




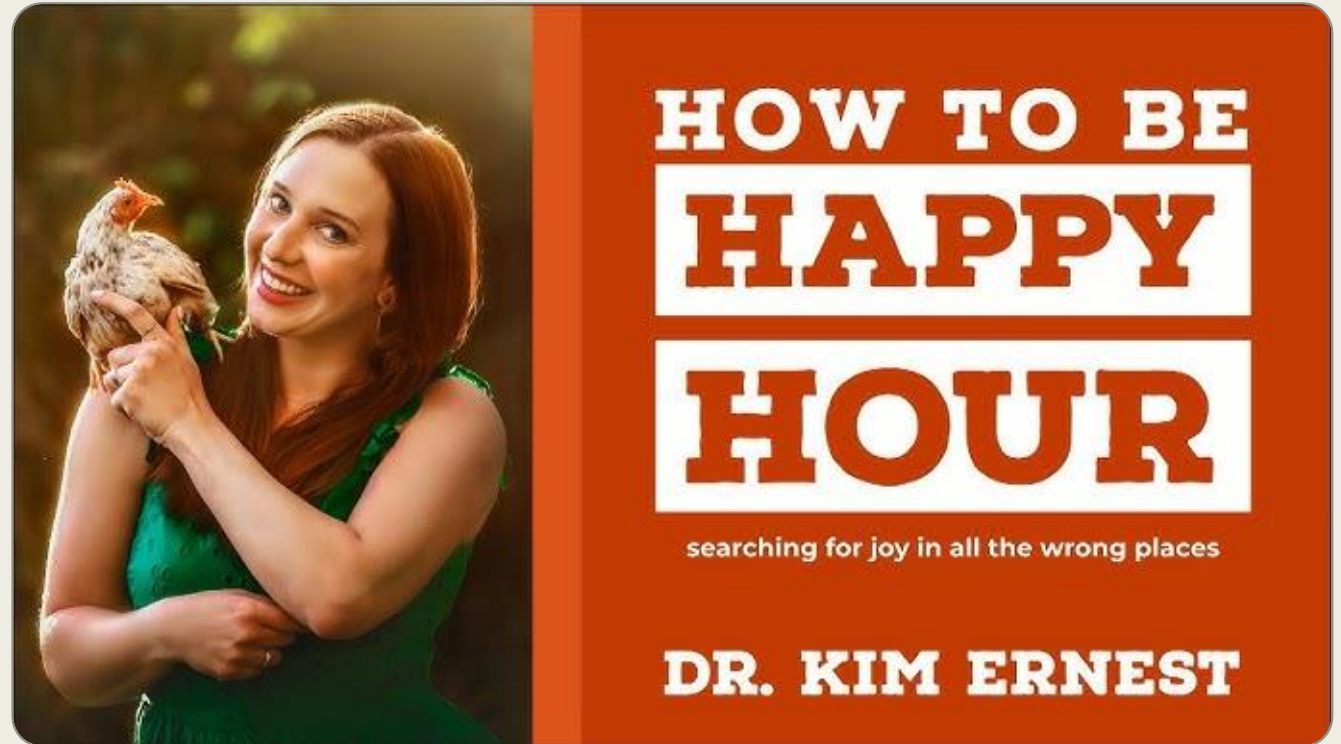
USING THE ECOSYSTEM

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About Me

- Dr. Kimberly Ernest, LPC, Psychologist
- President of Pennsylvania Counseling Services
- Founder of LiveUp Counseling
- Background in addictions, re-entry, and trained in family-systems therapy (structural family therapy; ESFT)
- Follow me on LinkedIn



Summer Family-Based Trainings

9
JULY

**INTRODUCTION TO ECOSYSTEMIC
STRUCTURAL FAMILY THERAPY (ESFT)**

This training is part of our lunch and learn, which runs for 1 hour from 12pm-1pm and provide the overarching practice of ESFT with Melanie Morgan, MS, LPC, CFBT

23
JULY

**INTRODUCTION TO CHILDHOOD TRAUMA AND
USE OF THE ACES**

A coffee chat from 8-9am with Melanie Morgan, exploring the impact of early trauma and how to assess with the ACES tool.

