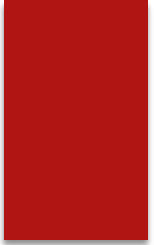




Parent-Child Relationships


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Considerations and Acknowledgements



Early literature and research focuses mainly on a cis-gender and white-centric perspective

Some content may be activating.



**“There is no such thing
as a baby”**

-DW Winnicott



Attachment

Attachment

“The way parents are with children is how children will be with the rest of the world”

– Dr. Karl Menninger

- ▶ Attachment is the emotional bond between the child and the caregiver
- ▶ This is an emotional bond that is persistent and emotionally significant



Harry Harlow
1950s

Monkey Love

The propensity to make strong emotional bonds to particular individuals is a basic component of human nature. (John Bowlby)



John Bowlby
1960s

Attachment=
The foundation
of healthy
development



Mary Ainsworth
1970s

The Strange
Situation

Attachment styles	% of sample (also generalized to represent U.S. population)	The child's general state of being	Mother's responsiveness to her child's signals and needs	Fulfillment of the child's needs (why the child acts the way it does)
Secure Attachment	65%	Secure, explorative, happy	Quick, sensitive, consistent	Believes and trusts that his/her needs will be met
Avoidant Attachment	20%	Not very explorative, emotionally distant	Distant, disengaged	Subconsciously believes that his/her needs probably won't be met
Ambivalent Attachment	10-15%	Anxious, insecure, angry	Inconsistent; sometimes sensitive, sometimes neglectful	Cannot rely on his/her needs being met
Disorganized Attachment	10-15%	Depressed, angry, completely passive, nonresponsive	Extreme, erratic: Frightened or frightening, passive or intrusive	Severely confused with no strategy to have his/her needs met

Attachment Styles

Relationships exist internally as representations and externally as behaviors/interactions

Zeanah and Anders, 1987





Attunement

Caregiver responsiveness

Factors impacting attachment

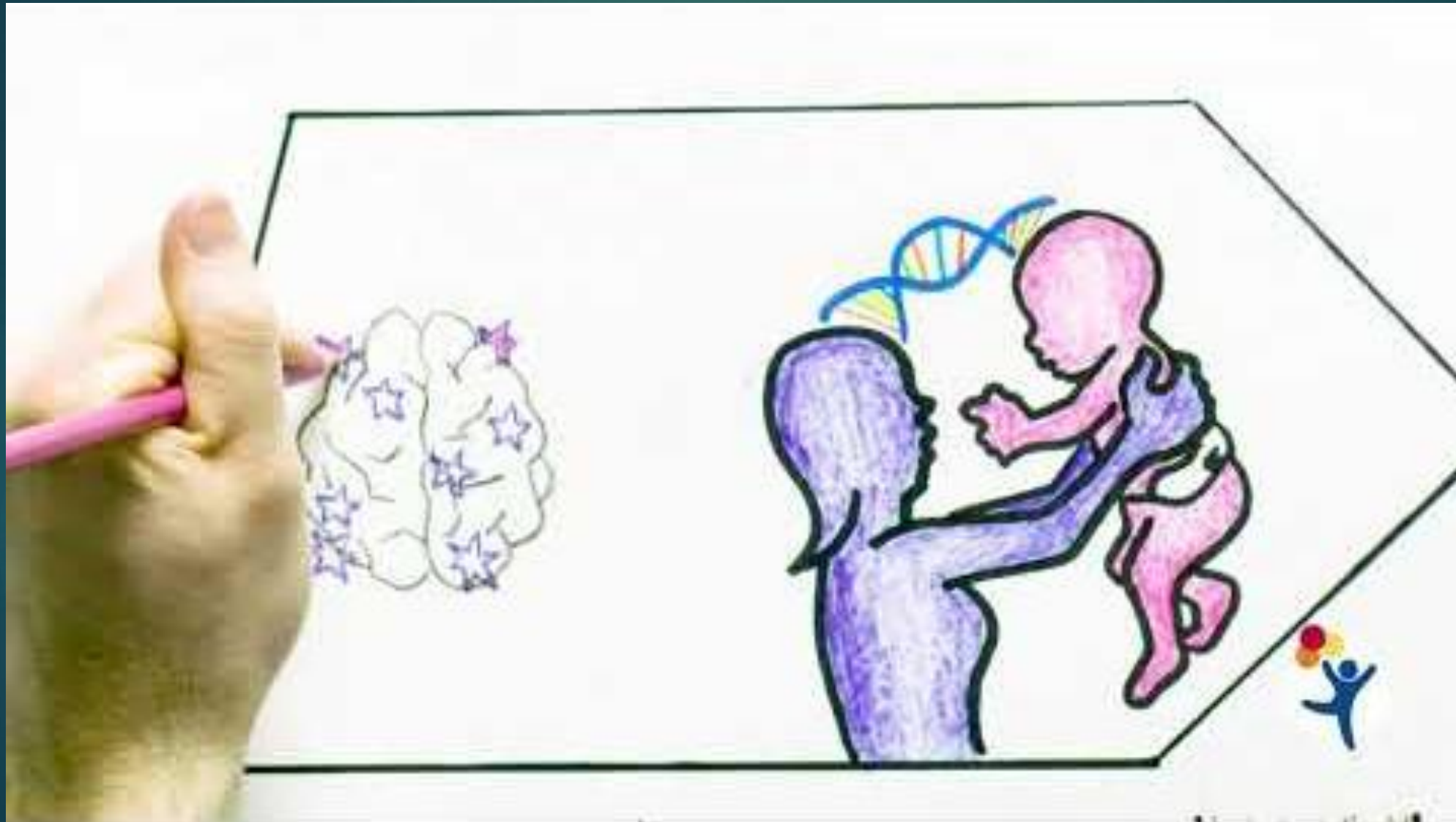
- ▶ Reciprocity, interactivity
- ▶ Responsiveness to child's needs
- ▶ Communication style
- ▶ Emotional regulation and co-regulation
- ▶ Level of intrusiveness
- ▶ Sharing power, building agency



