# THE BIG SIX

## WHAT EVERY CHILD NEEDS FROM THEIR PARENTS

As a child, your most important attachment was with your primary caregivers. These relationships shaped your brain more than anything else. Every child needs the following six things from their parents.

## 1 Attunement

Were your parents so attuned to you that they knew what you were feeling? A parent that is often distracted by their own needs, wants, emotions, and personal pain cannot be attuned to the child's needs.

## 2 Responsiveness

When you were distressed (mad, sad, afraid), did your parents *respond* to you? Did they offer comfort, care, and kindness?

## 3 Engagement

Did your parents have an internal intention and genuine desire to truly know you—to know your heart? Were they willing and able to engage with you on a heart level? Were you *pursued* by your parents?

## 4 Ability to Regulate Your Arousal

Arousal refers to the bodily sensations you feel inside during moments of distress. If your mother was attuned enough to you and willing to respond to you and engage with you, then she was able to effectively regulate your arousal.

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In other words, she was able to soothe you when you were anxious or scared, and stimulate you when you were shutting down.

As an infant you had absolutely no ability to regulate your own arousal. However, if your mother was willing to interactively regulate your arousal, then she enabled you to learn how to regulate your own arousal—to calm your own anxiety and spring to life again when you were going numb. A child cannot regulate his or her own arousal—the child is utterly dependent on their mother's ability to regulate it for them.

## 5 Strong Enough to Handle Your Negative Emotions

Did your parents welcome your anger, sadness, and fear? As a child, you needed to be free to express negative emotions—to cry, rage, or fall silent—knowing that you would be responded to in a loving, meaningful way. You needed to know deep down that your emotions were accepted and allowed in your home.

Did your parents communicate (verbally or nonverbally) that your anger, sadness, and/or fear was somehow "bad" or unwelcome? If so, this had a big impact on the development of your brain.

## 6 Willingness to Repair

When your parents hurt you, did they own and rectify the harm done? A healthy, secure attachment is not built on the absence of failure but on the willingness of the parent to own and rectify failures when they do occur.

No parent gets it right 100% of the time. Parents get tired, distracted, and frustrated. They get stressed out trying to do a hundred things at once. There are times when even the best parents are not attuned or responsive. The parent-child connection ruptures frequently. But the mark of a 'good enough' caregiver is that these ruptures are repaired through a process of reattunement and re-engagement with the child.

What mattered to you as a child was not that your parents got it right each time, but that they recognized when they missed you or hurt you, and responded in a way that brought comfort and reconnection.

If your parents were attuned to you, responsive to your needs, engaged with your heart, able to regulate your arousal, strong enough to handle your negative emotions, and willing to repair failures, then the result was a secure attachment. If your relationship with your parents was not marked by these things, then you likely developed an insecure attachment.

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