



SOCIAL CARE TRAINING SOLUTIONS

Where Training Matters





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Attachment Theory



Aims



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- **To enhance knowledge and understanding of attachment theory**
- **To know the affect on adult relationships**
- **To know how we assess our own patterns**
- **Understand the possible attachment pattern we may have developed**
- **Learn the implication on my caring relationship**
- **Develop an understanding of how I can alter my pattern**



What is Attachment?



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 ...the capacity to form and maintain healthy emotional relationships which generally begin to develop in early childhood

1. Enduring bond with “special” person
2. Security & safety within context of this relationship
3. Includes soothing, comfort, & pleasure
4. Loss or threat of loss of special person results in distress



Background



Attachment styles

1. John Bowlby
2. Harry Harlow
3. Mary Ainsworth

John Bowlby's idea



- Attachment is the result of innate, interrelated human predispositions for infants to seek the attention of adults –
- The primary caregiver (PCG) – most often their mothers; part of biological basis of survival
- Attachment is an “anchor” that allows child to explore world
- Disturbance/disruption of initial attachment bond between child and PCG renders person insecure as an adult

Harry Harlow's idea



- Raised monkeys with cloth-covered or wire “mothers”
- Wire mother also provided milk to infants, but not cloth mother
- Infants monkeys spent more time clinging to cloth mothers – “contact comfort” compared to wire ones

Mary Ainsworth's idea



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- Return and serve care giving forms attachment and brain scaffolding
- Humans, especially infants, rely on “attachment figures” for protection, comfort, and emotional regulation
- The “attachment behavioural system” is an evolved, innate proximity regulator
- When threat abates, behavioural systems other than attachment (e.g., exploration, affiliation, care giving) can be activated
- There are systematic individual differences in attachment orientation: secure, anxious, avoidant

Three Core Concepts in Early Development

2 Serve & Return Interaction Shapes Brain Circuitry

NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD

Center on the Developing Child  HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Ten Tenets



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- What could be the Ten core foundations that form **OUR ONGOING** attachment patterns be?



10 Central Tenets



- Attachment is an innate motivating force
 1. Seeking and maintaining contact with significant others is innate.
 2. This occurs throughout the life span.

10 Central Tenets



- Secure dependency complements autonomy
 - 1.No such thing as complete independence or over-dependency
 - 2.There is only effective and ineffective dependence
 - 3.Secure dependence fosters autonomy and self-confidence
 - 4.The more secure attached we are the more separate and different we can be.
 - 5.Health means maintaining a felt sense of interdependency, rather than being self-sufficient and separate from others.

10 Central Tenets



- Attachment offers a safe haven
 1. The presence of attachment figures provides comfort and security while perceived inaccessibility creates distress.
 2. Proximity is the natural antidote to feelings of anxiety and vulnerability
 3. Positive attachments offers a safe haven that offer a buffer against effects of stress and uncertainty.

10 Central Tenets



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- Attachment offers a secure base
 1. Gives base from which individuals can explore their world and most adaptively respond to their environment.
 2. Secure base encourages exploration and a cognitive openness to new information.
 3. When we have this felt security, we are better able to reach out and offer support for others.

10 Central Tenets



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- Accessibility and Responsiveness builds bonds
 1. Building blocks for secure attachment are emotional accessibility and responsiveness
 2. One can be physically present but emotionally absent
 3. Emotional engagement and the trust that this engagement will be there when needed is most crucial.
 4. Any response, even anger, is better than none.
 5. Emotion is the key.
 6. If there is no engagement, no emotional responsiveness, then the message is “your signals do not matter to me and there is no connection between us.”

10 Central Tenets



- Fear and uncertainty activate attachment needs
 1. When an individual is threatened attachment needs for comfort and connection become salient and compelling, and attachment behaviours are activated.
 2. Attachment to key others is our primary protection against feelings of helplessness and meaninglessness.

10 Central Tenets



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- The process of separation distress is predictable
 1. If attachment behaviours fail to evoke comforting responsiveness and contact from attachment figures, a predictable process of protest, clinging, depression and despair, ending eventually in detachment.
 2. Depression is a natural response to loss of connection
 3. Anger can be seen as an attempt to make contact with an inaccessible attachment figure.

10 Central Tenets



- Finite number of insecure forms of engagement can be identified.
 1. There are a number of ways that we have to deal with the unresponsiveness of attachment figures.
 2. Only so many ways of coping from a negative response to the question “Can I depend on you when I need you?”

