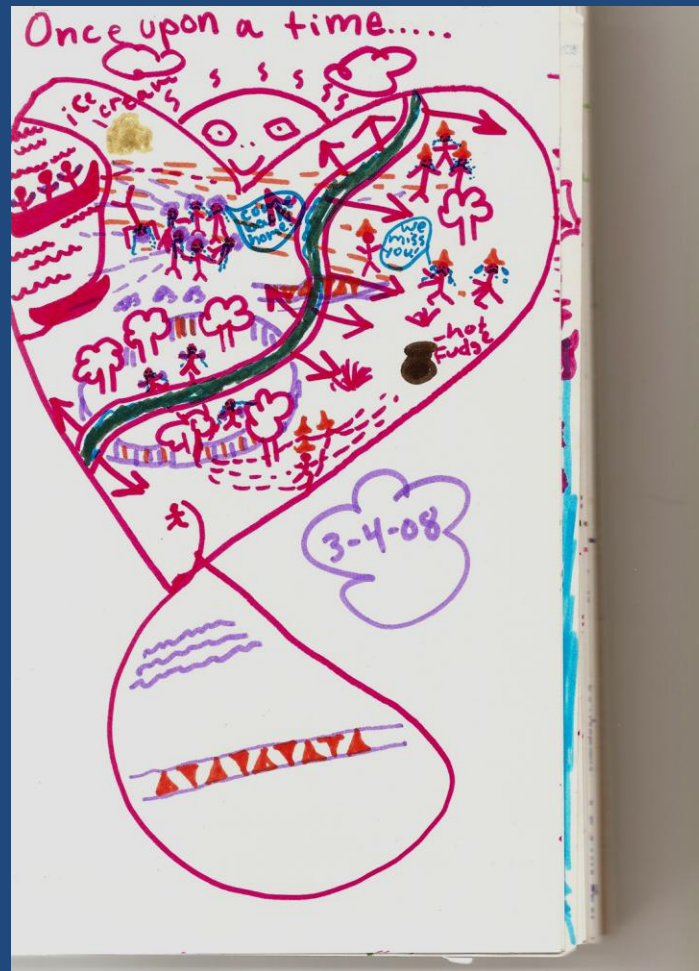


# Attachment :An Introduction

Dr. Marian Birch

# Self-portrait, 11 yr old girl ongoing parental litigation= 9 yrs





# *ANCESTRY: HOMO SAPIENS*

- Primates are social animals that have long infantile dependency and live in groups
- Human mothers are the **ONLY** primates who allow others to hold and care for their infants
- It has **ALWAYS** taken 'a village' to raise a human child



## *INSIGHTS FROM ANIMAL STUDIES*



*Monkey infants who grow up in social groups with competent mothers have larger brains, better coping abilities, better reasoning skills than isolated infants or infants with highly stressed mothers*

# Architecture of the Brain



*In the human brain,*

- *Connections between midbrain and cortex develop after birth*
- *These connections are sculpted by experience*
- *The most important kind of experience is interaction with caregivers*
- *Unrelieved distress alters brain structure*
- *Growth is phenomenally rapid until 18 months*
- *Between 18 months and 3 years, brain connections are pruned*
- *Pruning is based on*
  - *'use it or lose it'*
  - *'fire together, wire together'*

# The impact of fear & anxiety

- The brain's architecture is affected by chronic states of fearful arousal in infancy







