

Affect Dysregulation and Disorder of the Self.(Book Review)

by A. Rebecca Neal

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Affect Dysregulation and Disorder of the Self, by Allan N. Schore, New York, NY, W.W. Norton and Company, 2003, 306 pp., \$45.00.

Self-regulation has been identified as a critical domain of development in infancy and early childhood. Even so, self-regulation has been broadly and multiply defined across disciplines. The author acknowledges this diversity and then focuses his exploration of self-regulation on the examination of the "convergence of psychology and neuroscience." He applies a transactional model of development (most often used in the field of developmental psychopathology) to probe how early life experiences impact the neurobiological systems that serve as the foundation for self-regulatory development.

The book is divided into two sections. The first section clearly defines the author's experience-expectant model of brain development, as it relates to self-regulation. He explores the impact of dyadic interaction between the caregiver and infant on the neurobiological systems associated with regulatory development. In particular, he maintains a focus on these dyadic relations as precursors to attachment. In this section, the author emphasizes understanding these mechanisms in the context of typical development. This foundation in typical development prepares the reader well for the second section of this book.

In the second section, the author changes his focus to understanding these mechanisms in the context of atypical development. This section begins with an examination of the interaction between attachment relationships and relational trauma on (1) the development of neurobiological systems, (2) affect regulation, and (3) infant mental health. I was particularly interested by his discussion of the neurobiological correlates of Disorganized Attachment status (found at high rates in maltreated children). I also found his detailed discussion of the impact of ongoing relational trauma on the growth and development in the brain, at both micro and macro levels, to be fascinating. In the latter part of this section, the author proposes theoretical connections between traumatic attachment experiences and development of specific psychopathology (e.g., posttraumatic stress disorders, personality disorders, and violent behavior).

In sum, the author presents a wealth of information on theory and empirical findings associated with the development of self-regulation in infancy and early childhood, with an emphasis on the role of attachment.

The author's focus on the transaction between early childhood experience and the development of self-regulation (both biologically and behaviorally) helps it stand out from other works on this topic. I strongly recommend this book to the developmental scientist and/or practitioner who may be looking for a thoughtful, integrated approach to understanding the development of self-regulation. Notably, this book would be particularly accessible for those with a basic foundation in neuroanatomy. For those without such a foundation, a color insert section does an excellent job of illustrating neurobiological data.

Also notable is that the author has written a companion volume entitled *Affect Regulation and the Repair of the Self*. In this volume, the author uses his model of self-regulation to identify fundamental mechanisms of psychotherapeutic change. Consistent with the first volume, his work has a foundation in attachment theory. Additionally, the author introduces the concept of neuropsychanalysis, which places aspects of Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory in the context of neurobiological systems.

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