

# Attachment in Adult Relationships

Notes/Outline & Resources Cited

## Lecture 1: Foundation of IPNB, Integration, and the Mind

Interpersonal Neurobiology (IPNB) approach

- ⇒ A framework that honors all scientific disciplines and brings them together to explore a common ground, or conciliant, understanding of reality

What is the Mind?

- It is more than just brain activity. Aspects of mind include:
  1. Subjective experience
  2. Consciousness
  3. Information processing
  4. Self-organization (regulating that from which it arose)
- **Mind (defined)** = the emergent, self-organizing, embodied & relational process of energy & information flow (both within and between us)
  1. *There is a couple's mind*

Triangle of Well-Being:

- Mind
- Brain = the embodied mechanism through which energy & information flows
- Relationships = the sharing of energy & information flow
  - *We can sense the patterns in energy & information flow, and then change patterns to be more helpful & healthy*

What is Mental Health?

- Optimal self-organization creates a *FACES* flow of a system:
  - Flexible, Adaptive, Coherent, Energized, Stable
- Symptoms of mental health problems can be seen as chaos & rigidity
  - Maximizing complexity creates optimal self-organization (harmony)
- **Integration** = the linkage of differentiated parts
  - When a system is integrated, it goes in a *FACES* flow of harmony... when it is not, it goes to chaos or rigidity
- *Mental health* can be defined as when the mind is creating harmony within & between

Developmental Trauma & Integration as Well-Being

- Developmental trauma = abuse or neglect during childhood impairs integration in the brain
  - Neural integration is the basis of healthy regulation
    - *Relational integration creates neural integration*
- **Mindsight** = insight into oneself, empathy for others (sensing the mind of someone else), & integration (cultivating differentiation & compassionate linkage both within & between)

Steps for Working with Couples:

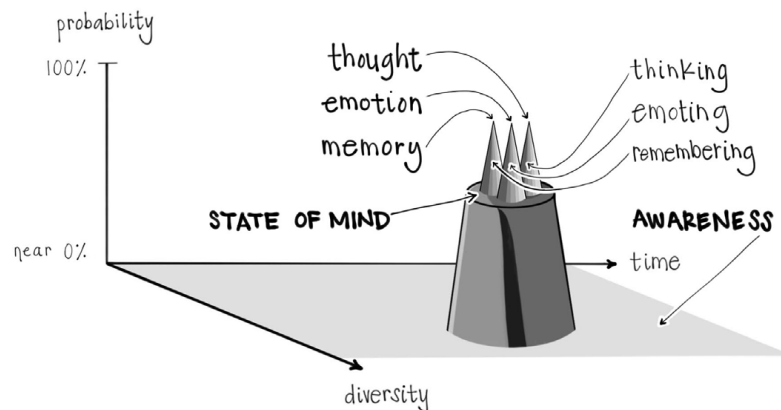
- a) Assess where chaos and/or rigidity exists
- b) Develop interventions based on the cause of suffering/impaired integration (focus on differentiation & linkage where they have not been developed)
  - *What is blocking the couple's natural drive towards integration?*
- c) Build the strength of the mind & skills of regulation
  - Regulation has 2 features: monitoring & modifying

## Lecture 2: Presence, Attunement, Resonance, and Trust

The *PART* we play in relationships to enhance well-being & connection

- **Presence** = a state of present moment awareness that allows you to be receptive & let go of previous judgements
  - *Can develop presence by utilizing the Wheel of Awareness (and other mindfulness practices)*

### 3-P Diagram with State of Mind



- **Attunement** = intentionally focusing attention on the internal world of self or other
  - *Interpersonally, we can utilize verbal & nonverbal signals to get a sense of another's subjective experience*
- **Resonance** = the process of being shaped by the inner life of another, through presence & attunement
  - *Joining with another, a sense of "we," & the experience of "feeling felt"*
- **Trust** = a deep sense of openness, connection, & reliability (a receptive state of the brain that turns on the social engagement system)
  - Repair is essential (there are always ways we get disconnected)
  - *When working with a couple, we need to get a sense of the trust within the relationship, as well as each individuals' sense of themselves*
- *Couples can have issues with any of these 4 qualities*

