

# Infant Mental Health

# Overview

- What is Infant Mental Health?
- The statistics
- What can affect Infant Mental Health ?
- The impact on the Infant's development
- What to look out for in the Infant
- Protecting, promoting and supporting Infant Mental Health
- Looking after yourself

# What is Infant Mental Health?

- The social, emotional and cognitive wellbeing and development of children in the earliest years of life.
- It is expressed in the infants capacity to form close relationships; experience, regulate and express emotions; and to explore their environment and learn.
- Infants achieve this through safe, nurturing and secure relationships.

# Statistics

- Babies brains make 1 million connections per second and grows faster than any other time in their lifespan. By the time a child is 5 years old they have developed 90% of their brain function.
- 60% of all the energy a baby expends is concentrated in the brain. This is due to the rapid rate of brain development during the first few years of life.
- Babies in the womb can be negatively affected by traumatic experiences their mother is exposed to while pregnant.
- Bonding with your baby when they are in the womb can help their development after they are born.
- 1 in 5 children across Scotland live in relative poverty. 11% of those living in the lowest income families at birth are more likely to experience Adverse Childhood Experiences by the age of 8 years old.

# What can affect Infant Mental Health?

- Caregiver and family factors
- Infant factors
- Community, social and physical environment factors

# Impact on the Infant

- Concerns with meeting developmental milestones and or failing to thrive.
- Increased anxiety or challenging behaviours.
- Easily overwhelmed by emotion or showing little expressed emotions.
- Struggling to self-soothe or develop capacity to regulate emotions.
- Capacity to form close, loving, meaningful relationships.
- Capacity to play, learn and achieve / engage in their world.

# What to look out for

- Difficulties with separating, sleeping or feeding
- An infant who excessively cries or is distressed without being able to be comforted.
- An infant who is unusually quiet or isn't able to express their needs.
- An infant who appears startled or scared.
- An infant withdrawing or cutting off from relationships, or engaging in indiscriminate efforts to have needs met by anyone.

# Promoting Infant Mental Health

- Serve and return Interactions
- Attuned relationships that provide safety, security and containment
- Wider supports for parents and carers to meet their needs
- Opportunities and experiences to explore and learn



# Looking after yourself

Things I can do

.....by myself

.....with others

People I can talk to.....