

Class Notes:

Attachment and Relational Resilience Across the Lifespan

- **Segment 1: Introduction**
 - Lifespan view of attachment and its' connection to relational resilience
 - Four main areas of application: personal, professional, public sector, planetary

- **Segment 2: Attachment**
 - Branch of child psychology looking at parent-child relationships and how these inform our understanding of how an individual develops and emerges into adult relationships (friendship, romantic, work, community)
 - Avoid being too rigid with attachment categories—instead we can see them as learned behaviors, strategies and patterns
 - Two modes of processing:
 - left-mode (language-based, linear ways, details of a part, narrow focus of attention)
 - right-mode (holistic, broad focus of attention, finds patterns, sees “big picture”, nonverbal [gesture, tone of voice])
 - Attachment research does not use integration but we are introducing integration as new concept
 - Key of integration is that you don't lose differentiation when you become connected

- **Segment 3: Foundations of Attachment Research**
 - Attachment research was originally rejected by the psychological community and researcher John Bowlby was considered a heretic
 - John Bowlby focused on relationship between child and caregiver and how children were impacted directly by these interactions and experiences
 - Mary Ainsworth studied children raised in villages in Africa
 - Alloparenting—humans evolved by infants receiving care by multiple, selective few family and community members
 - Bowlby and Ainsworth join forces for Attachment Theory, Ainsworth creates the Infant Strange Situation to systematically study attachment
 - Non-secure attachment refers to the relationship, not an individual

- **Segment 4: Foundations of Attachment Research Part 2**

- In the 50s and 60s the prevailing psychoanalytic thought was that infant psyche and development was shaped by fantasy
 - In the 60s and 70s there was emerging awareness that experience shapes the child, but it was not yet backed by science
 - 1981 David Hubel and Torsten Weisel show how experience shapes the neural connections of the brain
 - Temperament (the propensities and leanings of the nervous system) is important, but attachment still plays a significant role in development and behavior
- **Segment 5: The Infant Strange Situation**
 - Relationship defined as patterns of communication
 - Methodology:
 - Naturalistic observation in the home for the first year of life
 - Child brought into a “strange” situation, a lab room with toys. Parent stays for 15 minutes, leaves, then returns (reunion behavior is what is shown to correlate in statistically meaningful ways).
 - Initial 3 patterns of reunion behavior
 - Caregiver returns and baby stops playing, goes to her, if child is distressed they are easily soothed and return to play (correlates to secure attachment pattern)
 - Caregiver returns and baby continues to play and acts as if the caregiver returning is not important (correlates to avoidant attachment pattern)
 - Caregiver returns and baby goes to her and is not easily soothed and doesn’t go back to playing with the toys (correlates to ambivalent attachment pattern)
- **Segment 6: The Infant Strange Situation and Patterns of Parent-Child Interaction**
 - 3 patterns of child-parent interactions (from naturalistic observations):
 - Caregiver is slow to respond to signals of distress in the child and is not effective at soothing baby or meeting their underlying needs (avoidant)
 - Caregiver is attuned and effective in soothing and meeting the needs of the baby, quickly making corrections as needed (secure)
 - Caregiver is attentive and connects with baby when in distress but is inconsistent and they don’t accurately decode the underlying needs of the baby’s signals
 - Disorganized attachment
 - Mary Main studied a group of “unclassifiable groupings”, later named disorganized attachment category, where child exhibited

approach/avoidance behavior where they make contact and then withdraw from caregiver

○ **Segment 7: Disorganized Attachment**

- When a child experienced terror that is caused by the attachment figure the outcome is disorganized attachment (up to 30% of population)
- Parents usually loving and unaware that they are terrifying their children (i.e. parent yelling at partner, tv, or older child)
- Developmental trauma is related to disorganized attachment, but many disorganized attachment patterns do not involve abuse or neglect
- Biological Paradox
 - Fear without solution
 - Attachment drive pushes us toward caregivers, threat response drive us away from caregivers simultaneously
- Sense of self is shaped through relationship
 - Secure attachment pattern: coherence of self in presence of caregiver
 - Avoidant attachment pattern: disconnected self in presence of caregiver
 - Ambivalent attachment pattern: confused sense of self in presence of caregiver
 - Disorganized attachment pattern: fragmented sense of self in presence of caregiver

