Social Evolution: Policies and Practices Supporting Biological Health

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Biological Gifts
Social interactions calibrate our stress response systems, our reward systems and produce the biochemical environment optimal for brain development.

Through the process of minding another’s mind we optimize the self-organizing properties of the brain!
In 2016 6.6 million children were growing up in single-parent Families

28% of households now have just one person, doubling the rate from 1960

The average household is 2.53 people down from 3.3 50 years ago
Children age 5 to 16 spend an average of six and a half hours per day in front of a screen and just teens alone spend almost nine hours per day. Washington Post, 2015.
Schools have become more cognitive focused and less concerned with soft skills (Social Emotional capacities).

Teacher directed social emotional training resulted in increased academic performance (Payton et.al, 2008).

Highly logical feelings, Captain.
Healthy Developmental Trajectory

- Safe, stable environment
- Response able caregivers
- Stimulation
- Good nutrition
- Access to health care
- Self agency

Adverse Experiences

- Healthy relationships
- Developmentally relevant stimulation
- Food nutrition
- Access to health care
- Self agency
Human species are social creatures with a biological drive to connect.

Fear/Anxiety
Social Engagement to Defensive

Violence Prevention
Bullying
Substance Abuse
Sexual Harassment
Suicide Prevention
Special Education
“I Fear the Day That Technology Will Surpass Our Human Interaction!”
Use-Dependent Development
`Sensitive periods` in early brain development

Graph developed by Council for Early Child Development (ref: Nash, 1997; Early Years Study, 1999; Shonkoff, 2000.)
Different disorders share constellations of neurobiological findings.

Childhood maltreatment is associated with marked effects on brain architecture and functions, which are not mediated by psychopathology.
• Focus on high risk families
• Start at birth or before
• Integrated health care
• Support local community innovative solutions
• Focus on increasing therapeutic experiences not just therapy

For every $1 spent

There is a savings of $3 to $17

“When we align our interventions with our biology we can get significant change. When the environment is disrespectful of our biology we contribute to the manifestation of symptoms.”

Dr Bruce Perry
Time for Reflection

How do we continue to increase our focus away from just treating problems toward facilitating health?

If negative experiences can change the brain and increase the risk for behavioral health problems what are the experiences we should be exposing our children to with enough repetition to increase the possibility for health and well-being?

How do align policies and practices in health care, education and community development with current understand of the relationship between social connectedness and physical health, academic performance, long term outcomes?