

1001 Critical Days Lecture Series @ Parliament

Baby Bonds: foundation for lifelong health



Professor Charles Zeanah

Short Biography

Dr. Zeanah is Mary Peters Sellars-Polchow Chair in Psychiatry, Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics, and Vice-Chair for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Tulane University School of Medicine in New Orleans. He also directs the Institute of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health at Tulane. Throughout his career, he has studied the effects of adverse early experiences and interventions designed to enhance recovery. He is the editor of three editions of the Handbook of Infant Mental Health and with Charles Nelson and Nathan Fox, the co-author of Romania's Abandoned Children: Deprivation, Brain Development and the Struggle for Recovery and author of more than 250 scientific publications.

Abstract

Learning to Love

Attachment describes a young child's tendency to seek comfort, support, nurturance, and protection selectively from a small number of adult caregivers. Human infants are biologically predisposed to form attachments to caregivers and do so except in conditions of serious deprivation. Typically, infants form "focused" attachments in the second half of the first year of life, heralded by the onset of behaviours that are qualitatively distinct from previous behaviours. Young children's attachments may be different with different caregivers, depending on the kinds of experiences that they have with those caregivers. Healthy, secure attachments protect children from maladaptive outcomes, especially those who begin life experiencing various forms of extreme caregiving adversity.



Professor Marian J. Bakermans - Kranenburg

Short Biography

Marian J. Bakermans-Kranenburg is a professor of child and family studies at Leiden University, the Netherlands. Her research focuses on attachment and emotion regulation in parents and children, and the interplay between 'nature' and 'nurture'. She has been involved in several studies on institutionalization, adoption, and parenting interventions.

Abstract

Family Matters

The effects of parenting and the rearing environment have been queried by behavioral genetic research. The current generation of genetic studies however ascribes more influence to parenting and the interplay between nature and nurture. Moreover, the environmental impact on gene expression underlines the significance of parenting, and the massive catch-up after adoption or placement in foster care in previously institutionalized children demonstrates the importance of growing up in a family. Parents need support in parenting their children, in particular with children who suffer from delays and developmental or behavioral difficulties, and challenge their caregivers' expectations and parenting capacities.