○ **Segment 8: The Development of Self**

- Self (SPA)
 - Subjective experience
 - Perspective (point of view)
 - Agency (how I initiate action on behalf of my experience and point of view)
 - This SPA experience is shaped by at least two things:
attachment relationship experiences and temperament
- Researchers show temperament does not determine attachment category
- Interpersonal world of the infant (Daniel Stern)
 - Core self (affectivity [emotional tone] and agency[action] and coherence [how you make sense of affectivity and agency across time])
 - Relational self (general patterns of being seen or not seen) and how you develop a sense of self in a relationship
 - Narrative self: the bridge of core self and relational self, how you make sense of experience
- Solo-Self

- Modern cultural belief that the self is isolated and separate from others
- **Segment 9: Self, States of Mind, and the Brain**
 - Brain learns from experience to create spatiotemporal (in space and time) configurations in the nervous system that activate a cluster of firing patterns which we are calling a state of mind
 - As sense of self develops over time there exists context-specific activation of states of mind and these can be different within different relationships
 - State of mind includes 4 facets of mind: subjective experience, consciousness, information processing, the emergent process of self-organization
 - IPNB framework of attachment: secure attachment is a highly integrated state of mind (mind, not only brain, because it is a relational process)
 - Relational resilience results from integrated states of mind
- **Segment 10: Patterns of Development**
 - Attachment patterns behavior in school and camp and how perceived by others:
 - Avoidant: disagreeable
 - Ambivalent: needy
 - Secure: likable, leadership
 - Disorganized: difficulty regulating emotions and attention
 - Attachment security can change via positive or negative relational experiences
 - Adaptations based on attachment experiences:
 - Avoidant: self-organizing adaptive response of turning down attachment drive
 - Ambivalence: self-organizing adaptive response of turning up attachment drive
 - Disorganized: instead of increasing or decreasing drive, fragmentation and dissociation
- **Segment 11: Adult Attachment**
 - Adult attachment refers to the ability of a parent to make sense of their own attachment history
 - In multiple studies of pregnant women, adult attachment interview of each parent could predict attachment of child to that parent with 75% accuracy
 - The way a parent makes sense of their childhood experiences will be the most predictive of how coherent they are as parents
 - Resolved loss and trauma in caregiver can have secure attachment of children but unresolved trauma and loss is the number one predictor of disorganized attachment

- Optimistic research findings: it's not what happened to you as a child that will determine how you are as a parent, it's how you process and resolve what's happened to you so you can be present with your children
- **Segment 12: The Adult Attachment Interview**
 - Formal research instrument that can be adapted for clinical application (the only research instrument that indicates whether trauma is resolved v. unresolved)
 - Adverse Childhood Experience (ACES) study found that adverse events in childhood lead to poor health outcomes and serious medical conditions that could lead to a 20-year premature death BUT these are NOT intervention studies! Help and Healing are possible.
 - Unresolved trauma impairs the functional and structural integration of the corpus callosum, hippocampus, prefrontal cortex and the connectome
 - Three pillar practice (cultivating focused attention, open awareness, and kind intention) can grow integration in the brain, decrease cortisol, improve immunological and cardiovascular functioning, reduce inflammation and optimize telomerase
 - Three pillar practice also creates conditions that are also at the core of secure attachment (safe, seen, soothed, secure)
 - Developmental pathways are self-organizing, self-reinforcing neural firing patterns that cluster ("where attention goes, neural firing flows, and neural connection grows")
- **Segment 13: The Adult Attachment Interview in Detail**
 - Narrative open-ended interview that's evoking the story of their life
 - In a clinical setting, it can be adapted as a tool to explore with a client
 - Guidelines for using in a clinical setting:
 - Memorize the questions because the order is important
 - Maintain a relatively neutral stance
 - Try to do it in one session (to surprise the unconscious)
 - The role of memory
 - 2 types of memory: explicit and implicit
 - 3 stages: encoding, storage, retrieval
 - Goal: memory integration
 - Understanding the mechanisms of memory and how it works with AAI: client can understand how a pure implicit memory can occur without getting flooded and use the prefrontal cortex can help integrate memories
- **Segment 14: The Questions of the Adult Attachment Interview**

