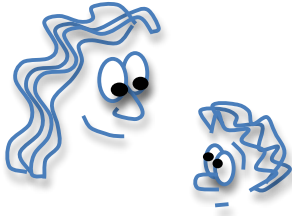


Developmentally Supportive Parenting

C.A. Childress, Psy.D.

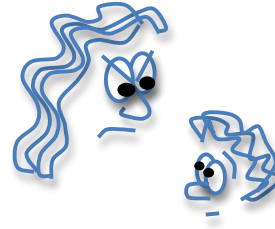
Eyes of the Other

Supportive Eyes

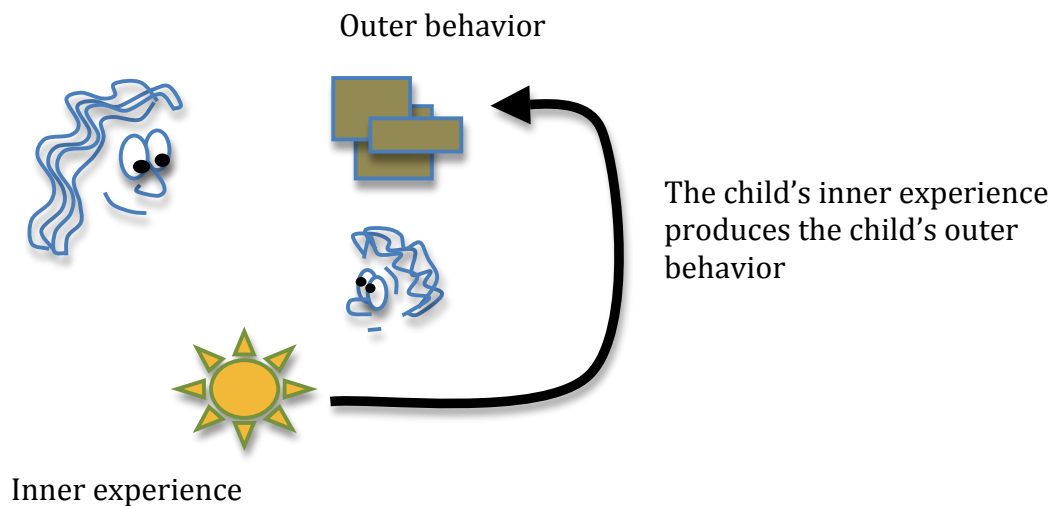


Supportive eyes of the other produce positive brain chemicals in the child's brain that build relationship, support increased communication of experience, and that highlight and amplify for the child the child's inner experience that is receiving the supportive eyes of the other

