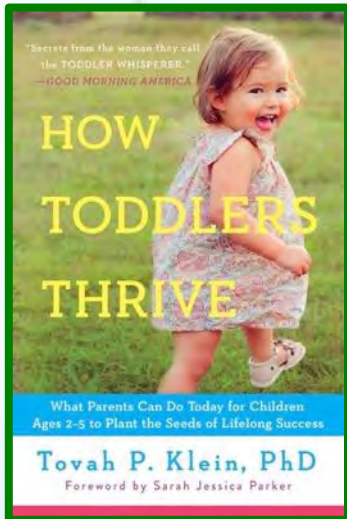


# Seeing the World from a Toddler Point of View (Delightful & Perplexing)

## AZ STRONG FAMILIES CONFERENCE



***Tovah P. Klein, Ph.D.***  
***Barnard Center for Toddler Development***

[howtoddlersthrive.com](http://howtoddlersthrive.com)



# THE TODDLER WORLD

- ALL ABOUT ME!
- Emotions are new
- Parents matter- A LOT
- Everything is new
- **SECURITY & TRUST** a must



# TODDLER WORLD (Wacky & Wonderful)



- Wonder & Curiosity
- Exuberance & Passion
- Discovery & Un-conventionality
- Repetition - over & over again!
- Now-now-NOW
- ME ME ME ME ME



# THEIR WORLD IS NOT OURS



**Seeing life from the  
Toddler Point of View**

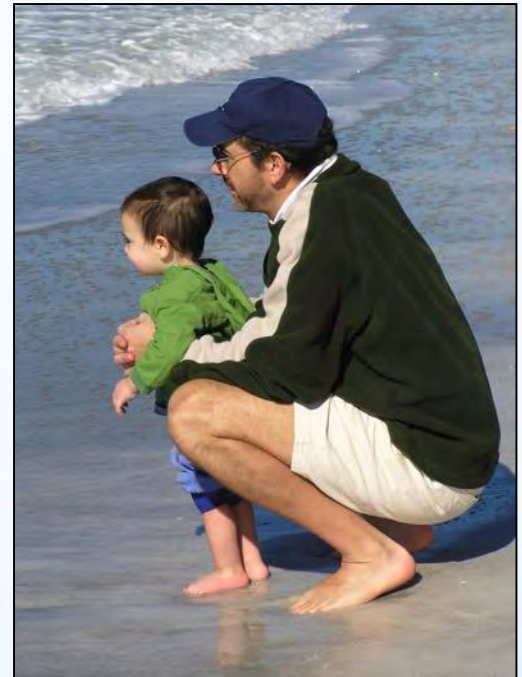
# DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

- Separation
- Becoming Me
- New emotions
- Language
- Figuring it Out



# SEPARATION: THE CORE DEVELOPMENTAL TASK

- Attachment
  - Then separation
- Emerging sense of self-
  - 'I am my own person'
- Push-Pull: attachment & exploration
  - On-going process
- Emotions: processing loss
- **BUILDING TRUST** above all else





# SEPARATION ALSO MEANS FIGURING IT OUT

- Making sense of the world
  - Brings organization & security
- Who am I?
  - What it means to be ME
- Emotions
  - What is this feeling?
  - Learning to handle (regulate)
- They are SUPPOSED to be self centered (for now)



**Self centered behaviors can seem 'rude'**

# INDEPENDENCE BEGINS



Means 'doing it my way'- a challenge at times



*YET: "I don't want to be alone."*



*THE WORLD IS A **BIG** PLACE*

*I need adults I trust to be there for me*

*Lots is new for me- changes can scare me*

# ***HOW DO TODDLERS CHALLENGE?***

- **Can't sit still/move a lot**
- **Impulsive; Aggressive**
- **Doesn't listen or follow routine**
- **Transitions can be hard**
- **Control battles**
- **Unpredictable- emotions/behavior shift suddenly**
- **Shy, reticent, observer, hard to connect with**
- **Throwing; dumping water; defiance**