- Phases of questions:
 - Details about family relationships
 - Why did your attachment figures act the way they did? Did your relationship change over time and why?
 - How have these things influenced your development as an adult?
 - What 3 things do you wish for your child when they grow up?
 - It isn't the content of what they say but how they say what they say
 - In a research setting, it is scored based on behavioral reactions, schema, and activations
 - As a clinician you can tailor and elaborate based on your style given this is NOT for research assessment or documentation
 - Interviews can be recorded for client use if desired but no need to transcribe
- **Segment 15: Responses to the Adult Attachment Interview**
- Responses to the AAI are not assessing content alone, but determining the coherence of the narrative
 - Narrative is an emergent process—the way something is told, not just the details of what is said
 - Narrative coherence corresponds to a secure attachment state of mind
 - When a client is reflecting in a flexible and open way, some positive some negative, overall that underlies a coherent narrative and is indicative of a secure, Free, autonomous adult attachment state of mind
 - When a client is overly generalizing and succinct, when they don't remember the relational experiences of their childhood, these are key indicators of an Dismissing adult attachment state of mind
 - When a client goes on for a long time and loses track of what's going with excessive detail sometimes not related to the question being addressed, these are classic indicators of a Preoccupied adult attachment state of mind
 - When a client has disorientation and disorganization during certain moments often related to loss or trauma, this suggests Unresolved/Disoriented adult attachment state of mind
 - Each unique relationship you have might evoke different states of minds in different contexts (even with the same partner)
 - The goal of therapeutic assessment is not to reduce an individual to a single category even if this is done in the research protocol, rather this process is an exploration that reveals states of mind across a wide range of possible states
- **Segment 16: Integrative Transformation**

- Integrative transformation requires two consilient principles: (1) the intentional movement toward change requires *consciousness* (2) *integration* is the basis of health
 - Integration involves linking without losing differentiation
 - Mental dysfunction emerges in the forms of chaos, rigidity, or both
 - Relationship is the sharing of energy and information flow
 - Secure attachment can be thought of as an integrative relationship
 - FACES flow (flexible, adaptive, coherent, energized, stable)
 - How PART manifests in an integrated relationship:
 - **(P)**resence: open and receptive awareness to what arises
 - **(A)**ttunement: focusing attention on the inner experience of another
 - **(R)**esonance: linkage without loss of differentiation (I am influenced by you, but I don't become you)
 - **(T)**rust: the result of the feeling of presence, attunement and resonance that creates the feeling that you can be yourself without losing belonging
- **Segment 17: Exploring Secure Attachment as Integration**
- Attachment likely involves both experience-expectant and experience-dependent neuroplasticity
 - Non-secure attachment is an adaptive strategy where a child turns up or shuts down their attachment drive in response to their learned experience with a particular caregiver—a child can have more than one attachment pattern that is specific to the relationship with a given caregiver
 - The result of parents repeatedly not resonating to our bids for PART leads to an avoidant state of mind
 - Avoidant states of mind create rigidity and likely involve left-mode dominance
 - Left-mode dominance is likely an adaptive shift away from painful right-mode emotional states of a longing to belong and be connected
 - Goal for avoidant attachment pattern to move toward security and integration is to tap into the less differentiated right mode (feelings, bodily sensation, emotional meaning) and link these to the often more established left mode
- **Segment 18: Exploring Secure Attachment as Integration through the Lens of Ambivalence and Preoccupied Attachment**
- Ambivalent states of mind involve chaos
 - Parental behavior that is inconsistent or intrusive creates intermittent reinforcement and intensifies a drive for connection
 - Creates flooding in right-mode and disconnection from left-mode state
 - Integration and coherence require an integration of right and left-modes

