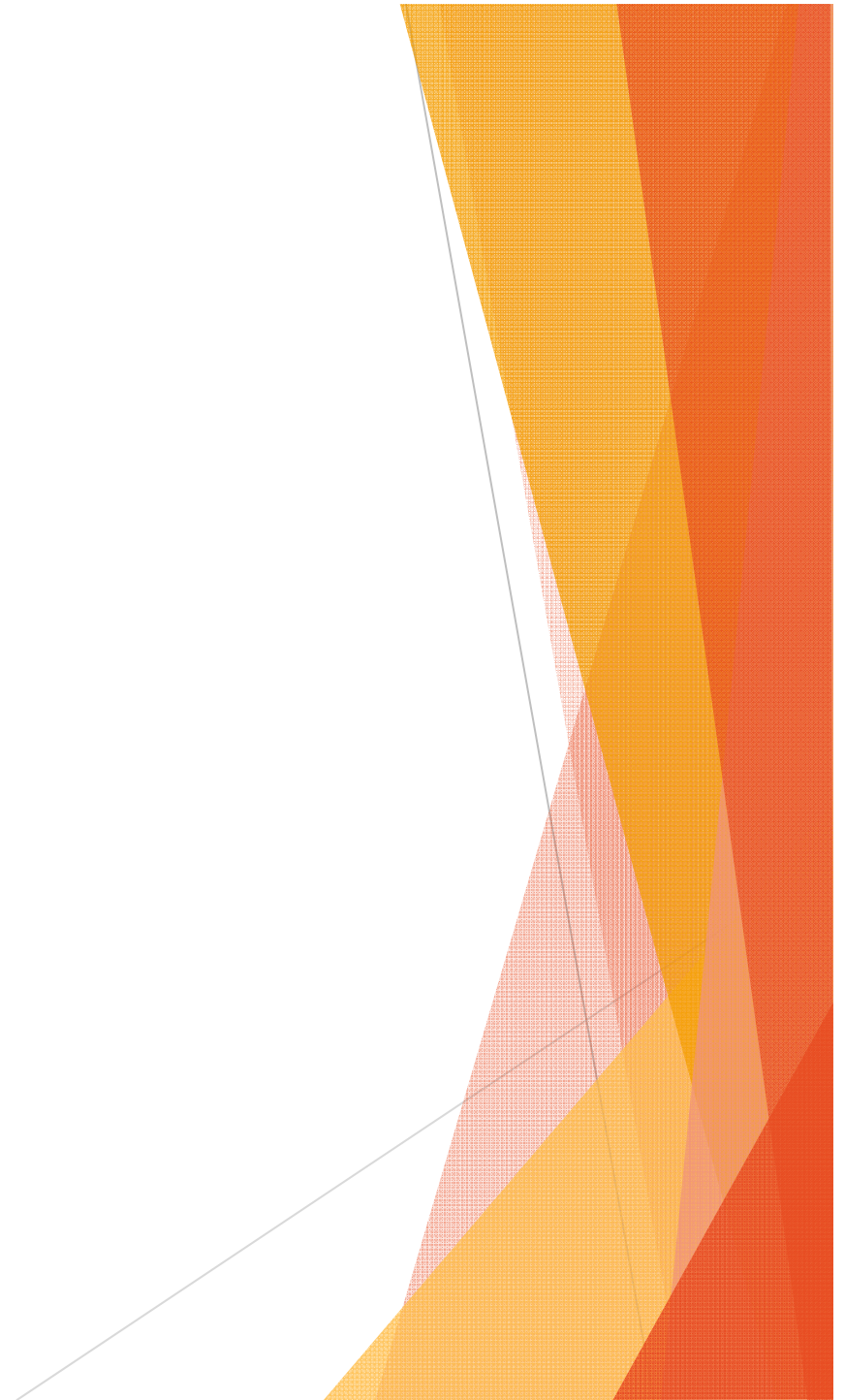
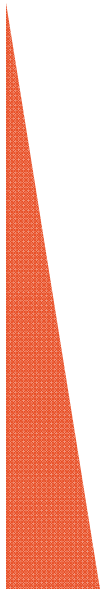