Pruning Eyes

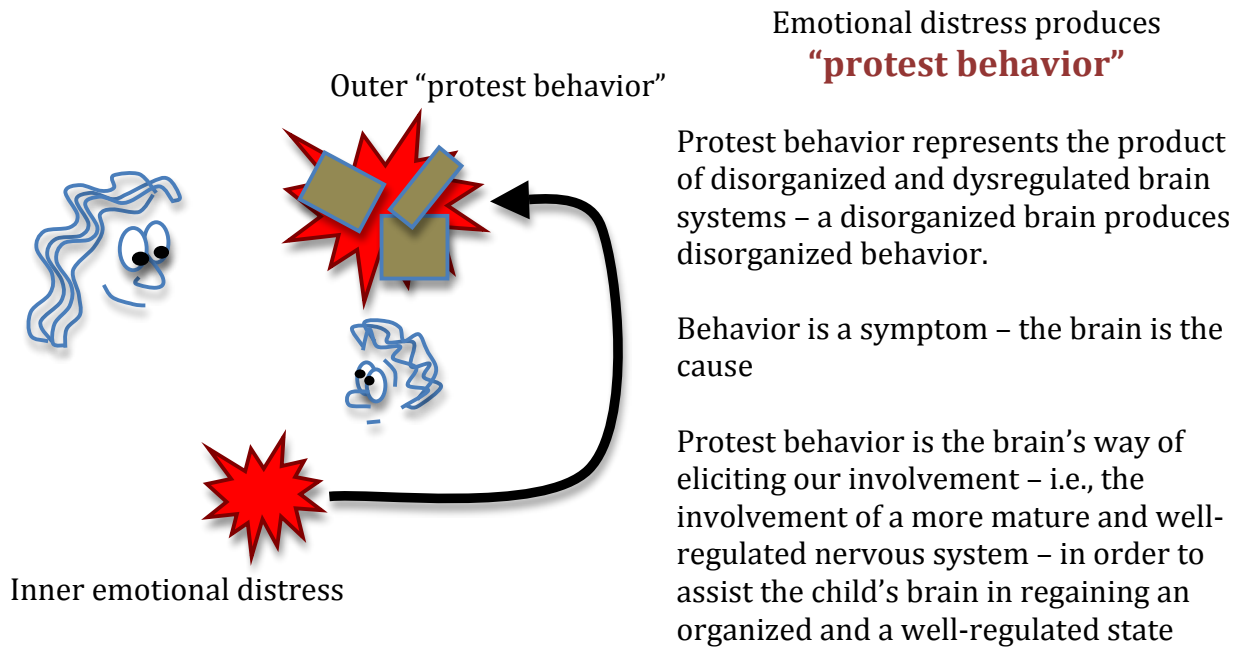


Pruning eyes of the other produce stress chemicals in the child's brain that prune and reduce brain connections, decrease communication of experience, and that dampen and nullify for the child the child's inner experience that is receiving the pruning eyes of the other



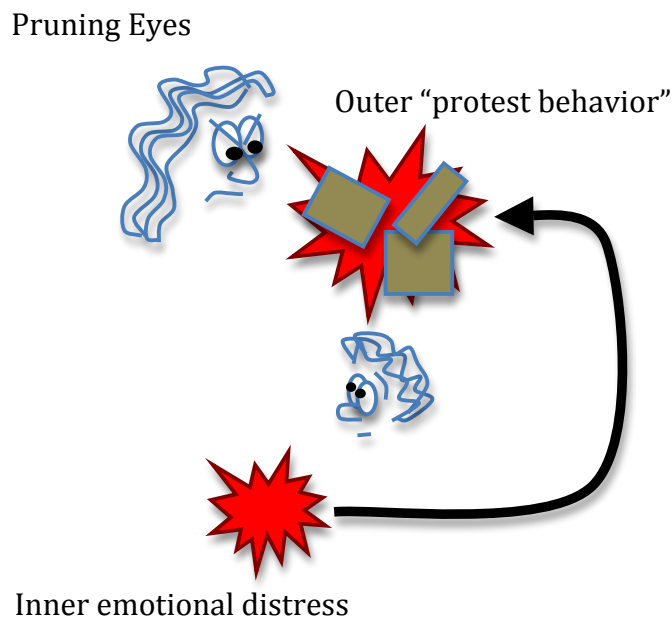
Responding to Protest Behavior

Protest Behavior



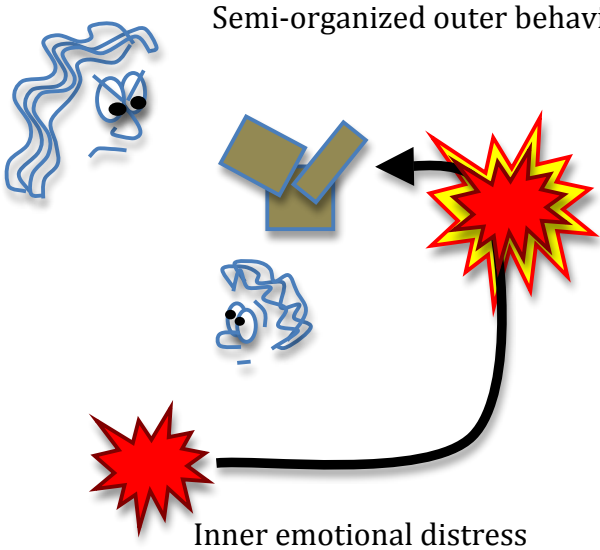
Protest Behavior elicits our involvement because it is annoying and therefore become involved with the child because we want to **make the protest behavior stop.**

Because we want to END the protest behavior, our typical response is to bring the pruning eyes of the other (our anger at being annoyed) to the child’s outer behavioral display



Our pruning eyes of the other (i.e., negative punishment) can sometimes limit and suppress the child's outer "protest behavior" - but it does nothing to address the inner cause of the protest behavior, the child's disorganized/dysregulated brain systems (i.e., the child's inner emotional/psychological distress)

