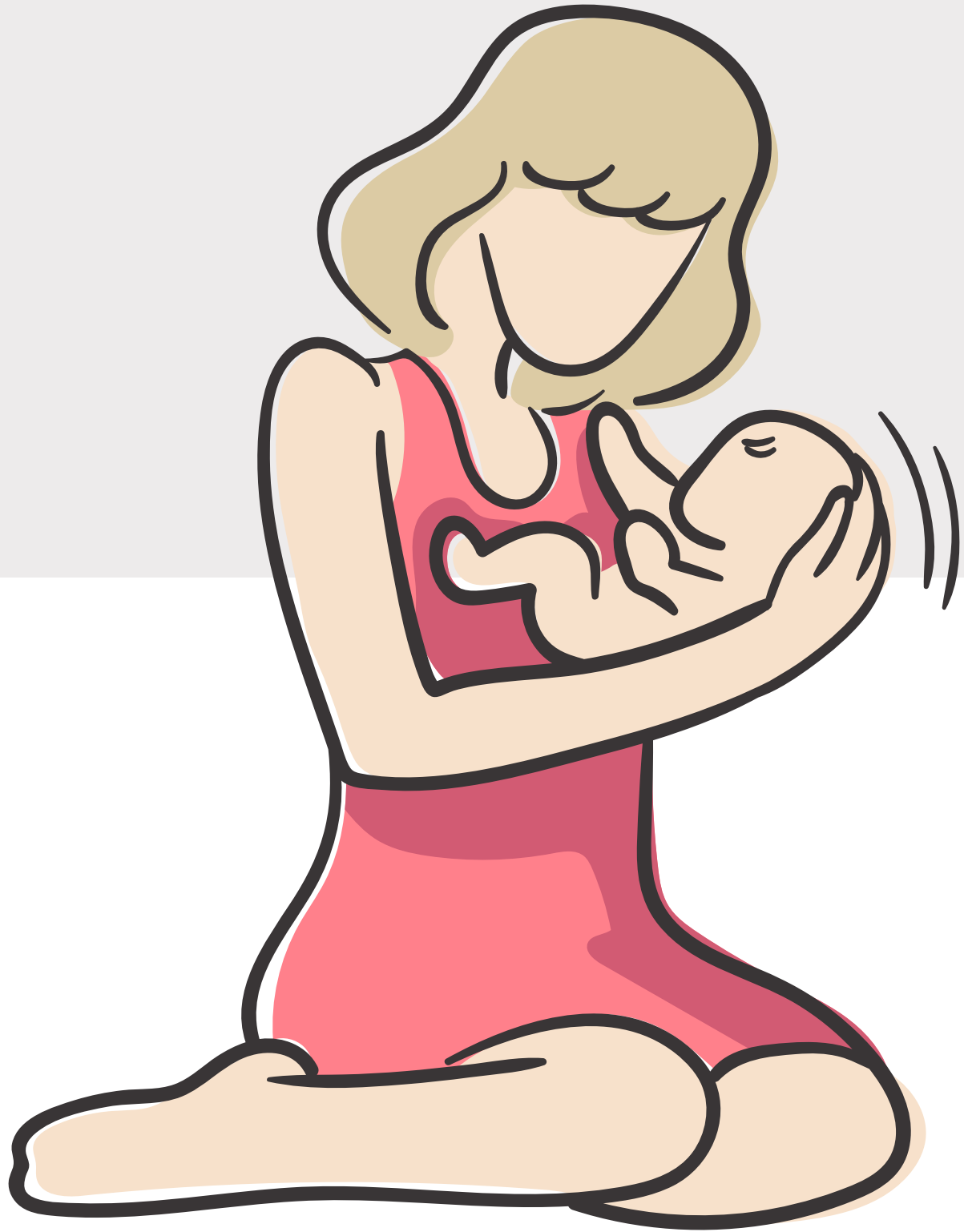


HELPING FAMILIES
thrive 

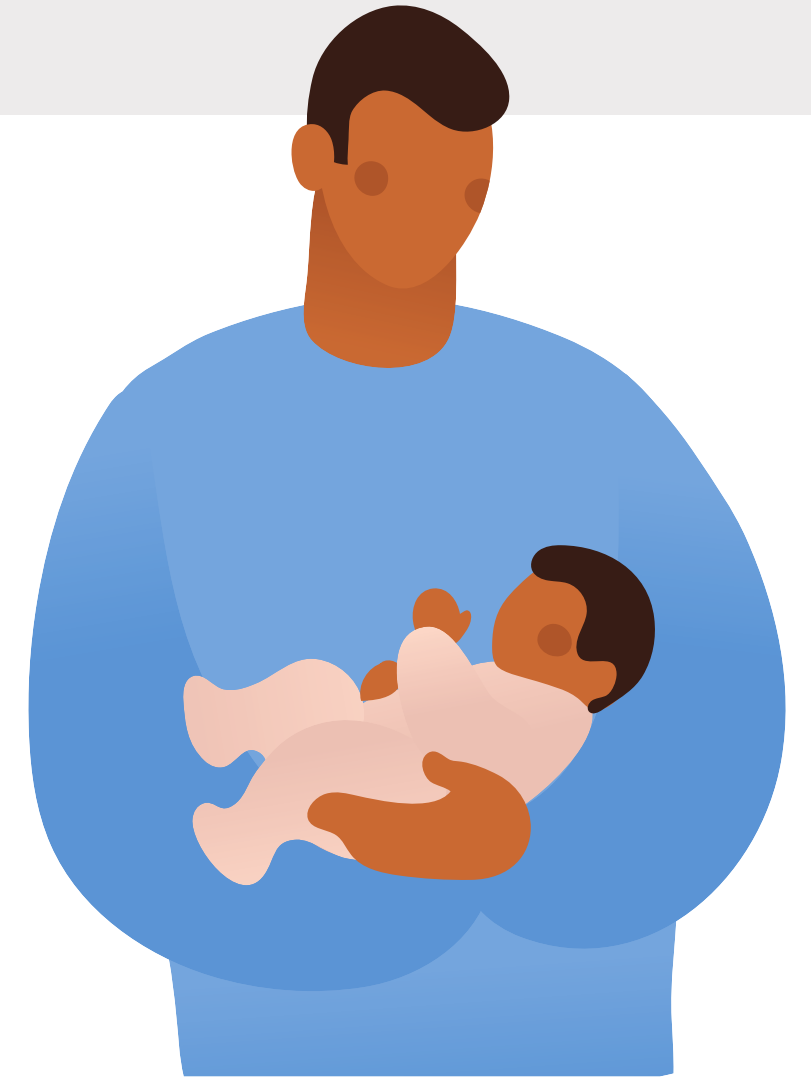


Attachment Science and Sleep

HELPING
FAMILIES **thrive**

Training Agenda

- **About us**
- **Attachment science**
- **Attachment science vs. attachment parenting**
- **What is & what is not associated with secure attachment?**