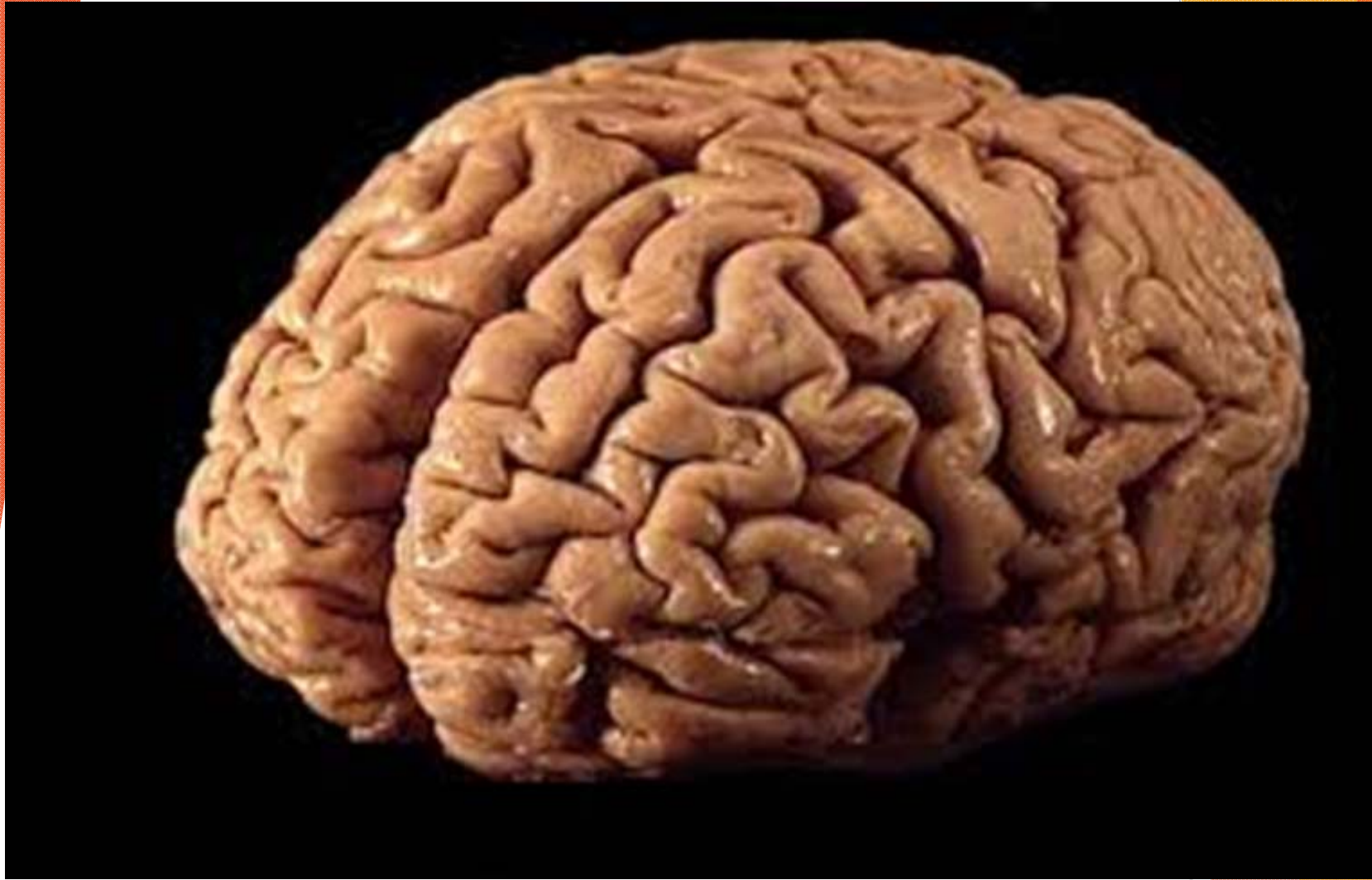
The Importance of Attachment

- ▶ Attachment is the strong bond between very young children and their caregivers
- ▶ Secure attachments form from nurturing, responsive relationships
- ▶ Babies learn about themselves through their interactions with adults
- ▶ Treating children with respect teaches them that they are worthy of respect

Self-Regulation

- ▶ Ability to cope with stressors
- ▶ Range of abilities
 - ▶ Attention
 - ▶ Emotion
 - ▶ Thinking
 - ▶ Behavior
- ▶ Controlled by central nervous system
- ▶ Affected by Temperament





