

A Brain-Based Approach in a Daycare Context

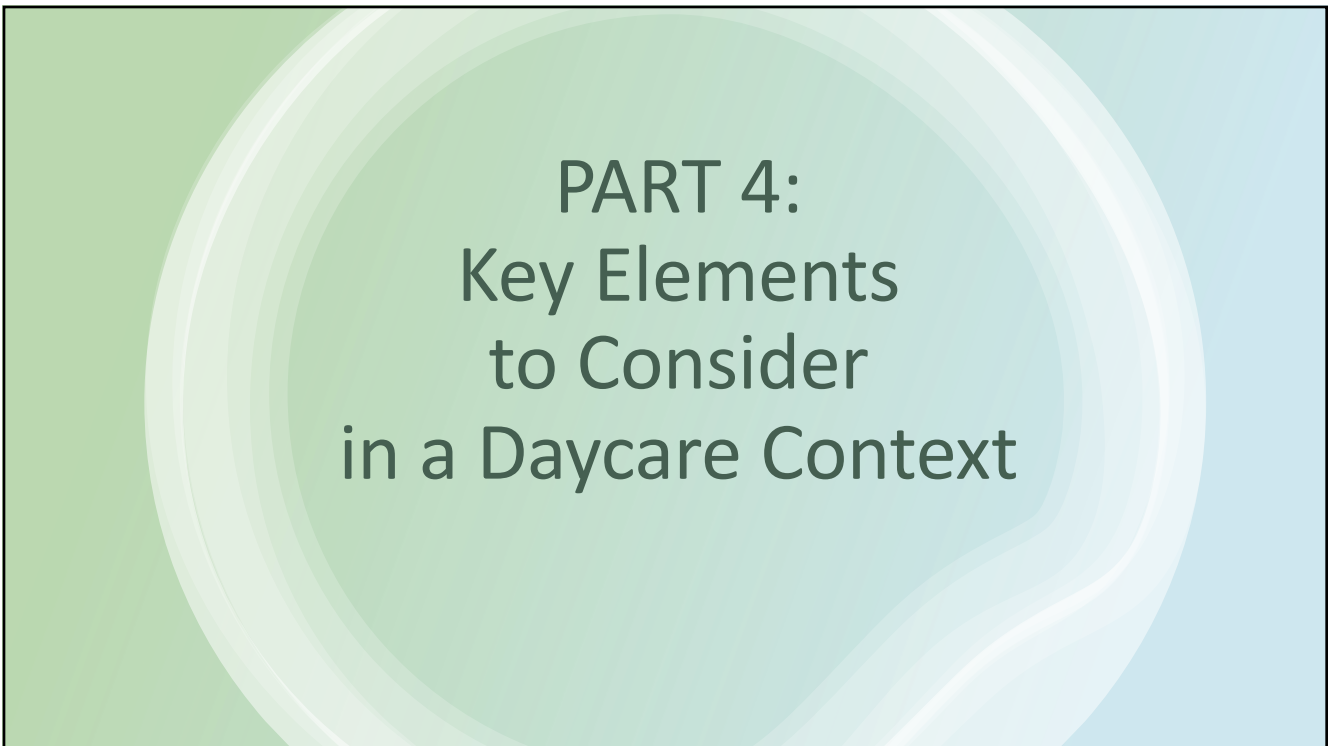
How play, connection, and co-regulation
serve as anchors.

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PART 4: Key Elements to Consider in a Daycare Context



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PART 4:
KEY ELEMENTS
TO CONSIDER

- Building attachment
- Value of play and emotional expression
- Prevention and intentionality
- Power of teamwork
- Family engagement

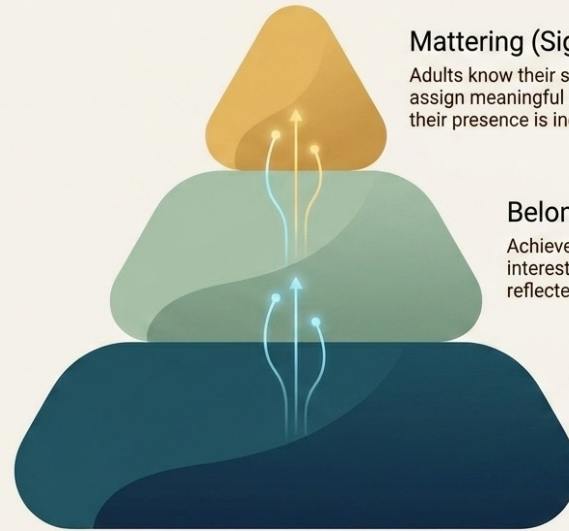
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**STUDENT ATTACHMENT,
BELONGING AND MATTERING**

Cultivating deep connections and a secure base, ensuring every child feels valued, seen, and integral to the community.

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The Connection Pyramid



Mattering (Significance)

Adults know their stories, acknowledge feelings, assign meaningful responsibilities, and ensure their presence is indispensable.

Belonging (Community Acceptance)

Achieved when children are greeted warmly, interests are valued, and they see themselves reflected in the environment.

Attachment (Emotional Safety)

Built via daily rituals of connection, highlighting commonalities, and celebrating effort to create baseline resilience.

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Engineering 'Mattering'

RELEVANCE • IMPORTANCE • ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



Being Seen

- Adults **know** their names, unique interests, and personal stories.
- Their presence is actively **noticed** and appreciated.
- Their contributions are **recognized** and celebrated.



Having Purpose

- Their ideas are **valued** and implemented.
- They are given **meaningful**, age-appropriate **responsibilities**.
- Their effort, contribution, and growth are **celebrated**.



MATTERING

You are
significant.
Your absence
would be felt.