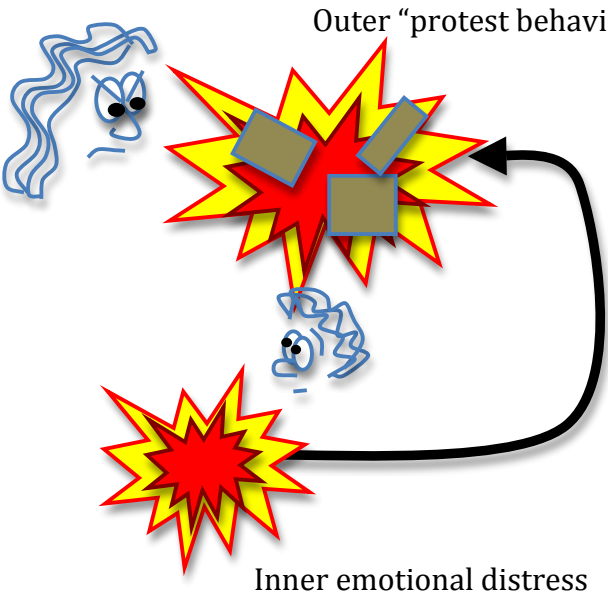
Pruning Eyes



So that the child's disorganized and dysregulated inner psychological state lurks right behind the appearance of the semi-organized and regulated outer behavior, poised to once again emit disorganized and dysregulated behavior once we stop attending directly to the child and return to our activities

Sometimes, our pruning eyes of the other (i.e., negative punishments and anger) only make the child's "protest behavior" worse - because we are adding increased stress to the child's already over-stressed brain organization

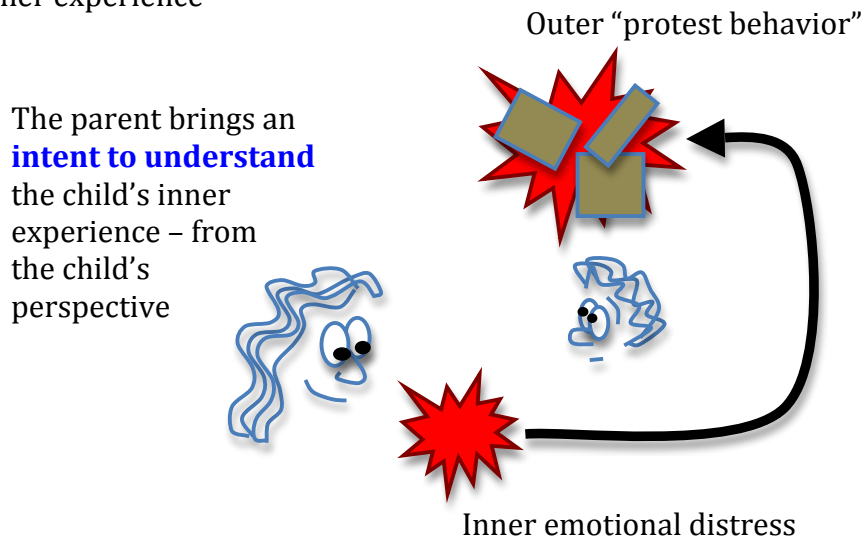
Pruning Eyes



Developmentally Supportive Parenting:

A developmentally supportive parental response, on the other hand, takes a different approach.

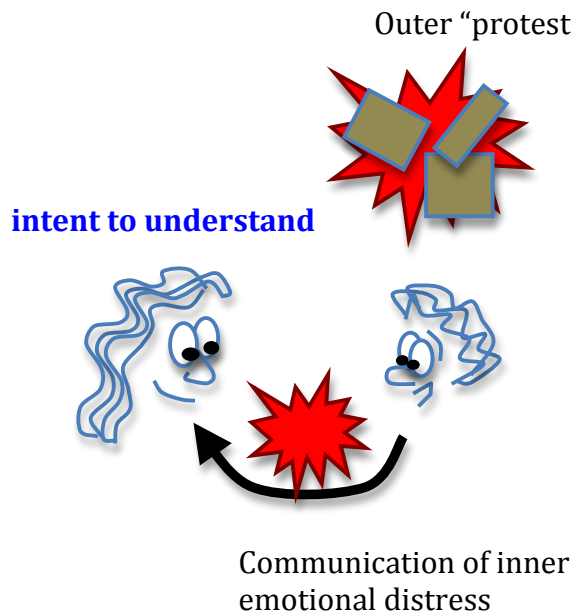
Instead of focusing the **pruning eyes of the other** on the external protest behavior of the child (i.e., the symptom), a developmentally supportive parental response focuses **supportive eyes of the other** on the underlying cause of the child's outer behavior, i.e., the child's inner experience