# Architecture of the Brain



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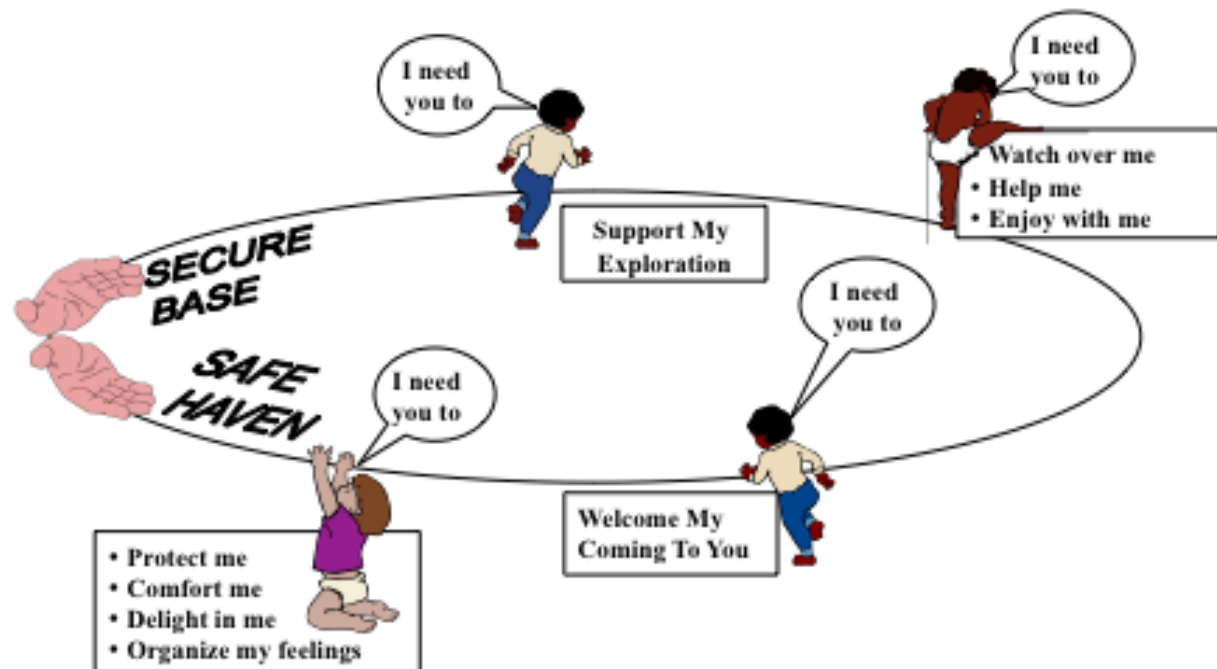
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# *ROLE OF PARENT-INFANT ATTACHMENT*

- Safety & protection
  - Prewired arousal and signaling to maintain contact with caregivers
- Affect regulation
  - Protection from fearful, pained arousal
  - Global infant arousal gradually becomes discrete emotions
  - Affect attunement
- Working model of relationship