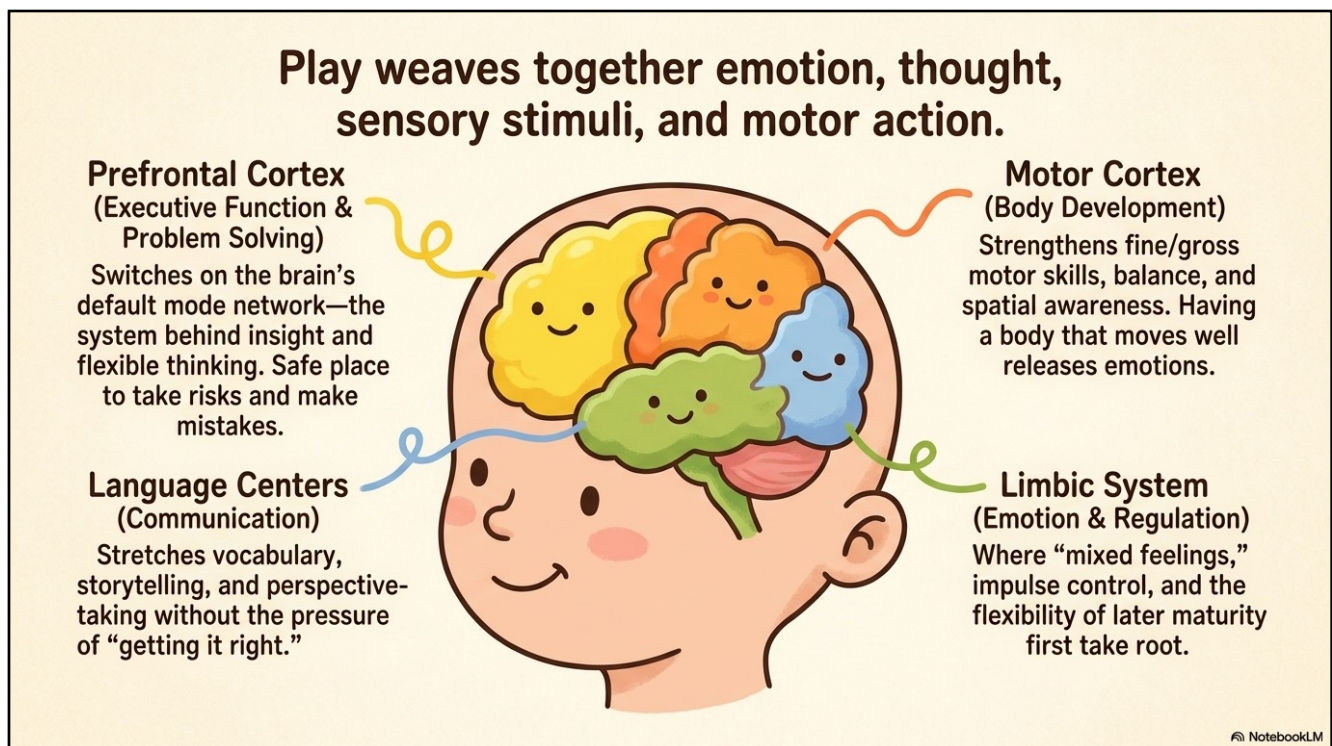


Mattering goes beyond basic belonging.
It transforms a child from a passive attendee to an active stakeholder in the **school ecosystem**.