- **Can attachment change over time?**
- **Why does attachment matter?**
- **What we do and don't know about sleep training & attachment**
- **Responding to parent concerns**
- **Take-aways**



Meet Us

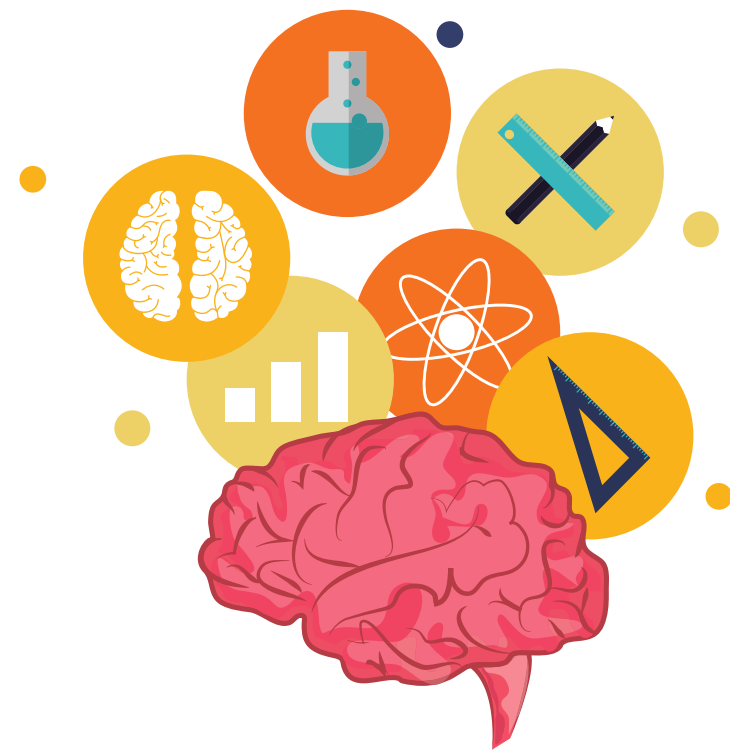
Shanna Alvarez, Ph.D.
Psychologist
Speech Language Pathologist
Mom of 3