# How Attachment Looks: The Circle of Security

## Circle of Security Parent Attending to the Child's Needs



© 2000 - Cooper, Hoffman, Marvin & Powell

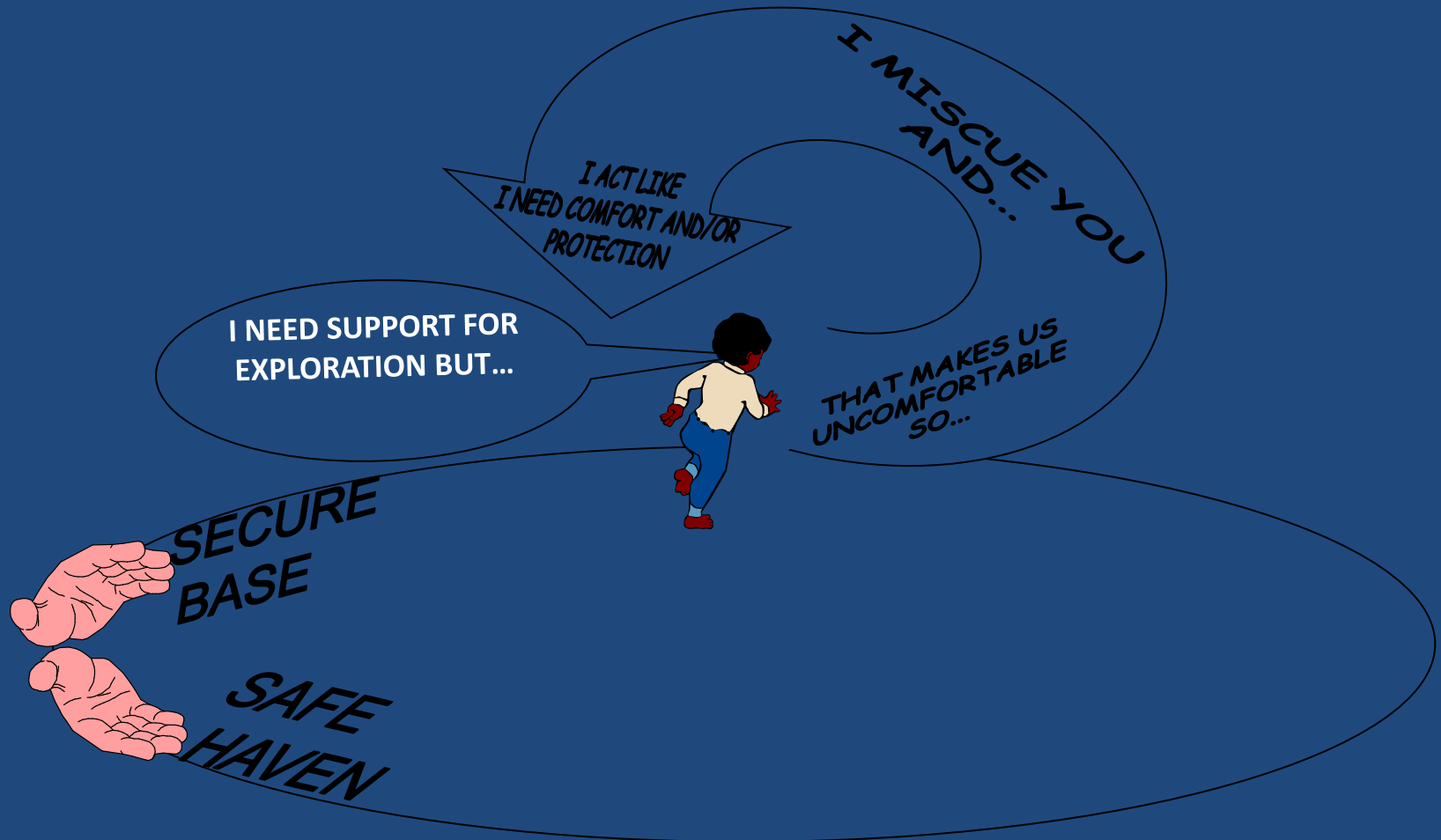
# CIRCLE OF LIMITED SECURITY

## Child Miscuing



# CIRCLE OF LIMITED SECURITY

## Child Miscoing



# The “Unthought Known”

**Attachment strategies, including their defensive and conflicted components, are examples of the non-conscious, implicit, or procedural representations that are developed in infancy before the explicit memory system associated with consciously recalled images or symbols is available.**

# Attachment classifications

		Type of attachment	Infant exploration	Infant separation & reunion behavior	Correlated caregiver traits	Correlated Adult pattern of attachment
		Secure	Uses caregiver as a secure base for exploration	Takes note of separation & behavior; indicates relief or pleasure on reunion; is readily comforted by caregiver	Accepting, empathic, affectionate sensitive, reliable caregiving	Normal, resolved, valuing intimate relationships and able to see viewpoints not their own.
		Insecure-avoidant	Often ignores caregiver and focuses exclusively on toys	Ignores caregiver's departure and return; actively or passively avoids contact. Heart rate, respiration and blood cortisol levels	Angry, irritable, rejecting caregiving. Caregiver is intolerant of infant distress.	Dismissive re importance of intimate relationships, emotionally constricted, often angry and irritable

# Attachment & Affect Regulation



Caregiving interactions, adverse experiences, and neglect all influence the child's developing brain and nervous system and how competently s/he can manage stress



## Attachment & Affect Regulation



# Adverse Childhood Experiences affect the Architecture of the Brain



- Sexual, emotional abuse
- Domestic violence, family violence
- Substance abuse in family member
- Mental illness in family member
- Parental loss by death, abandonment or due to child abuse or neglect
- Family member in prison



# Top 10 takeaway guidelines for an attachment-friendly parenting plan

- The child must be safe -- adequately supervised and protected from injury, illness, exploitation, excessive hunger, deprivation, fear or pain. This requires that the parent be responsible, aware of and able to provide the constant 'eyes on' that small children need, and willing to communicate in a clear, civil fashion with the other parent about current medical, psychological issues or other types of child