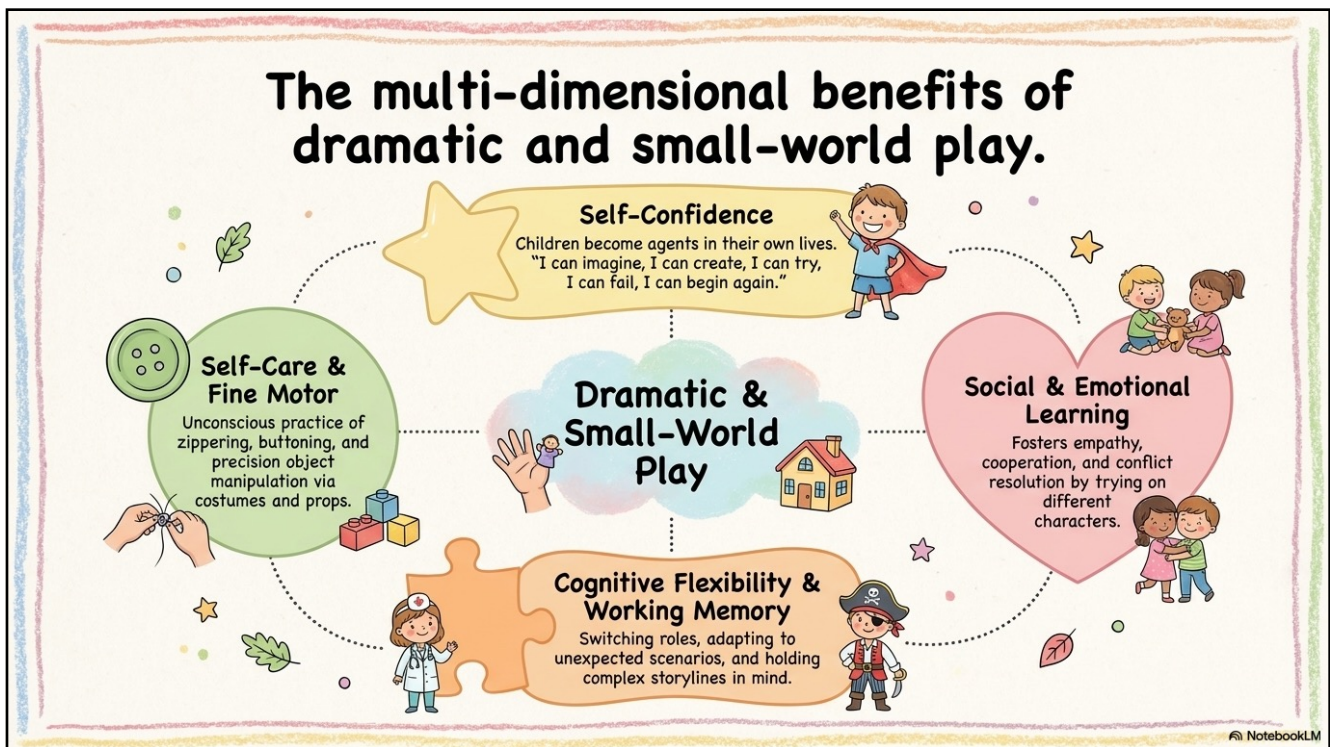
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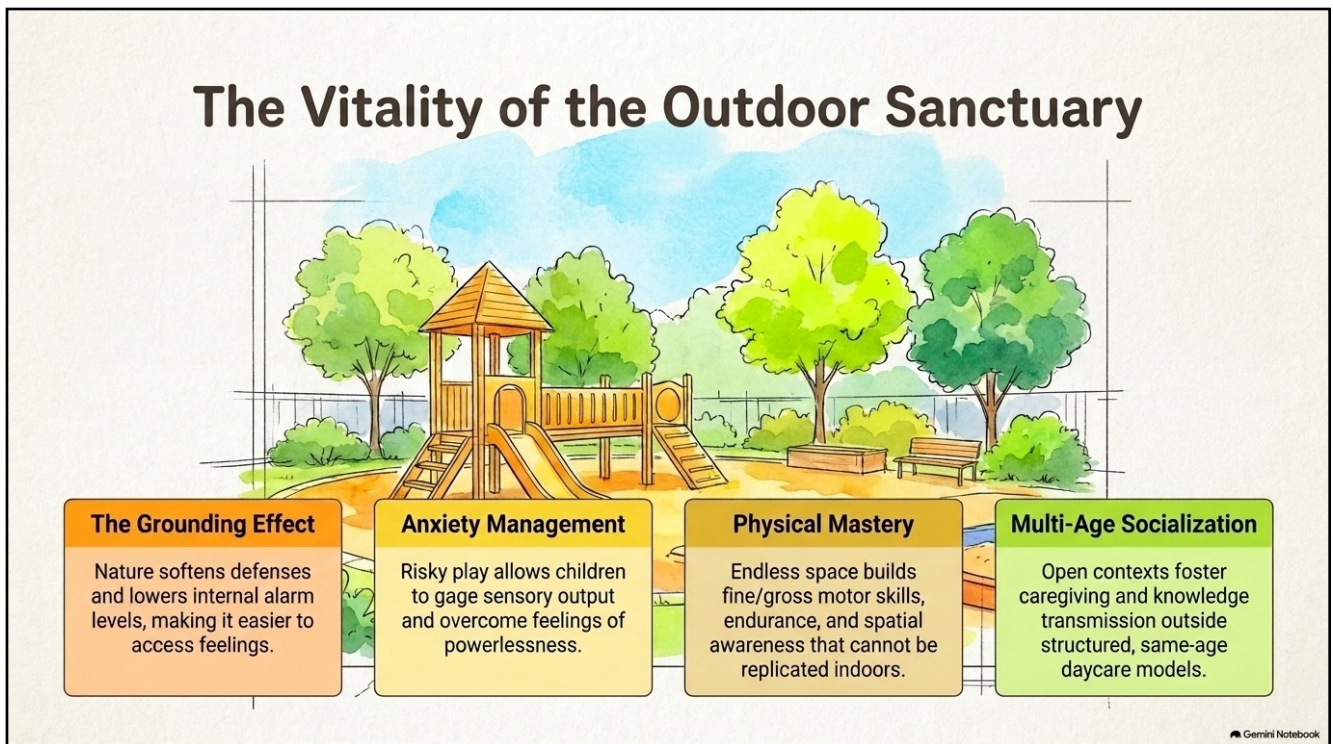
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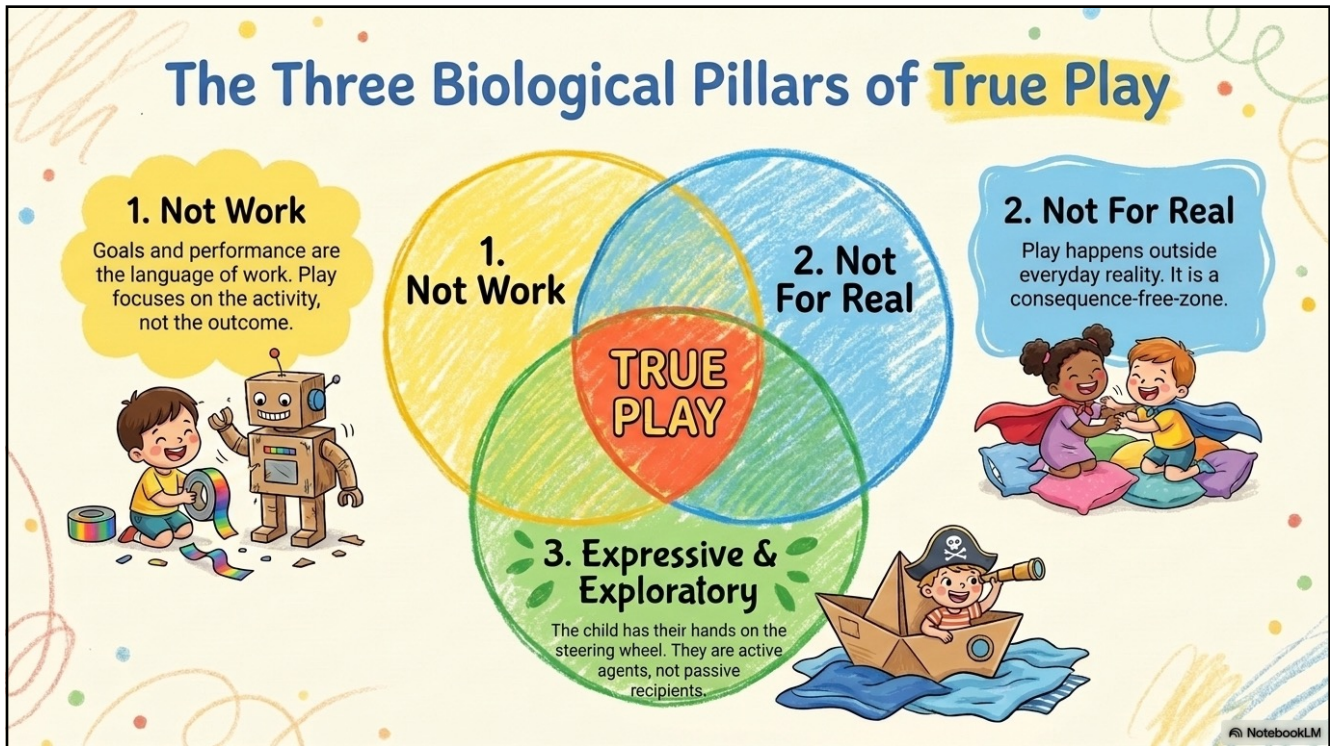
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Structured vs. Unstructured Play: The Diagnostic Matrix

