

If you would like the powerpoint or
exercise sheet :)

FINDING YOUR OWN WAY HOME: EARNED ATTACHMENT SECURITY

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Reflective Functioning Exercise

- 1) Record all of the actions and decisions you generated over the past 15 minutes.
- 2) Distinguish between cognitive and affective experience.
- 3) Analyze these in terms of what wellness needs they fulfilled.

THE INDIVISIBLE SELF:

An Evidence-Based Model Of Wellness

CONTEXTS:

Local (safety)

Family
Neighborhood
Community

Institutional (policies & laws)

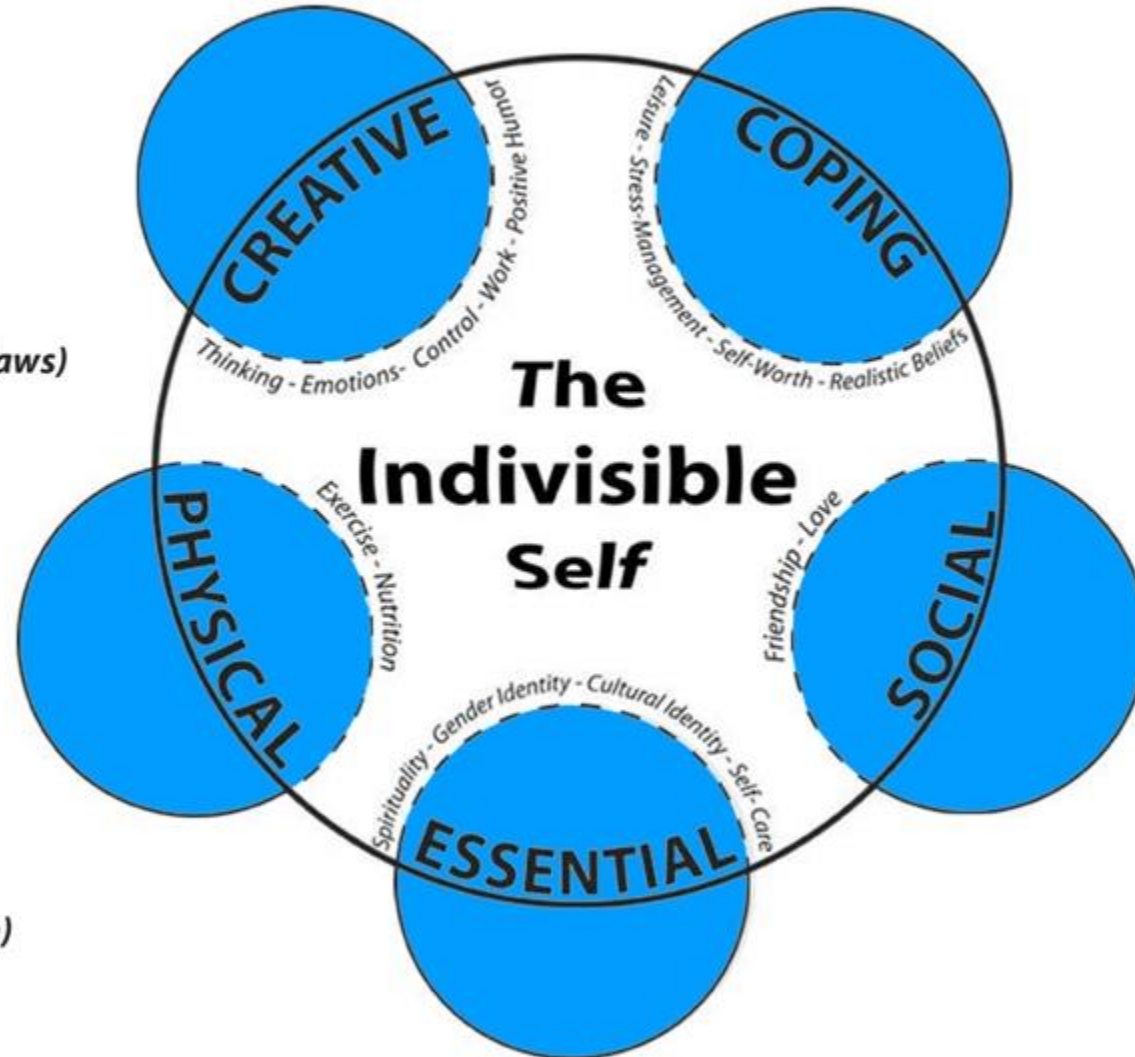
Education
Religion
Government
Business/Industry

Global (world events)

Politics
Culture
Global Events
Environment
Media

Chronometrical (lifespan)

Perpetual
Positive
Purposeful



Inspiration

- Clients ask me when they learn about the salience of attachment patterns: can this change?
- Our service is aimed at increasing caregiving competence – multigenerational
- One study has demonstrated that counseling graduate students had higher levels of emotional distress than the general population (White & Franzoni, 1990).



What is attachment?

- An affectionate bond between people that endures across time and space.
- John Bowlby conceived of an “attachment behavioral system” that serves to help ensure the survival and effective development of human infants, and therefore the species.
- The primary attachment relationship is a critical developmental context of neurological and biological regulatory processes.
- Attachment is a two-way process, both individuals adapt to each other.