The developmental goals are:

1. To help the child (i.e., the child's brain networks) begin to bring experiences of emotional distress into and through language, communication, and relationship brain systems – rather than simply expressing emotional distress through behavioral systems, or controlling behavioral expressions of emotional distress in response to externally applied restrictions (i.e., parental anger)
2. To help the child achieve a greater level of self-awareness of inner experience and the capacity for self-reflection. With an increased capacity for cognitive self-awareness and self-reflection, and an increased capacity to effectively communicate this experience, the child (i.e., the child's brain networks) is better prepared to maintain and restore well-regulated behavioral and emotional organization in future settings
3. By helping the child (i.e., the child's brain networks) solve the cause of the problem, we not only solve this specific incident but also prime the brain networks for applying similar solutions to similar experiences of emotional distress that could cause "protest behavior" in the future (i.e., we're not just giving the child's brain a fish, we're teaching the child's brain how to fish – metaphorically speaking)

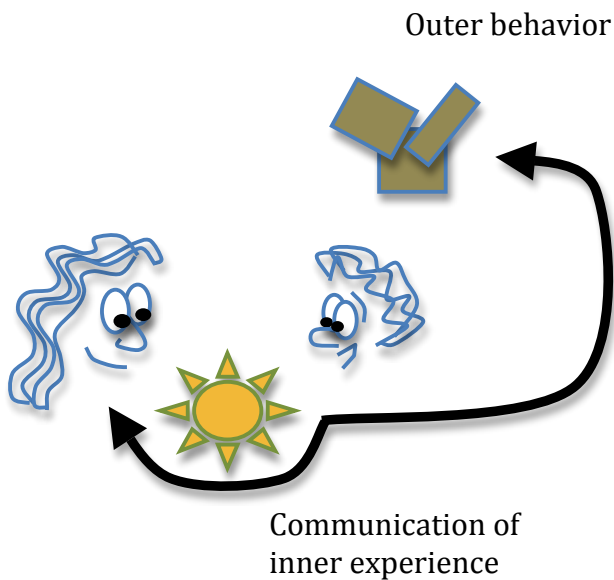
Solving the Symptom by Addressing the Cause:



When the parent brings an **intent to understand** the child's inner experience – from the child's perspective – this fosters the child's efforts to communicate this inner experience

But children will not communicate if we don't listen – we must bring an intent to understand the child's experience from the child's perspective

The child's communication of his or her inner experience then fosters the child's increased self-awareness for this inner experience, and an increased ability to communicate this inner experience to others



The child's ability to bring his or her inner emotional experience into and through language, communication, and relationship systems, will effectively metabolize, and so eliminate, the emotional distress

Eliminate the cause and we eliminate the symptom

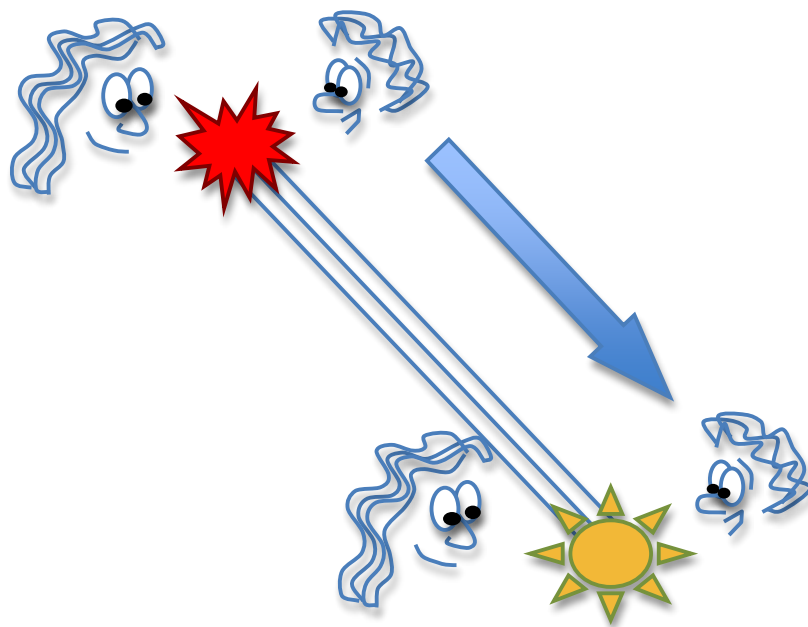
As the parent helps restore regulated organization to the child's inner experience, the child's behavior will become organized and regulated in response to organized and regulated brain systems