	Unstructured Play (Free Play)	Structured Play (Guided/Rule-Based)
Agency	Child-led and completely open-ended.	Adult-guided and bounded by rules.
Focus	Process-oriented (spontaneous, for its own sake).	Goal-oriented (focused on specific learning objectives or outcomes).
Material Use	Open-ended/non-traditional (e.g., using a block as a phone).	Prescribed (used as designed to complete a task).
Adult Role	Minimal; adult acts as a silent observer or stage manager.	High; adult controls the process and dictates the outcome.

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Six “Emotional Playgrounds” that invite expression.



Music
Bypasses words; pulls feelings out through sound and vibration.



Dance
Unblocks physical tension; makes space for unguided movement without judgment.



Drama
Provides a veil of safety (props/puppets) to express scary things one step removed.



Stories
Draws us in and out; provides a safe connection to vulnerable feelings through characters.



Art
Focuses entirely on process and inner expression, outward—zero focus on a final product.

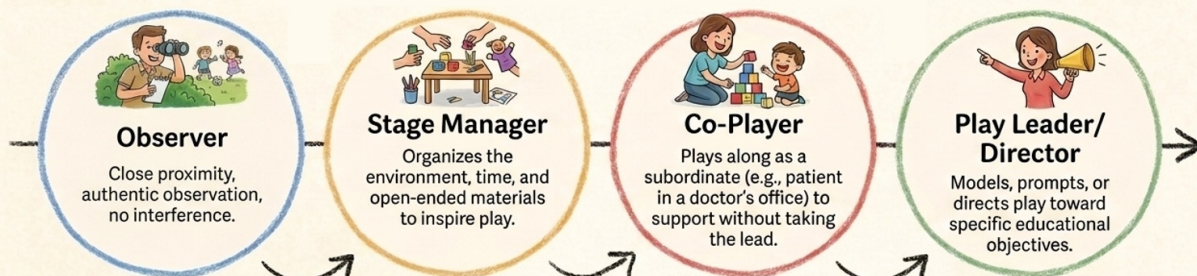


Nature
Grounds the nervous system, softens alarm, and engages sensory awareness.

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The Adult’s Role: Supporting without hijacking.



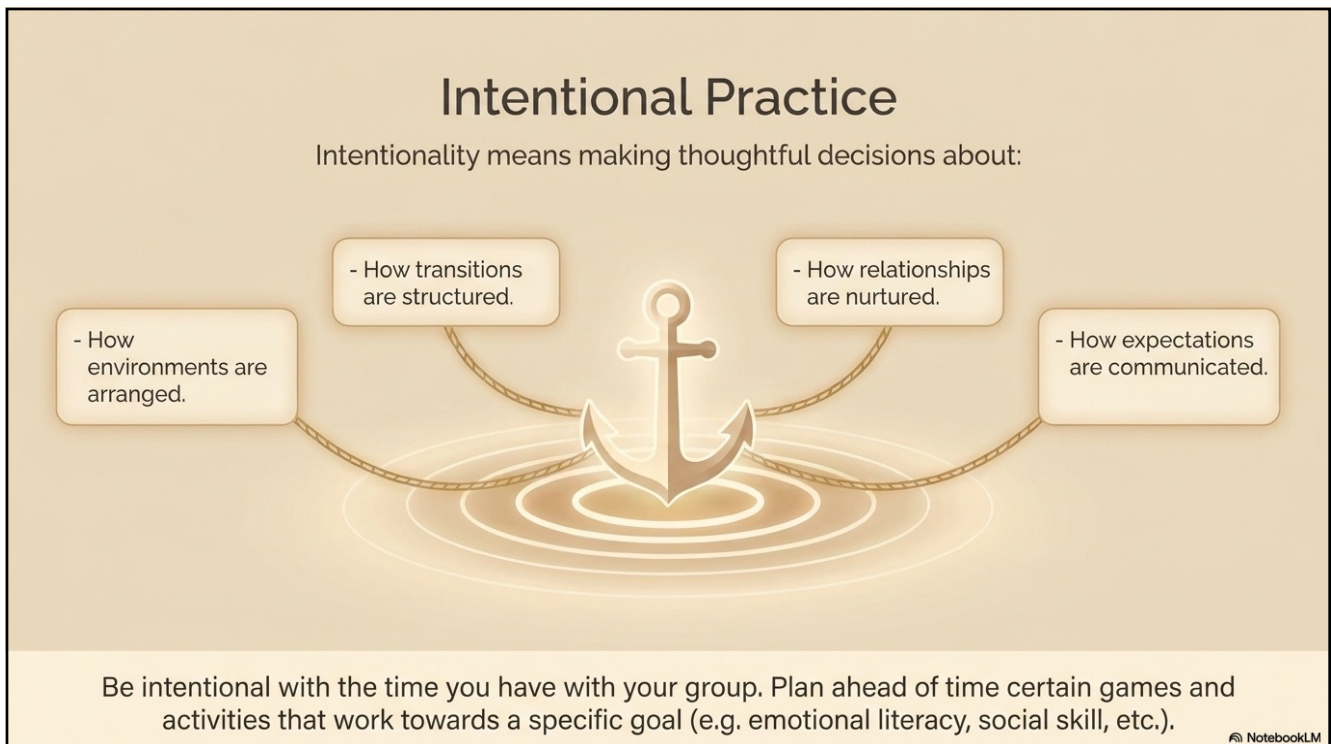
Takeaway: The adult’s involvement dictates the type of play: Shared agency is where learning is meaningful

