

# Increasing secure base script knowledge of high-risk mothers with an attachment-based parenting intervention

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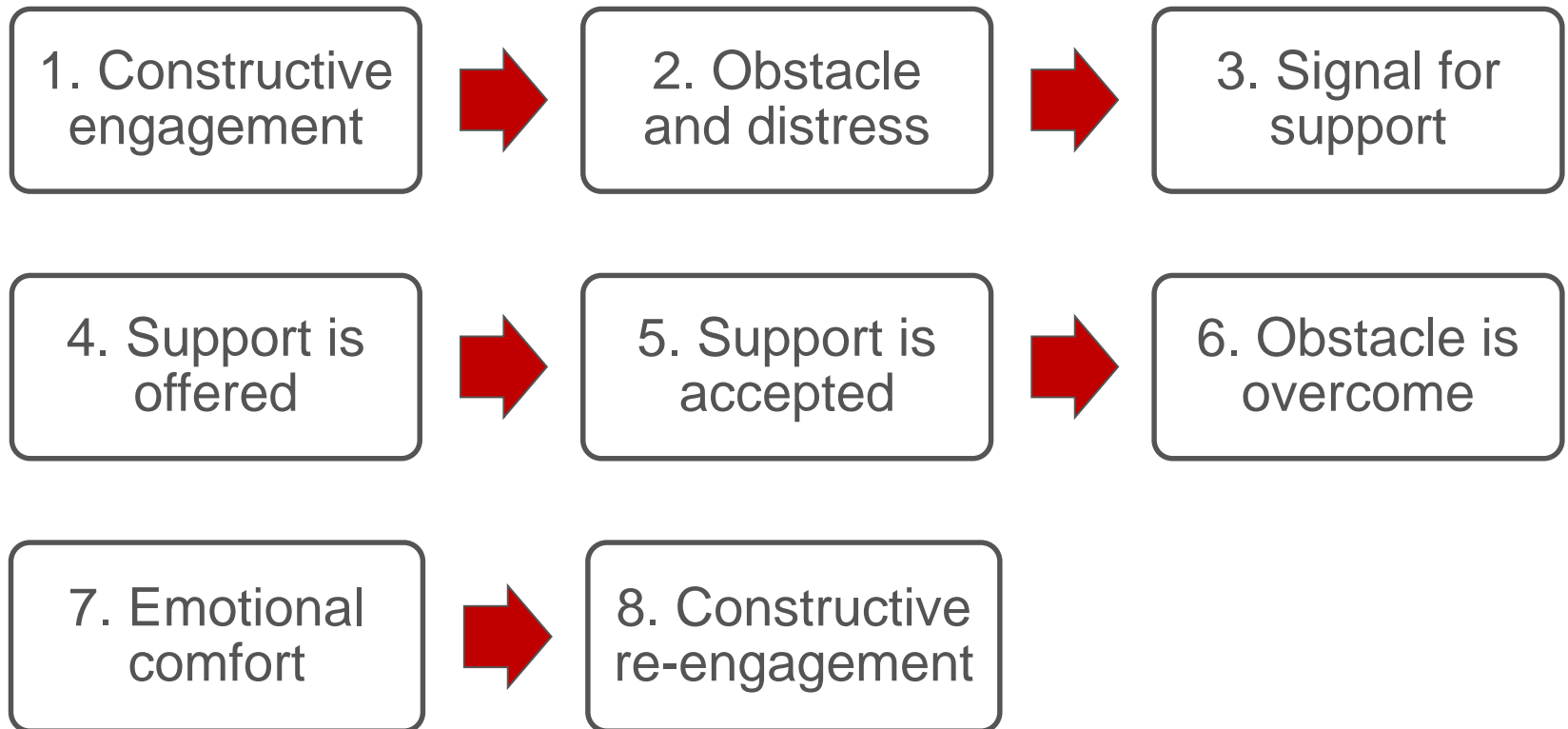
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**The attachment working models concept: Among other things, we build script-like representations of secure base experiences**