ABCDE's of Meaning:

- Associations, Beliefs, Cognitions, Developmental periods, & Emotions
  - *Helping people in therapy involves helping them make sense of their life & experiences*

### **Lecture 3: Adult Attachment and the AAI: Memory, Narrative and Making Sense**

**Attachment** = the relationship between a child and their caregiver/parent

- Attachment relationships shape the anatomy & function of the child's brain
- *Alloparenting* = when there are designated attachment figures for human infants other than the parents

4 S's of Attachment:

- Seen – caregiver perceives the inner subjective experience of the child
- Soothed – caregiver interacts with the child in a way that is calming when the child is in distress
- Safe – caregiver protects the child from outside harm & is not the source of a child's terror
- Secure – when the above 3 S's are met, the child develops a sense of security

Attachment Strategies

- *Secure attachment* – contingent communication (needs are perceived & responded to reliably)
  - Coherent sense of self
  - ~55-65%
- *Avoidant attachment* – parent does not see or ignores signals of the child (responding is absent or disconnected)
  - Disconnected sense of self
  - ~20%
- *Ambivalent attachment* – inconsistency of contingency & intrusion of the parent's emotional state onto the child
  - Confused sense of self
  - ~10-15%
- *Disorganized attachment* – parent is the source of terror for the child
  - "Fear without solution" – a biological paradox: we are biologically programmed to go towards our attachment figure, however, the child gets a clear message of terror or neglect from their caregiver
    - High probability of **dissociation** = the clinical symptom of fragmenting the continuity of consciousness
  - Fractured or fragmented sense of self (difficulty with relationships & regulating emotions)
  - ~5-15%
- Note: Many of us have a little bit of multiple categories

### Adult Attachment Interview (AAI)

- Research-validated instrument that gives us a window into relationships
  - Approx. 20-question narrative analysis (can change over time)
  - Whether a parent has made sense of their life experiences = the most robust predictor of their child's security of attachment
- Assesses memory integration & narrative
  - **Memory** = how something from the past influences present & future functioning
    - *Implicit memory* = emotional, perceptual, body state, sensation memories (all we have until ~18 months old)
      - When retrieved, implicit memory does not involve the awareness of its connection to the past
    - *Explicit memory* = factual & episodic (autobiographical) memory; needs focal attention for processing
      - When retrieved, explicit memory has the sensation of recall
  - **Narrative** = how we make meaning from our memory

### Lecture 4: Trauma, Attachment and Integration

**Integration** = the linkage of differentiated parts

#### Developmental Trauma

- Developmental trauma impairs the growth of integrative areas in the brain (i.e., corpus callosum, hippocampus, prefrontal region, connectome)
  - Regulation (of stress, emotion, thought, moral, relationality, etc.) depends upon neural integration
- Resolving trauma (making sense of what has happened to you) is linked to the creation of secure attachment
  - "Flipping your lid" = a nonintegrative state in which the amygdala & brainstem override the higher brain functions (trauma is correlated with a more fragile prefrontal area)
  - *It's not your fault, but it is your responsibility* to heal your brain & relationships
- **Window of tolerance** = the range of a specific emotion that an individual can handle (outside of that window, they go to chaos or rigidity)
  - *Widening the window involves strengthening the mind's capacity for monitoring & modifying energy & information flow*
- **Shame** = an adaptive emotional response to problematic caregiving that creates the belief that "I am defective"

## **Lecture 5: Together Yet Differentiated: The Role of Integration in Relational Health**

How Experience Changes the Brain:

- a) Neurogenesis – growth of new neurons
- b) Synaptogenesis – synaptic modulation
- c) Myelination – laying down myelin
- d) Modification of epigenetic regulation
  - o "Where attention goes, neural firing flows, & neural connection grows"

