

# Fluency

## MOVING FROM REFLECTION TO CONNECTION

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### Premise 1

Reflective practice aims to heighten and contain awareness of our own experiences, reactions and responses, to better allow us to be open to others' experiences, reactions and responses.

Single Slices / Peter Kohlsaat

I have to spend quality  
time with my parents  
or they'll become dysfunctional.\*



\* and so will I....

## Premise 2

But reflection is the start to a process.

- We foster the sensation of being understood,
- by shifting how we perceive behavior and emotions,
- to better appreciate the deeply communicative intent of both,
- so we can build shared stories,
- to permit fluency - ways of talking that promote connection.

## Attachment



The essence of **attachment**:  
early experience of being  
known, to facilitate security  
regulation and organization.

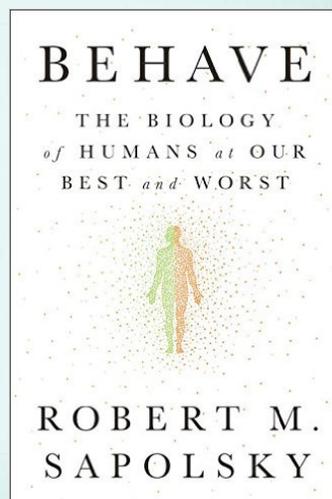
High RF and low RF influence  
attachment experience.

## Perceiving behavior

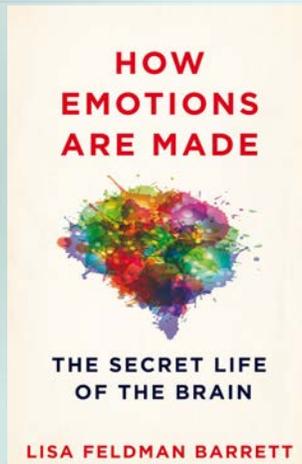
Advances in neurobiological  
understanding of behavior: for a purpose,  
= "self serving", often to manage internal  
distress and fear.

Behavior is also a signal to others.

What we all hope -- that when I behave,  
someone will be interested and wonder  
"why is she doing that?"



# Constructing emotions



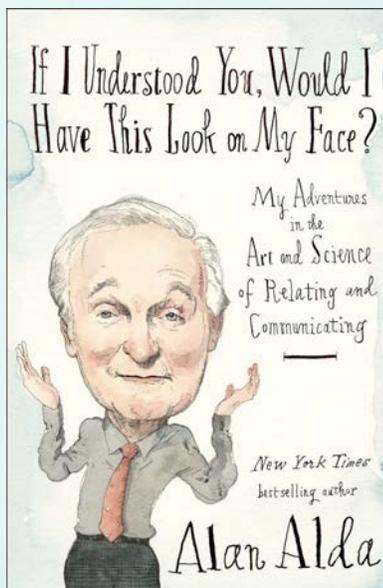
Emotions are not only innate, but are continually constructed through transactions with others.

In these transactions we feel about ourselves and others and realize how and why we perceive things. Our brains are deciding and reorganizing experiences continually in part to confirm or re-construct meaning.

## Communicative purpose: to be interested and intentional



## Others are catching on...



## My story...or shared stories?

- Clinical tendency to write “fiction” — to create characters we believe we know.
- Instead, **learn to listen to another’s story**...their experiences and beliefs and intentions and desires. Within this story, we find common ground. We recognize our own stories...or imagine how this story could be ours.
- Stories are shared when 1) there is found commonality and 2) empathy that bridges differences.

