



***Innovations in Autism Intervention:
Research and Practice of DIRFloortime®***

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How would an autistic kid's and his family's life look like in different eras?



1970S - PRESENT



1900S-1940S



1940S-1980S



1980S-2010S

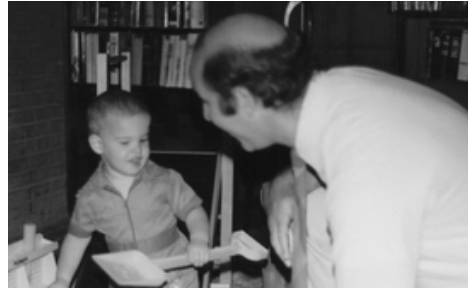


2010S.....

The Pioneering Legacy of Greenspan



"In order to feel good about himself, a child must be successful in his own eyes, not just in your eyes. Self-esteem is an inner feeling: Sometimes it corresponds with outer reality, and sometimes it doesn't."



"If our society were truly to appreciate the significance of children's emotional ties throughout the first years of life, it would no longer tolerate children growing up or parents having to struggle in situations which could not possibly nourish healthy growth."



"Learning first occurs as a part of emotional interactions; it involves the split-second initiatives that children take as they try to engage other people, interact with them, communicate and reason with them."



"Empathy comes from being empathized with."

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2010S.....

DIR and DIRFloortime

- **Theory:** DIR is the Developmental, Individual-differences, and Relationship-based model developed by Dr. Stanley Greenspan
- **Practice:** DIRFloortime is the application of the DIR theoretical framework. When used to address developmental challenges, it is considered an intervention.



DIRFloortime®: Key Ideas

- ❖ Focused on the core challenges directly rather than behavioral manifestations of the core challenges. An “inside-out” approach.
- ❖ Focused on promoting foundational and necessary human development. The “D”
- ❖ No two people are alike. Individual differences are the norm not the exception. The “I”
- ❖ Affectively charged relationships are essential for development. The “R”
- ❖ “Being” vs. “Doing”
- ❖ Strength-based, respectful, engaging, and joyful intervention. “Floortime”



Understanding Affect

Psychological Approaches Use

Affect

Behavior

and/or

Cognition



Behavioral approaches

- Focus is on what you can see and measure. If you cannot see it or measure it, it is not considered.
- Compliance and easily observable skills are emphasized
- To increase wanted behavior: reward.
- To decrease unwanted behavior: punish or ignore.
- Assume that bottom line improves with discrete skills.

DIRFloortime

- Surface behavioral changes are not the end goal. Internal changes are.
- Isolated skills and compliance are de-emphasized.
- Intrinsic rewards and motivation are key, starting with finding pleasure in relationships.
- Affect is emphasized at all times.



Behavioral approaches

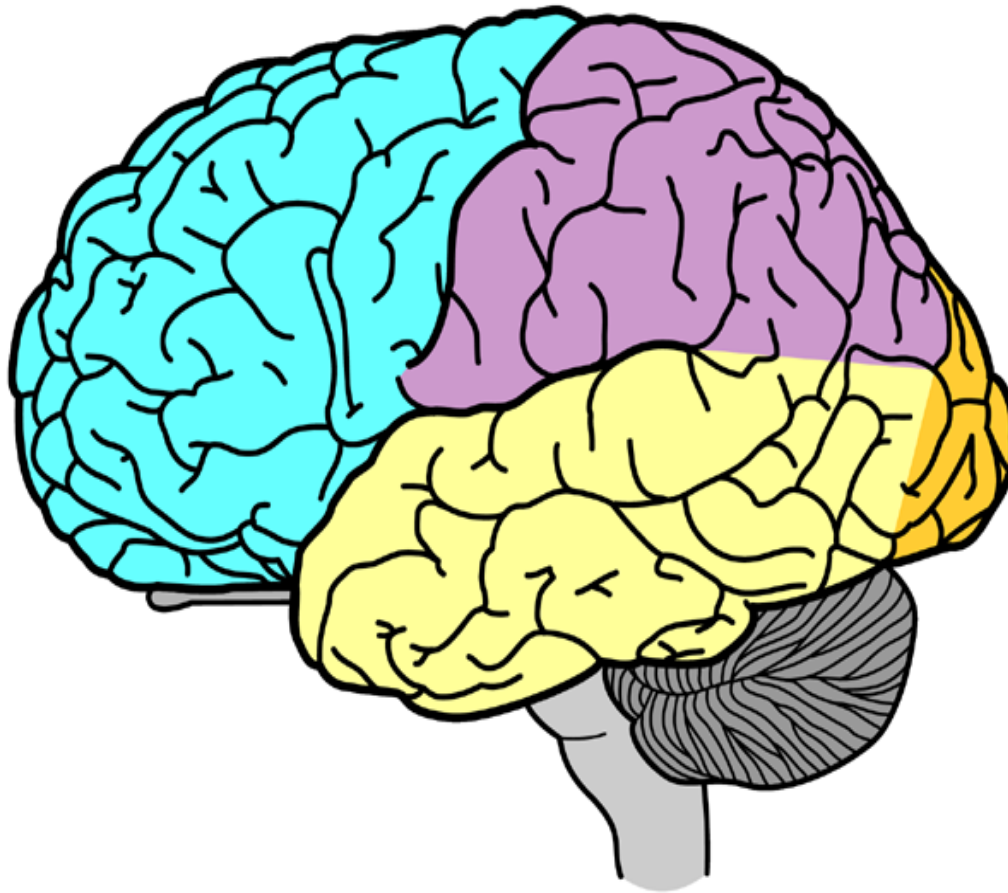
- Child learns to avoid the punisher.
- Child performs only when extrinsic reward is possible.
- Child gains rote skills rather than abstract reasoning.
- Core deficits are not improved with discrete skill improvement.
- Lack of generalization of skills especially with pragmatic communication since there are so, so many different situations possible.
- Child is discouraged (due to being asked to do what is impossible.)