9 Domains of Integration

- 1) Integration of Consciousness
  - o *Wheel of Awareness practice* – differentiating the “knowing” (consciousness) from the “knowns” (that which we’re conscious of) & linking them
- 2) Bilateral Integration
  - o Left mode = develops later, linguistic language, literal/concrete thinking, linear, logistical, factual knowledge
  - o Right = develops earlier, nonverbal language, contextual, big picture thinking, connected to the interior signals of the body
- 3) Vertical Integration
  - o Higher & lower parts of the nervous system (*for example, we can put words to what is going on in the body*)
- 4) Memory Integration
  - o Two layers of memory: implicit & explicit
- 5) Narrative Integration
  - o Weaving together the implicit & explicit elements in order to find meaning within one’s life patterns
- 6) State Integration
  - o Mind states, brain states, & self states – *we all have different needs & states, which we must honor for their differences & allow them to thrive*
- 7) Interpersonal Integration
  - o Joining with others (being part of something larger than oneself)
- 8) Temporal Integration
  - o Facing existential issues due to our experience of time (our desires for certainty, permanence, & immortality can be linked to the realities of uncertainty, transience, & mortality)
- 9) Identity Integration
  - o Honoring the “me” as well as the “we” in order to bring them together for an integrated state of “Mwe”

## **Lecture 6: Creating Healthy, Integrated and Rewarding Relationships**

Educating clients on attachment leads us to understanding & common humanity

Therapists can help clients move from insecurity (nonintegrated) to security (integrated)

- *See through the defenses to the vulnerability & need for connection*
  - **Forgiveness** can be defined as “giving up all hope for a different past”
- The mind seems to recreate patterns from the past that it needs to work through in the present
  - *With couples, look for the symbolic meaning beneath experiences/events*

#### Meaning, Purpose, & Connection

- *Help clients go from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset*
  - We can reinterpret the stress response (i.e., increased muscle tone, faster breathing, quicker heart rate) as neutral or positive (i.e., when we experience something meaningful, our bodies respond in a way that prepares us for a challenge, rather than a threat)
- Integration is the basis of health
- Supportive relationships are the source of our wellbeing (and impact the mind)

#### **Resources Cited**

##### Books & Resources by Dr. Dan Siegel:

- *Mind: A Journey to the Heart of Being Human*
- *The Developing Mind*
- *The Mindful Therapist*
- Wheel of Awareness practice links – <https://drdansiegel.com/wheel-of-awareness/>
- “The Verdict Is In: The case for attachment theory” by Alan Sroufe and Daniel Siegel - <https://drdansiegel.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/1271-the-verdict-is-in-1.pdf>
- *Parenting from the Inside Out* by Daniel Siegel & Mary Hartzell

##### Lecture 1 – Researchers & Research Works Cited:

- Martin Teicher (works on trauma & its impact on integration in the brain)
- Marcus Raichle (work on the connectome & the default mode network)
- Hilary Blumberg (findings related to people with manic-depressive illness having impairments of integration in the brain)
- Human Connectome Project (best predictor of well-being is how integrated your brain is)
  - <http://www.humanconnectomeproject.org/>
- Stephen Porges (polyvagal theory)
- Jon Kabat Zinn (mindfulness in clinical practice)
- Marco Iacoboni (work on mirror neurons)
- Ed Tronick (still face experiments)

##### Lecture 3 – Researchers & Research Works Cited:

- Chess & Thomas (1996 New York Longitudinal Study of temperament & the role it plays in attachment)
- Jerome Kagan (studies in child development, temperament, & parenting)
- *Mothers and Others* by Sarah Hrdy
- John Bowlby & Mary Ainsworth (development of attachment theory)
- Mary Ainsworth & Mary Main (the infant strange situation)

- Phillip Shaver & Mario Mikulincer (separate studies on adult attachment)

Lecture 5 – Researchers & Research Works Cited:

- Stephen Suomi (primate studies & work related to epigenetic regulation)
- Roger Sperry (split brain experiments)
- *The Master and His Emissary* by Iain McGilchrist (differences in the modes of processing in the left & right hemispheres of the brain)
- Michael Gazzaniga (work related to narratives)

Lecture 6 – Researchers & Research Works Cited:

- Carol Dweck (fixed vs. growth mindsets)
- Dacher Keltner (studies on awe)