Jenna Elgin, Ph.D.
Psychologist
Mom of 3

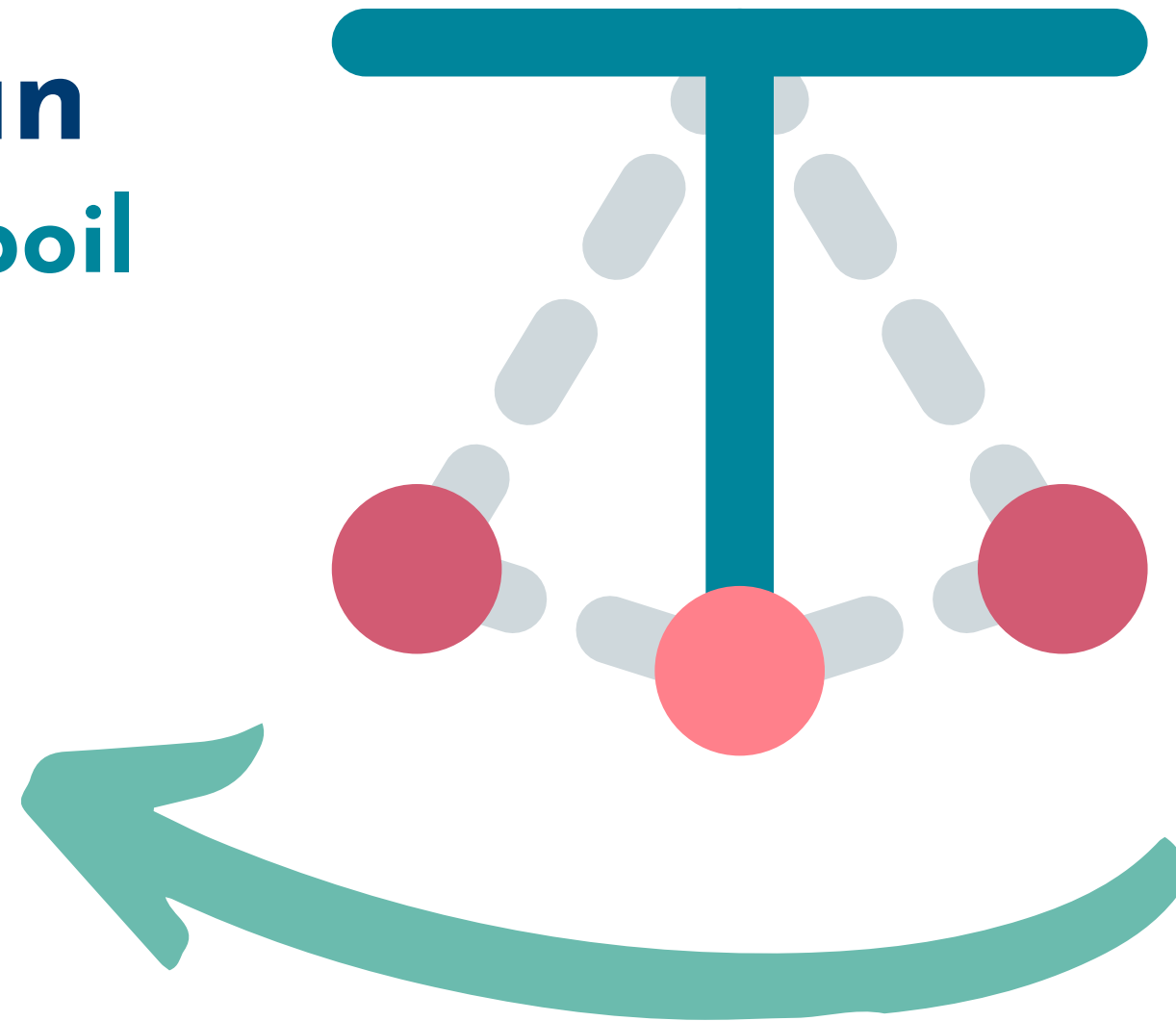
Our Mission

To bridge the gap between the academic and research world and the every day parent.