Attunement

- ▶ The capacity of caregivers and children to accurately read each other's cues and respond appropriately
- ▶ Requires caregiver and child to be attuned on many levels
 - ▶ Cognitive
 - ▶ Emotional
 - ▶ Behavioral
 - ▶ Psychological

Serve and Return





Assessing External Interaction

Marschack Interaction Method (MIM)

The MIM assesses how well the parents can

- Structure the environment and set clear, appropriate expectations and limits.
- Engage the child in interaction while being attuned to the child's state and reactions.
- Respond in a nurturing way to the child's needs.
- Provide appropriate challenge.

The MIM assesses how well the child can

- Accept structure from the adult—as opposed to insisting on calling all the shots.
- Engage with the adult—as opposed to being withdrawn, avoidant, or superindependent.
- Accept nurturing care from the adult—as opposed to looking only to herself for comfort.
- Respond to appropriate challenge—as opposed to being helpless and clinging, or being competitive, and making too high demands on herself.

MIM Coding

▶ Behavioral Anchors for Dimensions

- ▶ 4 – Optimal
- ▶ 3 – Good
- ▶ 2 – Some weakness
- ▶ 1 – Problematic
- ▶ 0 – Clearly dysfunctional

▶ Critical Items

- ▶ 0 – Not a problem
- ▶ 1 – Possible problem
- ▶ 2 – Serious problem

1.	Parent is physically aggressive toward the child
2.	Parent is verbally abusive toward the child
3.	Parent behaves in a sexualized manner toward the child
4.	Parent fails to set basic safety limits.
5.	Parent interacts with the child as a peer
6.	Parent puts child in parental role.
7.	Parent requests an inappropriate amount of nurturance from child and/or child provides parent with an inappropriate amount of nurturance.