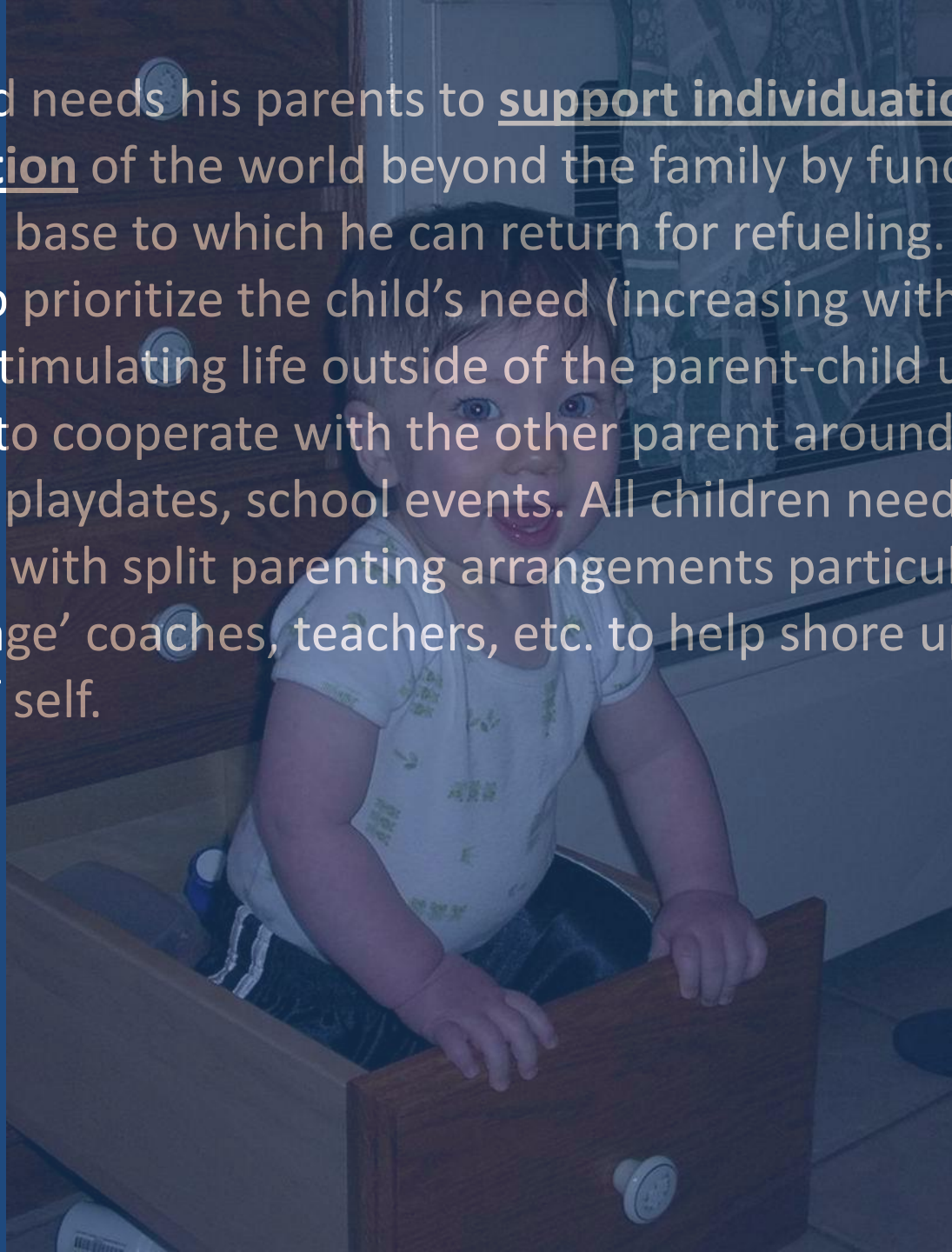


- The child must feel secure -- confident that his needs will be recognized and met consistently. This requires that the parent have a basic grasp of what is developmentally needed and desirable, and place a value on understanding the child's often unclear communications. It also requires a willingness to clearly and civilly communicate understandings to the other parent when appropriate.

- The child must be supported in developing a **coherent working model of relationships** that enables developing child to reach out for and accept help, information, and experience from others without indiscriminate risk-taking, crippling inhibitions or dangerous dysregulation. As we are social animals whose brains depend on social interaction to grow and develop, this is critical. This requires that the parent be consistent, emotionally available, and able to make amends when s/he has frightened the child or been unfair to the child. Most important, it requires the parent to honor the child's tie to the other parent and, to the extent possible, convey confidence that the other parent is a good-enough parent.

The child must be protected from conflict between his attachment figures, particularly conflict about him. Because children are egocentric, they will interpret any conflict as being about them. Because the child's sense of self is embedded in his attachment relationships, conflict between parents feels like conflict between unintegrated parts of the self, conflict within the self. This requires the parent to acknowledge that the inevitable conflict and animosity between parents is extremely frightening and distressing to children and to actively take whatever steps lie in his/her power to protect the child from being exposed to such conflict. Where parents seem unable to stop fighting in front of the child, the court needs to be aware that research shows that the psychological harm done by exposure to intense parental conflict is at least equal to, if not greater than that inflicted by physical abuse of the child.

