“Mom, there’s a monster in the closet”
How do attachment, trauma and anxiety disorders interact?
Trauma?

“Invisible” Trauma

Early Attachment Trauma

Consequences

Anxiety

Link between EAT and anxiety disorders

Therapeutic tools
“Invisible” Attachment Trauma
“Invisible” Attachment Trauma

The form of traumatization

↓

Child’s experience of threat

↓

Totally dependable on his caregiver

↓

limited behavioral and cognitive coping capacities
"Invisible" Attachment Trauma

Experiences of threat

include the threat of

- separation
- having little response to
- from the caregiver
- the signals of distress.
“Invisible” Attachment Trauma

In the interaction between child and caregiver

Not an obvious event

Caregiver’s unavailability

Caregiver’s inability to modulate the affective dysregulation

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“Invisible Attachment trauma”

Attachment trauma

Abuse  ⇐  Neglect

“ Invisible Attachment Trauma”

↓

Quality of the attachment relationship
THE ABC OF ATTACHMENT (Siegel & Hartzell, 2004)

Attunement
• parents use of their own internal state to help regulate the infant

Balance
• a child’s achievement of balance between its body, emotions and state of mind

Coherence
• sense of internal integration and interpersonal connectedness to others acquired by the child through its relationship with its parents
Attunement
Sensitive responsiveness

Ainsworth and others (1974)
• The infant’s point of view

– Four essential components:
  • Her awareness of the signals
  • An accurate interpretation of them
  • An appropriate response to them
  • A prompt response to them
Mentalization

Peter Fonagy

• A theory of mind (internal world)

• Oneself and others as psychological

• Mirroring

• Sense of self
Reflective functioning

• Reflect upon their own history (trauma, attachment)

• Influence

• Trigger

• “Ghosts in the nursery” (Selma Fraiberg)
Containment

– (Bion, 1959)

• Receive and understand

• Without being overwhelmed by it

• Communicates back
Shared pleasure/ play

Confidence, trust, security

Communicate and connect

Reduce stress

Strengthens attachment
Balance
Balance
Mother as external regulator

Contingent responsivity

she appraises the nonverbal expressions of
infant’s internal arousal  affective states

regulates them

communicates them to the infant
Coherence
Early attachment trauma
Early attachment trauma
Stressful events in the relationship: Pre-natal trauma
Stressful events in the relationship: Birth trauma

• C-section/ long or short labor/life threatening experiences/ vacuum extraction etc.
Disruptions in the attachment bond
Physical inaccessibility
Disruptions in the attachment bond
Emotional inaccessible/ unavailable

I'm sorry..the person you have reached is emotionally unavailable right now. Please call back next lifetime.
EAT and stressful events outside the relationship

- Frequent moves or placement.
- Undiagnosed or painful illness.
- Early medical interventions.
- Absence of the father.
- Bereavement.
- Parental stress.
- Fearful or chaotic environment.
- Traumatic childbirth.
Quality of the attachment relationship
EAT and affect regulation
EAT and Internal Working Model
EAT and cognition
EAT and the body
EAT and dissociation
Anxiety: the mother of all psychopathology
Subtypes of anxiety

• Panic disorders with or without agoraphobia
• Phobias, including specific phobias and social phobia
• Social anxiety disorder
• OCD: unwanted, intrusive, persistent thoughts or repetitive behaviors.
• Stress disorders: post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and acute stress disorder
• Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD).
• Anxiety disorder not otherwise specified
EAT ➔ Affectdysregulation ➔ Affectphobia
EAT ➔ Affectdysregulation ➔ Affectphobia

• Triangle of conflict
EAT ➔ IWM ➔ Anxiety

• Dismissive style and anxiety =
  – dealing but not feeling ➔ fear of closeness

• Preoccupied style and anxiety =
  – “feeling but not dealing” ➔ Separation anxiety

• Fearfull style and anxiety =
  – “not feeling not dealing” ➔ Intense anxiety
EAT ➔ Social Phobia

- World = threatening and unsafe
  - Self = incompetent in different life domains
  - Give rise to perfectionism
    - Perfect social performance
    - Withdrawal and avoidance
EAT ➔ Insecure attachment ➔ Fear of failure

"NO, NO, NO WRONG AGAIN!"

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EAT ➔ Parent-child role- confusion
EAT and health anxiety
Anxiety treatment = Trauma treatment

• Phase-oriented:
  – Stabilization phase:
    • FAFA
    • Improving daily life
    • Emotion focused therapy
    • Affectregulation
    • Mentalization
    • Restructuring IWM
    • The therapeutic alliance
    • CBT
    • Presence
  – Confrontation phase
  – Integration phase
Stabilization
Therapy: calming the physiology

• Grounding:
Therapy: calming the physiology

• Diafragmatic breathing
Therapy: calming the physiology

- Diafragmatic breathing
Therapy: calming the physiology

Feeling anxiety? Do a "grounding" tool.

Look around you. Find 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste. This is called "grounding." It's helpful to do whenever you feel anxious.

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Safe place
Therapy: calming the physiology
Long term

• Meditation
• Relaxation
• Yoga
• Safe touch
• Sports/ movement
Therapy: Affectregulation
Therapy: Cognition
Therapy: Cognition

• Stop!

• Container exercise
Therapy: Cognition

• Distraction (do something!)

• Another thought
Resource development
Inner child work

“I can help you find your inner child, but I can’t help you claim him as a dependent at tax time.”
Reconnecting with the body
EMDR

Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing

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It's been a rough week, but I made it... How about you?