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# The Secure Base Script



# Background

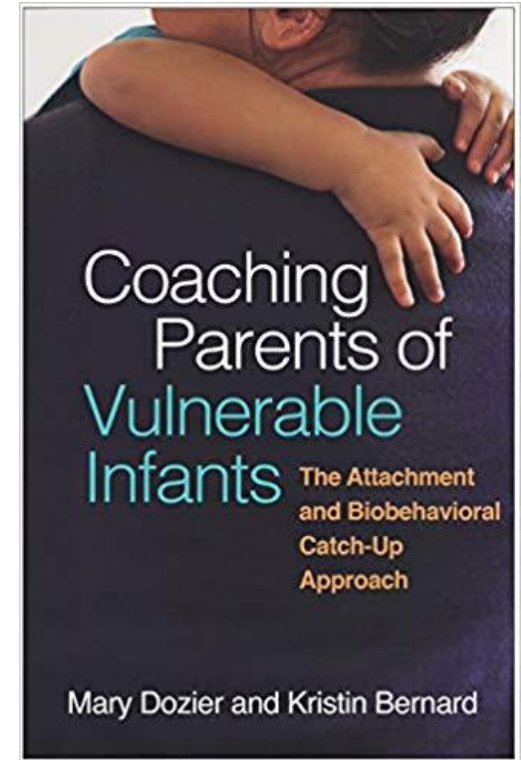
- Knowledge of the secure base script is expected to shape a person's ability to serve as a secure base
  - Studies have focused on parenting outcomes in normative-risk, community samples
  - Is the method valid in low SES samples?
- **Aim #1: Evaluate whether secure base script knowledge is associated with sensitive parenting among mothers at risk for maltreatment**

# Background

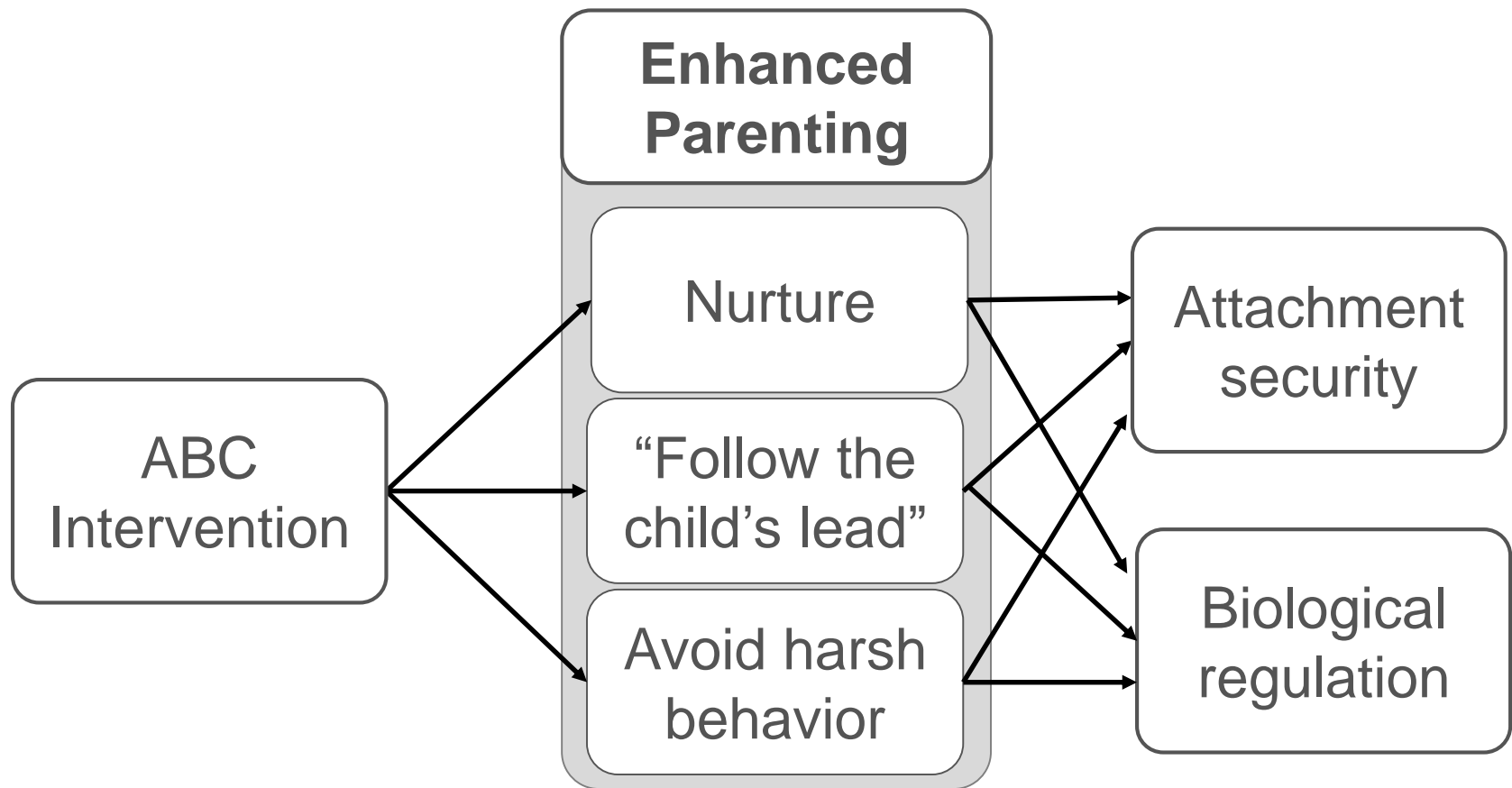
- Secure base scripts are theorized to be established during childhood but remain flexible to incorporating new information
- **Aim #2: Test whether a parenting-focused intervention facilitates learning the secure base script among mothers at risk for maltreatment**