10 Central Tenets



- Attachment involves working models of self and others
 1. Attachment strategies reflect ways of processing and dealing with emotion
 2. These models of self and others come from thousands of interactions, and become expectations and biases that are carried forward into new relationships.

10 Central Tenets

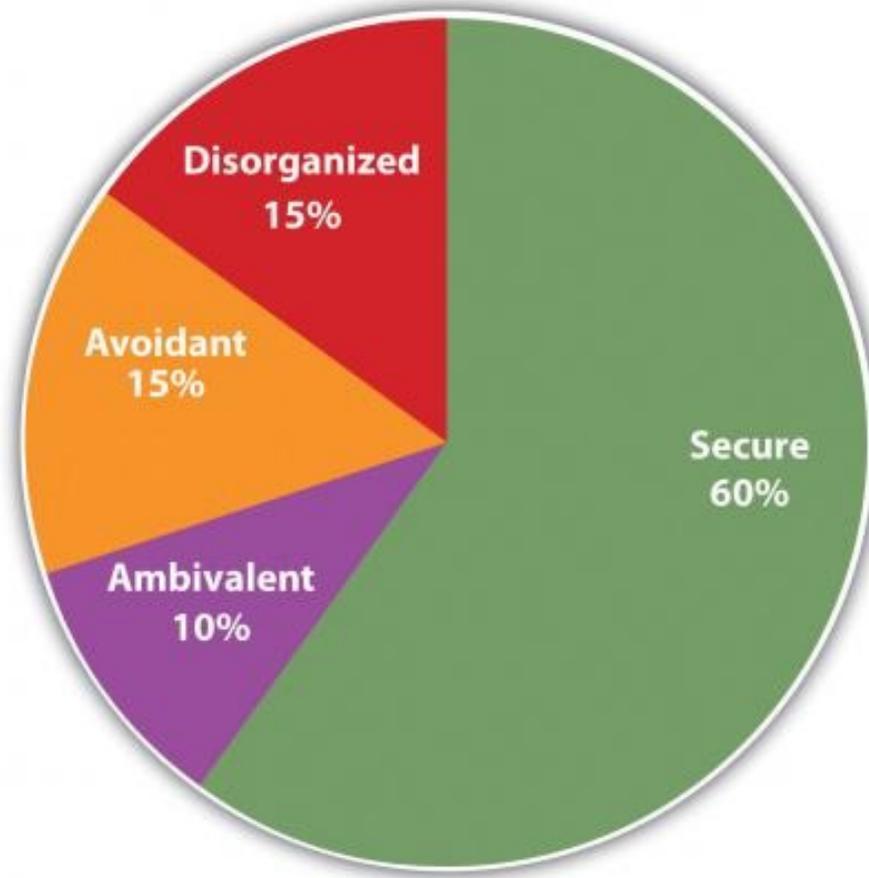


- Isolation and loss are inherently traumatising
 1. Attachment theory describes and explores the trauma of deprivation, loss, rejection, and abandonment by those we need the most and the enormous impact it has on us.
 2. These events have a major impact on personality formation and on a person's ability to deal with other stresses in life.



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So what about us then?