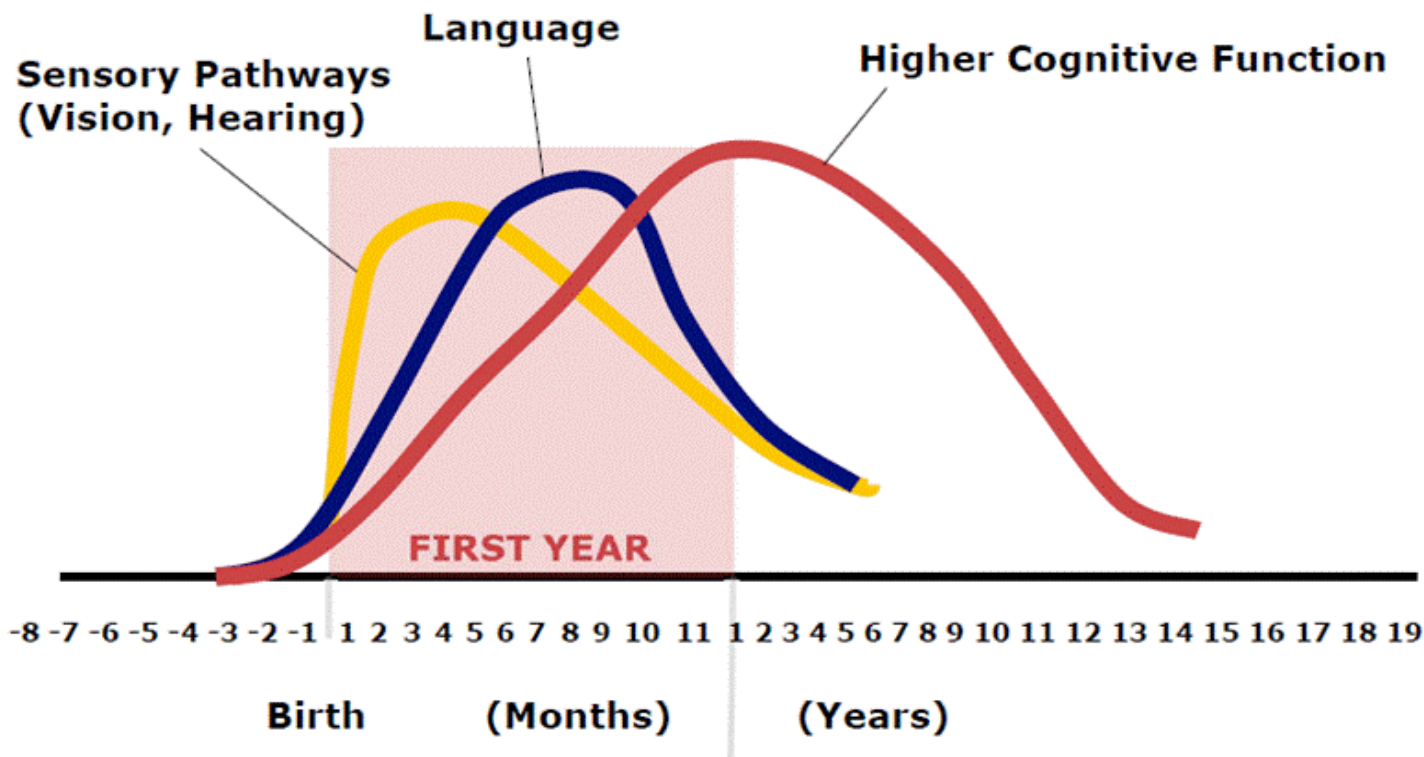
Thompson, R. A., & Nelson, C. A. (2001). Developmental science and the media: Early brain development. *American Psychologist*, 56(1), 5-15.



Center on the Developing Child
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Human Brain Development

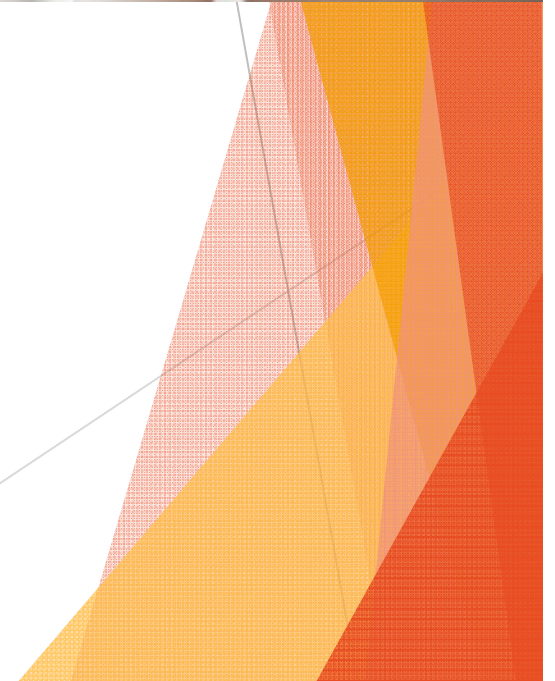
Synapse Formation Dependent on Early Experiences (700 per second in the early years)



