



Attachment Theory

..."FROM CRADLE TO THE GRAVE" (BOWLBY 1979 P.154)

Insecure Attachment Styles

Avoidant

Caregivers who are emotionally unavailable or dismissive.

Children learn to suppress their emotions and needs, leading them to avoid seeking closeness and comfort.

Babies don't notice when the caregiver leaves the room and ignore them coming back.

Hypoactivation or shutting down

Ambivalent/

Anxious

Inconsistent availability

Unpredictable

"my heart on the sleeve"

Need to work hard for caregivers attention

Clinginess

Fears of abandonment

Disorganised

Trauma and abuse

Chaotic and frightening caregiver environment

Caregiver is the source of fear and comfort

Displaying a mix of the other two attachment styles and also displaying a range of unusual behavior such as:

Freezing in front of the caregiver

Rocking

Curling up as a ball

Development of insecure attachment styles

- ▶ Relational stress
- ▶ Little t trauma and big T-trauma (Schoore, 2001)
- ▶ Chronic "mis-attunement" of the caregiver
- ▶ 44/45

Is 100% caregiver attunement possible?

- ▶ No! Tronick, (2007) found that even the best functioning mother infant pairs were only attuned 30% of the time.
- ▶ Cycle of rupture and repair – which teaches babies to tolerate mis-attunement 45/46 and are valuable stress-tolerance exercise opportunities.
- ▶ Manageable stress exposure helps infants to develop, grow, and build resilience to later life stressors.

Contributing factors

- ▶ Caregiver behavior
- ▶ Caregiver mental health
- ▶ Socioeconomic factors
- ▶ Cultural context

The role of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- ▶ Trauma and stress
- ▶ Fear and insecurity
- ▶ Influence brain development
- ▶ Intergenerational effect

Impact of insecure attachment on the client's development

► Emotional Development

- Emotion regulation issues
- Low self-esteem
- Fear of intimacy

► Psychological Development

- Cognitive distortions (reinforcing negative beliefs about oneself, the world, and others)
- Influence self-concept
- Fear of abandonment or rejection

► Relational development

- Interpersonal challenges
- Trust issues
- Reenactment of patterns

Insecure attachment in the counselling room

- ▶ Autonomy vs intimacy, (avoidant)
- ▶ Desire for intimacy might frighten people, does he she really love me? (ambivalent)
- ▶ Trust issues
- ▶ Transference and counter-transference
- ▶ Difficulty with Boundaries
- ▶ Reluctance to speak about their childhood

Rogers seven Stages of therapeutic growth (Merry, T. & Lusty, B.1993)

► Stage1

- Rigid personality
- Disconnected from their emotions
- Judgemental
- Ying/ Yang
- Unwilling to reveal anything about themselves
- Unlikely to enter therapy

Stage 2

- ▶ Loosening of rigidity
- ▶ Looking for fault elsewhere
- ▶ Accepting that things are not right
- ▶ Not responsible

Stage 3

- ▶ Loosening of attitude continues
- ▶ Talking about themselves in the third person
- ▶ More comfortable to talk about the past rather than the present
- ▶ Internal contradictions (idealised self and reality)
- ▶ This is the stage when clients often enter therapy

Stage 4

- ▶ Deeper feelings emerge (past)
- ▶ Difficulty accepting negative feelings
- ▶ Present feeling start to emerge (rejected)
- ▶ Some acceptance of responsibility
- ▶ Recognition of patterns

Stage 5

- ▶ Expressing current feeling becomes easier
- ▶ Talk about feeling rather than experience them
- ▶ New insights
- ▶ Accepting contradictory feelings

Stage 6

- ▶ Suppressed feelings can be experienced
- ▶ Moments of congruence
- ▶ Free flow of feelings (including negative ones)
- ▶ Irreversible changes

Stage 7

- ▶ Change will happen outside therapy
- ▶ Strong internal locus of evaluation
- ▶ Living fully in the present

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