Adult Attachment

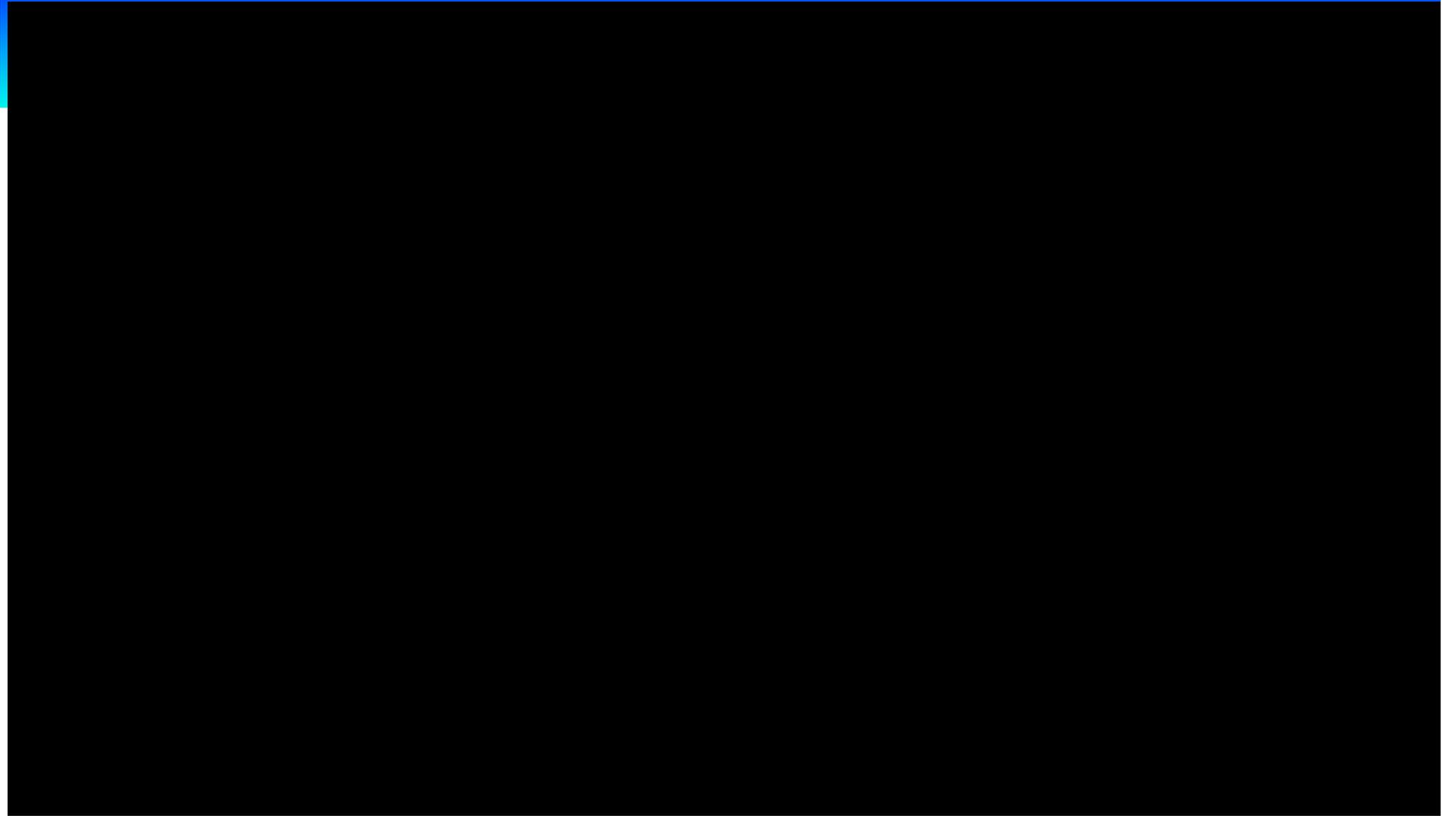


- From our childhood experiences we develop schemas that are concerned with dependability of others and the worth or lovableness of self.
- These schemes are easily maintained across time into adulthood as they are reinforced over and over again.
- In the literature these schemas are referred to as attachment styles.

Attachment Figures



- Those who will serve as attachment figures for children are:
 1. The ones who are most responsive to crying and to interact socially.
- Those who will serve as attachment figures for adults are:
 2. The ones who are most responsive to anxiety/fear and to social interaction



Adult attachment styles (Hazan & Shaver, 1994)



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- A.** I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely, difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, others want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.
- B.** I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me.
- C.** I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want

Answer a - yes



Avoidant

1. Fearful- Tend to recognise their need for others but avoid others and frame them as untrustworthy.
2. Dismissing- Tend to deny their need for attachment and frame others as untrustworthy.