Source: C. Nelson (2000)



© Hero/Corbis



**36 weeks
gestation**



Newborn



3 months



6 months



2 years



4 years



6 years

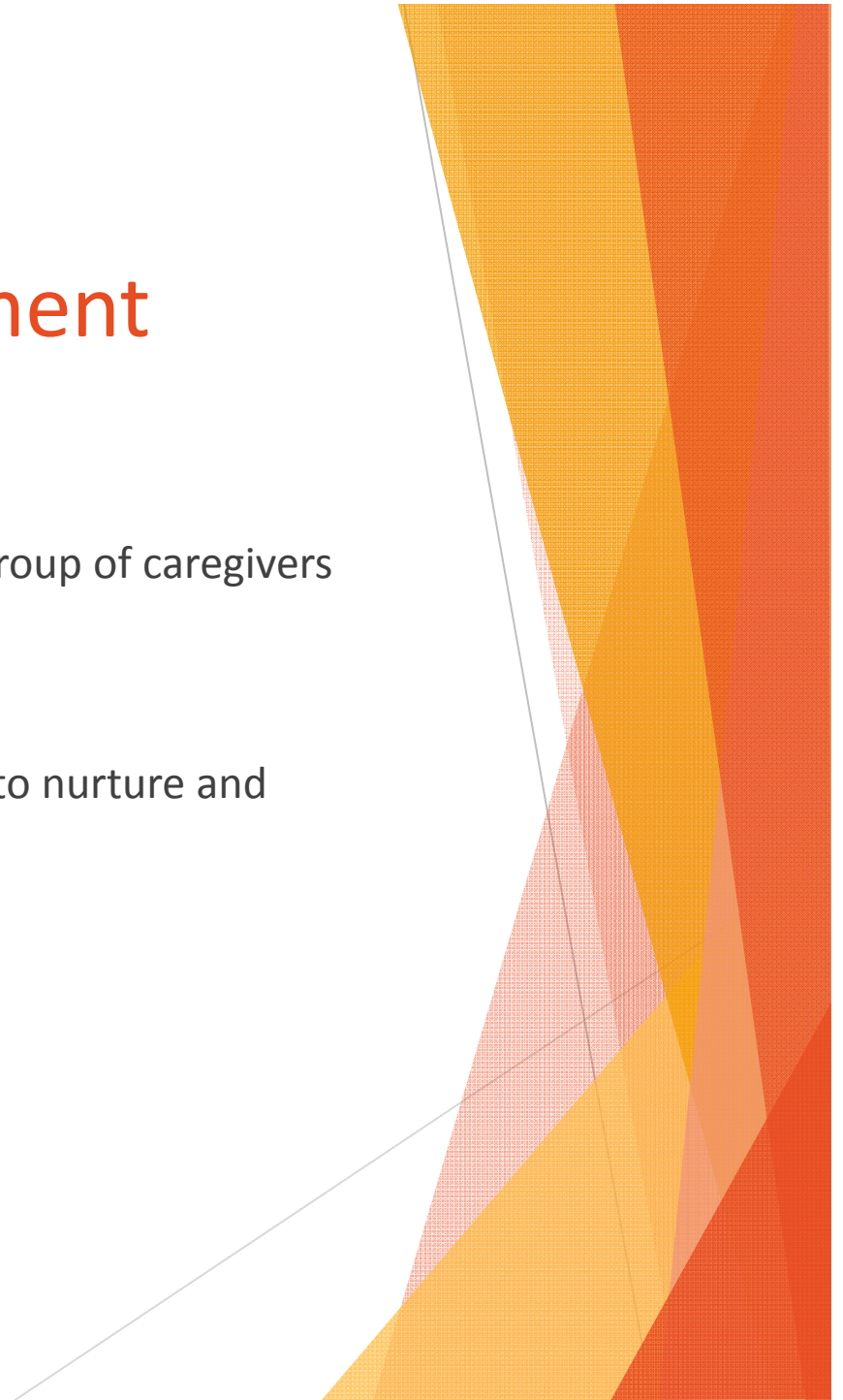
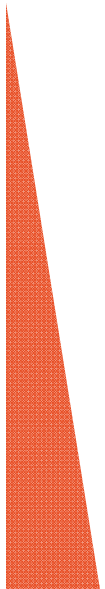