# Attachment & Biobehavioral Catch-up

- 10-session intervention
- Implemented in families' homes
- Targets parenting behaviors important for children who experienced early adversity



# Attachment & Biobehavioral Catch-up



# Randomized controlled trial

- 82 mothers referred from Child Protective Services when children were infants
  - Randomly assigned to receive ABC ( $n = 39$ ) or a control intervention ( $n = 43$ )
    - Control intervention focused on children's cognitive and motor development
  - Follow-up visits when children 8 years old
- 79 low-risk parents recruited when children were 8 years old



# Attachment Script Assessment

- Mothers told four fictional, attachment-related stories using word prompts

<u>Doctor's Office</u>		
Tommy	hurry	mother
bike	doctor	toy
hurt	cry	stop
mother	shot	hold

# Attachment Script Assessment

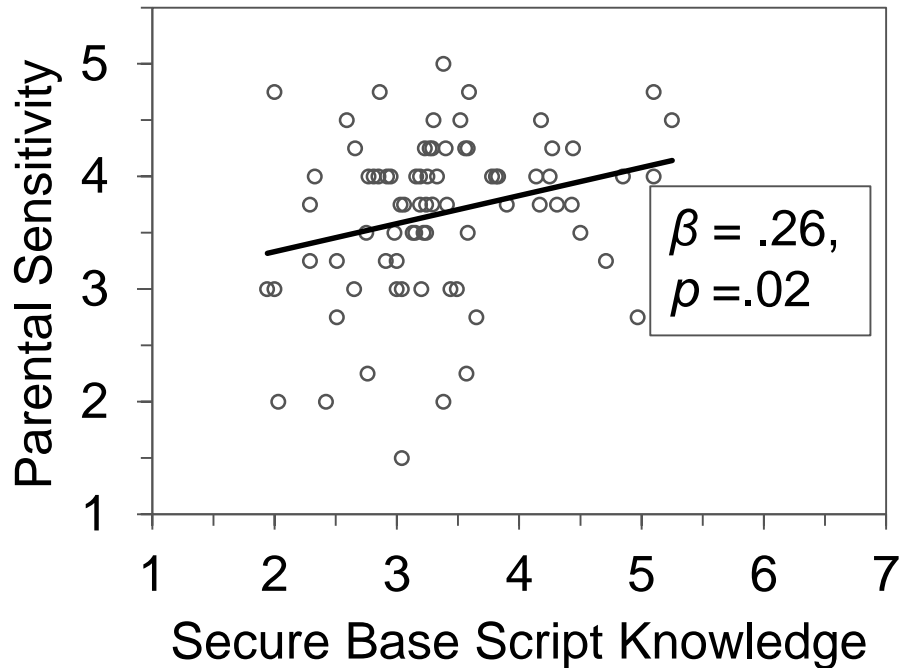
- Mothers told four fictional, attachment-related stories using word prompts
- Each story was coded for secure base script knowledge using a 7-point rating scale
- Four ratings were averaged to create a measure of overall secure base script knowledge ( $\alpha = .77$ ).

# Sensitive Parenting

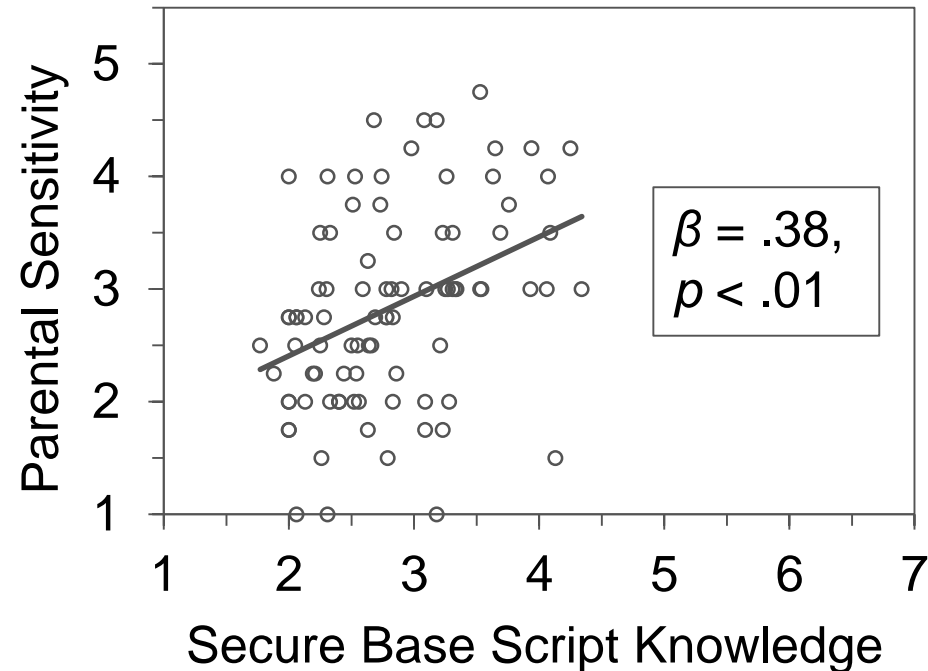
- Mothers and children were observed for 5 minutes planning a hypothetical birthday party for the child
- Sensitive parenting was rated using a 5-point scale
  - Following the child's lead during the conversation
  - Appropriately responding to the child's cues