Answer b - YES



Secure

1. Tend to believe that others are reliable and see themselves as lovable and worthy of care.

Answer c - yes



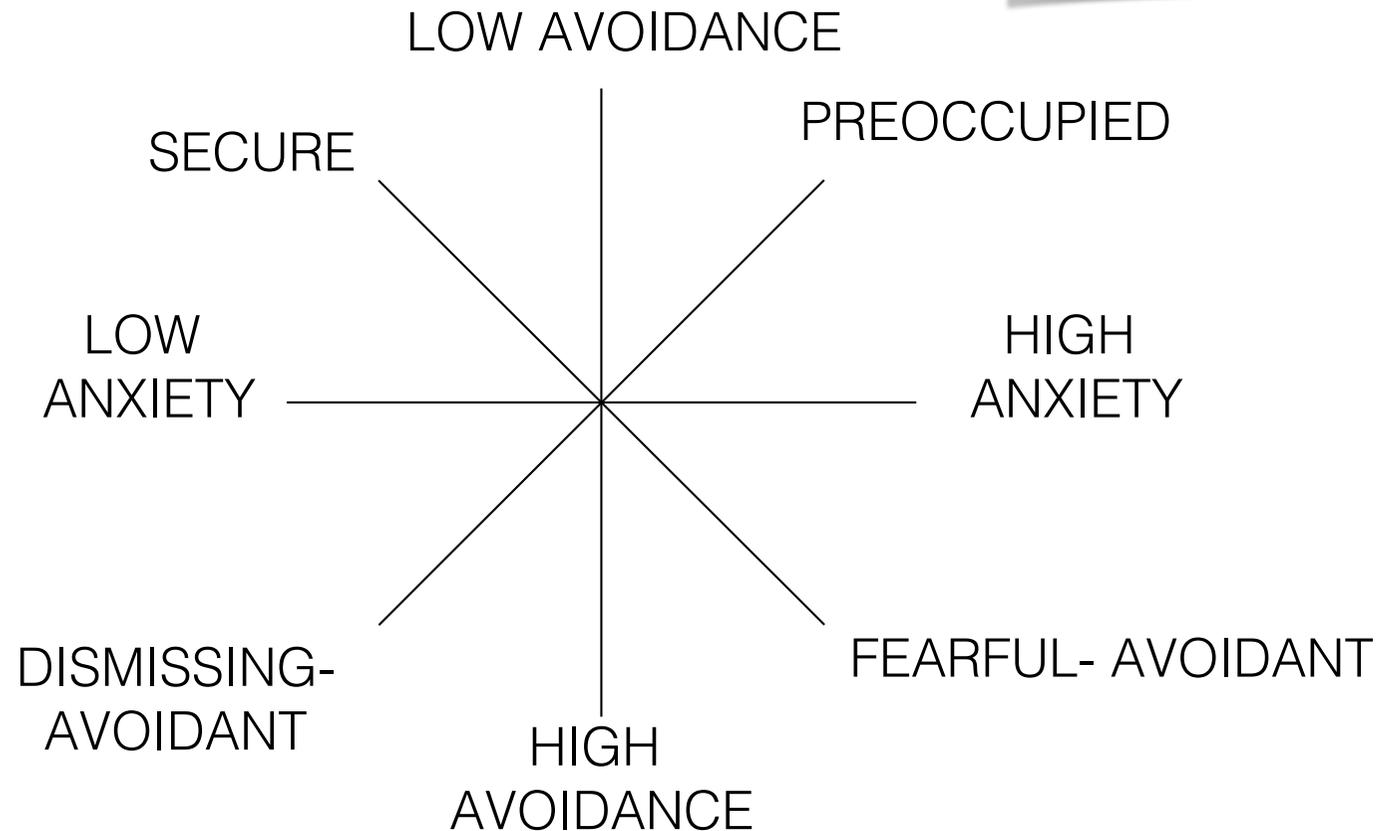
 Anxious/preoccupied

1. Tend to cling to attachment figures or aggressively demand reassurance, often fearing that they are somehow deficient or unlovable.