Synapse formation

Synapse pruning

The Beginning of Healthy Brain Development

- ▶ Dependent on human interaction
- ▶ The relationship with a caregiver or small group of caregivers is essential
- ▶ Physical and emotional needs must be met
- ▶ Most adults are drawn to babies and want to nurture and protect them



IMH Core Competencies

- ▶ Brain Development
- ▶ Attachment
- ▶ Separation
- ▶ Temperament
- ▶ Sensory Integration
- ▶ Self Regulation

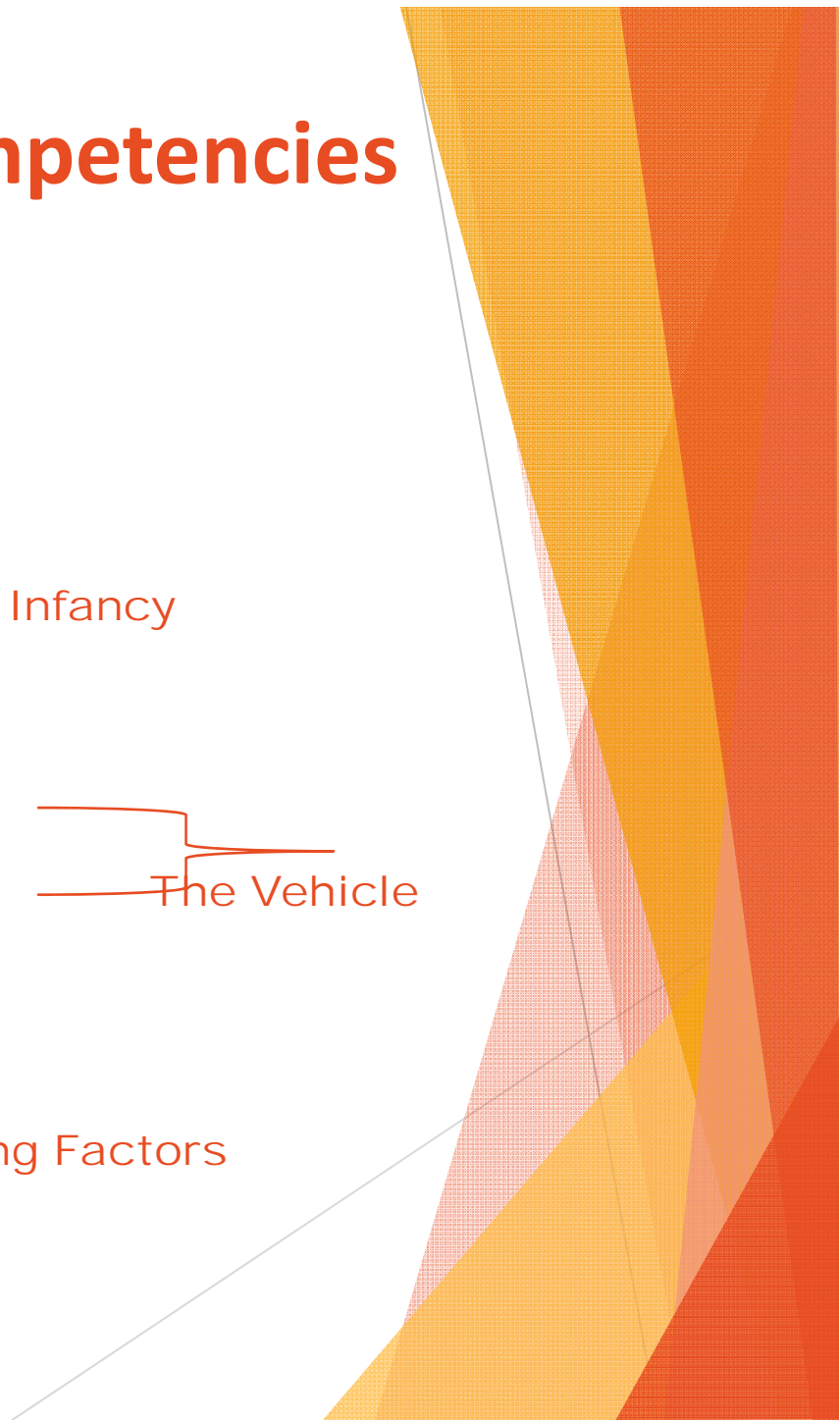
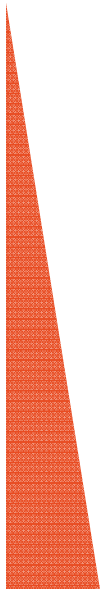
The Work of Infancy