20
AUGUST

**CHILDHOOD TRAUMA AND IMPACT ON RELATIONSHIP
DEVELOPMENT**

This training is a part of our lunch and learn series, which run from 12-1pm with Melanie Morgan explores the impact of childhood trauma on relationships.

27
AUGUST

**ATTACHMENT IN ELEMENTARY-AGED
CHILDREN**


Our final lunch and learn within the series, offered from 12-1pm exploring the role of attachment in middle childhood

To register visit
[PACOUNSELING.COM/TRAINING](https://pacounseling.com/training)




SAVE THE
DATE!






8/1 & 8/2



9AM - 3:30PM



**VIA ZOOM OR IN
LEBANON, PA**

WORKING WITH CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE VICTIMS WHO EXHIBIT PROBLEMATIC SEXUAL BEHAVIORS

This **FREE** training program for direct care professionals is designed to equip attendees working with child sexual abuse victims (age 12 & younger) who may exhibit problematic sexual behaviors with the knowledge, skills, & tools necessary to provide effective care, support, & intervention.

12.00 APA CE Credits for psychologists, social workers, or professional counselors. *Attendees must be present/on camera for training in its entirety, no partial credit will be given.

Visit pacounseling.com/training to register!

****PCS Family Based staff must attend in person & email**

scwright@pacounseling.com to register if they wish to receive the stipend.**



This training is funded in part by the Endowment Act and a competitive grant awarded through the PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency Children's Advocacy Center.

Register for Trainings at pacounseling.com/training

Complex Cases

- Sometimes complicated cases evoke a variety of responses from the helper.
 - *Sometimes we avoid them*
 - *Sometimes we over-function for them*
 - *Sometimes we fear them*
 - *Sometimes we abdicate our responsibility for them*
 - *Sometimes we are overwhelmed by them*
 - *Sometimes we over-identify with them*
 - *Sometimes they remind us of someone we *wish* we would've helped*

When it's too big...

.... We slice it thinner

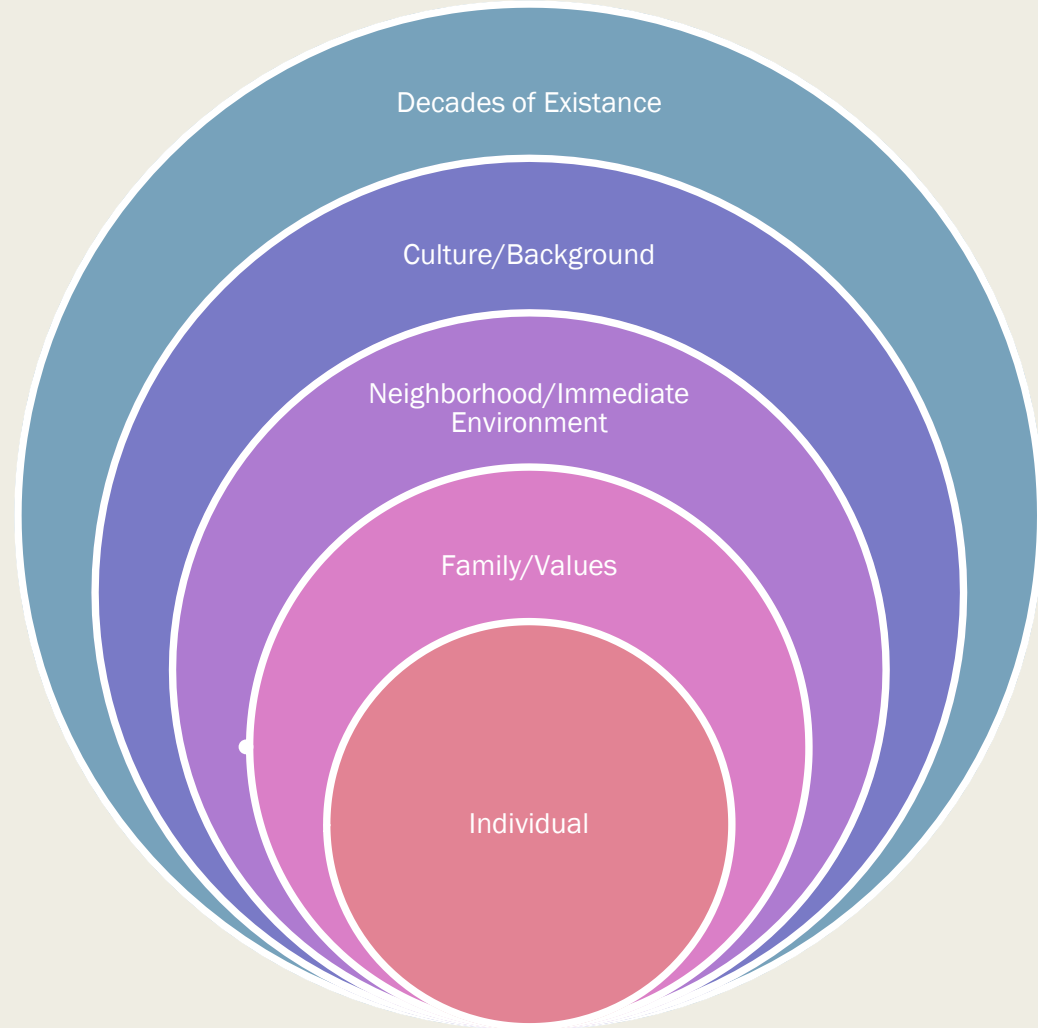
What is my responsibility in this case? Am I functioning within the capacity of my role?

