

Attachment and Affect Regulation Theory

Weekly Syllabus

Spring 2019

Week 1: THE DEVELOPMENT OF ATTACHMENT THEORY

The origins of attachment theory will be discussed and foundational concepts in attachment theory introduced. We will discuss the attachment styles (or patterns or strategies) that develop based on the nature of our early experiences and how these shape our adult sense of self and self-in-representation. We will examine the Ainsworth/Main classification system used

Week 2: THE ADULT ATTACHMENT INTERVIEW AND ADULT ATTACHMENT STYLES

We will focus on the concepts of adult attachment style and attachment states of mind and discuss their potential implications in the therapeutic process. The Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) will be described and we will explore how to utilize this instrument in assessment and case conceptualization. Case examples will be presented for babies as well as for adults.

Week 3: AFFECT REGULATION AND ATTACHMENT THEORY: AN INTRODUCTION TO REGULATION THEORY

We will explore the developmental process of affect regulation and how the attachment relationship shapes its course of development. Additionally, we will examine how each attachment strategy can be understood as a mechanism in regulating affect. The concepts of attunement and intersubjectivity will be explicated as will the role of mentalization, or reflective functioning in this process. We will discuss the centrality of emotion, affect regulation and nonverbal, unconscious communication in development and psychotherapy.

Week 4: ATTACHMENT STRATEGIES THROUGH THE LIFESPAN: THE DYNAMIC MATURATIONAL MODEL OF ATTACHMENT AND ADAPTATION

We will look at a different classification system for attachment strategies, the Dynamic Maturation Model (DMM) of Attachment developed by Patricia Crittenden. She includes a more extensive range of organized strategies for those who had to adapt to early dangers. We will learn how attachment strategies manifest and change with development, with risks of more distorting strategies developing as well as opportunities for reorganization toward balance or security. We will consider the applicability/meaning of the constructs of secure and insecure attachment across cultures and socio-economic contexts. Which aspects can be considered universal and which are culturally determined? Is attachment theory Western, middle-class biased?

Weeks 5 and 6: THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE THERAPIST'S AND CLIENT'S ATTACHMENT STRATEGIES

We will discuss how to foster reparative therapy relationships for our clients, offering them a secure base from which to explore, regulate and integrate their internal worlds. We will consider the importance of thoughtfully managing therapeutic distance and approach, taking the client's attachment strategy into account. We will discuss how the therapist's own attachment strategies may influence the course of therapy. Clinical examples of work with dismissing and preoccupied clients will be given.