- ▶ The parent-child/caregiver-child relationship

The Vehicle

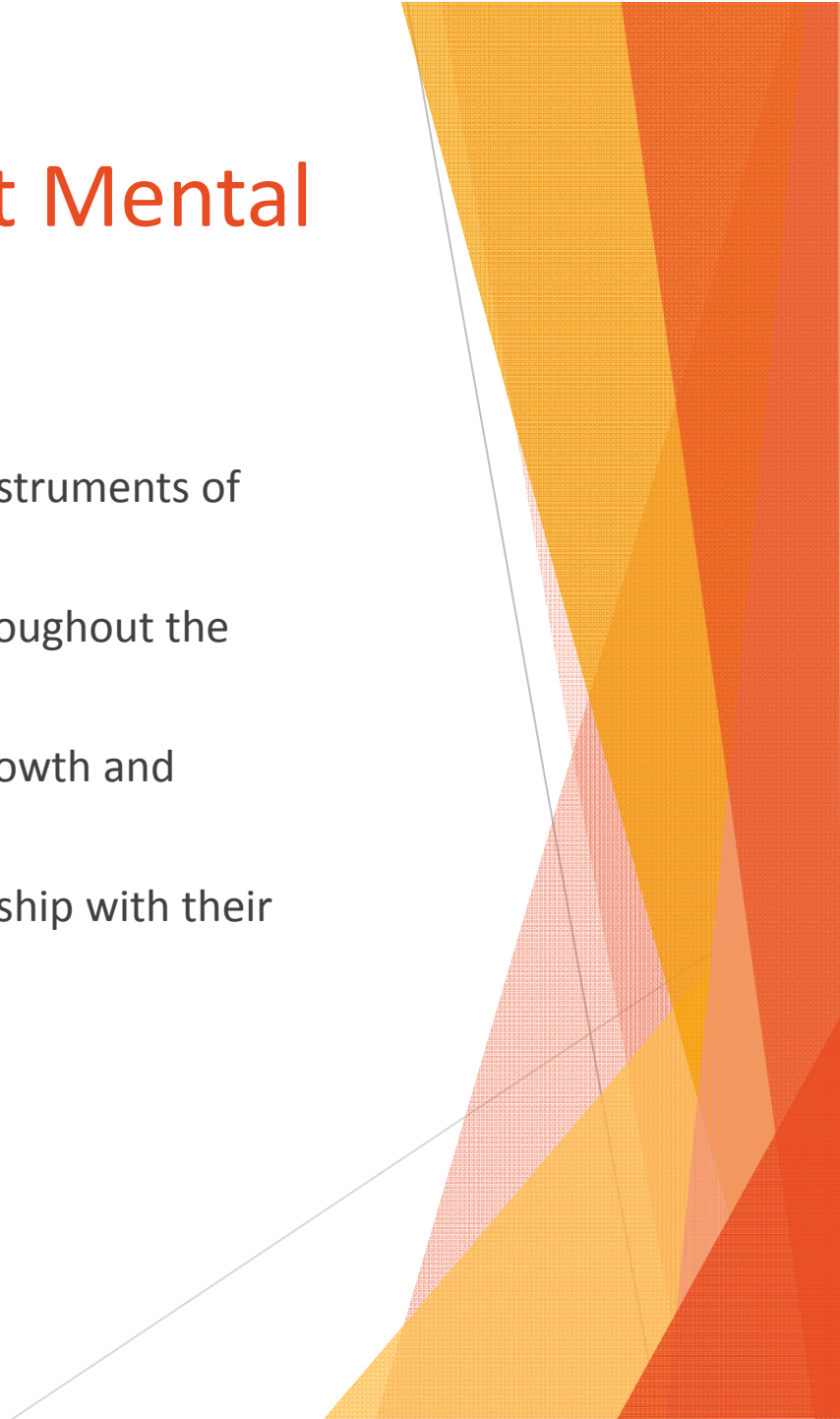
- ▶ Cultural Awareness/bias
- ▶ Trauma
- ▶ Transgenerational History
- ▶ Poverty