- Goal for ambivalent attachment pattern to move toward security and integration is to use left mode to make sense of implicit memory and create a coherent narrative
- **Segment 19: Exploring Secure Attachment as Integration through the Lens of Disorganized Attachment**
 - Avoidant attachment is left-mode rigidity, ambivalent attachment is right-mode chaos, disorganized is *both*
 - Disorganized attachment can be the result of abuse or neglect, but it can also result from non-abusive adverse experiences (alcoholic parent, parental fighting, or unrepaired ruptures in the parent-child relationship)
 - Disorientation in AAI responses is a key feature that indicates *unresolved* memories and lack of memory integration (the basis of lack of resolution of loss or trauma)
 - Reflects a lack of integration between left-mode and right-mode
 - Resolving unresolved loss and trauma is always possible because the brain remains open to being integrated across the lifespan
- **Segment 20: Consciousness and Change**
 - 2 consilient principles: consciousness is needed for change & integration is the basis of health
 - Integrated consciousness is important in cultivating attachment security
 - A relationship is the sharing of energy and information flow
 - Relational resilience is the integrating of this shared energy of connection
 - Relational resilience can be understood as the capacity to achieve an equilibrium (harmony created by integration) even in the face of challenges
- **Segment 21: The Plane of Possibility**
 - In physics, energy is defined as the movement from possibility to actuality
 - Non-secure attachment patterns persist because of energy flow (neural connections and relationship) therefore transformation is all about energy flow
 - Plane of possibility: y axis is the probability and the x axis is time, a form of measuring change, z-axis is diversity
 - Peak is actuality, plateau is a subset of possibilities
 - Non-secure attachment patterns are states of mind that create rigid or chaotic plateaus
 - Accessing the open plane of possibility allows differentiation and linkage to naturally arise
- **Segment 22: Awareness and the Plane of Possibility as the Portal for Integration**

- Awareness corresponds to the plane of possibility
 - Ambivalent, avoidant, and disorganized attachment patterns are outdated adaptive strategies that move us away from uncertainty but cause impaired integration
 - Secondary adaptive strategies to non-secure attachment are embedded as plateaus
 - The goal is to remove obstacles to let the natural process of optimal self-organization emerge
 - Accessing the hub of the Wheel of Awareness creates COAL (curiosity, openness, acceptance, love) and allows energy to come into the plane of possibility
 - For those with non-secure attachment patterns, the plane of possibility is a portal providing freedom and choice to access other developmental patterns and states of mind
- **Segment 23: Developmental Pathways toward Wholeness**
 - When we experience non-secure attachment we experience a feeling where we are not whole
 - Wholeness: self, identity, belonging
 - Temperament: innate proclivities of your nervous system
 - Personality: behavior, thinking, emotional life
 - Developmental pathways: self-reinforcing patterns of neural connections that are both experience-expectant and experience-dependent
 - Avoidant attachment developmental pathway creates a left-mode dominant pathway
 - Ambivalent attachment has more developmental pathways in the right-mode
 - Disorganized attachment blocks interconnections between developmental pathways
- **Segment 24: Patterns of Developmental Pathways**
 - Proposal of patterns of developmental pathways (PDP model): temperament and attachment interact to create personality on the the journey to wholeness through developmental pathways
 - PDP model highlights 3 vectors of emotion (from Panksepp's subcortical motivational networks): Agency/anger, Bonding/sadness, Certainty/fear
 - 90% of people surveyed said they identify strongly with one vector in particular
 - When motivation not achieved:
 - Motivation for agency → anger
 - Motivation for bonding → sadness
 - Motivation for certainty → fear
 - PDP model highlights orientation of attention and energy as inward, outward, or both