Parent-Child Early Relational Assessment

► Situations:

- Feeding
- Structured task
- Free play
- Separation/Reunion



► Variables

- Parental
 - Tone
 - Affect
 - mood

► Child

- Mood
- Behavior/adaptive abilities
- Activity level
- Communication

► Dyadic

- Affective quality
- Mutuality in interaction

► Video Feedback

- Meaning of child to parent
- Ability to read and respond to cues
- Capacity for enjoyment
- Relational history of parent
- Sense of competency as parent

Internal working Models

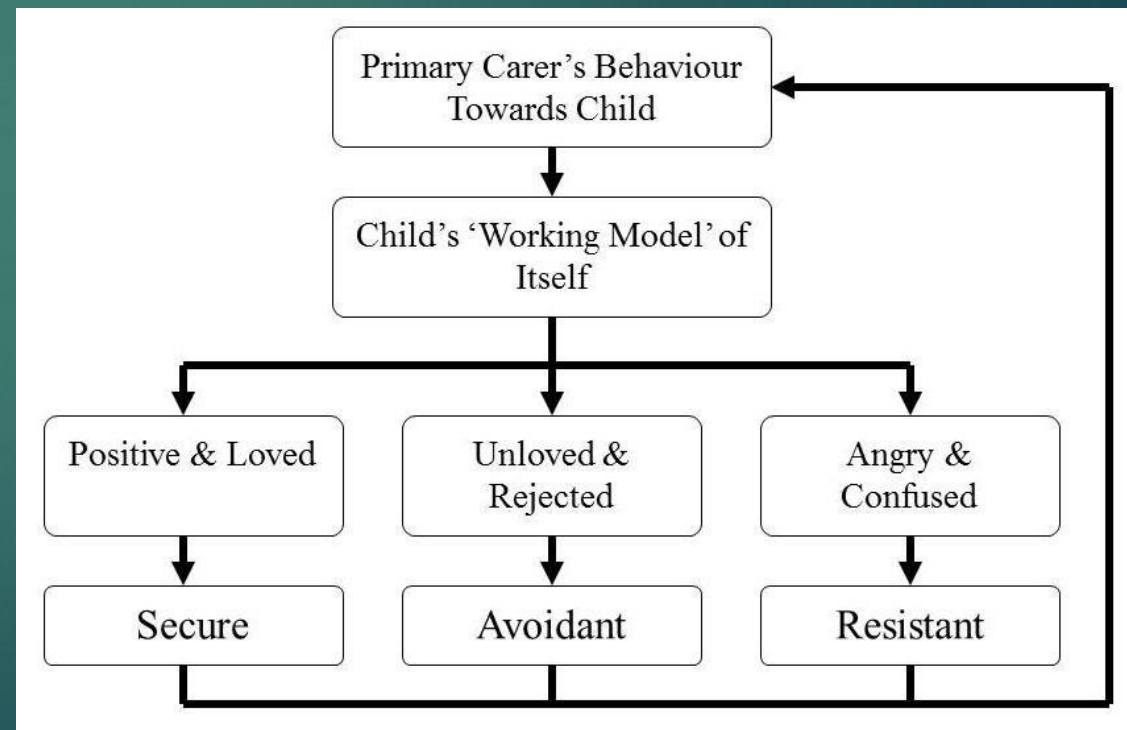
A model of others as being trustworthy

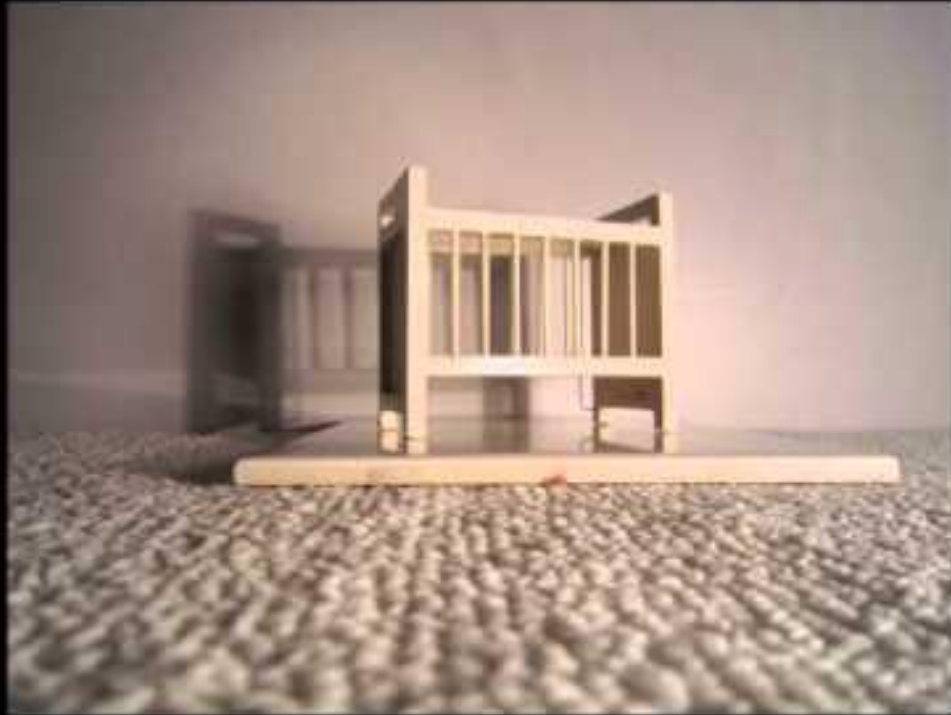
A model of the self as valuable

A model of the self as effective when interacting with others

Through repeated daily patterns of interactions with the caregiver, the child forms a **model of relationships**, which guide behavior now and in future.

Infants/toddlers develop a working model of the *caregiver* and the *self*.





Assessing Internal Representations

Working Model of the Child interview (WCMI)

WORKING MODEL OF THE CHILD INTERVIEW CODING MANUAL

(1/25/96)

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(3a) At this point, whom does your child remind you of? In what ways? When did you first notice similarity? If only one parent is mentioned, ask, in what ways does the child remind you of (the other parent)? The following questions should be asked whether or not the parents have been mentioned. Which of his/her parents is your child most like now? In what ways is your child's personality like or unlike each of his/her parents?

(3b) Are there any family characteristics on your side you see in your child's personality? What about (other parent's) side?

(3c) How did you decide on your child's name? *Find out about family names, etc.* How well does the name seem to fit?

(4) What do you feel is unique or different about your child compared to what you know of other children?

WCMI Coding

▶ Primary rating scales:

- ▶ Richness of perceptions,
- ▶ Open-ness to change
- ▶ Intensity of involvement
- ▶ Coherence
- ▶ Caregiving sensitivity
- ▶ Acceptance
- ▶ Infant difficulty
- ▶ Fear for infant safety.

▶ Secondary rating sales

- ▶ Joy
- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Pride
- ▶ Anger
- ▶ Guilt
- ▶ Indifference
- ▶ Disappointment
- ▶ Other emotions

Balanced

Disengaged

Distorted

The Importance of the Relationship - in General

- ▶ **"The single most common factor for children who develop resilience is at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult.** These relationships provide the personalized responsiveness, scaffolding, and protection that buffer children from developmental disruption. They also build key capacities—such as the ability to plan, monitor, and regulate behavior—that enable children to respond adaptively to adversity and thrive. This combination of [supportive relationships](#), adaptive skill-building, and positive experiences is the foundation of resilience."



How Abuse Impacts Child-Caregiver Relationship

“The importance of a child’s close relationship with a caregiver cannot be overestimated. Through relationships with important attachment figures, children learn to trust others, regulate their emotions, and interact with the world; they develop a sense of the world as safe or unsafe, and come to understand their own value as individuals. When those relationships are unstable or unpredictable, children learn that they cannot rely on others to help them. When primary caregivers exploit and abuse a child, the child learns that he or she is bad and the world is a terrible place.”

From National Child Traumatic Stress Network:

[Home](#) > [What is Child Trauma?](#) > [Trauma Types](#) > [Complex Trauma](#) > Effects.

Retrieved from: <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/complex-trauma/effects>

Evidence- Based Dyadic Trauma Treatment Options

Child Parent
Psychotherapy

Attachment and Bio-
behavioral Catchup

Parent-Child
Interactional Therapy

Evidence- Based Dyadic Trauma Treatment Options

Attachment, Self-Regulation,
and Competence: A
Comprehensive Framework

Alternatives for Families - a
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Trauma Focused Cognitive
Behavioral Therapy

- To learn more about trauma treatment options, visit:
- <https://www.nctsn.org/treatments-and-practices/trauma-treatments/interventions>

Questions? Comments? Parting Thoughts?