Mitigating Factors



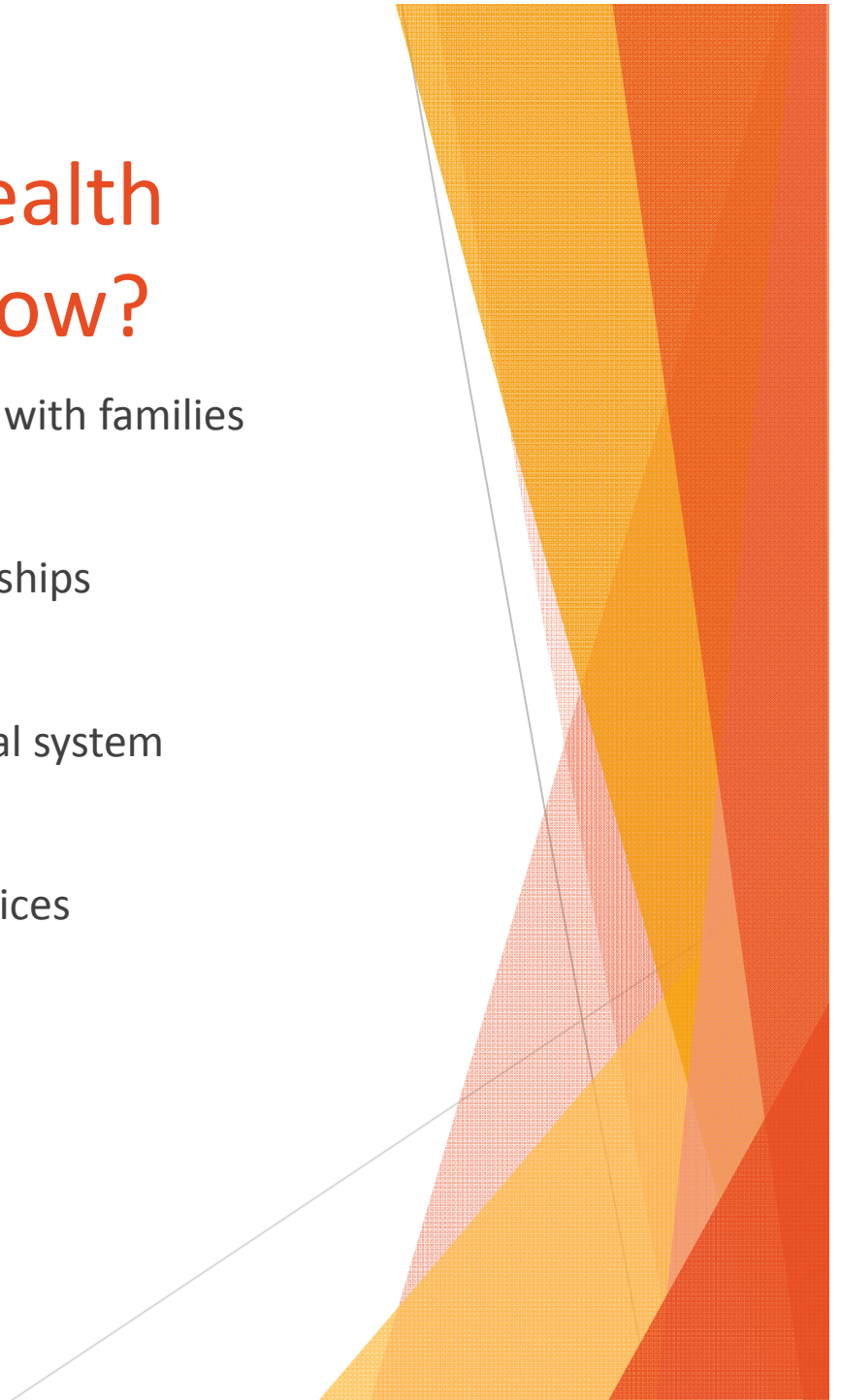
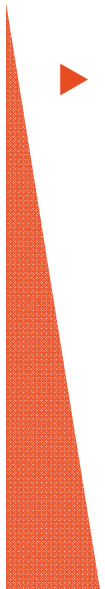
Strategies used in Infant Mental Health

- ▶ Building Relationships and using them as instruments of change
- ▶ Meeting the infant and parent together throughout the intervention period
- ▶ Sharing in the Observation of the infants growth and development
- ▶ Helping parent find pleasure in the relationship with their child



