

The Dynamics of Attachment in Adult Life

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Session One

Our adult social and interpersonal behaviour and its roots in infancy:
Implications for psychotherapy and counselling

Session Two

An evolutionary approach to understanding human behaviour

Session Three

Fear Fear Caregiving

A Model of Practice

A Theory of Interaction
for caregiving and psychotherapy in adult life

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WHAT SPARKED MY INTEREST

Observations of infant parent interaction

Daniel Stern's work on affect attunement

The Perturbation Studies

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MY WORK ON CAREGIVING 1994-2014

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BACKGROUND

In the 1990's I set up a series of experiments to investigate the nature of the interaction between psychotherapists and their clients.

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FOCUS

Whether one could visibly see when the client withdrew their investment in the relationship with their therapist

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Goal-Corrected Empathic Attunement

How I discovered the process;

Understood its significance;

With my colleagues, Hooper and Miller reliably rated it;

Showed training could improve a practitioner's practice;

And developed a practice of exploratory caregiving.

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The Study

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The Method

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Findings

High level of agreement between professional caregivers

High level of disagreement between those in training

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Findings

The professionals paid attention to the interaction and to shifts in vitality states

The trainees paid no attention to the interaction, focussed on the therapists behaviour and evaluated it as positive or negative

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Research Findings

Affect attunement, identification and regulation, along with empathy are part of the process of effective caregiving

Empathic attunement on the part of the Caregiver is interactive and responsive to feedback

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Research Findings

Effective caregiving is a process of Goal-Corrected Empathic Attunement (GCEA)

The process of Goal-Corrected Empathic Attunement can be reliably rated ($r=.7981$, $p=.002$)

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Research Findings

Subjective measures of GCEA correlate significantly with each other
($r=.87$, $p=.001$)

and with the objective measure of GCEA
($p=.03$)

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Research Findings

The independent measure of GCEA correlates significantly with a secure attachment score for the caregiver (p=.03)

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Research Findings

Training makes a significant impact as measured by the independent measure of GCEA (p=.03)

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SUMMARY

Theoretical work that locates a theory of caregiving for adult interactions that are based on research in infant caregiver interactions

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SUMMARY

Measures that are:

- internally consistent
- distinguish between caregivers
- relate to personality measures

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Critical finding

Two Forms of Caregiving Signals

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Critical finding

Attunement to affect is not the same as empathy

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Leap in understanding the
therapeutic process

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Conceptualise the dynamics of
interaction within an
attachment frame

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...and to conceptualise the 'offer
to treat' as arousing the
dynamics of attachment

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Findings

Secure caregivers empathically attune to
a range of careseeking behaviour

Effective caregivers will adapt and
respond to distress emerging in the
system for self defence

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When caregiving is functioning effectively the
caregiver's own exploratory system is active

If caregiving is effective, careseeking is
assuaged and the person's natural
exploratory system resumes its normal
function

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Goal-Corrected Empathic Attunement

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Careseeking and Caregiving Presentations in Adult Life

Careseeking presentations in adults

1. Wants to discuss feelings, conflicts and concerns
2. Reluctant to discuss feelings, conflicts and concerns
3. Bring in issues they are concerned about but tangle the care-giver when they try to help
4. Bring in issues they are concerned about but dismiss the care-giver when they try to help
5. Are overwhelmed incoherent and disorganised in their presentation of feelings conflicts and concerns

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Caregiving Responses

1. Attunes to care-seeker affect, regulates it and attends to care-seeking goals
2. Avoids care-seeker affect and attempts to deflect care-seeker from exploring it
3. Avoids engaging with affect, becomes disorganised, then refocuses on affect, regulates it and attends to care-seeker's goals
4. Avoids engaging with care-seeker affect becomes immobilised.
5. Misattunes to affect, becomes disorganised

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Patterns of Interaction between Careseekers and Caregivers

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Our adult Careseeking and Caregiving patterns and their roots in infancy

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Care-giving infiltrated by fear:
Immobilisation

Defensive care-giving

Lack of affect regulation

Ineffective purposeful
misattunement

Care-seeker tangles care-
giver
Care-giver becomes
disorganised

Effective Caregiving

Remains exploratory

Regulates affect

Provides or puts the person in touch with skills
necessary to deal with upset

Reminds the person of their competence

Puts the person in touch with the world of their peers