Is my over-functioning allowing others to abdicate their role....

Sit around the table – what is everyone's given mission statement.

What is an “Ecosystem”

- Ecosystem of the individual can be defined as any natural or artificial (organization or agency) which is involved with and influences the individuals recovery.



Component of Individual's Ecosystem

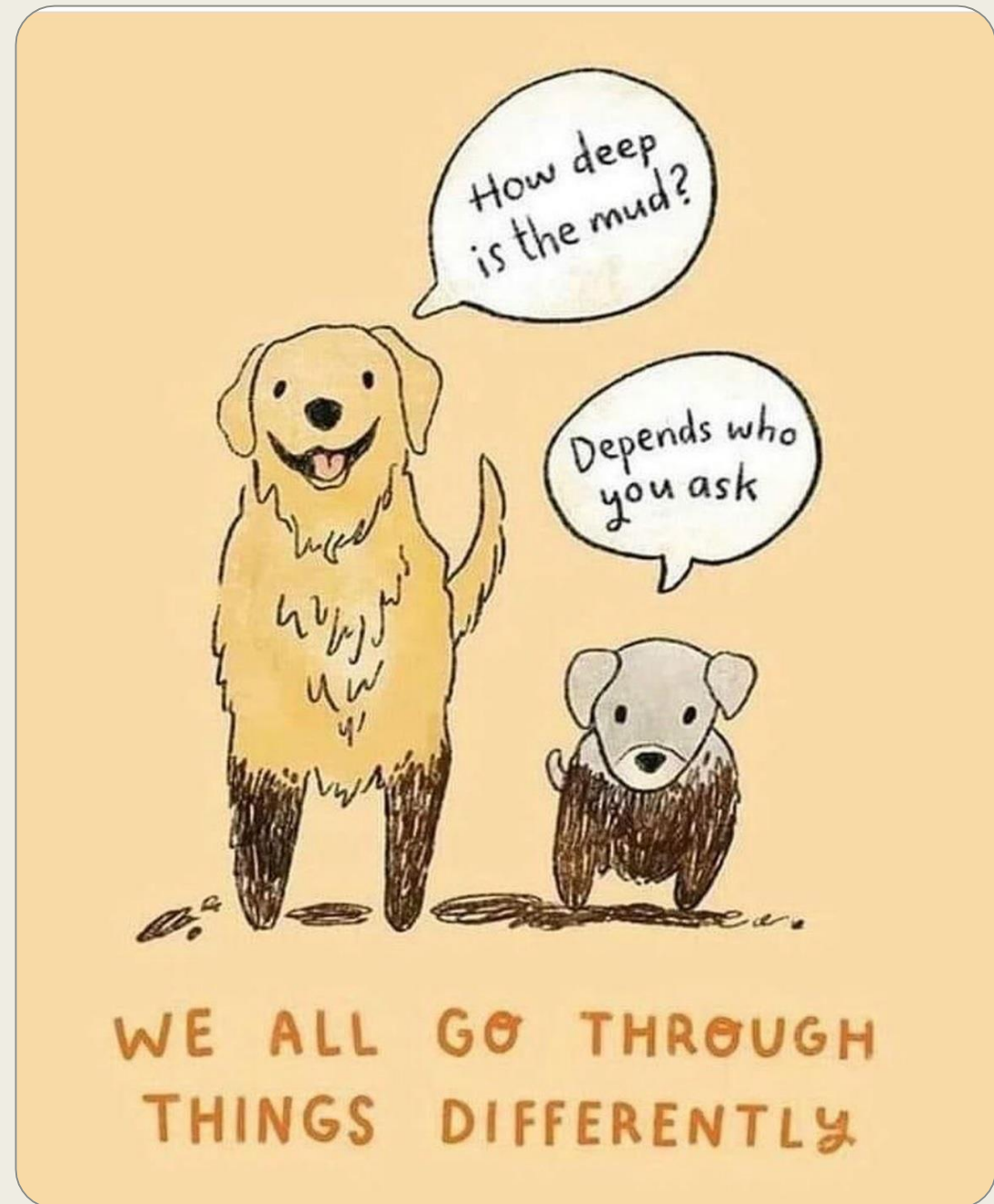
Natural Supports

- Romantic partner
- Family of Origin
- Children/Grandchildren
- Neighborhood
- "Old faces"
- Hobbies/activities
- Church Community
- Friends/Social Connections
- Pets

Artificial Supports

- Program Involvement
- Probation/Parole
- CYS
- Case Management
- Housing Support
- Mental Health or SUDs treatment providers
- CRS/Peer Support
- Psychiatry/Med Management

Every
Experience is
Unique



Attachment Theory in Brief

John Bowlby – British Psychologist and Psychoanalyst in 1950's & 60's

- Key focus on the child/caregiver relationship
- Attachment as an evolutionary survival mechanism
- Caregivers serve as a “secure base” in which children can explore their world while seeking comfort

Stranger Anxiety

Natural and developmentally expected emotional response observed in infants and young children.

Stranger anxiety refers to the distress or wariness that a child may exhibit when confronted with unfamiliar individuals, especially those who are not part of their primary caregiver or immediate family.

Starts towards the end of first year of life → serves to keep the child safe and attached to primary caregiver

Attachment and Stranger Anxiety

- Bowlby's attachment theory suggests that the primary caregiver serves as a secure base for the child.
- The child forms a strong emotional bond with the caregiver, and when faced with strangers, they may experience anxiety or discomfort due to the unfamiliarity and the absence of the secure base.

Separation Anxiety

- Normative display of fear or distress when primary caregiver is unavailable to the child (crying, clinging, separation protest)
- Emerges around 6-8 months and peaks around 18 months – 2 years
- Supports the development of a secure bond