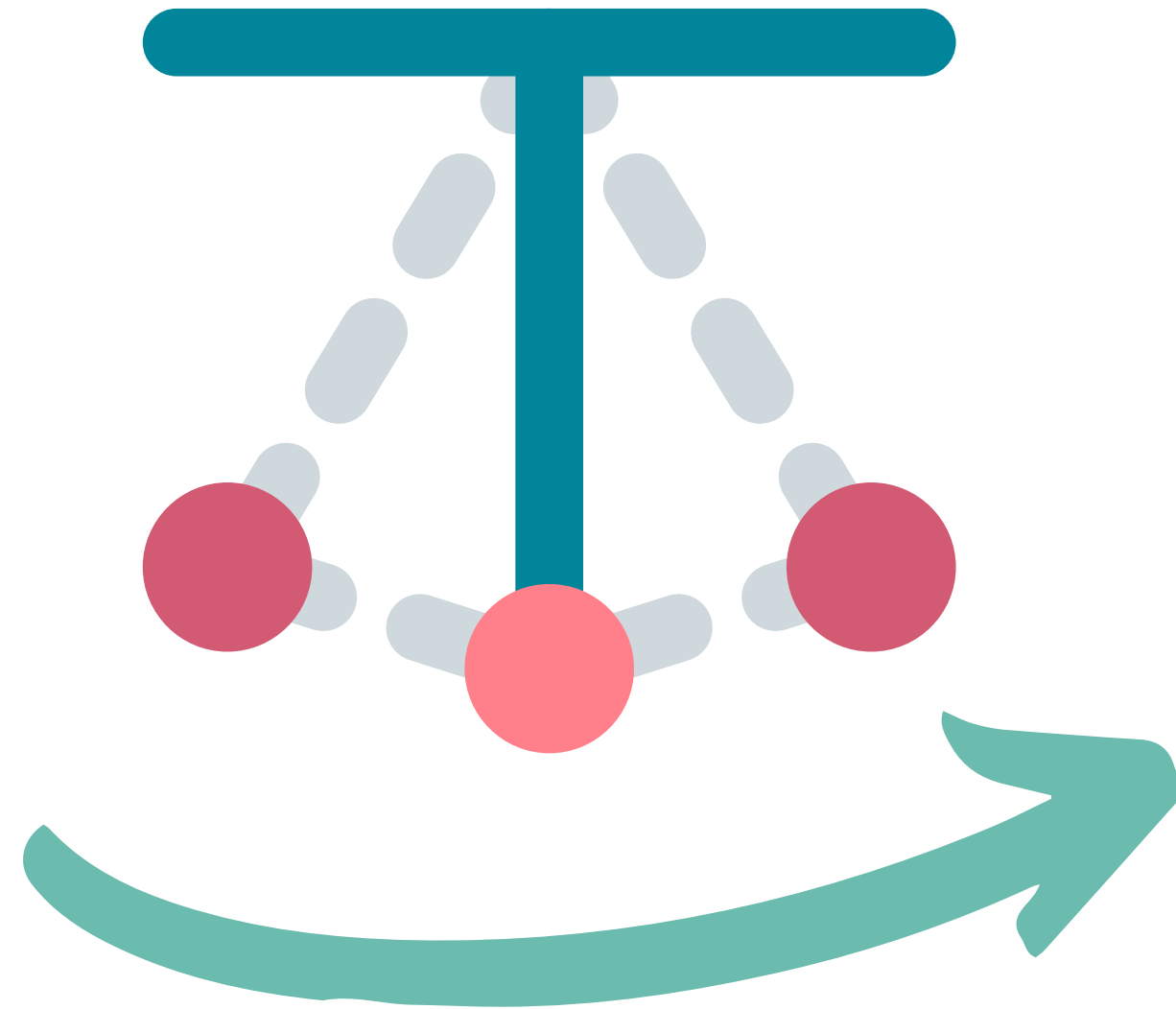
The Parenting Pendulum

authoritarian
spare the rod, spoil
the child



The Parenting Pendulum

authoritarian
spare the rod, spoil
the child



purely positive
lack of any
consequences

The Parenting Seesaw

Warmth

Boundaries



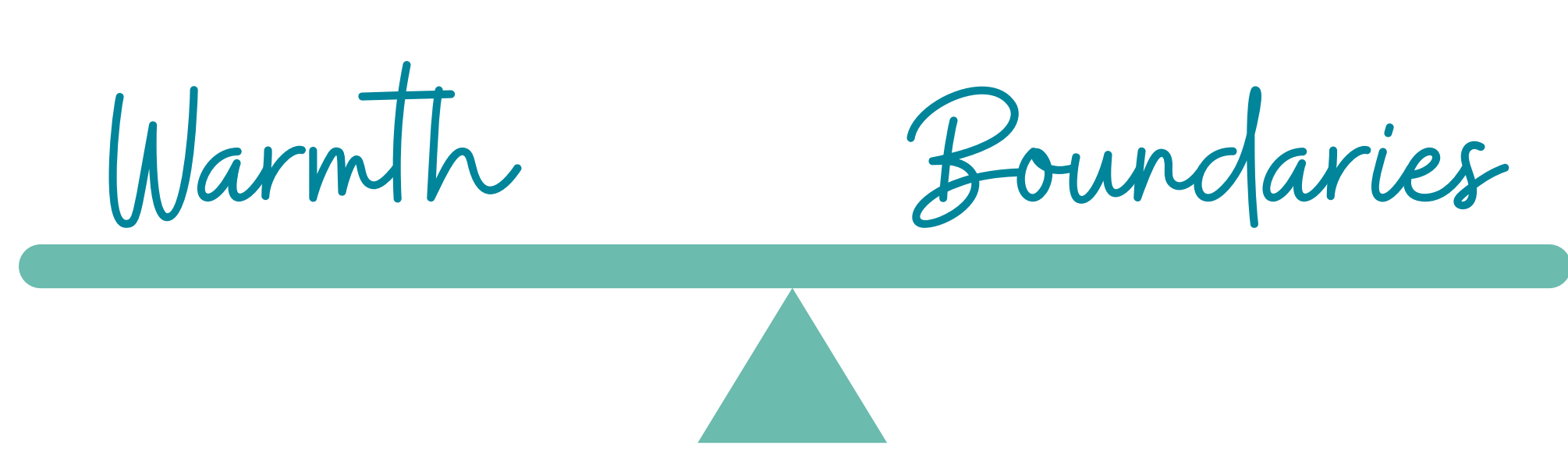
The Parenting Seesaw

Warmth

Boundaries



 Authoritative Parenting



Why is this balance so hard when it comes to sleep?

Because...

- **We all want to have good relationships with our kids**
- **We want our kids to feel safe with us**
- **In scientific terms, we want our kids to have a secure attachment**

Because...

- **We all want to have good relationships with our kids**
- **We want our kids to feel safe with us**
- **In scientific terms, we want our kids to have a secure attachment**

Unfortunately, the term 'attachment' is being misused to scare parents

What is Attachment Theory?

The most important tenet is that young children need to develop a relationship with at least one primary caregiver for healthy social and emotional development.



What is Attachment Theory?

- **Began with John Bowlby**
- **Prior to Bowlby, behaviorism leading theory**
- **Interest in children separated from their parents during wartime**
- **The drive for attachment is a survival instinct**
- **Bowlby proposed that nurturance and responsiveness were the primary determinants of attachment**

What is Attachment Theory?

- **Mary Ainsworth**
- **Began with her Uganda field study**
- **Developed the Strange Situation Procedure**
 - **Children 12-18 months**
 - **Mother leaves child for short duration then comes back**
 - **Infant response at separation isn't important**
 - **Infant reunion response reunion = attachment style**

Secure Base

**Someone they can separate
from to explore and
always return
to for *comfort*
and *safety*.**



Attachment Styles



SECURE

Child may be upset when parent leaves, is able to explore when parent is gone, and is easily comforted when the parent returns.

ANXIOUS-AVOIDANT

Child may show little reaction to mother leaving or returning. Does not explore much regardless of who's there.



ANXIOUS-RESISTANT

May be a bit distressed before caregiver leaves, does not explore much when s/he is gone and hard to comfort when she returned.