- Question not answered from attachment model: how does non-secure attachment influence how temperament becomes manifested as child, adolescent and then adult personality?
- **Segment 25: Wholeness and the Journey of Personality**
 - PDP Model- developmental view drawing on science and data that the nervous system has a propensity to lean toward 3 main drives: agency, bonding and certainty
 - Feelings of wholeness begin in the womb: timeless and connected (similar to the hub) which creates the implicit memory of being one with the womb or universe, wholeness
 - Implicit memory gets encoded with memory flow in the nervous system and when it gets retrieved it has the feeling of the here and now
 - Human beings strive to get back to this initial feeling of connectedness and wholeness
 - Temperament does not influence attachment category, but the rigidity of the developmental pathways is influenced by secure versus non-secure attachment
- **Segment 26: Temperament and Attachment in the Cultivation of Personality**
 - PDP framework looks at nine pathways shaped by vectors (directionality) of Agency/anger, Bonding/sadness or Certainty/fear, combined with an orientation bias of attention (inward, outward, or both)
 - The fundamental drive of the development of personality is to belong and be in a state of connection
 - Non-secure attachment impedes the ability to feel belonging, which can cause impairment in integrative process of the development of personality with accessing many different states of mind, many different adaptive pathways
 - Temperament is innate but non-secure attachment can intensify a vector pathway, and may close off access to other pathways
 - Pathways are generally not rigid and we can access more than one as needed in life
- **Segment 27: Pathways of Development Driven by Vector and Orientation of Attention**
 - Pathways include variations of one of the three emotions (anger, sadness, or fear) paired with one of these three bias of attention (inward, outward, or both)
 - Pathways create an internal map and tendency to try to make outward experience match in the drive toward wholeness
 - Goal is to create integration of pathways and access new pathways: make attention more flexible and expand access to a variety of vectors in the journey toward wholeness

- **Segment 28: Working with your Growth Edge**
 - Experiences in attachment create patterns that are states of mind (plateaus)
 - Relational resilience is the ability to notice entering a plateau, trying to access the Plane of Possibility, and make a repair with ourselves and others
 - Wheel of Awareness: hub is the plane of possibility, the rim is plateaus and peaks
 - Growth edge has to do with understanding interaction of attachment patterns with developmental pathways

- **Segment 29: Attachment Meets Temperament in the Cultivation of Personality and the Movement toward Integration**
 - Connection, open awareness and love that the Plane of Possibility is something we can all access
 - Attachment does not determine your temperament (drive for agency, bonding, or certainty/safety combined with attentional bias inward outward)
 - Attachment nonsecurity can make these pathways more rigid, whereas attachment security can make these pathways more flexible and make other vectors available

- **Segment 30: Conclusion: Attachment and relational resilience across the lifespan**
 - Secure attachment creates a relational field that is integrative
 - Attachment patterns are states of mind, not rigid categories
 - Resilience is integrative harmony
 - Everyone has the capacity to get into a reactive state (determined in part by temperament and in part by attachment), but accessing the Plane of Possibility is where freedom and choice arise
 - Non-secure attachment builds plateaus to protect us (because they create certainty) but they keep us from plane of possibility. Prevent us from tapping into the plan

Recommended Reading:

- *The Organization of Behavior* by Donald O. Hebb
- *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are, Third Edition*, by Daniel J. Siegel
- *Mind: A Journey to the Heart of Being Human* by Daniel J. Siegel
- *IntraConnected: MWe (Me + We) as the Integration of Self, Identity, and Belonging* by Daniel J. Siegel
- *Cornerstones of Attachment Research* by Robbie Duschinsky
- *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications* by Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver

- *The Development of the Person: The Minnesota Study of Risk and Adaptation from Birth to Adulthood* by Alan Sroufe
- *The Verdict Is In: The case for attachment theory* By Alan Sroufe and Daniel J. Siegel
- *The Deepest Well: Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Adversity* by Nadine Burke Harris
- *Living Narrative: Creating Lives in Everyday Storytelling Paperback* by Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps
- *The Emotional Foundations of Personality: A Neurobiological and Evolutionary Approach* by Kenneth L. Davis and Jaak Panksepp
- *The Power of Discord* by Ed Tronick and Claudia M. Gold