Attachment in Early Childhood

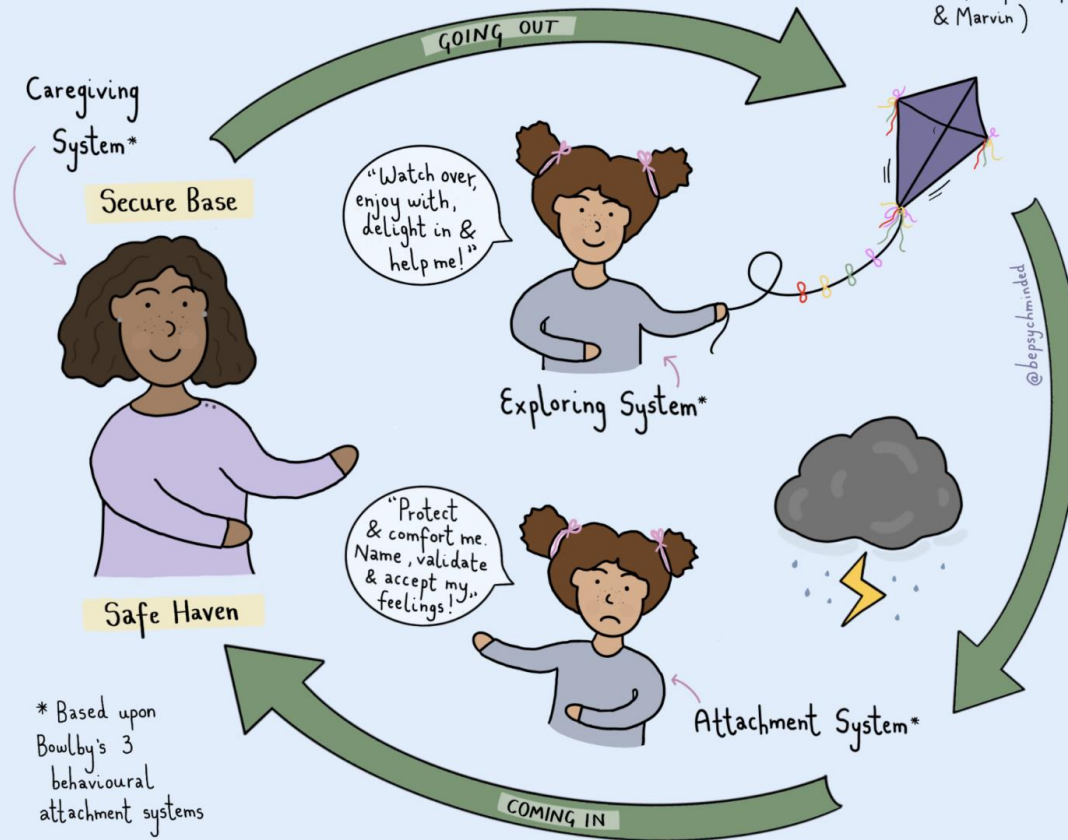
Bowlby suggested that there is a critical period for the development of attachment, but later research adapted the concept to a sensitive period.

Attachment was once believed to be set by age 2 – but more recent research suggests it continues to adapt across the lifespan

Circle of Security

@bepsychminded

(by Powell, Cooper, Hoffman & Marvin)