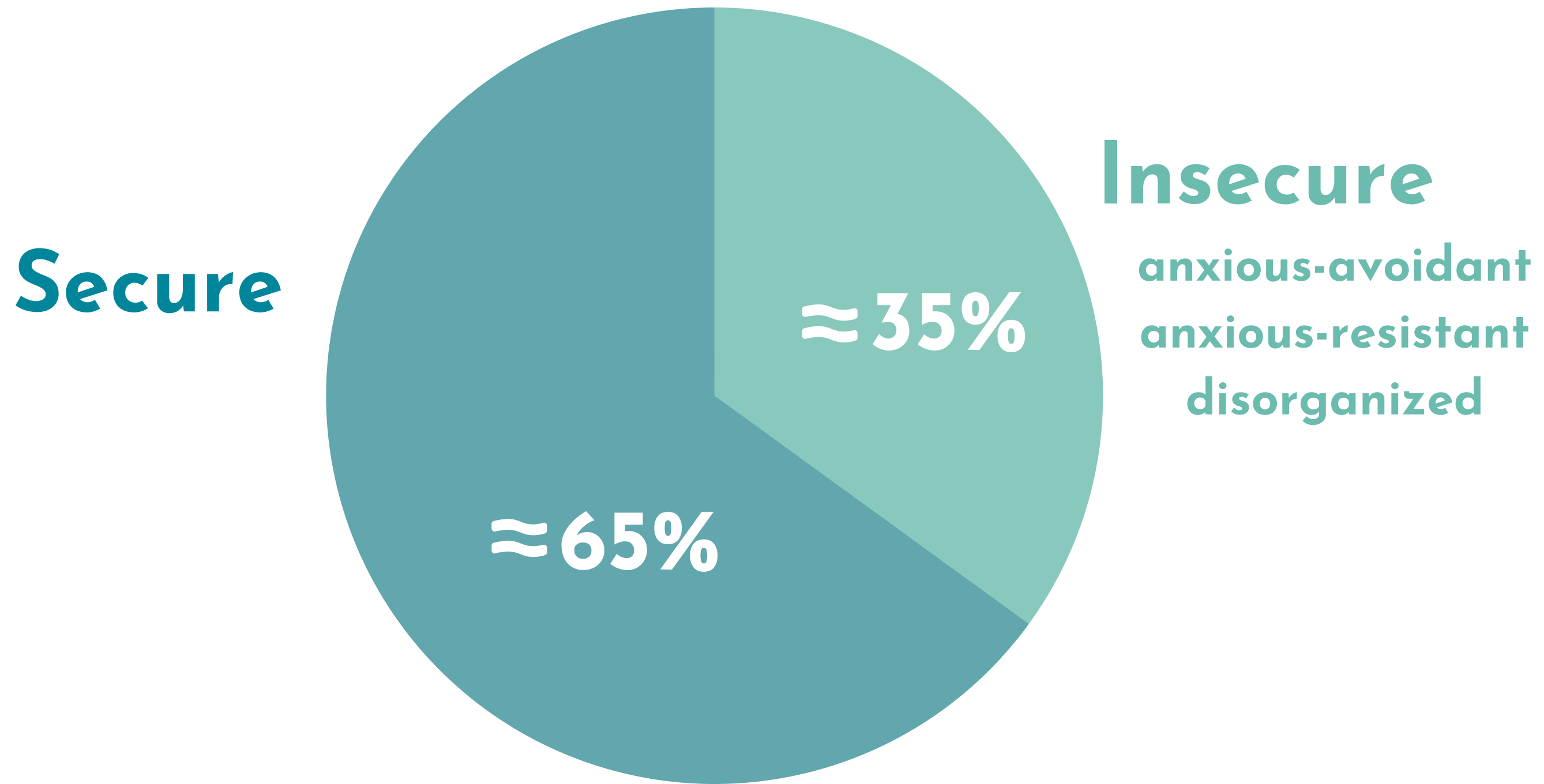


DISORGANISED

largely inconsistent behaviors, including general aimlessness, fear of the caregiver, or even aggressiveness toward them.



Attachment Styles





0-6 weeks

Asocial



6 weeks - 6 mo

Indiscriminate
Attachment



7 weeks - 12 mo

Specific
Attachment



12 mo+

Multiple
Attachments

Attachment Stages

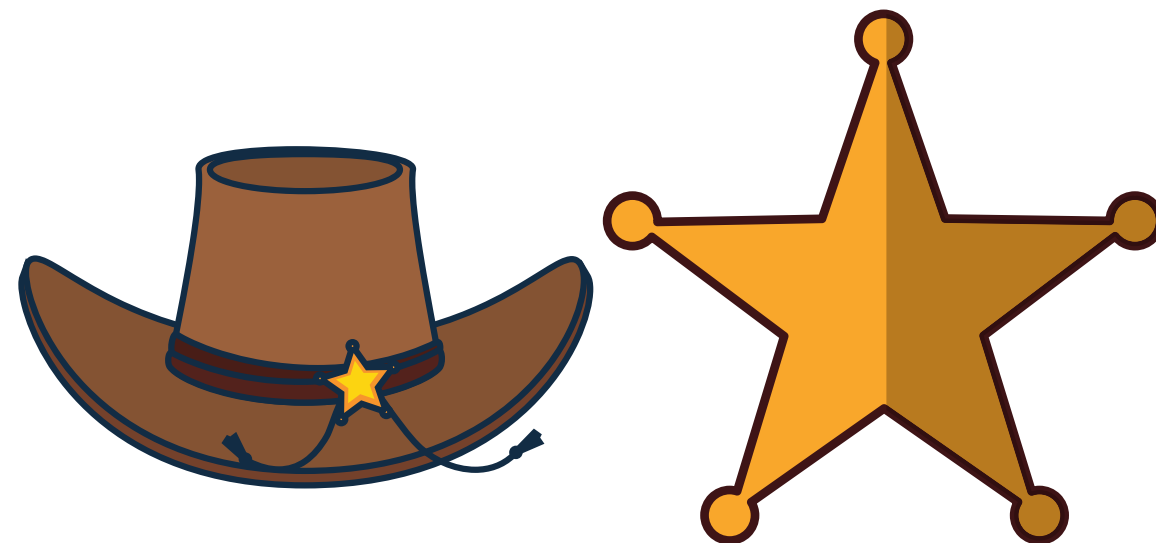
Can Attachment Change Over Time?

yes

Great!

***Let's create secure
attachment!***

But how?!



Attachment Science



Attachment Parenting

Attachment Parenting **Philosophy**

- **Style of parenting proposed by pediatrician Dr. William Sears and wife Marth Sears**
- **Maximal parental empathy + responsiveness but also by continuous bodily closeness + touch**
- **Initially called "immersion mothering"**
- **Near constant bodily contact recommended**

ATTACHMENT PARENTING

vs.

SECURE ATTACHMENT

Checklist:

- ✓ birth bonding
- ✓ breastfeeding
- ✓ baby wearing*
- ✓ balance
- ✓ baby's cues
- ✓ beware of baby trainers
- ✓ bed-sharing*

General pattern of
warmth and
responsiveness **MOST** of
the time + other factors.

There is no evidence that attachment parenting leads to a *secure attachment*.