Strange Situation Procedure

- Designed by Mary Ainsworth for use with mother-infant dyad (12-18 mo).
- Could recognize patterns of attachment in 30 min lab procedure.
- Currently have infant and pre-school coding systems.
- Focuses on child behavior upon separation and reunion with parent.

SSP Attachment Classifications

- 60% Secure
- 30% Insecure
 - *Anxious-avoidant*
 - *Anxious-ambivalent*
- 10% Disorganized (much higher in clinical populations)

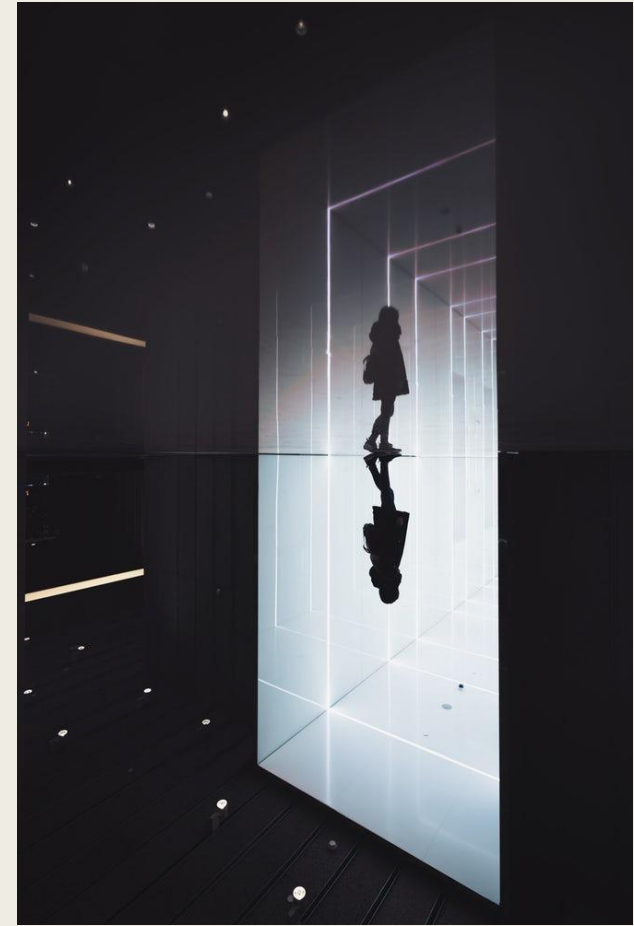
Research on Attachment and Adjustment

- Attachment security correlates with life outcomes:
 - *Better social adjustment (e.g. Andersson, 2005)*
 - *Increased well-being (e.g. Love & Murdock, 2004)*
 - *Lower rates of depression and anxiety (e.g. Armsden & Greenberg, 1987)*
 - *Higher levels of academic achievement and employment (e.g. Beauchamp, Martineau, & Gagnon, 2016)*



Adult Attachment Interview (AAI)

- A semi-structured interview intended to explore adult state of mind in regard to attachment
- Focus is on the discourse rather than content.
- Questions are designed to “surprise the unconscious”



Sample AAI Questions:

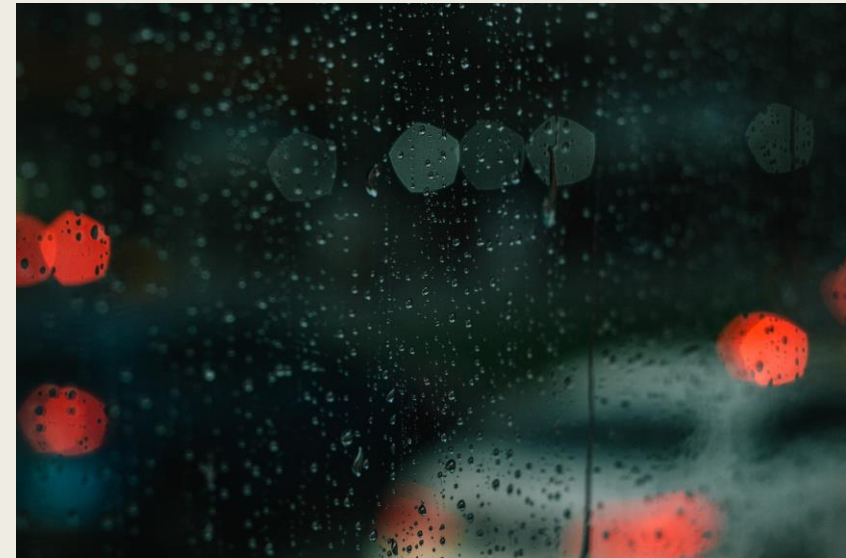
- *When you were upset as a child, what would you do?*
- *What is the first time you remember being separated from your parents?*
 - How did you respond? Do you remember how your parents responded?*
 - Are there any other separations that stand out in your mind?*

Coding the AAI

- Examine the speaker's probable experiences with each parent.
- Current state of mind in regard to these experiences.
- Consider coherence of overall transcript, as well as lapses in discourse or reasoning.