- The child needs his parents to support individuation and exploration of the world beyond the family by functioning as a secure base to which he can return for refueling. The parent needs to prioritize the child's need (increasing with age) for a stable, stimulating life outside of the parent-child unit – and be able to cooperate with the other parent around sports, lessons, playdates, school events. All children need this, but children with split parenting arrangements particularly need the 'village' coaches, teachers, etc. to help shore up their sense of self.

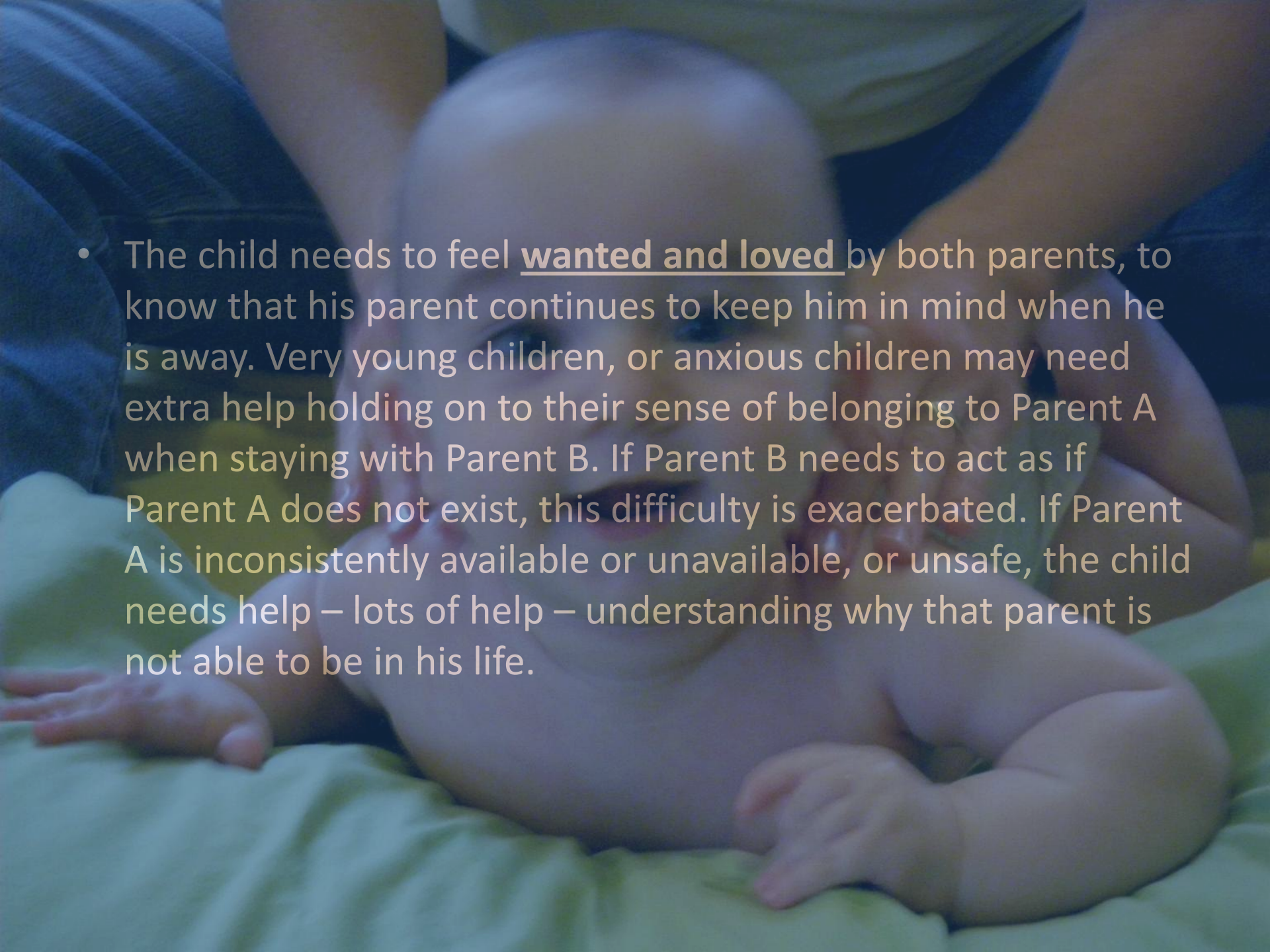




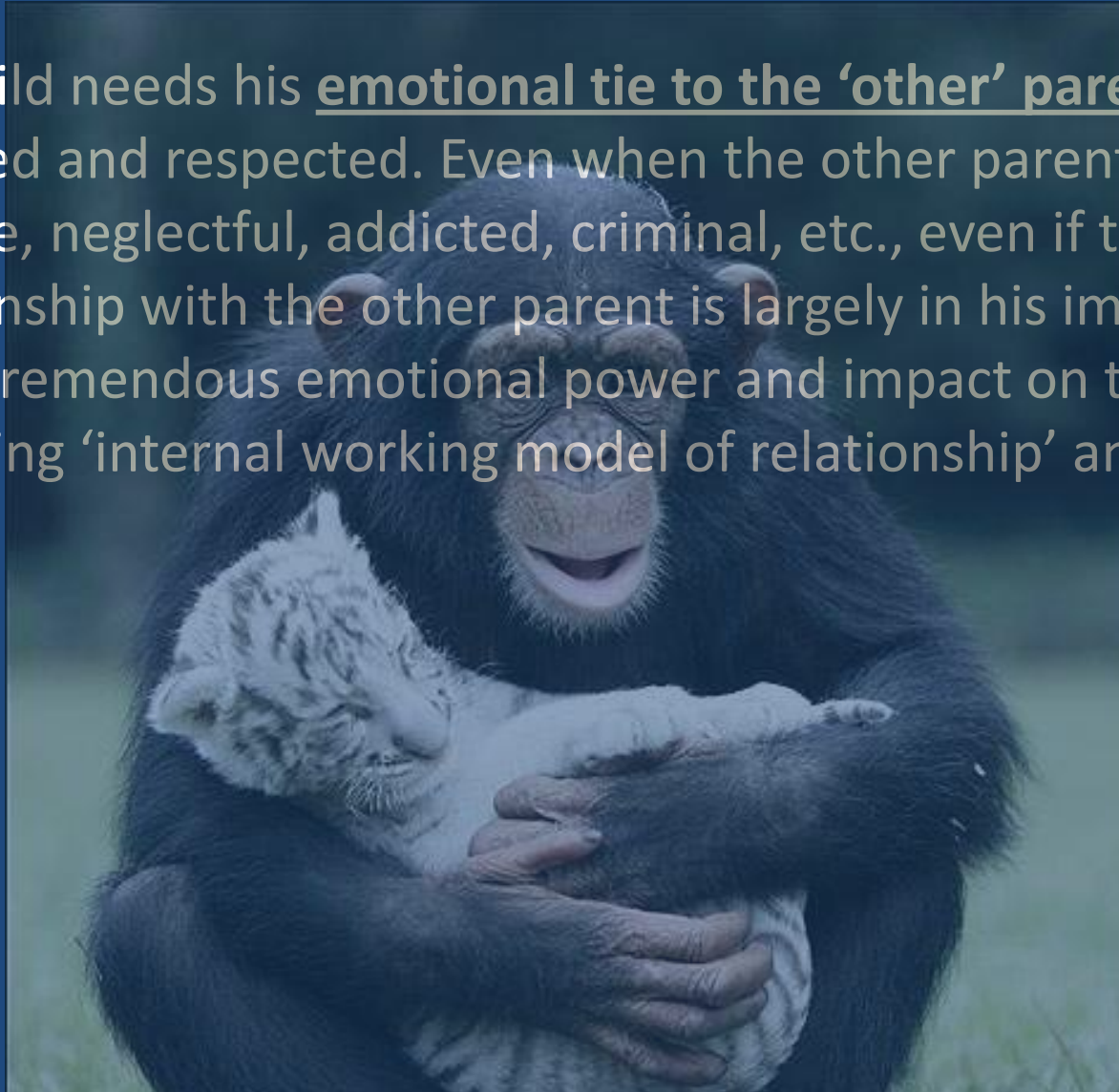
# consistency and routine

- The child needs consistency and routine, with both parents and in transitions, in order to develop an internal sense of time, confident knowledge of what to expect. All children do better when they can predict confidently what is going to happen next and how they are expected to behave. When they are continuously transitioning from one environment to another, this becomes even more valuable and important. Most children are flexible enough to do well with two different routines, if both are consistent and if the other parent respects each routine. Some children temperamentally have a lot of trouble adapting to change, and need more consistency.