Why Does Attachment Matter?

Secure attachment is related to higher:

- ✓ **social-emotional competence**
- ✓ **behavioral functioning**
- ✓ **cognitive functioning**
- ✓ **physical health**
- ✓ **mental health**

Predictors of Attachment Security

Parent Factors

- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Sensitivity
- ✓ Responsiveness
- ✓ Intrusiveness
- ✓ Attachment Style

Environmental Factors

- ✓ Adverse Life Experiences / Trauma
- ✓ Chronic Marital Discord
- ✓ Early Bedsharing*
- ✓ Social Support

Child Factors

- ✓ Infant Temperament

So what does this mean?

Attachment is complex.

Parents matter! Parent well-being is critical to healthy attachment.

Sensitivity/Responsiveness is important.

What Does Sensitivity/Responsiveness mean?

- ✓ “Caregiver sensitivity” remains poorly defined
- ✓ Instruments measure many behaviors: ability to soothe baby, providing learning opportunities, praising, promptness, appropriateness...
- ✓ Responsivity + Sensitivity: "Some is more"
- ✓ Maternal sensitivity is only part of the equation

Sleep Training + Attachment

What we do and don't know

Back to Ainsworth...

- **Bell and Ainsworth's (1972), N=26**
 - **Naturalistic observation study**
 - **Close physical proximity = less crying**
 - **Promptness of response = less crying in subsequent months**

Developed 'caregiver sensitivity hypothesis' to explain attachment

Limitations of Ainsworth's Studies

- ✓ Ainsworth's findings on promptness of response and later crying have not been replicated and actually have been contradicted
- ✓ Methodical and *significant* statistical concerns
- ✓ Cultural limitations of Strange Situation

van IJzendoorn & Hubbard (1987, 1991, 2000)

- **Attempted replication of Ainsworth with correct statistical analyses, N=50**
- **Frequency of ignoring infant's crying = decrease in later crying**
- **Frequency and duration of infant crying ignored by the mother did not predict later attachment**
- **Mothers of avoidant infants responded more promptly**

van IJzendoorn & Hubbard (1987, 1991, 2000)

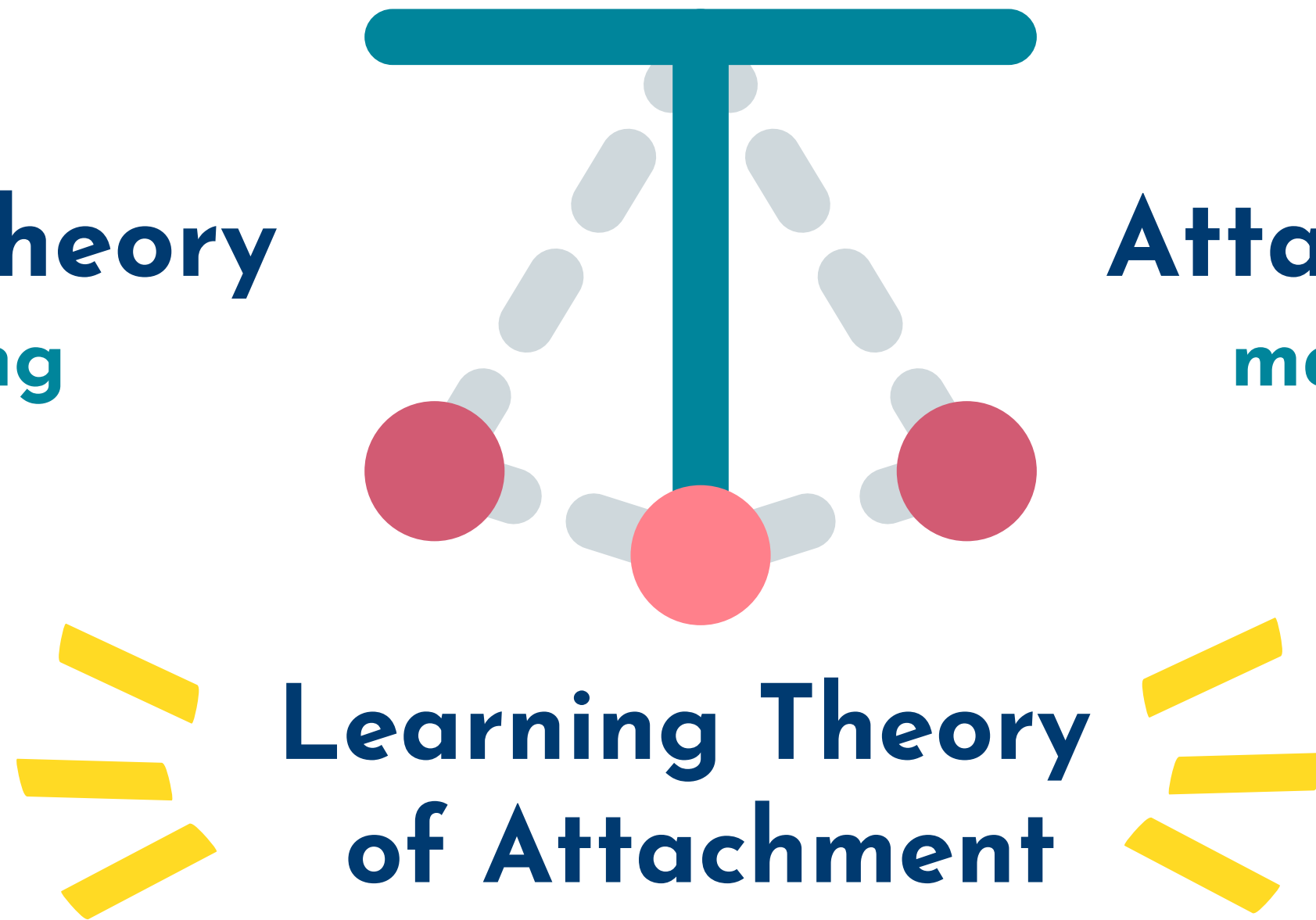
Take-aways:

- **Ainsworth findings spurious!!!**
- **Parental discomfort > overresponding > reduced emotion exploration**
- **Pausing = learning self soothing**
- **Crying is not on/off... graduated**
- **Responsiveness should be on or off but graduated**

So where does this leave us?