Why is discourse coherent or incoherent?

- Grice's maxims:
 - **Quality** - *Do details of the story support the overarching themes?*
 - **Quantity** – *Is the narrative an appropriate length? Is too little or too much information given to answer the question?*
 - **Relation** – *Is the information relevant?*
 - **Manner** – *Are responses clear and complete?*



Coding the AAI Continued

- Classifications include:
 - *Secure-autonomous---valuing of attachment*
 - *Insecure-dismissing*
 - *Insecure-preoccupied*
 - *Unresolved-disorganized*
- These patterns correspond with, but are technically distinct from parent-child classification system.



Mary Main: Berkeley Longitudinal Study

- Followed 42 individuals from 1977-1999
 - *Infant attachment assessed via the strange situation at 1 year old (1978)*
 - *Children at age 6 assessed via SSP (1983)*
 - *Parents assessed via AAI (1983)*
- =70% correlation
 - *Children given AAI at age 19 (1996) – matched:*
- 1978 SSP, 1983 behavioral assessment, 1983 parent AAI

Continuous-secure vs. earned-secure

- Some individuals reported inconsistent or unloving parenting, but still presented coherent narratives of their childhood on the AAI.
- These parents also tended to behave securely with their own children and raise children categorized as secure.
- Pearson et al. (1994) retrospectively defined these individuals as “earned-secure” on the assumption that they would have been classified as insecure if they were assessed as children.

Continuous-secure vs. Earned-secure

- Roisman et al. (2002, 2006) questioned the validity of retrospectively defining earned-secure attachment.
- No direct evidence of childhood adversity.
- Conducted *prospective* research with a 23-year longitudinal study.
- Earned-secures (74 of 516) had poorer experience ratings than continuous-secures (434 of 516).
- Earned-secures had better relationships than insecure, more emotional distress than continuous-secures.

Continuous-secure vs. Earned-secure

- No evidence that earned-secure adults were insecure as infants.
- Roisman et al. (2002, 2006, 2014) concluded that earned-secures overcame adversity due to a combination of early security and scaffolding from other supportive figures.
- Earned-secures had:
 - *Lower quality maternal care*
 - *More father absence*
 - *Greater financial stress*

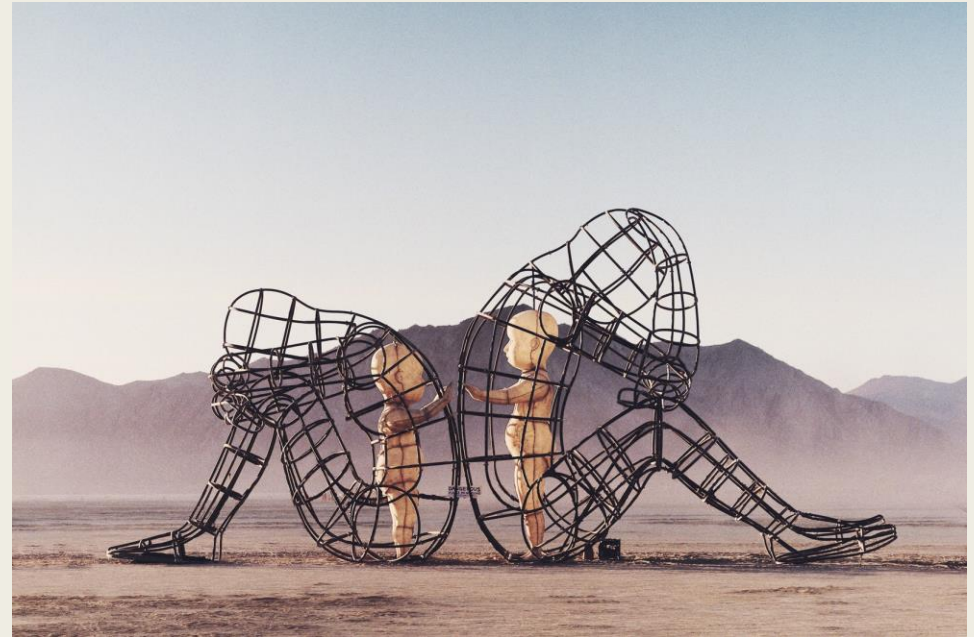
Correcting the record

- Earned-security is not about moving from insecure as an infant to secure as an adult.
- There are real differences between continuous-secure adults and earned-secure adults.



How can people change?

- Receiving emotionally-oriented support helps people overcome adverse experiences.
- Our attachment system becomes more resistant to change over time.
- We can increase our reflective functioning.



Who produces coherent narratives?

- People who can both **mentalize** and be **mindful** of their experiences.
- **Mentalizing/reflective capacity** – The ability to hold at some distance and analyze lived experience.
- **Mindfulness** – Present moment awareness, non-judgemental perception of internal and external stimuli.

Implications for counselors

- “The investigations of Main, Fonagy and others confirm that the capacity to reflect coherently upon experience – rather than being embedded in it or defensively dissociated from it – is a marker of both our own attachment security and our ability to raise children (and perhaps patients) who will also be secure”
- David Wallin (2007)

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