State Transitions – and the Development of Self-Regulation

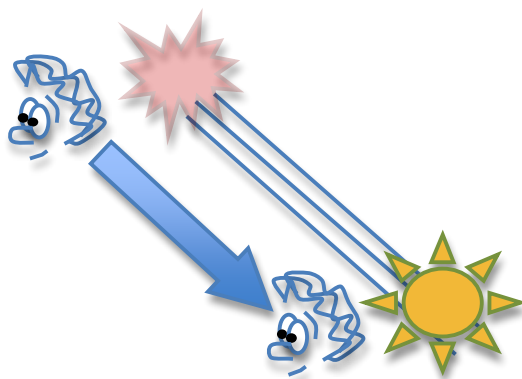
“we build what we use”

And through this process, we build – through “use-dependent” neural process – all of the brain pathways and connections associated with transitioning from a disorganized and dysregulated brain state to an organized and regulated brain state

Each time we repeat this interaction sequence; the child becomes better able to self-transition from a disorganized and dysregulated brain state to an organized and regulated brain state – which is called self-regulation, or self-control



Until, ultimately, the child (i.e., the child’s brain networks) will develop the independent capacity to make this state transition from a potentially disorganized and dysregulated brain state to an organized and well-regulated brain state, i.e., “self-regulation”



Complex Communication

Developmentally supportive parenting involves a mixed blend of supportive, guidance, and pruning communications.

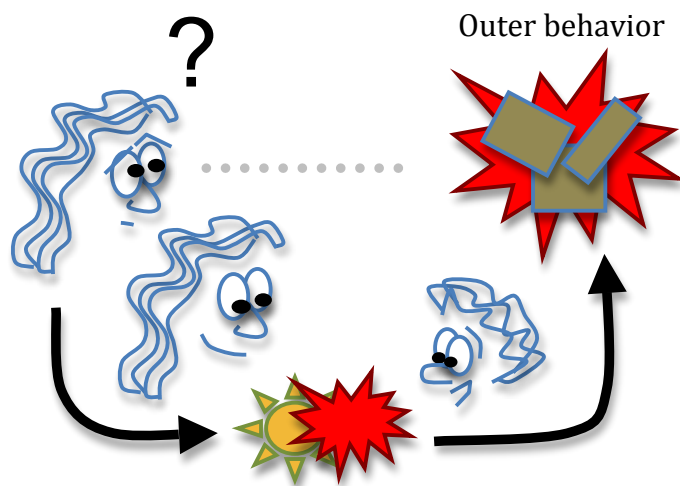
When we approach the child with **an intent to understand** the child's inner experience from the child's perspective, the child will typically not know what his or her inner experience is, and may not be able to communicate what this experience is. So the child might offer attributions that are misguided and may well be wrong, such as wanting a particular item or activity.

It is up to us, as parents, to provide this understanding – called organizing the child's experience – by offering educated guesses and possibilities as gentle suggestions and gentle questions of curiosity

“I wonder if you might be feeling sad?”

“You sound disappointed, because you were really looking forward to that.”

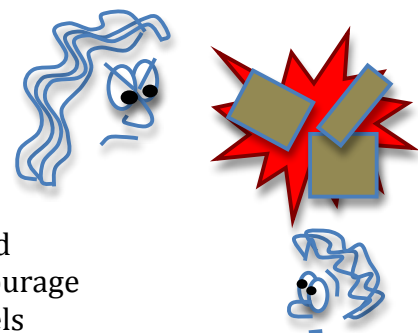
A parental positive, relaxed, low-level happy/pleasant emotional tone invites the child's exploration and communication, and should be part of the intent to understand phase



Gentle back-and-forth communication regarding the child's inner experience

The parent monitors the child's behavior, the setting, and context, and balances listening to the child's explanations of his or her inner experience (75%) with offering gentle guesses about what the child's inner experience might be (25%) based on the parent's educated interpretation of the motivations for the child's behavior – in a give-and-take dialogue of “co-constructing” meaning

The parent also balances providing the child with supportive “intent to understand” communications with **pruning communications of displeasure** regarding the annoying “protest behavior” (75-90% supportive/communicative; 10-25% pruning)



The parent's pruning eyes of the other provide modulated restrictions on the brain's “degrees of freedom” that encourage the brain systems to pop-up to higher organizational levels