

# Connecting Neuroplasticity to Social-Emotional Development in the Classroom

We all ask questions of ourselves and the world around us. Looking at the nature of these questions can help us understand ourselves and others in new ways.

*Questions: Am I lovable? Is it ok to be me?*

When not securely attached to self, we question our own self-worth. Struggles with these questions are often built upon years of experiences. Meaning, just being told “yes you are loved,” won’t likely stop the questioning. **New experiences** are what change perceptions. This is the concept of neuroplasticity.

What if some essential understandings could help us intentionally create experiences for students and others that could change their perceptions, and answers to these questions?

## Essential Understandings:

- There are reasons for behavior and emotions, and it can provide information.
- Being curious about behavior can give us insight and help us understand the need being expressed.
- We needn't accept all behavior at all times. Creating boundaries is important, but why and how we do it, makes a difference.

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*Questions: Can I really trust others and the environment?  
Can I let my guard down?*

Time and experience teach us to trust or not. If we have learned that we cannot trust, then we can be stuck in a hypervigilant state. Believing we must always be ready for what might come next, drains us of resources that might otherwise help us to self-regulate, and manage our emotions.

## Essential understandings:

- When something doesn't make sense, it's perceived as a threat.
- When our behaviors, feelings, and words don't match we can be perceived as a threat.
- Perception is reality.
- Authenticity promotes trust, inauthenticity promotes a lack of trust.

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*Questions: Do I matter? Can others see me?  
Do you get what it feels like to be me?*

Attunement means to be in a harmonious or responsive relationship. When we attune with others, they know they matter, they know they are being seen, and can experience a resonance that communicates that we "get" what it feels like to be them, in that moment.

## Essential understandings:

- Attunement requires presence.
- Being present requires practice.
- You will feel like being present all the time is not possible, and you will be correct.