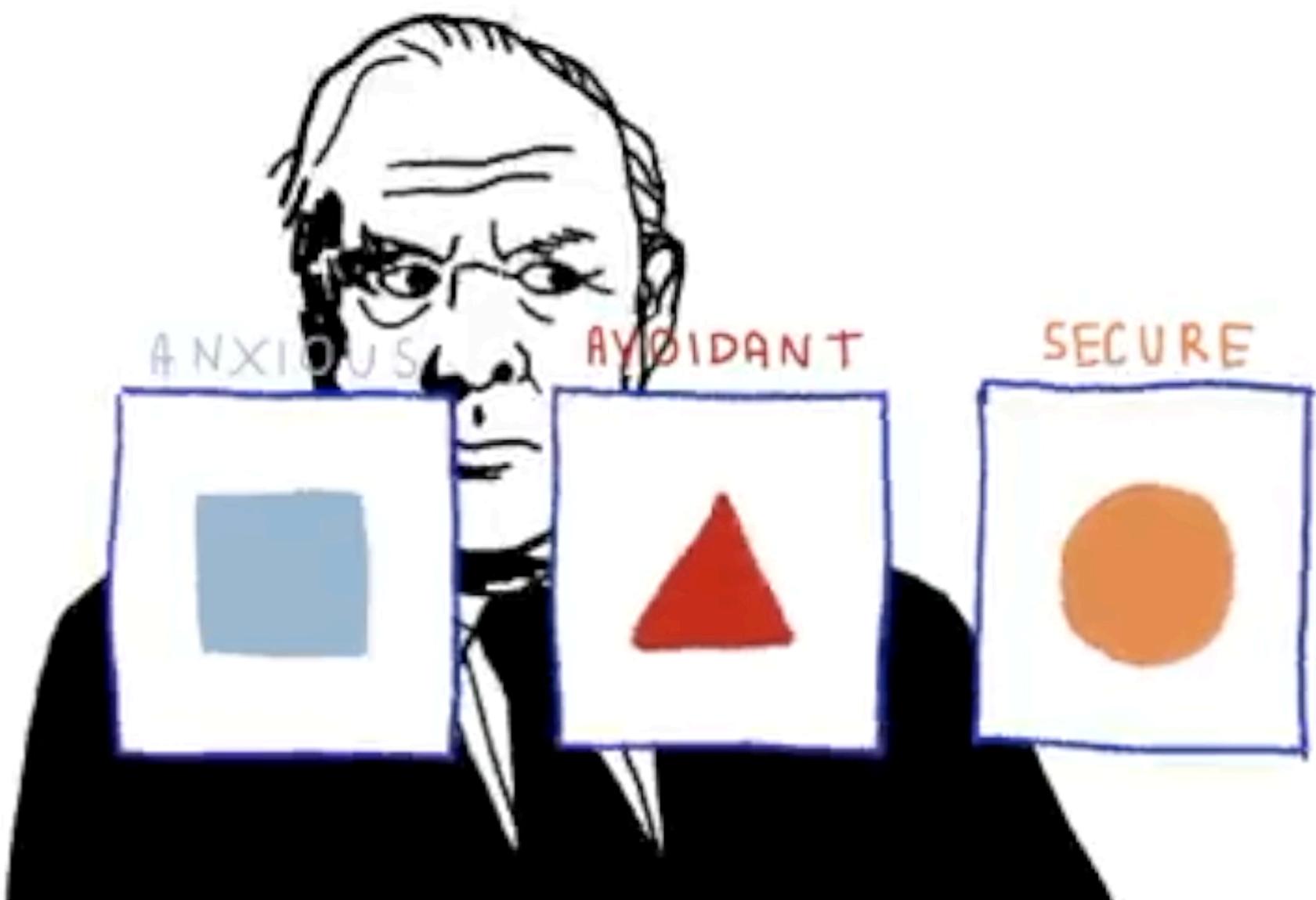
Attachment Patterns in Adulthood: Not Types, But Regions in a Two-Dimensional Space



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Adapted from Fraley & Shaver (RGP, 2000)



Highlights



- Attachment styles are working models of self and others.
 1. The way we see ourselves
 2. The way we see others
 3. The way we see relationships
 4. Predict the way we will respond

Relevance



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- 🌐 What is blocked care?
- 🌐 So why might understanding of your attachment style enhance your caring relationship?





So why might understanding of your attachment style enhance your caring relationship?



- Enhances “Felt Security” for our young people so:
- Better Affect Regulation
 1. - less reactivity
 2. - less hyperarousal
 3. - less underarousal
 4. - more acknowledgement of support seeking

“Felt Security”



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- Better Information Processing
 1. - more flexibility, curiosity, openness
 2. - tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty

- Better communication
 4. - more ability to collaborate, to metacommunicate, to disclose, more assertive and emphatic

“Felt Security”



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 Sense of Self is more:

1. - coherent
2. - elaborated
3. - articulated
4. - positive

Highlights for our caring relationship



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1. Seeking and maintaining contact is viewed as the primary motivating principle from childhood into adult relationships.
2. A secure connection offers a safe haven and a secure base.
 - Needs for connection, comfort and caring are key.
3. Separation Distress – A predictable process.
 - Protect
 - Cling & Seek
 - Depression & Despair
 - Detachment
4. Accessibility and Responsiveness builds bonds.
5. Emotion is the music of the attachment dance.
6. Therapy must be a safe haven, and a secure base.
7. Predictable set of attachment strategies in response to distress.
8. Attachment strategies define sense of Self and Others – Working Models
9. Defines pivotal moments of healing/injury.

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