



Integrated Foundations

A Systems-Based View of How Children Grow

Nicole Archambault
EdS, MS, CCC-SLP, CYMHS, CSSC
The Mindful Connector



Allspace Therapy: Growing Human Potential Through Mindful Connections

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A Systems-Based View of How Children Grow

AN INTEGRATIVE LENS FOR UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENT

Child development does not unfold in isolated parts. It emerges through interconnected systems in the body that continuously communicate with one another—nervous system regulation, sleep and circadian rhythms, breathing and airway function, sensory-motor integration, and physiology. When we understand these systems and how they influence behavior, learning, and emotional expression, we are better equipped to respond with insight rather than correction.

This guide offers a systems-based lens for understanding children. It is intended to support both parents and professionals in moving beyond surface-level behavior and toward developmentally aligned care that fosters resilience, connection, and long-term well-being.



A Note to Parents and Professionals

Children arrive with their own internal blueprints – unique patterns of growth, regulation, and becoming that unfold over time. Development is not something we install or accelerate. It is something we make space for.

At Allspace Therapy, we believe in holding space for children as they are, while honoring who they are becoming. Each child carries a signature journey shaped by their nervous system, physiology, relationships, and environment. When we slow down enough to notice these interwoven systems, we are better able to support development in ways that are respectful, responsive, and aligned.

This guide is an invitation to look beneath behavior and toward the body, to consider how regulation, sleep, breathing, and physiology shape children’s experiences of the world. It is written for parents and professionals who sense that children do not need more correction – they need understanding, support, and environments that allow their systems to organize and grow.

When we hold space in this way, we create the conditions for resilience, connection, and lifelong well-being.

Thank you for being part of that work.



Nicole

*Children need us to hold space for them
as they continue to unfold into the
individuals they are meant to be.*

From Behavior to Biology

Much of modern childhood support is organized around behavior—what a child is doing, not what a child’s body may be communicating. While behavior provides information, it is not the origin point. Behavior is an expression of underlying physiological and regulatory states.

When a child struggles with attention, emotional regulation, sleep, nasal breathing, or learning, the impulse is often to manage or correct the behavior itself. A systems-based approach asks a different question:

What is happening beneath the surface that may be shaping this behavior?

Children’s nervous systems are shaped by internal signals (breathing patterns, sleep quality, sensory processing) and external inputs (environment, expectations, stress, relationships). These systems develop together, not separately. Supporting one system often supports many others.

When adults understand this interconnectedness, responses naturally shift—from control to curiosity, from urgency to attunement, and from isolated interventions to integrated support.

Behavior is often the most visible expression of underlying biological systems doing their best to adapt.

Regulation as the Foundation

Regulation is not a skill children either have or lack. It is a state that emerges when the nervous system feels safe, supported, and resourced.

A regulated nervous system allows a child to:

- Attend and engage
- Process sensory information
- Recover from stress
- Access learning and social connection

Dysregulation is often misunderstood as defiance, inattention, or emotional volatility. In reality, it frequently reflects a nervous system working hard to adapt under strain.

Sleep disruption, inefficient breathing, chronic stress, sensory overload, and unmet physiological needs can all tax regulation. When these pressures accumulate, behavior becomes the visible signal.

Supporting regulation begins with adults understanding their role not as managers of behavior, but as co-regulators—shaping environments, rhythms, and expectations that help the child’s nervous system settle and organize.

A regulated nervous system creates the conditions for learning, connection, and growth to unfold.

Sleep, Breathing, and Physiology

Sleep and breathing are foundational biological processes that profoundly influence development and behavior, yet they are often overlooked when children present with behavioral or learning challenges.

Sleep supports brain development, emotional processing, immune function, and metabolic health. Both chronic sleep disruption and sleep disordered breathing can impact attention, mood, memory, new learning, and resilience. Similarly, breathing patterns influence oxygen delivery, nervous system balance, posture, craniofacial growth, and stress physiology.

Mouth breathing, airway restriction, disrupted sleep architecture, and chronic fatigue can contribute to a chronic state of fight or flight. Over time, this affects regulation, learning readiness, and emotional stability.

A systems-based approach considers whether a child's body is receiving what it needs to rest, restore, and grow. Addressing sleep and breathing is not an add-on—it is often central to supporting developmental progress.

Physiology is not separate from behavior. it is one of the languages through which the body communicates need.

Responding With Insight Rather Than Correction

When adults view development through a systems lens, responses naturally become more compassionate and effective.

Instead of asking:

- How do I stop this behavior?

The question becomes:

- What is this child's body asking for right now?

This shift does not remove boundaries or expectations. Rather, it grounds them in understanding. Structure, predictability, and support become tools for regulation rather than control.

For parents, this may mean adjusting routines, prioritizing sleep and play, getting to the root cause of mouth breathing, or noticing early signs of overload. For professionals, it may involve interdisciplinary collaboration, environmental adaptations, or reframing goals through a regulatory lens.

The result is not permissiveness, but alignment—meeting children where they are biologically and developmentally.

*When we understand the systems beneath
behavior, our responses naturally shift
from correction to curiosity.*

Supporting Resilient Development



Resilience is not built through pressure. It develops through repeated experiences of regulation, repair, and support.

When children’s systems are supported—physiologically, emotionally, and relationally—they are better able to tolerate challenge, adapt to change, and engage with learning and relationships.

A systems-based approach invites adults to slow down, observe patterns, and trust the body’s wisdom. It recognizes that development is not linear and that progress often emerges when foundational needs are addressed.

By understanding how regulation, sleep, breathing, and physiology interact, adults can create environments that support not just behavior, but the whole child.

This is not about doing more. It is about seeing differently—and responding in ways that honor how children are designed to grow.

Allspace Therapy is committed to supporting biologically aligned, developmentally informed approaches to childhood health and well-being.

Resilience grows when foundational systems are supported consistently over time.





NICOLE ARCHAMBAULT

EDS, MS, CCC-SLP, CYMHS, CSSC

The Mindful Connector
Founder, Allspace Therapy
Creator/Instructor, PSA Educational Series
Co-Founder, Prescription for Play®

www.allspacetherapy.com
courses@allspacetherapy.com
[@allspacetherapy](https://www.instagram.com/allspacetherapy)

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*Academy of Applied Myofunctional Sciences
(AAMS)*

Nicole is an ASHA board certified speech-language pathologist with a unique blend of sub-specialties. She is the Founder of Allspace Therapy in Calabasas, California and is the myofunctional therapy section leader for the American Academy of Physiological Medicine & Dentistry (AAPMD). She is a graduate of the Mind, Brain, Teaching graduate certificate program at Johns Hopkins University.

Nicole is a national and international speaker, as well as a published author on the topics of educational neuroscience, orofacial myofunctional therapy, airway function disorders and the autonomic nervous system, and sleep wellness in pediatrics. Her first article for The ASHA Leader (2015) on sleep-disordered breathing and tongue-ties garnered a Bronze Excel Award from Association Media & Publishing for Best Column.

Nicole is a passionate advocate for interdisciplinary collaboration and public health awareness on airway health and sleep. Alongside an interdisciplinary team of colleagues on the FAIREST: Functional AIRway Evaluation Screening Tool (Pilot Study, Phase 1), she has contributed to research on nasal breathing and oral function.