Attachment Neurobiology & It's Influence on Our Relationship with God and Others Through the Generations

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How does our early neurobiology influence our experience of God and others?

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN
NATURE-NURTURE-SPIRITUAL
The neurobiology of attachment begins in utero

We begin to develop the ability to recognize caregivers and use them to keep us safe, meet our needs, care for us, and teach us about relationships. These early experiences are stored in our mind as implicit memories and form the foundation of conceptualization of relationships - mentalization.
Right brain functions and attachment

Sensory information from voice tone, touch, facial expressions

Distress and soothing create neural pathways for future self-soothing capabilities

Safety begins with our earliest experiences and influences our ability to accurately "read" cues within relationships

Schore, A. 2000, 2001
As we go through life, memory helps us to navigate our world and making day-to-day decisions because we access previous memories to help us understand and know how to respond to new situations.

The information stored in our implicit (earliest memories) plays a critical role in our experiences of new situations.

**Implicit memory** is memory that is stored without language and these memories include our earliest memories encoded through sensory information.

**Explicit memory** is memory that is stored with language and available to our conscious mind.
Mirror neurons and their role in relationships and emotion regulation

- "reading" the intention of others
- necessary for empathy
- critical role in formation of mentalizations
- Internal mind maps of relationships

Mentalizations are formed based on our experiences and the meanings we make of the behavior of others toward us

Our mentalizations become our unconscious "roadmaps" about our relationships and the intentions of others

Bowlby referred to internal working models as those "maps" we have about ourselves and ourselves in the world

Siegel, D. 2011
Fonagy, P., Steele, M., Steele, H., Moran, G. S., and Higgitt 1991
Luyten, P., and Fonagy, P. 2015
Marrone, M. 2014
Trust and Vulnerability within Relationships

Neuroception circuits must be de-activated in order for social engagement circuits to be activated.

Social engagement circuits must be activated in order to allow for intimacy (play, secure attachment interactions, close proximity for positive social interaction).

Porges, S. 2011
Early intersubjective experiences lay the foundation for trust and vulnerability.

Fully present in the moment mutually enjoying the experience communicated and experienced.

Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001; Liljenfors & Lundh, 2015
"The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him."

Psalm 103:13 (NLT)

A father to the fatherless, ... God places the lonely in families;"

Psalm 68: 5-6 (NLT)
Internal Working Models of God and Safety

God the Father and our conceptualization of God are rooted in our own unconscious early experiences of "father" and caregivers - our mentalizations rooted in early memories.

Our relational experiences influence our neural circuitry activated and our ability to fully trust and be vulnerable.
Epigenetics refers to ways in which environment influence gene expression.

Early environmental experiences can influence gene expression in future generations.
Changing family patterns and our experiences of God

The "sins" of the "father" are passed through the generations and the "righteousness" of the "father" is also passed through the generation.
The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the Lord’s favor has come, and with it, the day of God’s anger against their enemies. To all who mourn in Israel, he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the Lord has planted for his own glory.

- ISAIAH 61:1-3 (NLT)
Healing attachment wounds occurs within relationships

CREATING SAFETY WITHIN RELATIONSHIPS LAYS THE FOUNDATION FOR DEEP CONNECTION WITH GOD

Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins." ~ 1 Peter 4:8 (NLT)
Using an attachment framework to facilitate change through the generations one family at a time
What we do to create strong connection

The Three Rs of Relationship

- Reflexive communication
- Regulate emotions
- Repair relationship ruptures

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you teach them. Rather, bring them up in the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord"

Ephesians 6:4 (NLT)
Teaching parents to use an attachment framework creates secure attachment and capacity for healthy relationship and resiliency.

It influences a healthy understanding of God and capacity for deep connection with God and others.

"Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude."

~ 1 Peter 3:8 (NLT)
Spirituality is relational in its core

Relationship with self and others is an overflow of the abundance of God's love for us

Our neurobiology requires a sense of safety to engage in relationship including our relationship with God

To create strong communities of faith we need to create strong families

"The man answered, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And,'Love your neighbor as yourself." ~Luke 10:27 (NLT)
Thank You for Being Here Today!
May God bless you and keep you

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