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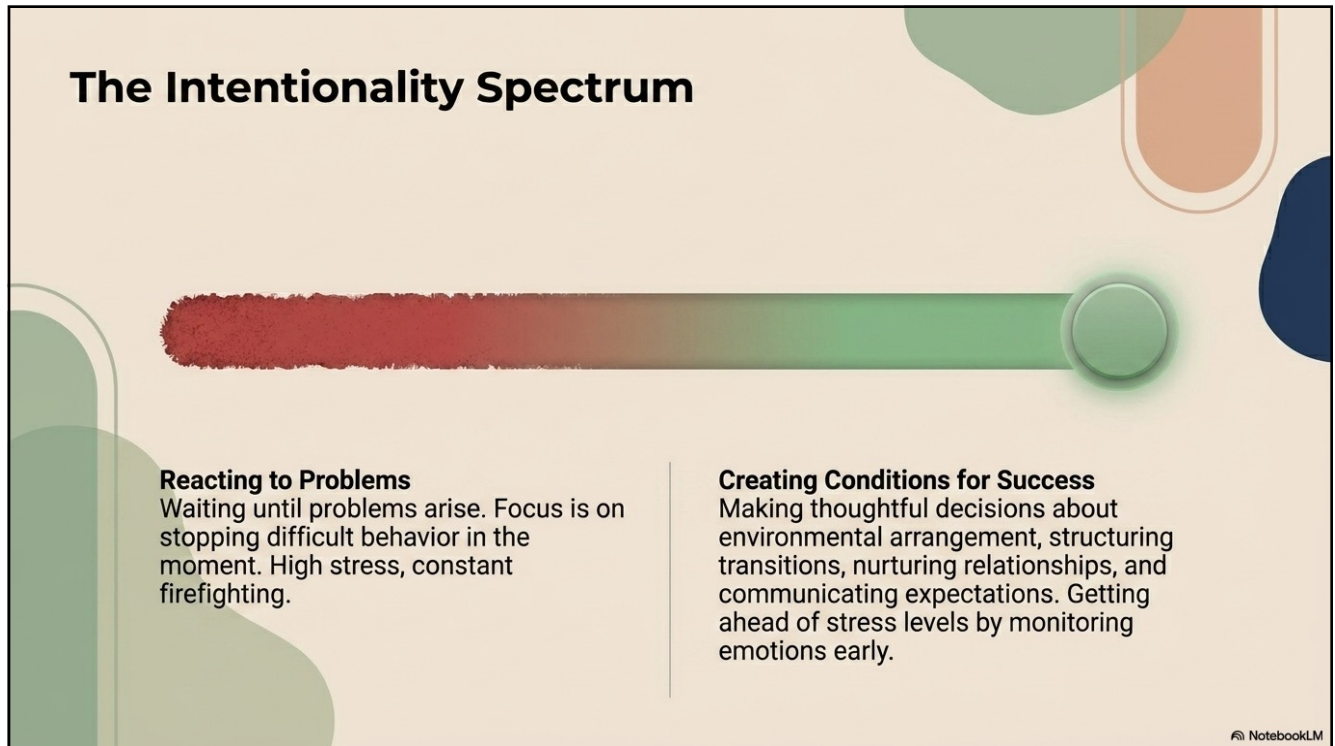
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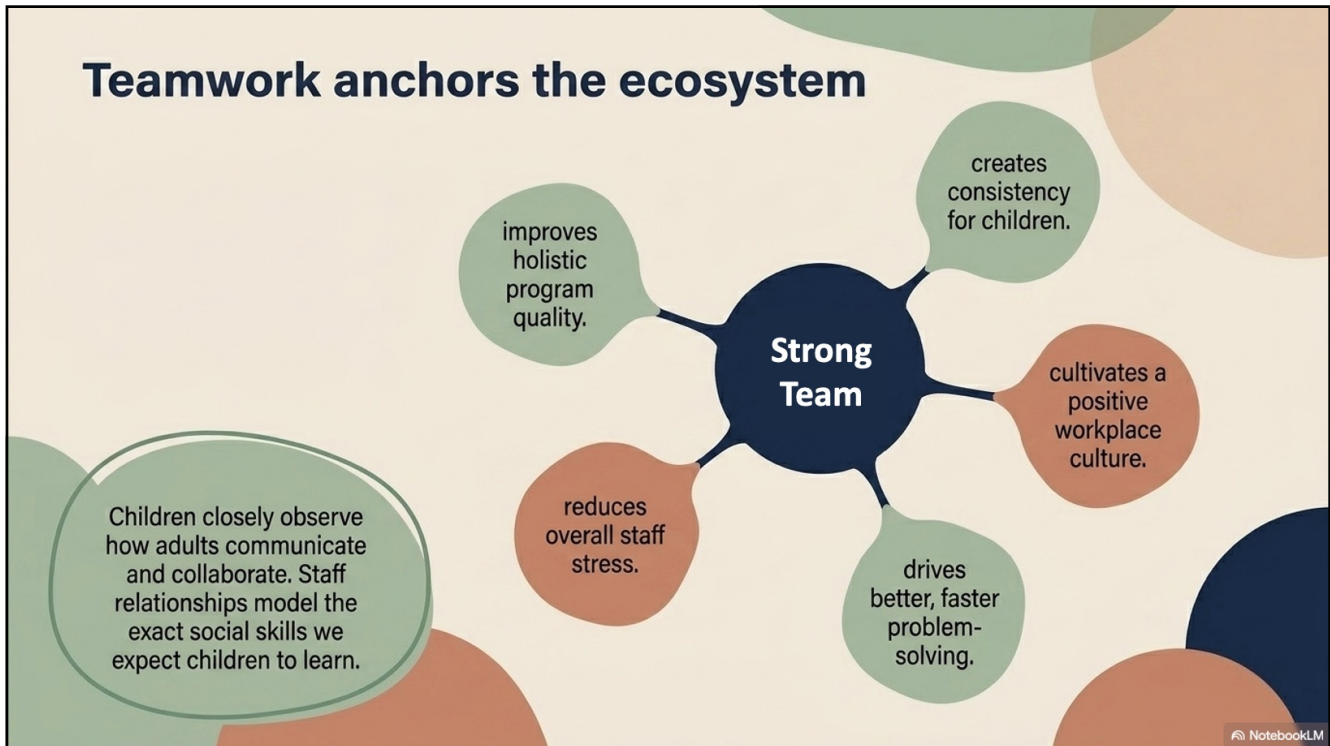
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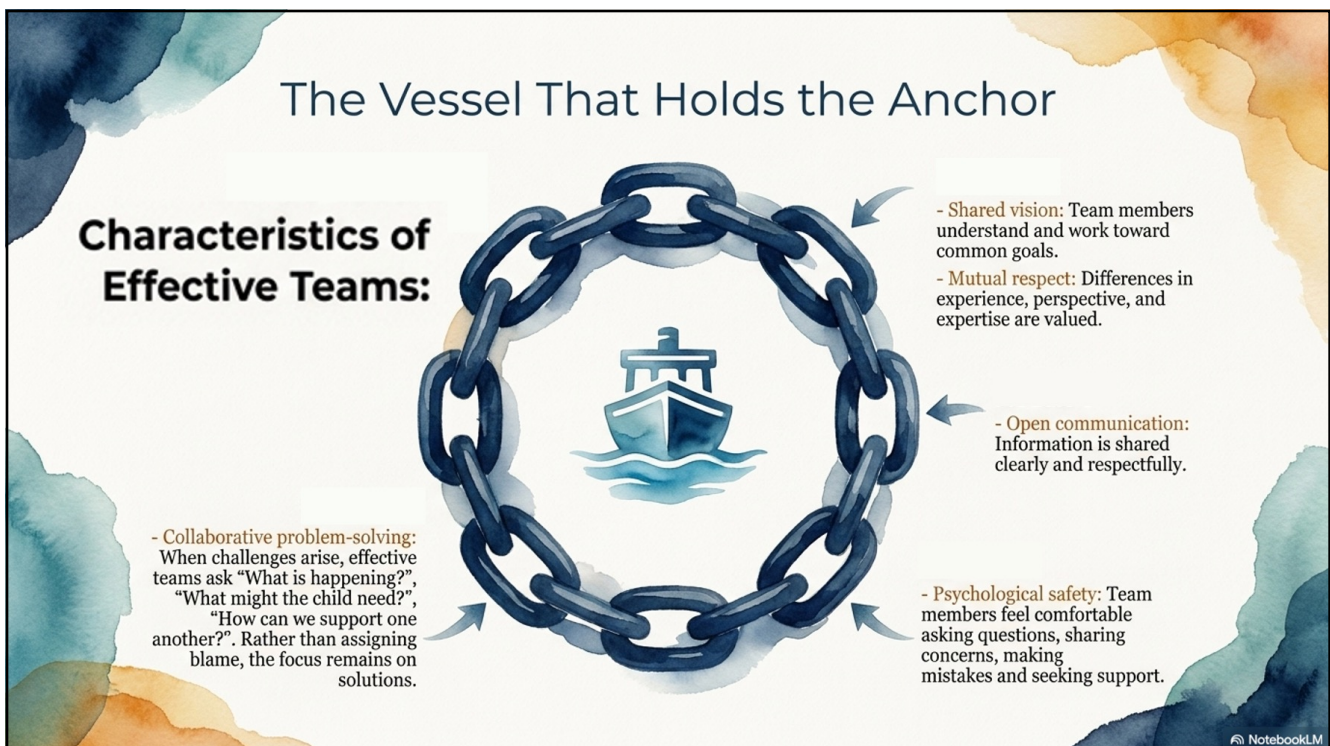