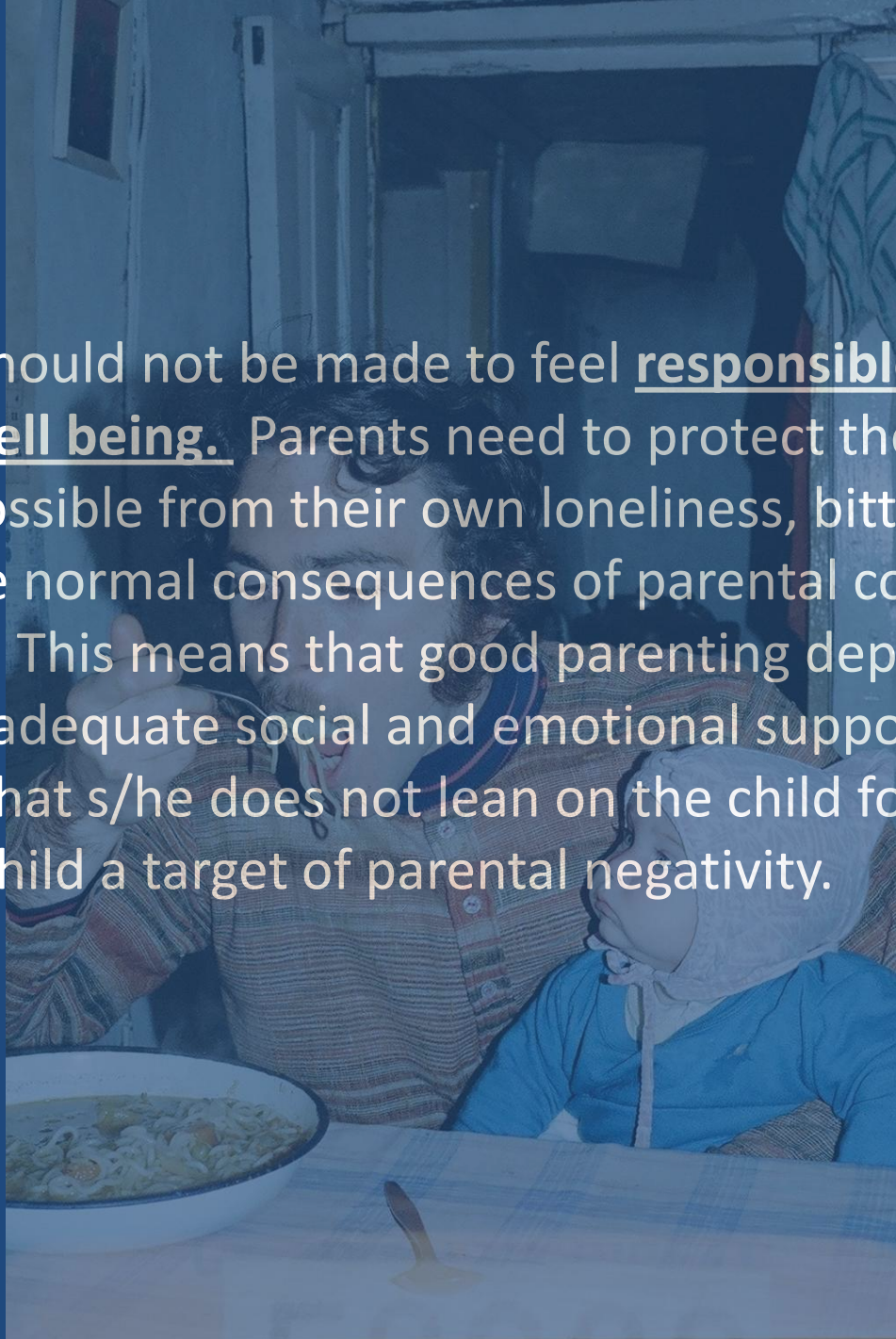
- 
- A close-up photograph of a baby lying on its stomach on a green blanket. The baby is looking up towards the camera with its mouth open, appearing to be in a state of distress or seeking attention. The background is slightly blurred, showing parts of an adult's legs and hands near the baby.
- The child needs to feel wanted and loved by both parents, to know that his parent continues to keep him in mind when he is away. Very young children, or anxious children may need extra help holding on to their sense of belonging to Parent A when staying with Parent B. If Parent B needs to act as if Parent A does not exist, this difficulty is exacerbated. If Parent A is inconsistently available or unavailable, or unsafe, the child needs help – lots of help – understanding why that parent is not able to be in his life.