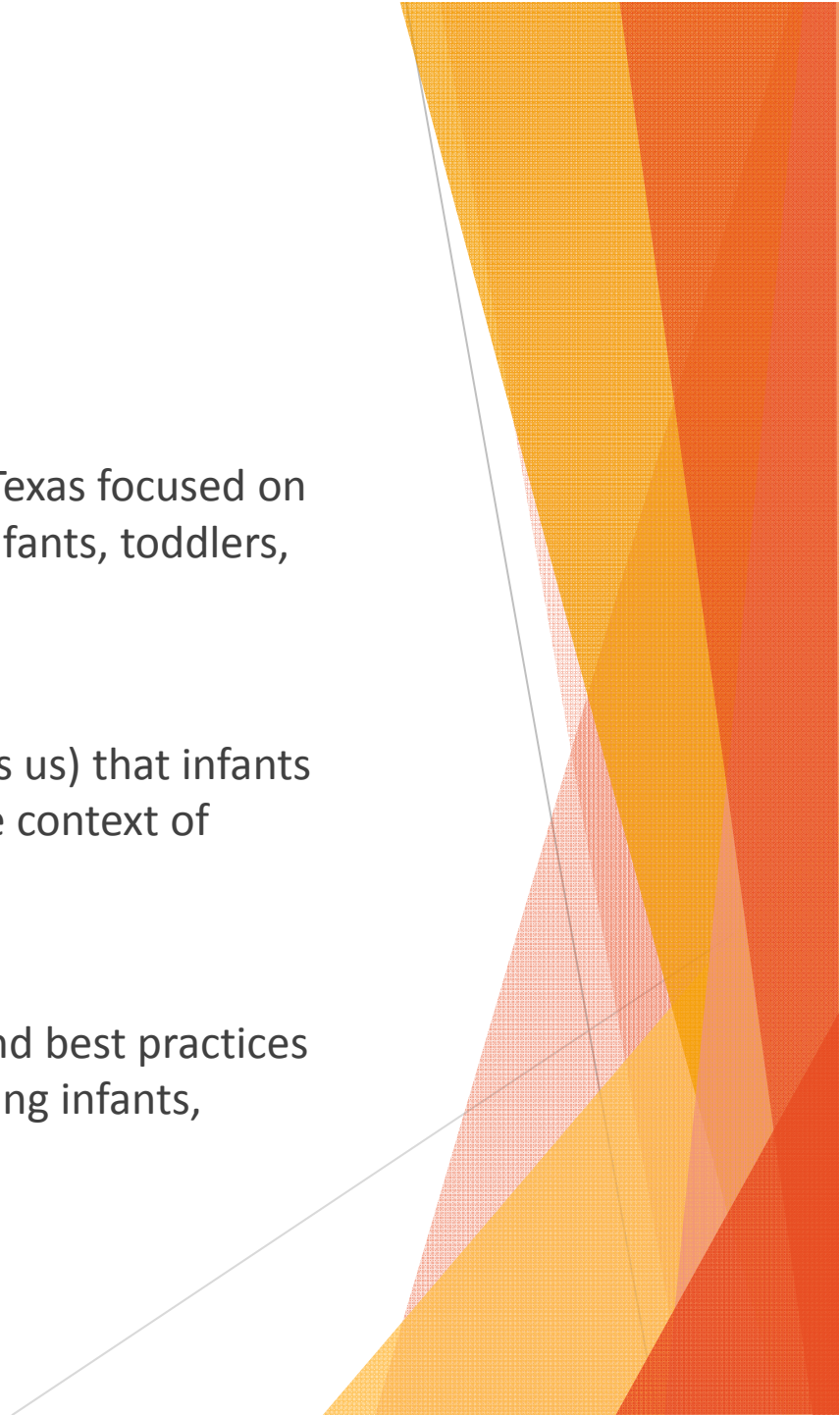
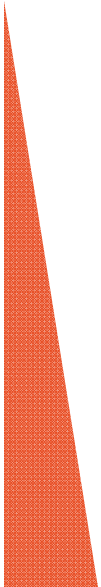
Why is Infant Mental Health Important for you to know?

- ▶ Share responsibility for promoting development with families
- ▶ More understanding can lead to deeper relationships
- ▶ There is trauma associated with CPS and the legal system
- ▶ Help identify problems and refer families to services



Who is First3Years?

- ▶ We are the only non-profit organization in Texas focused on the social and emotional development of infants, toddlers, and their families
- ▶ We believe (and scientific research supports us) that infants and toddlers learn and develop through the context of relationships
- ▶ We are committed to spreading research and best practices around Infant Mental Health to those working infants, toddlers, and their families





What does First3Years do?

- ▶ Education
- ▶ Advocacy
- ▶ Support and Endorsement for Professionals
- ▶ Outreach

We exist because Parents and Caregivers need to understand and respect how important their role is in the life trajectory of the developing child.

Brain Science is Important!

Questions?

Thank you for participating!



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