* Based upon Bowlby's 3 behavioural attachment systems

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ATTACHMENT STYLES

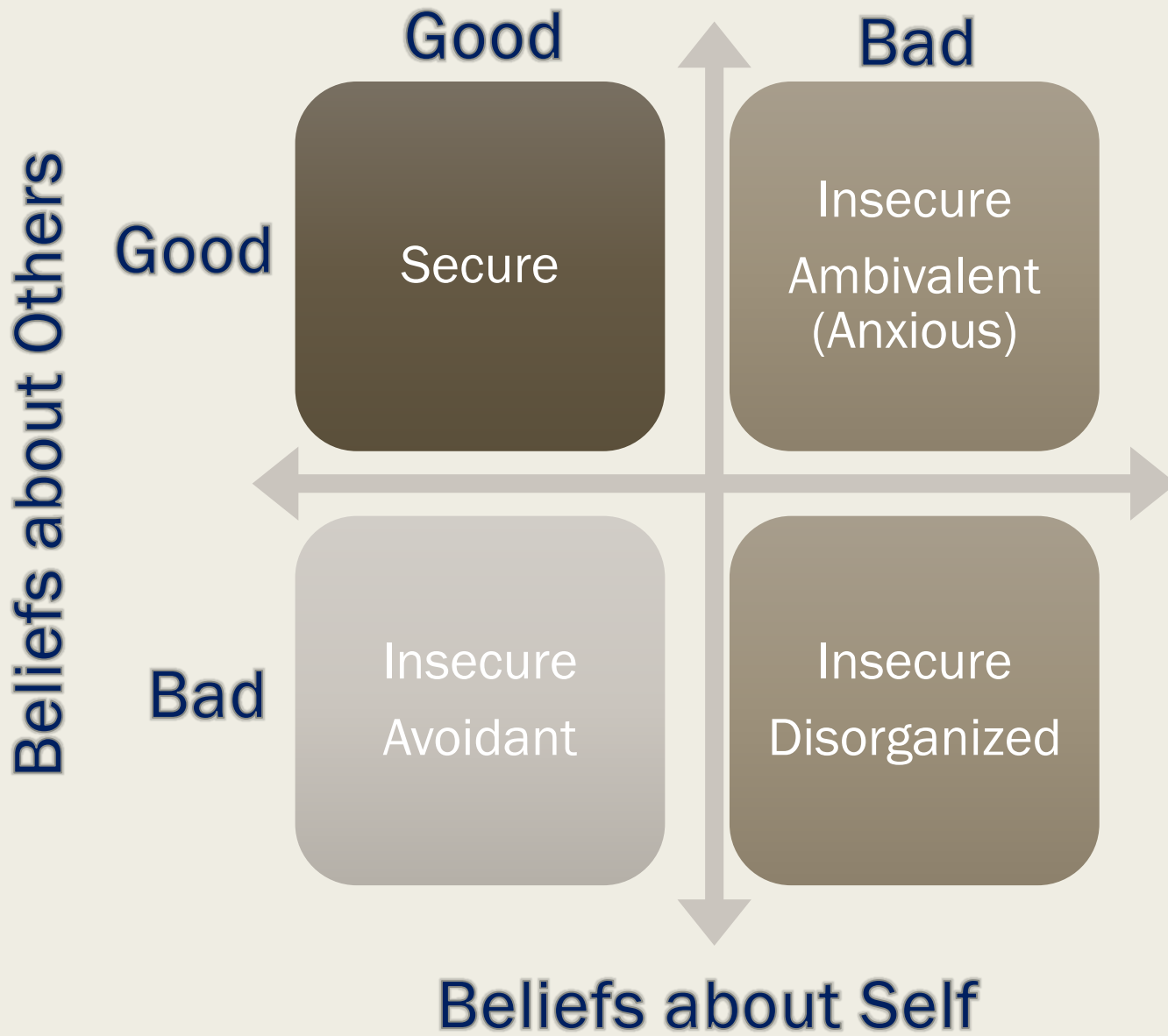
IMPACT OF CAREGIVERS THEN & NOW

			
SECURE	AMBIVALENT	AVOIDANT	DISORGANIZED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Healthy relationship with primary caregiver - Shows appropriate distress when left alone - Able to seek support in relationships - Can regulate emotions and manage conflict in close relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited parental availability - Distress when left - Craves close relationships but struggles to trust - Need for reassurance from partners - Feelings of anxiety and jealousy are common 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Abuse or neglect from caregiver - No preference for parental presence - Independent - Pattern of withdrawal - Tendency to minimize the feelings of others - Preference for casual relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inconsistent parenting - Intimate relationships feel confusing - Feelings of unworthiness - Tendency towards aggressive or antisocial behaviors

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Dimensions vs. Categories

- Dimensional model allows for greater nuance across relationship types
- Dimensions give more plausibility to the winding road definition of attachment patterns



Attachment Across the Lifespan

- Reciprocity in attachment experiences continue to shape and form attachment patterns
- May exhibit different attachment patterns in different types of relationships (ie: secure in friendships but avoidance in romantic relationships) ect.

Secure Attachment

Childhood

