

Introduction to Infant Mental Health

What is infant mental health?

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Infant mental health is a rapidly growing field of interest. Learn what infant mental health is in this introductory brief video (3:28). The term, itself, can be confusing...

Validity Affect: The Innate and Dynamic Capacity of the Human Brain to Socially Connect

This video (5:22) is a synopsis of early brain development drawn from works of Stern, Markova and Legerstee, Feldman, and Ammaniti and Ferrari.

Historical Origins of Contemporary Infant Mental Health

What is needed for infants to survive came into question with René Spitz's publication in 1945 and came to international attention after WWII.

René Spitz, an Austrian psychoanalyst, observed that infants in orphanages who were provided basic care including healthcare but lacked social interaction suffered failure to thrive, became severely delayed, ill, and, in many cases, died, a condition he termed "hospitalism."

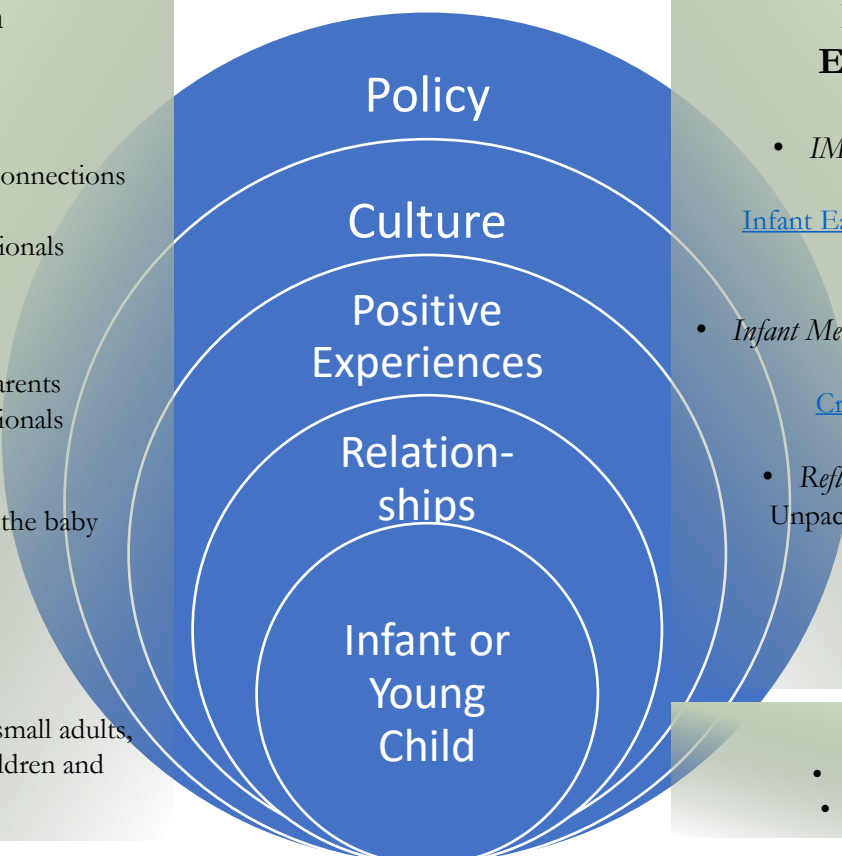
In response to the numbers of orphaned infants and young children after WWII, the WHO in 1949 commissioned **John Bowlby**, a British psychologist and psychoanalyst, to write a report on the mental health of homeless children in Europe. The seminal report, *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, was published in 1951. Bowlby is given the distinction of being the originator of attachment theory.

Mary Ainsworth worked with Bowlby and expanded on his extensive work. Ainsworth, a Canadian developmental psychologist, became interested in universal characteristics of mother-infant interaction while in Kenya. In England, she went on to create the "Strange Situation," a laboratory research protocol for attachment observation. Her extensive research on maternal-infant attachment and the Strange Situation is a part of the infant mental health field to the present day. Some believe that her contributions have been inappropriately overshadowed by John Bowlby's.

While infant mental health's history is rooted in pathological outcomes attributable to devastating lack of nurturing social interaction in infancy, the field has broadened over the last six decades to include promotion, prevention, and advocacy in addition to intervention. Infant Mental Health also embraces the entire array of professionals and caregivers working with or on behalf of infants, toddlers, and young children.

Infant Mental Health Principles

- *Relationships matter*
 - Infant, Dyad, Triad
 - Family & Community Connections
 - Parents to Professionals
 - Professionals to Professionals
- *Parallel Process*
 - Parents support infants
 - Professionals support parents
 - Policies support professionals
- *Holding the Baby in Mind*
 - Ultimately, it's all about the baby
- *Assume positive intent*
 - Activate empathy
- *Infant Rights*
 - Just as children are not small adults, infants are not small children and have unique needs



Infant Mental Health Emerging in Medicine

- *IMH Integration in Primary Care*
 - [Positive Parenting Strategies](#)
 - [Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation](#)
- *Infant Mental Health Diagnostic Criteria*
 - DC:0-5
 - [Crosswalk to ICD-10 & DSM-5](#)
- *Reflective Supervision/ Consultation*
 - Unpacking challenging relationships
 - Exploring implicit bias
 - Processing vicarious trauma
 - Preventing burnout
 - [Facilitated reflective process](#)

Journals

- [Infant Mental Health Journal](#)
- [ZERO TO THREE Journal](#)