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# Why Attachment Matters in Guidance

Scottish  
Attachment  
*In Action*



## What do we mean by attachment?

- Biologically driven behaviour to achieve safety and comfort
  - Affects the developing brain
  - Lifelong but most apparent in childhood
  - Supports the development of key emotional, social and cognitive skills
  - Can buffer the impact of trauma and support the recovery of traumatised children
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## Why does this matter in schools?

- Many children carry the impact of adverse early developmental experiences or trauma
- Being attachment informed can help us understand the meaning of challenging behaviour or responses
- All children are likely to experience severe stress at some point in their school career and providing attachment promoting experiences in schools helps them to manage this without being overwhelmed
- Children learn best when they feel safe and secure attachments provide safety
- Teachers and other adults involved in schools also need safe supportive relationships to manage the inherent stresses of their work

## So let's just throw in puberty and the teenage brain!

- Age of onset of puberty is falling in developed countries which leads to massive emotional changes
- The teenage brain undergoes a rapid reorganization which is not complete until young adulthood. This is focused on the prefrontal cortex which is the area of the brain that influences self-control, judgement and risk taking.

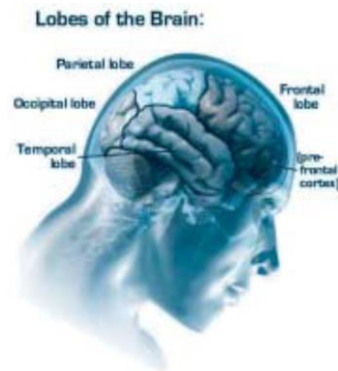


The combination of hormonal changes which increase risk taking and ignite passion, with a reduced capacity to make effective social judgments can be explosive.

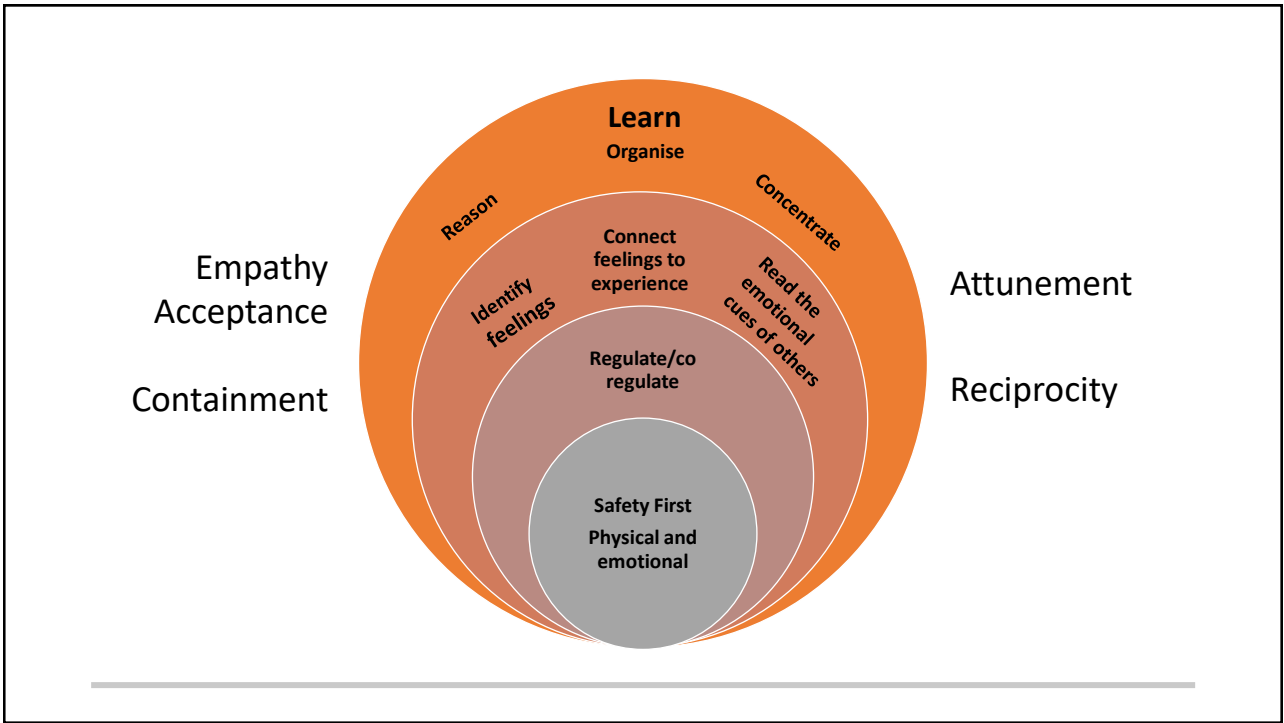


## Positive implications

- Adolescent brains are still malleable and therefore potentially susceptible to learning new emotional, social, motor and cognitive patterns
- Environmental factors may affect the nature of the synaptic pruning and therefore the development of preferred pathways.
- It is not too late!



The frontal lobe undergoes far more change during adolescence than at any other stage of life.



## The role of guidance teachers

- Attachment aware direct support to individual young people
- Contributing to attachment informed assessment and planning for young people with additional support needs
- Contributing to professional learning for school staff about the impact of attachment and trauma
- Supporting individual teachers to understand and respond to troubled behaviour
- Working towards attachment promoting policies, structures and systems as part of school improvement planning
- Recognising and explaining the importance of understanding attachment in supporting learners