The Ububele Baby Mat Service

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Ububele

Funded by TDH
The Genesis of Ububele

Established in 1999, as a training and service NGO on the outskirts of Alexandra Township, Ububele is a mental health organisation which aims to:

- develop and train professional & lay people in preventative mental health interventions and programmes developed for South African communities
- focus on the first years of life from pregnancy to pre-school.
- draw on Indigenous Knowledge Systems; attachment, psychodynamic and developmental theories
The Ububele Baby Mat Service

• a preventative community-based ECD intervention
• that focuses on attachment and bonding
Why a focus on bonding and attachment?

The following slides are thanks to Ilifa labantwana
www.ilifalabantwana.co.za
Q: What is ECD in practice?

ECD takes place, first and foremost, within the responsive and caring relationship between the child and the parent/caregiver.
Q: Who needs ECD services in SA?

1 million = pregnant women
3 million = children aged 0 - 2
3 million = children aged 3 - 5

First 1000 days (Conception - age 2)
Most rapid period of brain development, laying the foundation for all future health, behaviour and learning.

3-4 years of age
The first few years of childhood are crucial for brain development. By the age of two or three years, a child's brain has up to twice as many synapses as it will have in adulthood.
Core ECD factors

developed from Harvard Centre for the Developing Child

1. Young children develop in an environment of relationships

2. Children's emotional development is built into the architecture of their brains.
3. Excessive stress disrupts the architecture of the developing brain.

4. The timing and quality of early experiences combine to shape brain architecture.

5. Establishing a level foundation for life: mental health begins in early childhood.
What gets fired gets wired

• Children's emotional development is built into the architecture of their brains.

• The timing and quality of early experiences combine to shape brain architecture.

“Children who fall victim to insecure attachment relationships are six times more likely to develop psychological problems. This has a mutating effect and gets passed on from generation to generation”

(Van Rensburg, 2013)
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The Ububele Baby Mat Service

• a community parent-infant mental health intervention offered at primary health care clinics
• a once-off session
• offered by 2 Baby Mat Practitioners on a mat on the floor of the clinics
• it aims to emotionally **support** caregivers by:
  - offering brief counselling
  - offering parenting support that emphasises BONDING
  - offering psycho-education
  - providing referrals to other services

Over 3500 dyads have accessed this service to date
The Ububele Baby Mat Service

• it aims to emotionally support caregivers by:
  - offering brief counselling

Example:
Mom has a 6 week old, Sibusiso, and is very worried about him. After some time, we learn that she lost her first-born at birth. She is worried that she may not be able to keep Sibusiso alive.
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• it aims to emotionally support caregivers by:
  – Offering parenting support that emphasises BONDING
The Ububele Baby Mat Service

- it aims to emotionally **support** caregivers by:
  - offering psycho-education

**Example**
Mom brings 14 month old, Palesa, to the mat. She is worried that is still not walking. We reassure her that there are windows of development and that every child is unique. We suggest she return to the mat in a month to monitor her progress.
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• it aims to emotionally **support** caregivers by:
  - Providing referrals to other services

**Example**
Mom brings 6 month old Londiwe and shares with us that she is very worried that Londiwe is unable to hear. We talk with Mom for some time and observe Londiwe who, we notice, does not appear to hear our communications with her. We refer them to the Speech and Language therapist at the Clinic.
Over 3500 dyads have accessed this service to date.

We have evaluated aspects of the service and have published them.
Thank you

Questions?
Thank you for your attention

Katharine Frost (Ububele)