# WHAT IS YOUR CHALLENGE?

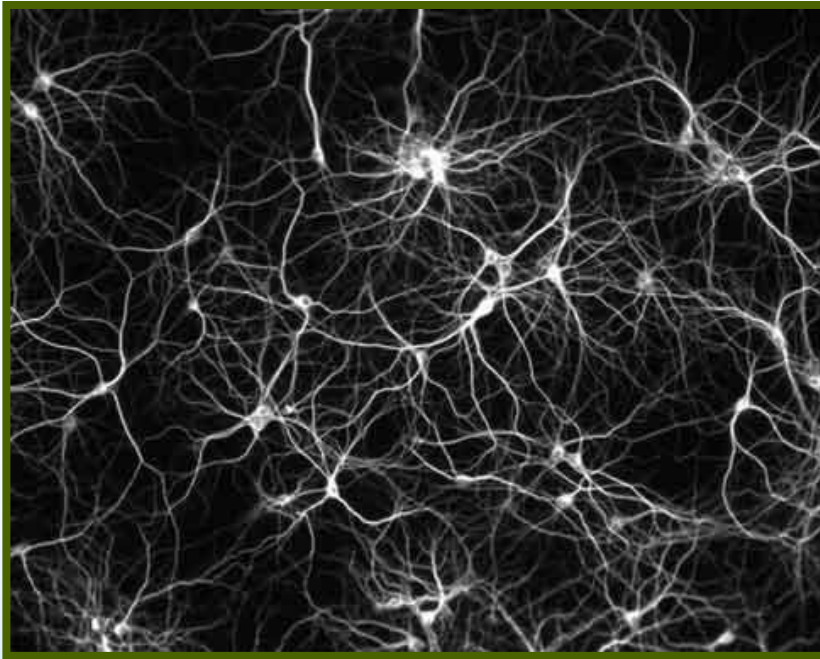
(What is the PARENT'S challenge?)





*What underlies all of these  
toddler challenges?*

# UNDER-DEVELOPED BRAIN = LACK OF IMPULSE OR EMOTION CONTROL



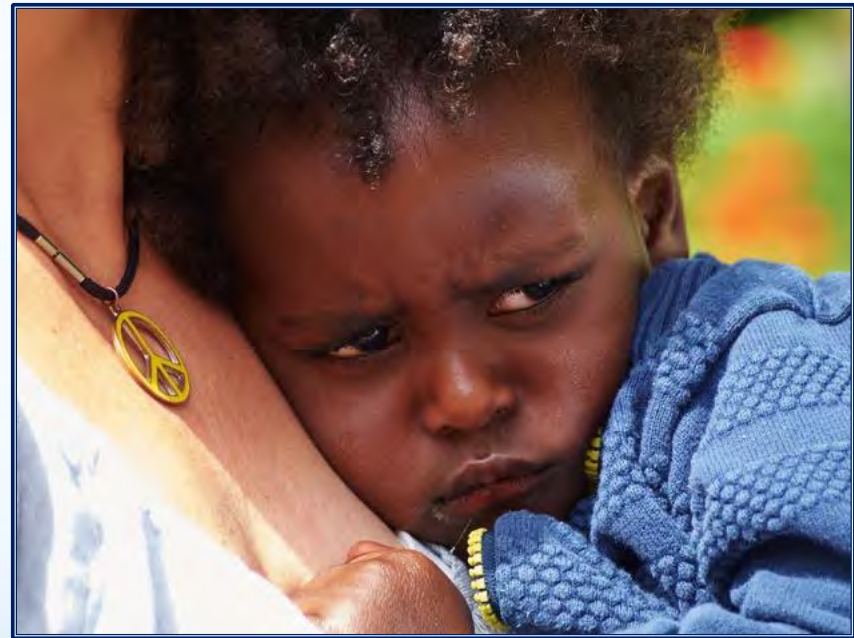
1 million synapse connections  
per second!



**Most Rapid Time of Brain Development- exponential growth**

# TODDLER EMOTIONS ARE INTENSE

*(with little ability to control them)*



Reflect:  
How do you react to these emotions?