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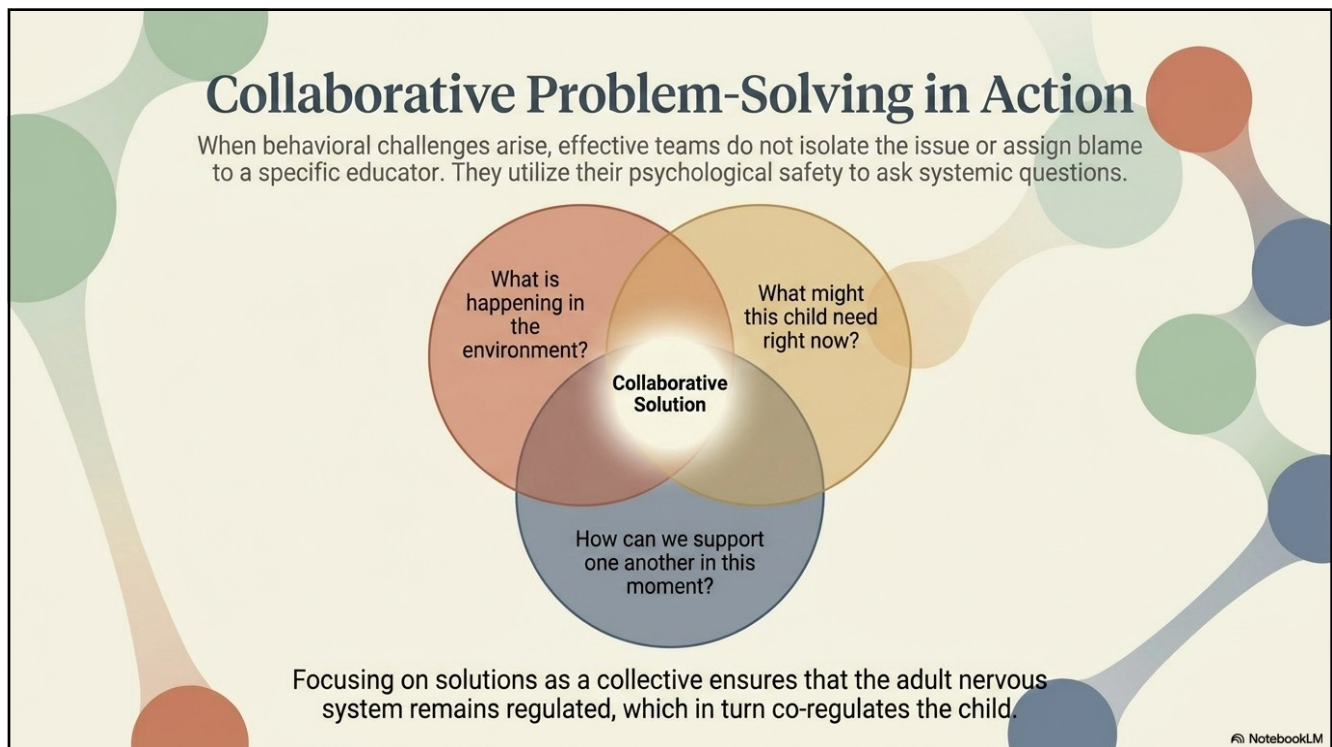
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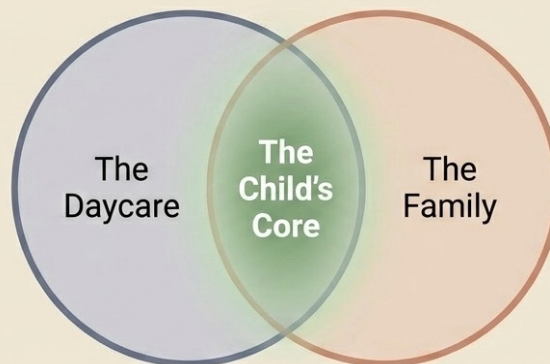
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Establishing strong, transparent
partnerships with families,
bridging home and daycare for
holistic child development.