Learning Theory
conditioning

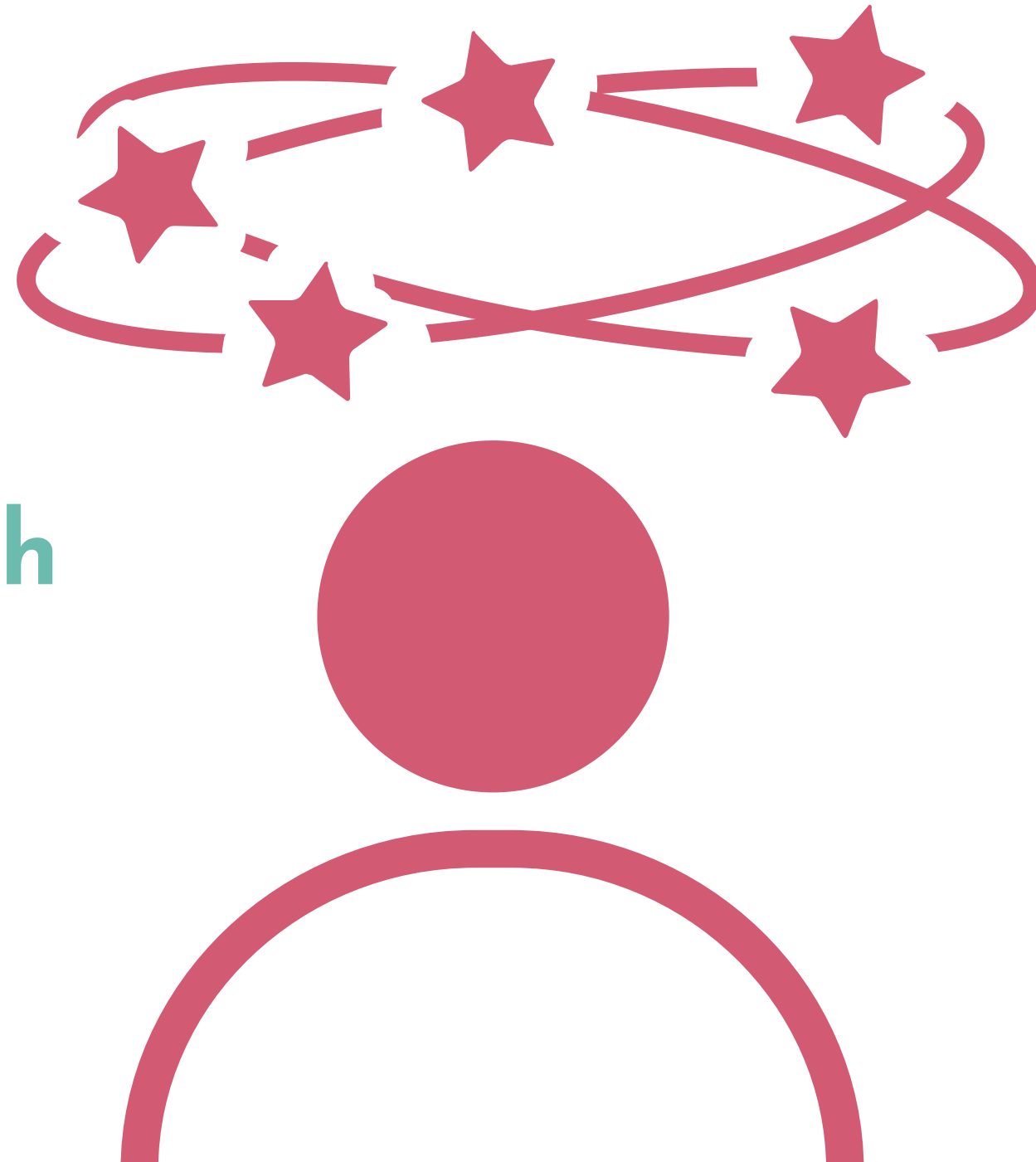
Attachment Theory
maternal sensitivity



So where does this leave us?

Sit with uncertainty

**Make the best
decisions we can with
the available data**



**Science keeps us
humble**

**Be aware of
confirmation bias**

Sleep Training + Attachment

What we do and don't know

Sleep Training Research

- **Large body of research showing behavioral sleep interventions to be effective at reducing "sleep problems" and improving maternal mood**
- **Several studies showing no change or positive impact on attachment**
- **To date, no studies showing any harmful outcomes on any measure with the exception of one on cortisol**

Gradisar et al., 2016

- **N = 42**
- **RCT with three groups: graduated extinction, bedtime fading, control**
- **Interventions effective for improving sleep and maternal stress**
- **At 12 mo, no differences in attachment or behavior**
- **Diurnal cortisol data indicated interventions did not result in elevated levels**

Bilgin & Wolke, 2020

- Assessed parent report of 'leaving to cry out' and cry duration on later attachment and behavior, N=178
- CIO a few times at term and often at 3 mo associated with shorter fuss/cry duration at 18 mo
- At 18 mo, mothers who left their infant to CIO more associated with higher maternal sensitivity
- CIO in the first 6 mo was not associated with infant-mother attachment or behavioral development at 18 mo