# *NO (ZERO) SENSE OF TIME*



**Routines & Repetition  
Help organize the child**

# *EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS*

- Executive Function Skills are key for successful development
  - Predictive of school & social success, above and beyond IQ
  - Decision making, focus/attention, shifting/flexibility, initiative, agency, planning, sequencing

**Developed through play & parent-child interactions**

# WHY CHILDREN PLAY & PLAY & PLAY

- To communicate their experiences
- To make sense of the world
- To be understood
- To express and explore emotions
- To gain control; explore; discover
- For pleasure

**Learning happens  
through play**





Playing- What is he doing?



# BRINGING ORDER TO MY WORLD



Repetition & Lining Up; Organizing object; Calming

# *Order, predictability or 'lining up our ducks'*



**Daily routines; organization of toys, objects, clothes**



*"I Need Control"- at times, LOTS  
Sameness; Not flexible*



**EX: Same Foods, Same Clothes, Same bedtime ritual**

# PLAY AS A WAY TO PROCESS...

## Emotions

- Sadness
- Fear
- Anger

AND

## Experiences

- Separation
- New baby
- Potty training





***We're Gonna Be Late***





# PROCESSING SEPARATION

- Hide and seek
- Peek-a-Boo



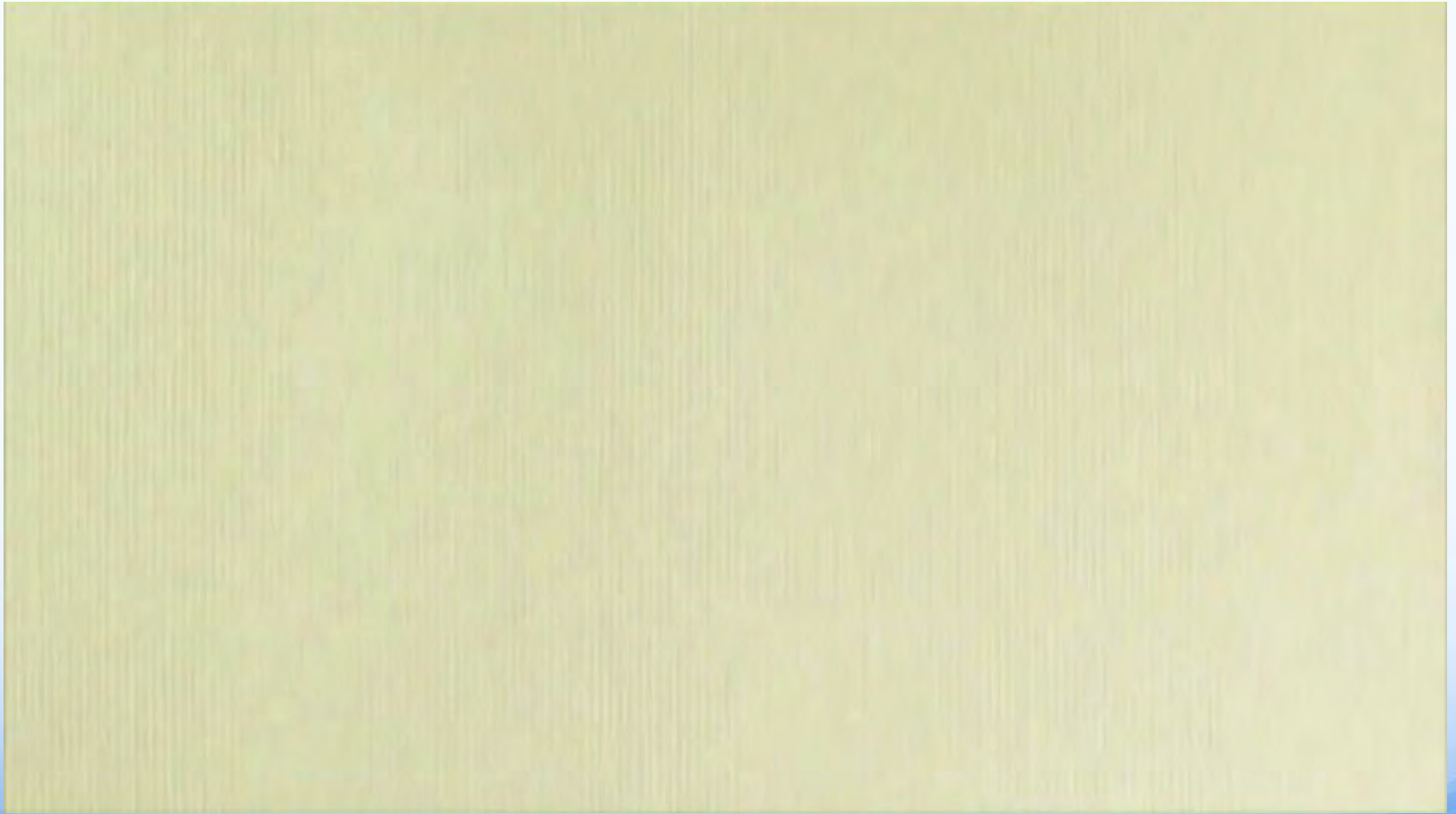
- Scarves, curtains for hiding
- Boxes to hide & find