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Redefining family engagement

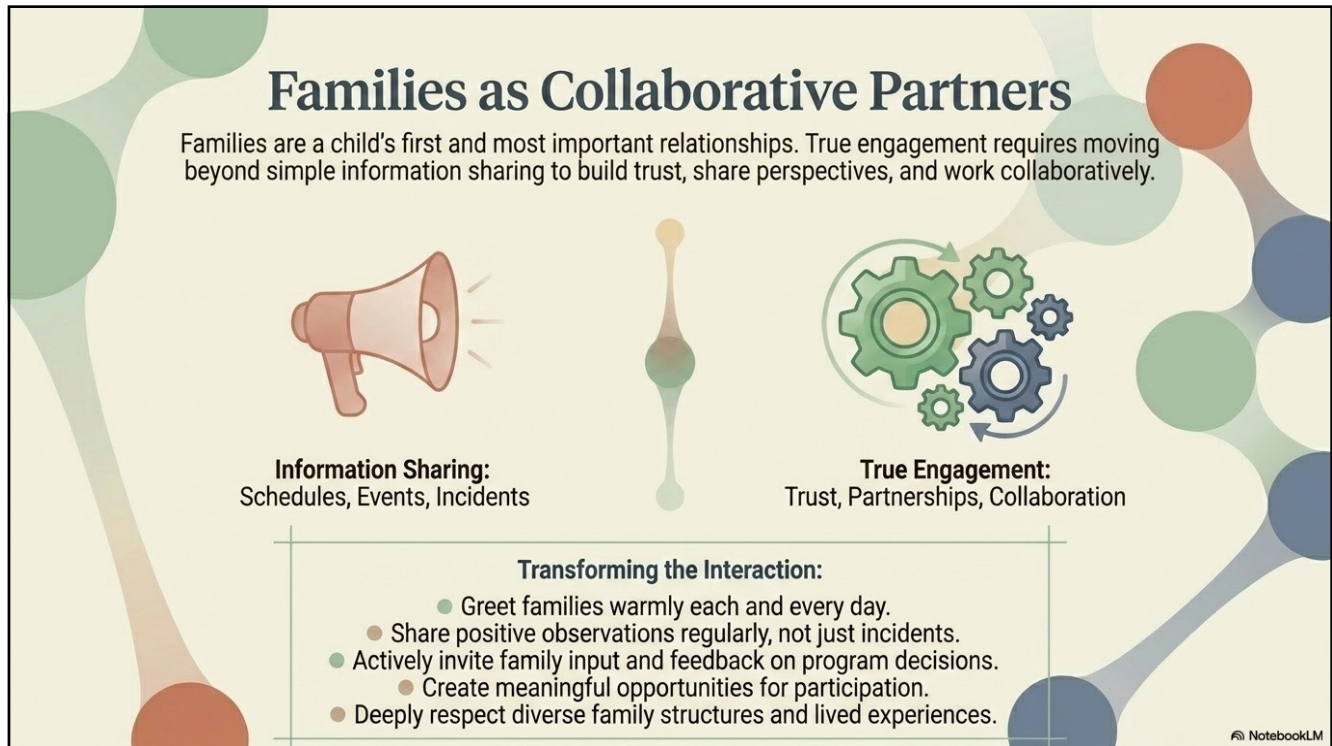


Meaningful partnerships go beyond communicating
schedules, upcoming events, or behavioral incidents.
True engagement requires building trust, sharing
perspectives, and working collaboratively.

Core Action: Respecting diverse family structures
and experiences while creating genuine
opportunities for participation. Families are the
child's first and most critical relationship.