DIRFloortime

- Seek to understand core deficits rather than focusing on outward symptoms and behaviors.
- Support and increase core functions of relating, communicating, reasoning and thinking.
- Remove or bypass constitutional barriers.
(e.g. speaking slowly to a child with auditory processing challenges; avoiding sensations a child finds aversive)



A word about ... **THE BRAIN and AUTISM**

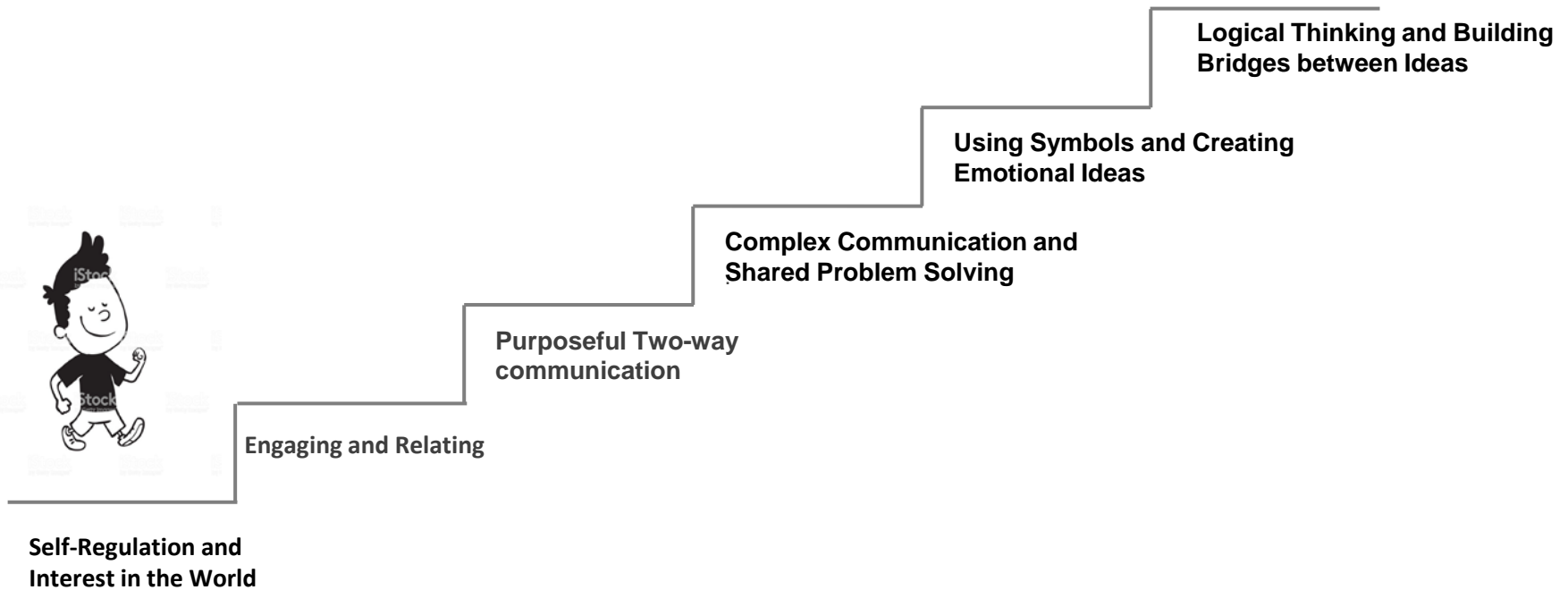


The DIRFloortime Model

- Developmental
- Individual Difference
- Relationship-Based



Developmental ladder: the “D”



Individual Differences: The “I” in DIR

- Each child has a unique capacity to take in, integrate, manage, and react to sensory input from the environment, from others, and from his or her own body.
- No two children are alike in their expression of autism or other challenges of relating and communicating.
- No treatment is “one size fits all.” Multiple techniques and therapies are called for.



Individuals differ in many ways

- Health
- Sensory/Motor Processing
- Auditory Processing
- Visual Processing
- Support systems
 - Family/Therapists/Community Resources



“Fundamental things that happen” through Emotionally- Charged Relationship

Relationship:

- Draws child into shared world**
- Motivates child to attend and communicate**
- Supports self-regulation**
- Creates sense of purpose**
- Strengthens spatial skills**
- Creates foundation for learning math concepts and reading comprehension**

From Engaging Autism, Chapter 6: Fostering Attention and Engagement, page 65-77

In the Absence of Affect

So what happens to a relationship when all affect is removed and responses from one partner are muted or absent?