# PLAYING OUT SEPARATION

- 'Coming and Going' Toys Tunnels, tubes
- Open and closing doors to cabinets, hiding toys & finding them
- Toy phones to connect to mommy/daddy



# *The Leaving Game*





# *EXPRESSING ANGER IN PLAY*



It can be hard for adults to allow children's anger

# *A NEW SIBLING (from the toddler view)*



# LEARNING ABOUT OTHERS



**Peers- roots of empathy, cooperation, sharing are planted**

**Sharing comes LATER**

**Understanding 'OTHER' Takes Time**



# *FROM PROXIMITY TO COLLABORATION*



# *SHAME FOLLOWS SENSE OF SELF*



... feelings are complicated

When sense of self is new...





# PROCESSING STRESSFUL EXPERIENCES:

## Doctor/ER Visits

- Loss of Control
- Feelings of blame
- Anger
- Confusion



- Doctor kits
- Nebulizer masks
- Eye patches
- Casts

**Think about materials to provide**



# Play to Process Traumatic Events



# Processing Emotions for the Home Visitor

Debrief your experiences with a supportive co-worker

- How did you feel? What is your frustration? What is your joy?
- What was it like for you to experience the conflict/behavior/emotion of the child or the challenge of the parent or the telling of their trauma?
- How did you feel towards the child/family?

Identify what it triggers in yourself. Reflection is important.

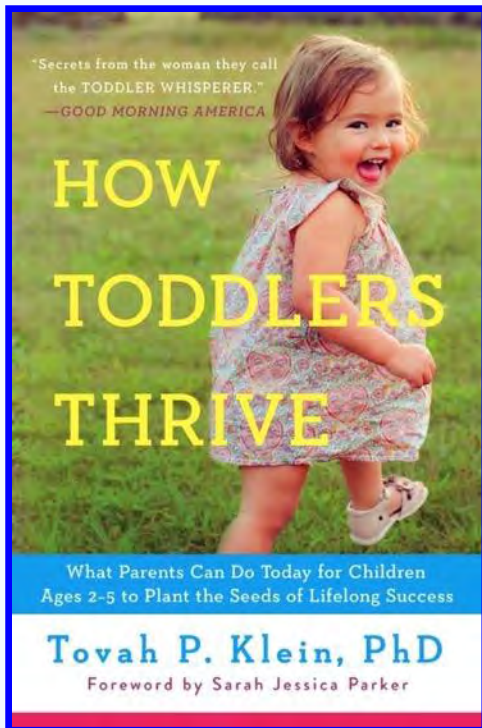
**TIME TO REFLECT MATTERS**

SECURITY = EXPLORATION = GROWTH



**Learning everyday IS  
the toddlers' world**





# THANK YOU!

TOVAH P. KLEIN, PH.D.

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TODDLER DEVELOPMENT

MORE at:

[Howtoddlersthrive.com](http://Howtoddlersthrive.com) (Free E-newsletter)

[Facebook.com/howtoddlersthrive](https://Facebook.com/howtoddlersthrive)

TWITTER: @tovahklein

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