- Confident Exploring world when present caregiver
- Seek Comfort from Caregiver and trust their needs will be met

Adulthood

- Positive and stable relationships
- Comfortable with intimacy and can trust others
- Generally positive view of self and effective coping strategies

Insecure/Avoidant Attachment

Childhood

- Little distress when caregivers leave and may avoid contact upon return
- May have learned how to self-soothe due to inconsistent caregiving/needs being unmet

Adulthood

- Struggle with intimacy and closeness and tend to engage in “fleeing behaviors”
- Independent, Self-Reliant, and avoiding close emotional connections

Insecure Ambivalent/Anxious Attachment

Childhood

- Intense distress upon separations and may resist contact upon return
- May have a history of inconsistency in caregiving behaviors
- Lack of positive sense of self esteem

Adulthood

- Difficulty trusting others will be there
- Fear of abandonment
- Potential challenges in relationships due to rejection sensitivity

Disorganized Attachment

Childhood

- Inconsistent caregiving and trauma
- Lack of consistent response pattern in the child
- May appear disoriented/aloof

Adulthood

- Struggle with emotional regulation
- Difficulty forming and maintaining stability within relationships
- Unresolved trauma may negatively impact well-being

Secure attachment within Family Systems



Communicate more openly, readily ask for and provide emotional support to one another



Sense of trust, comfort, and willingness to express needs and feelings



Trust within the system, assuming of good intent, positive co-regulation



Flexibility and adaptability are stronger and better able to navigate life's challenges