# Is secure base script knowledge associated with sensitive parenting?

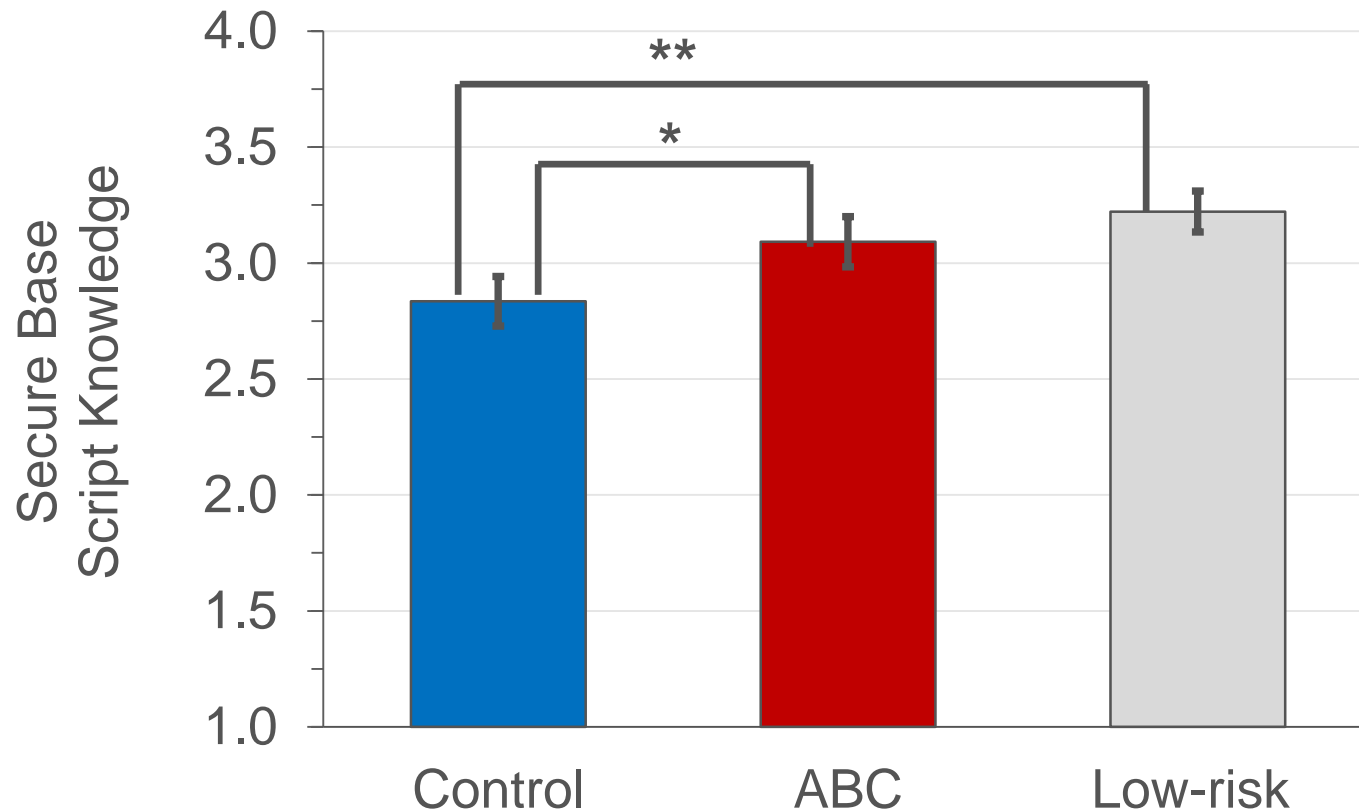
Low-risk mothers



High-risk mothers



# Does the ABC intervention promote secure base script knowledge?



# Conclusions

1. A parenting-focused intervention facilitated a greater understanding of the secure base script among CPS-referred mothers.
2. Secure base script knowledge may contribute to these high-risk mothers' ability to sensitively respond to their children's signals.

# Acknowledgements

Mary Dozier



ABC Lab



Theo Waters