Video: Still Face (Dr. Ed Tronick)

- ❖ Baby tries everything she can to get Mom back: smiles, points, puts both hands up to say “what’s going on?!”, screeches.
- ❖ When Mom doesn’t respond, even in a brief window, Baby experiences extreme stress.



Video: Still Face (alt)



The D, I and R are Interrelated!

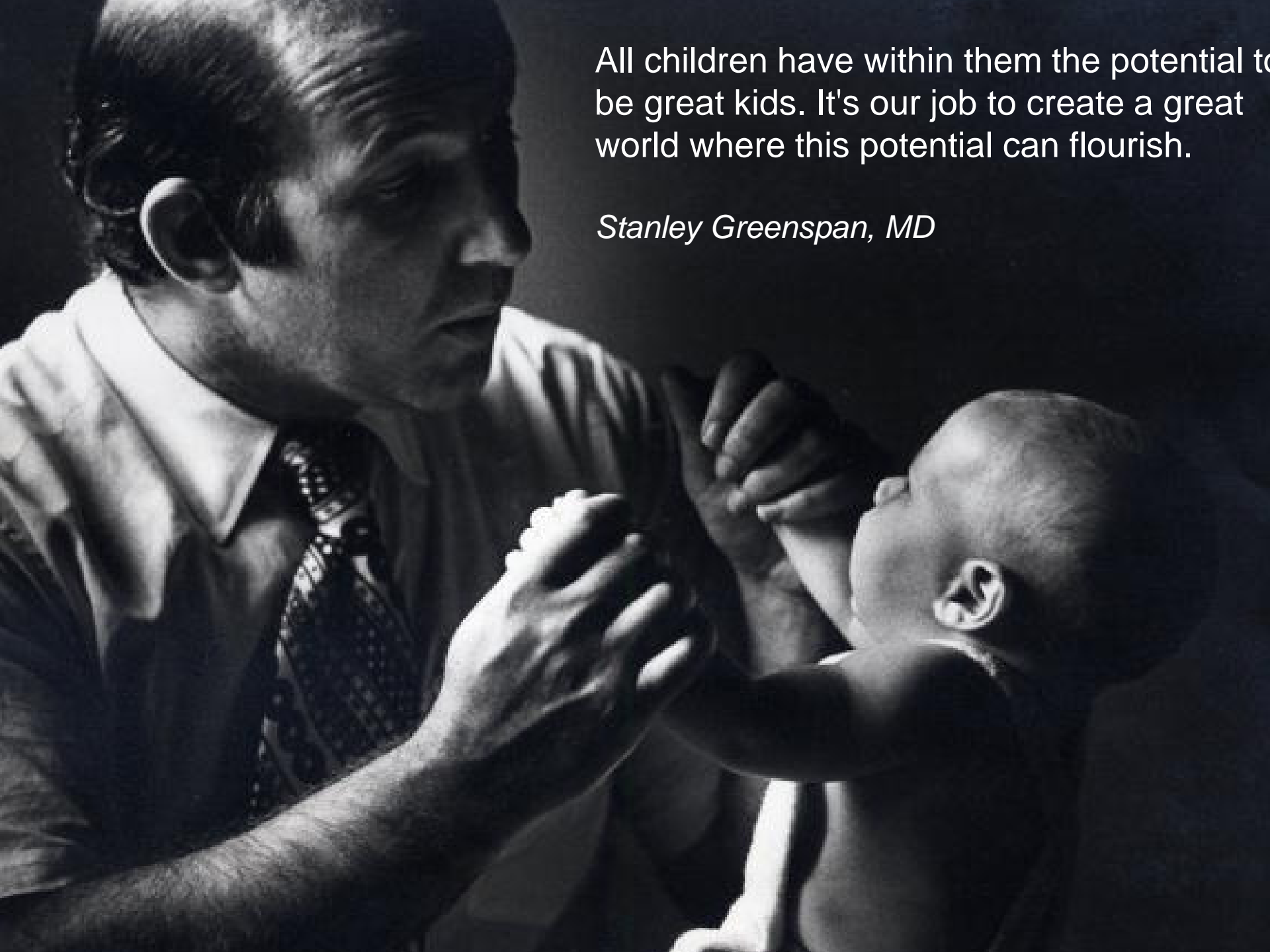
- The D and the I tell you how to work on the R
 - The D tells you where to start...
 - The I tells you what to emphasize or strategically avoid with *this* child who has *this* unique profile...
- A strong R is essential for progress in the D and the I
 - Remember the fundamental things that happen through relationship!



Principles of Floortime

- Attune to child's affect
- Co-regulate
- Follow the child's motivation
- Move up and down the ladder with the child
- Maintain continuous circles of communication
- Expand and challenge when appropriate
- Remember self-reflection





All children have within them the potential to
be great kids. It's our job to create a great
world where this potential can flourish.

Stanley Greenspan, MD