Secure in seeking support and exploring independence

Avoidant Attachment within Family Systems

Prioritize independence and distance within the relationships

May avoid intimacy and not seek or offer support during times of distress

May struggle to effectively communicate emotions and boundaries

Challenges in resolving emotional issues within the family system

Ambivalent /Anxious Attachment within Family Systems



Intense emotional dynamics



Pursuer/Distancer patterns (approach/avoidance)



Heightened sensitivity to threats of rejection or abandonment



Conflicts and emotional turbulence



May engage in repetitive support seeking/reassurance seeking behaviors but struggle to trust expressions of connection

Disorganized Attachment within Family Systems



Chaotic and unpredictable dynamics



Trauma bonds/narratives pervade this attachment pattern



Inconsistent and unreliable communication patterns – difficulty seeking support and trusting each other



Difficulty forming stable and healthy relationships due to unresolved trauma

Attachment Patterns within Teams?

- Interdisciplinary team for a client
- Office culture? Workplace?
- How does this play out with remote work? Or work that is more isolated due to being “on site”?

Secure Attachment at Work

Likely to trust their peers within reason and feel confident enough to contribute positively to a workplace environment

Good emotion regulation/coping skills

More flexible/adaptive in challenging circumstances

Tends to have stronger resiliency practices and cohesion within a team setting

Avoidant Attachment at Work

May be more independent/self—reliant than is helpful within a team or collaborative setting

Less likely to seek help from others or accept influence.

May also be resistant to offering help to others on the team

Potential for communication challenges, difficulty expressing vulnerability or asking for help, and may be more isolated at work.

Ambivalent/ Anxious at Work

Intense dynamics within the workplace →
increasing emotional dynamics within the team

Enmeshment may be more likely

May seek reassurance/support to a level
uncomfortable to fellow teammates

Heightened sensitivity to perceived criticism or
rejection

Struggle to communicate effectively

Misunderstandings and conflicts may arise in a
workplace setting

Disorganized Attachment at Work

Struggle to have
stable/reliable collaboration
and communication

Behavior may be
unpredictable and emotional
regulation may be challenging

Needs clear structure and
support systems to function
effectively within a team

How can we make our teams more amazing?

- Boundaries are always excellent when communicated clearly and with kindness
- Assuming Good Intent goes a long way
- First, you REGULATE
- Understanding each other, your needs, and practicing clear and effective communication strategies (DBT skills are GREAT here) support a safe and affirming environment and more positive team dynamics

What can supervisors do?

- Provide clear guidelines and expectations for roles within the workplace system
- Create a system of feedback across levels of the team to work towards everyone's development while also preventing hurts or misunderstandings to pervade the culture
- Avoiding triangulation and identifying enmeshment can be helpful in supporting a positive workplace.

What can individuals do?