Price et al., 2012

- **N = 326**
- **Brief behavioral sleep intervention at 8 mo**
- **Effective at reducing sleep problems and maternal depression**
- **At age 6, no differences between groups in behavioral or emotional functioning**

Middlemiss et al., 2012

- **N = 25-day extinction sleep training in a hospital**
- **Cortisol measured before bed and 20 min after bed on days 1 + 3 for mom and baby**
- **Baby and mom's cortisol was correlated on day 1, not correlated on day 3 (babies still high)**
- **Their conclusion: babies stop signaling but are still distressed**

Middlemiss et al., 2012 Criticisms

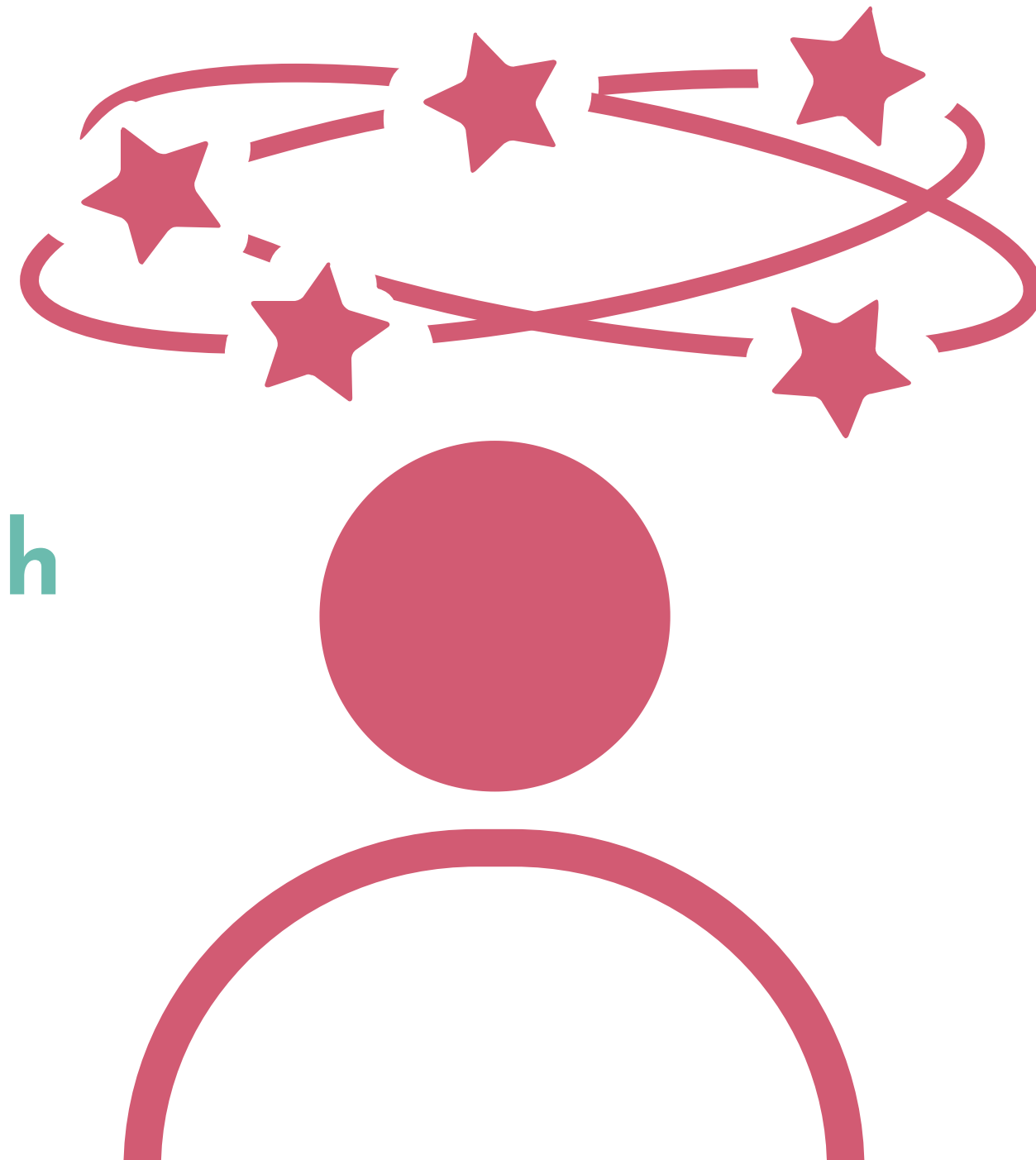
- **Small sample**
- **NO CONTROL GROUP**
- **Unfamiliar environment**
- **No data on cortisol before intervention**
- **Only two data points (day 1 and 3), why?**
- **No nighttime data**



So where does this leave us?

Sit with uncertainty

Make the best
decisions we can with
the available data
****HIGH QUALITY
DATA**



**Science keeps us
humble**

**Be aware of
confirmation bias**

Responding to Parent Concerns

- ✓ **Parent mental health matters for attachment**
- ✓ **Overall warmth + boundaries**
- ✓ **Sleep training vs. not sleep training does not predict attachment**



Take Homes

- ✓ **Most children have secure attachments**
- ✓ **Attachment is critical but not fragile**
- ✓ **Attachment is influenced by sensitive caregiving AND learning**
- ✓ **Responsiveness > Promptness**

YOU CAN HAVE A SECURE ATTACHMENT IF YOU..

Bond immediately

Take time to bond

Baby wear

Co-sleep

Work outside the home

Breast feed

Bottle feed

Stay at home

Use time-out

Sleep train

Balance + Evidence

Less Shame, More Support

HELPING FAMILIES **thrive**

 <http://helpingfamiliesthrive.com>

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 contact@helpingfamiliesthrive.com