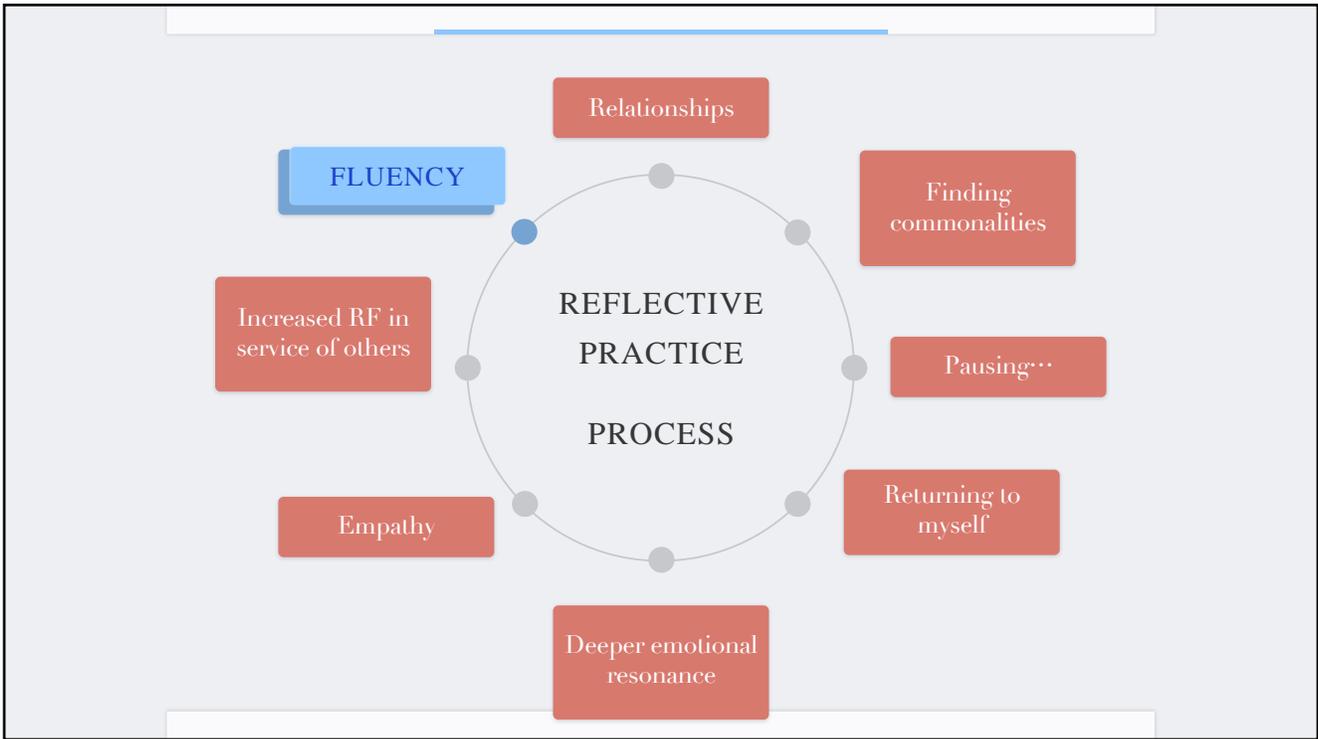
# Empathy /E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.

Reiss, H. 2014

- Eye contact
- Muscles of facial expression
- Posture
- Affect
- Tone of voice
- Hearing the whole person
- Your response

## How we all communicate...

- **Behaving** is always first.
- “**Squalking**” = compelling sounds that signal intense emotions
- **Talking** is the uniquely human capacity to convey feelings and needs in words, so that I *can hear myself* and others can share in my experience.
- Words become valuable tools to build coherence and to construct meaning that can be shared. ***Name it and tame it.***



# Fluency

The magic of sharing words

## Defining fluency

- **Fluency** is how we use words...but as importantly, how we think about connecting.
- To describe it: flowing, kind, clear and concise, without a lot of apparent effort.
- **Fluency** becomes a state of mind...a way of moving in present moment, being aware of the other.

## And..

- when you experience the other's responses, you get hooked.
- Lecturing, describing, instructing, imposing will lose their thrill. **Fluency** assures a verbal style that values process flow more than content especially the other's process.
- When I am lacking in fluency, I can feel it...it is as if my mouth feels crowded with empty sounds.

## Why fluency?

- **Fluency** makes it possible for words to connect me with another person.
- But also, for words to become useful for the other person.
- When a provider is being effectively fluent, the other feels more connected to their own experiences, and it becomes easier to say more...feel more...even understand more.
- Our goal: to use reflective energies as a force for fluency.

