

THE NEURORELATIONAL FRAMEWORK'S Qualities of Engagement

SUPPORT SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

STEP 2
TRUNK

INCLUDES AGES



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The trunk of the tree is shaped into a pyramid.

Interaction without words is the foundation of all human communication which are the bottom five slices of the trunk. Each slice has the label of the quality of how we engage with each other. Each slice supports the next one. Getting green together sets the pair up for finding sensory comfort together. This comfort can come through any sensation - from sharing sounds and singing, to rocking together, and many others. What is important is that shared sensory experiences lead to joy. Once joy is shared, we want that joy to flow for longer and longer periods of time. As that flow of back and forth joy deepens, the partners begin to anticipate and watch each other's facial expressions and gestural cues. As children develop, these body gestures occur with sounds that turn into words. Words become the next form of communication so that we can share our feelings and ideas with each other. Lastly, we want these feelings to turn into stories so we know why we feel happy, sad, mad, or scared, and we can emotionally problem solve with another person when we need to. The last two qualities represent communication capacities with pretend play and language.

The pyramid is organized into bottom-up and top-down qualities. The term bottom-up refers to any communication that occurs without words and any learning that occurs through doing things together. Bottom-up memories are how we felt in our bodies, sensations we felt from the world around us, and emotions we felt in the past. The term top-down refers to communication that occurs with words and learning that occurs through talking with each other. Top-down memories are those that we have words for and can tell stories about with each other. These bottom-up and top-down distinctions matter when it comes to personalizing the type of intervention that matches your child and your family's needs. The arrows in the diagram show that the bottom-up and top-down qualities are always influencing each other.



The star at the top of the pyramid is there to remind you that we interact best with each other when both partners feel safe together. Remember that we had the same star representing safety in the Sleep-Wake States Arc. Our best interactions happen when we are feeling safe with healthy sleep cycles and the green zone awake state.