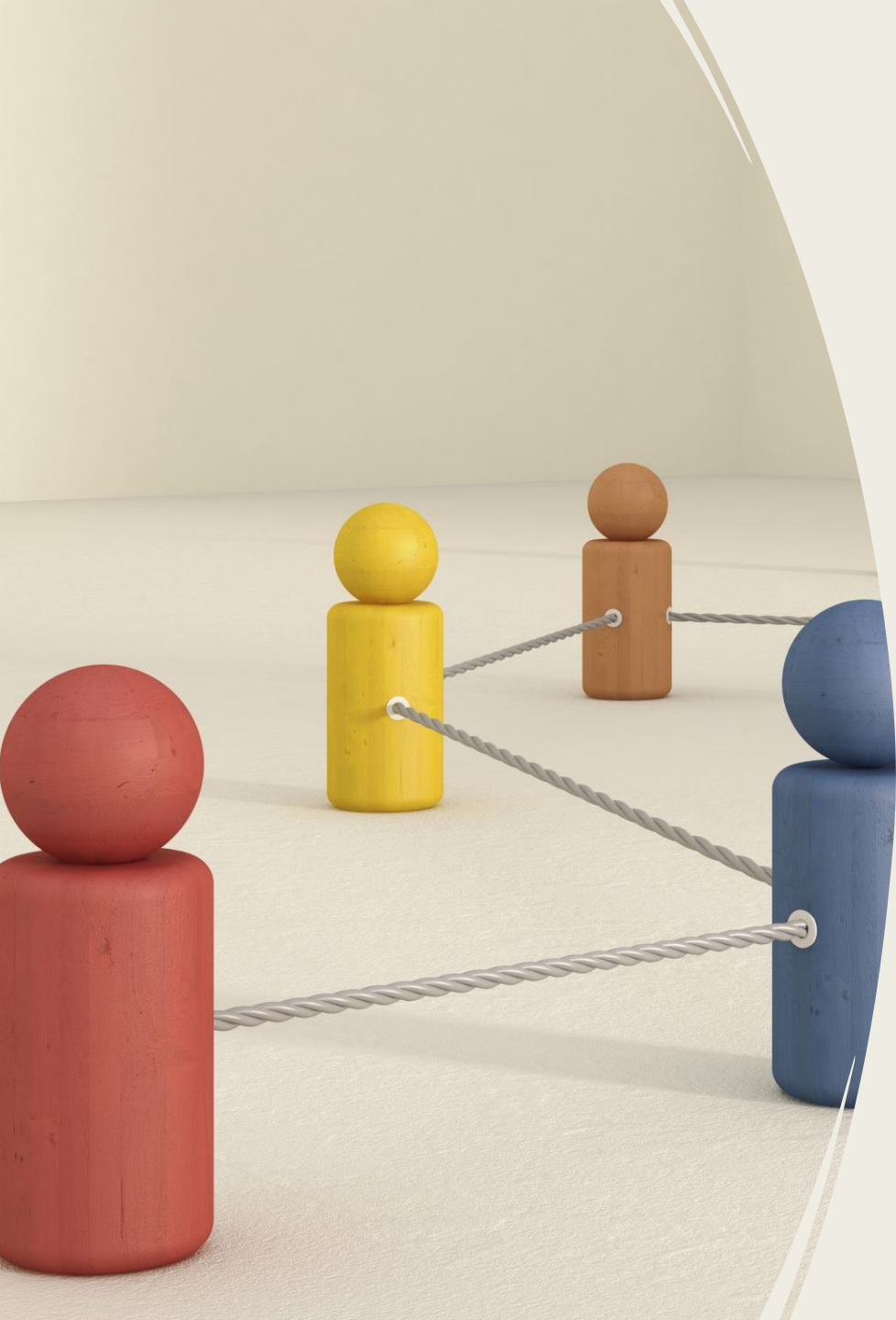
- Explore how your attachment patterns may inhibit you being the best version of yourself within a team?
- Check-in on some of your most common "soundtracks" within relationships and attend to themes within and outside of the workplace
- Acknowledge that you are HUMAN and recognize when your attachment patterns may show up within your colleagues or even therapeutic relationships?

Thinking systemically

Systems and individuals mutually influence one another

clients' problems and their solutions within their relational/social context or location

The range of what is possible in the individual's change is mediated by the context in which the person is trying to enact that change



Ecosystemic Structural Family Therapy (ESFT)

- Ecosystemic structural family therapy is a therapeutic approach that views the family as a complex, interconnected system and seeks to identify and address dysfunctional patterns and boundaries within that system.
- Focus on restructuring these family dynamics and considers the broader contextual influences, such as culture and community, to promote healthier relationships and interactions within the family unit.

Targets of ESFT Clinical Intervention

Increase Individual Wellness & Overall Functioning

Through SHIFTING FAMILY MEMBER INTERACTIONS in the following areas:

1. Emotion Regulation
2. Parent Child Relationship
3. Executive Skills
4. Co-Caregiver Alliance (including supports to caregiving)



Ecomap with energy patterns



Create your own ecomap

- Begin with yourself at the center
- Around you, put all the important, significant, or otherwise impactful individuals and entities that influence your day-to-day living
- Identify which entities “pour into” you
- Identify which entities “draw from” you
- And Identify which entities have a bi-directional flow of energy and investment

Socratic Questions following Ecomap

- Identify the sources of comfort
- The sources of discomfort
- Are the sources of discomfort otherwise tied to your broader values?
- Do the sources of discomfort still serve you in some overarching capacity?
- Are you engaging in sources of discomfort out of obligation? Habit? ... do you not know anymore?
- Is there a way in which you can be more in balance with the pieces that draw from you?

Keep in Touch!

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- Follow Me on LinkedIn
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- Servantsoasis.org
- LiveUpCounseling.com