## How I learned fluency...



### **DEVELOPMENTAL REPAIR:** A Training Manual

*An Intensive Treatment Model for Working with  
Young Children Who Have Experienced Complex Trauma  
and Present with Aggressive and Disruptive Symptoms*

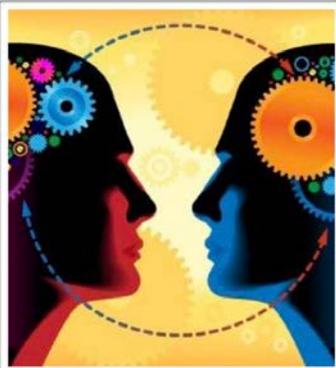
by Anne Gearity, PhD, LICSW



## Repairing the rhythms of care

- \* Working with infants, young children and their parents includes a lot of rhythmical exchanges...because being an infant, toddler or parent requires finding the rhythms.
- \* Words are not dominant, and when there is stress, the relationship can become discordant and needs help to restore "musicality." (Trevathan)
- \* But we are highly verbal: we live in the world of words.
- \* **Fluency** is a bridge between no words and too many words. Not sing song, but organizing ...

## Fluency facilitates negotiation

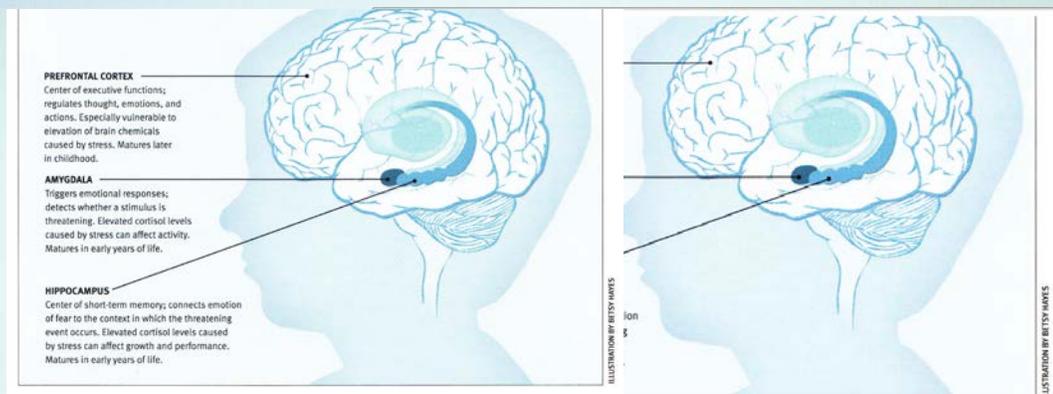


- \* Negotiation is another outcome of attachment security. We are not the same.
- \* This is about getting in sync with another, aligning enough to have common needs and to work things out.
- \* Louis Sander described negotiation as central to the toddler experience, as the child realizes *my mind...and your mind.*
- \* **Fluency** allows for differences as well

## Fluency and trauma

- Positive emotions are essential to maintain fluent connection.
- *“Two key ingredients in the treatment of trauma: (a) supporting developmental progress and (b) encouraging the (re-)discovery and practice of pleasurable emotional investment in the self, others, and the world through the affective experience of interest, enthusiasm, joy, elation, self- confidence, reciprocity, intimacy, and love”* Lieberman et. al, 2005

## Fear brain/ learning brain



- Stressed children and adults cannot permit reflection and self awareness when threat

## Getting to fluency

- Fluency takes practice and confidence.
- It is simple...not simplistic.
- But it isn't hard...once you understand it's value. Like any new language, it flows the more you use it.

### FLUENCY BOOT CAMP

1. Joining another accurately reduces agitation and dysregulation.
  - \* Many new professionals have lots of facts *in their heads*...but too little experience sharing ideas. Reflective consultation supports their ability to not know, but to be with...
  - \* To be **fluent**, you must be willing to be open and honest and genuine. Defensiveness defeats fluency, as does any need to control or impose beliefs or diagnosis.
  - \* A good formulation — especially one that recognizes patterns or themes — helps a lot.



## FLUENCY BOOT CAMP

2. **Fluency** is not just repeating back but adding to: we help others feel more organized, engaged with their own experiences.

- \* Use of metaphors/ images/ allegory can be useful...and can be off-putting if these are not shared. Don't get too invested in your artistry.
- \* This **fluent** awareness allows recognition, relief and problem solving = more effective interventions.
- \* And **fluency** is actually fun!



and *fluency*

Experiment: ask a provider to tell the story/ and then have another "be that person"/ child or adult. This help people "feel" the interactive experience = protected access to empathy and fluency.

And finally, there is a place for

STOP TALKING