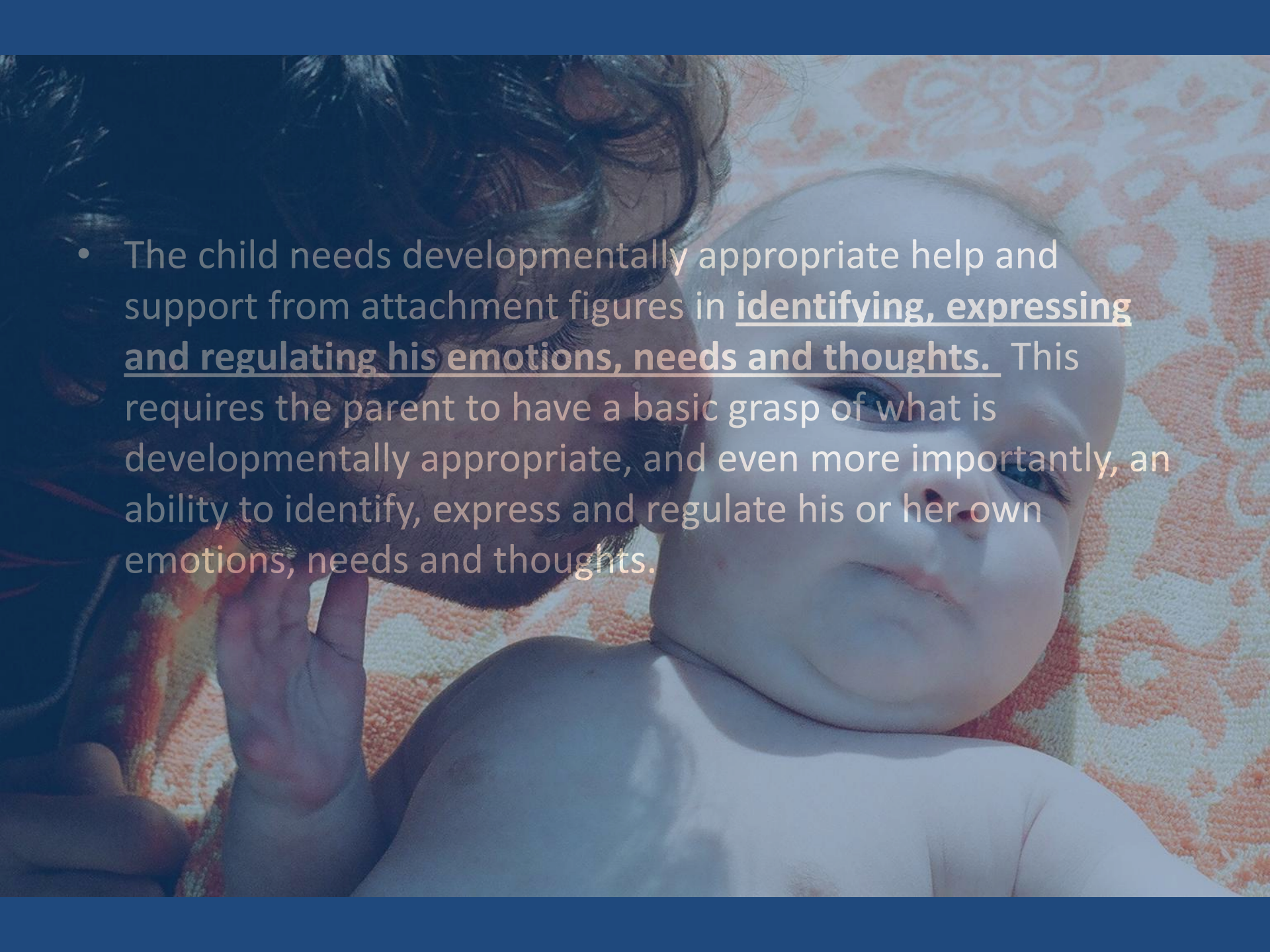
- The child needs his emotional tie to the 'other' parent to be honored and respected. Even when the other parent is abusive, neglectful, addicted, criminal, etc., even if the child's relationship with the other parent is largely in his imagination, it has tremendous emotional power and impact on the emerging 'internal working model of relationship' and sense of self.





- The child should not be made to feel responsible for the parents' well being. Parents need to protect their children as much as possible from their own loneliness, bitterness, fear etc that are normal consequences of parental conflict and separation. This means that good parenting depends to a degree on adequate social and emotional support for the parent so that s/he does not lean on the child for comfort, or make the child a target of parental negativity.



- 
- The child needs developmentally appropriate help and support from attachment figures in identifying, expressing and regulating his emotions, needs and thoughts. This requires the parent to have a basic grasp of what is developmentally appropriate, and even more importantly, an ability to identify, express and regulate his or her own emotions, needs and thoughts.