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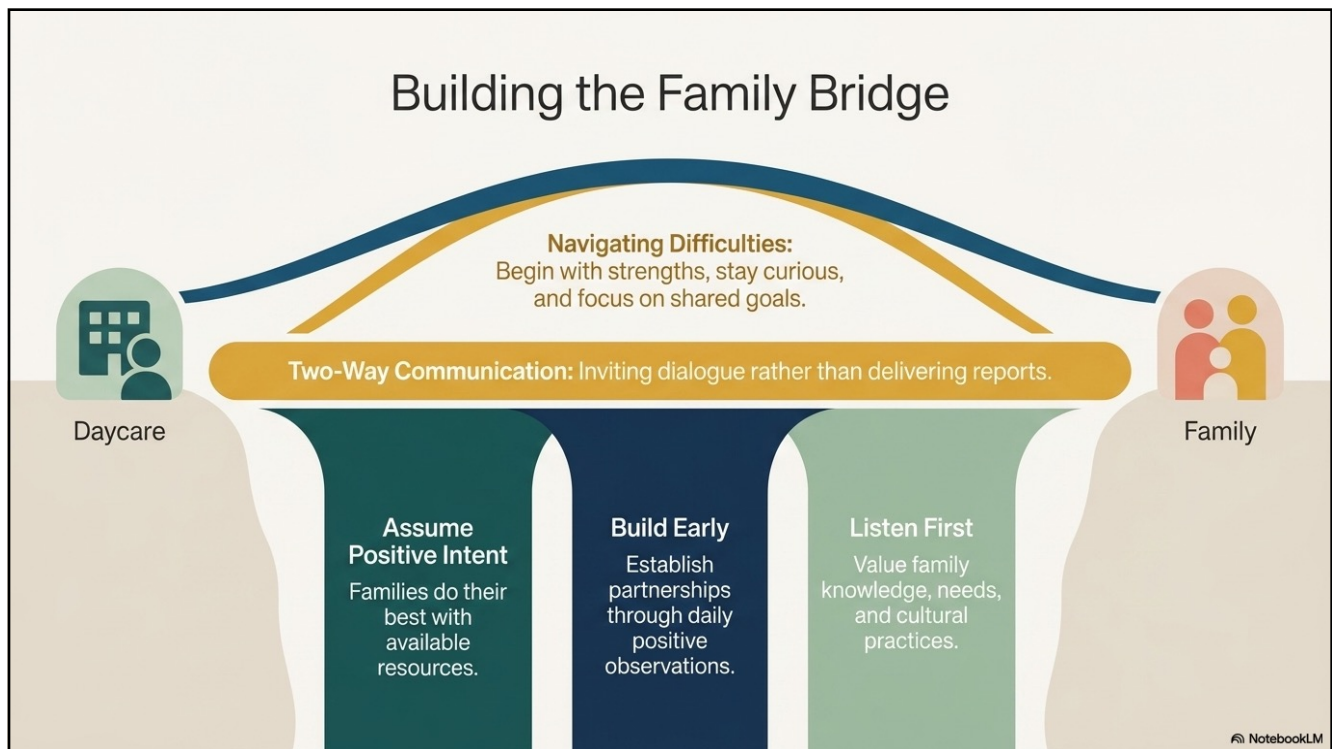
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Moving beyond information sharing

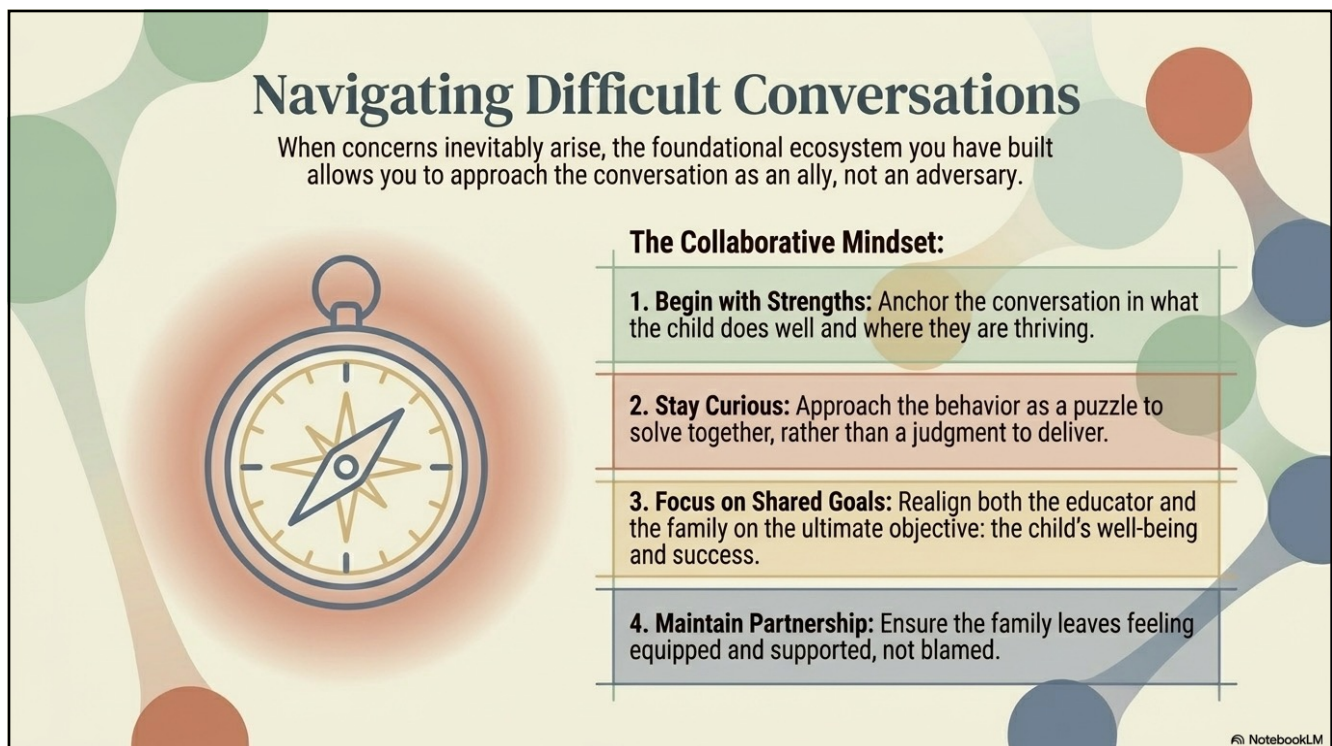
Information Sharing	True Engagement
One-way delivery of facts.	Two-way dialogue that invites input and feedback.
Primarily incidents, schedules, and logistics.	Regular sharing of positive observations and shared developmental goals.
Interaction peaks during challenges or administrative needs.	Relationships are built through everyday interactions before concerns ever arise.

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PART 4:
Reflection
exercise

Small group discussion (10 min)

Conversation prompts:

- Does our environment communicate that children belong here?
- Would every child in our program be able to identify an adult who knows them well and genuinely cares about them?
- Are we spending more energy responding to problems or creating conditions that reduce the likelihood of problems occurring?
- Do families feel like partners in our program, or simply recipients of information?