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
Trauma?

• The classic vision of trauma

• From the perspective of a traumatizing event
  – PTSD: Criterion A: (traumatic event)
  – Bowlby: “any event that seriously threatens the attachment relationship”

• Characteristics
“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 from the caregiver
- having little response to 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
“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
Coherence
Sense of self

The availability of a reflective caregiver

Secure attachment

Facilitates the development of theory of mind

"She thinks of me as thinking and therefore I exist"

Child "find itself in the other"

"giving back to the baby the baby's own self"

(Winnicott, 1967)
Early attachment trauma
Early attachment trauma

- Stressful events in the relationship
- Quality of the relationship
- Stressful events outside the relationship
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 affectregulation
EAT and affect regulation

Ineffective regulation

Ineffective Emotional Regulation

Child experiences catastrophic anxiety and terror.

Child continues to feel catastrophic anxiety and terror.

Child cries

The adult cannot soothe and therefore communicates (verbally and non-verbally) that the feeling is indeed frightening and catastrophic.

Parent/ Carer finds the baby's cry frightening/ punishing/ over-whelming etc.

Adult cannot cope with it

Over time, when the child experiences this on most occasions, the child fails to develop capacity to regulate their own emotions.
EAT and Internal Working Model
EAT and Internal Working Model

Primary Carer’s Behaviour Towards Child

Child’s ‘Working Model’ of Itself

Positive & Loved
Secure

Unloved & Rejected
Avoidant

Angry & Confused
Resistant
EAT and cognition
EAT and cognition

• Negative IWMs of self:
  – Increased appraisals of normal life circumstances as threatening
  – Difficulty in suppressing thoughts
  – A tendency to devalue oneself in threatening situations

• Negative IWMs of others:
  – failure to suppress when the individual is experiencing high cognitive loads
EAT and the body
EAT and the body

- Attachment dynamics play out at the physical level
- Via the body-to-body communication
- The nature and quality of the attachment relationship.
- Ways in which a mother relates to and responds to her own physical and bodily needs
- The child relate to his own body.
- Sense of bodily sense
EAT and dissociation
EAT and dissociation

Early attachment trauma
↓
Attachment insecurity
↓
Disorganized attachment
↓
Dissociation
Anxiety

- “Anxiety” and “fear”
- Separate entities in the neuroscientific community.
- Fear is the physiological reaction to something in our external or internal environment.
- Anxiety on the other hand is the psychological and emotional reaction to the afore mentioned environmental stimulus.
- Anxiety is the conscious worry and sense of subconscious unease
Anxiety and stress regulation
Anxiety and stress regulation

• Stephen Porges (2001)
  – The Polyvagal Theory:
    • ANS = hierarchical system that responds to environmental challenges
    • Three different subsystems
      – Parasympathetic ventral vagal (Social engagement system)
      – Sympathetic arousal (fight/flight)
      – Parasympathetic dorsal vagal (freeze responses)
Anxiety and Locus of control

• The extent to which an individual perceives personal control over events in one’s environment.
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

• Affect regulation
  – awareness of the feeling
  – identifying what it is/ name it
  – the modulation of that affective experience

• When not achieved

  ↓

the arousal generated by that affect remains unmodulated as well

  ↓

  Anxiety
EAT ➔ Affectdysregulation ➔ Affectphobia

• EAT = lack of contingent and responsive mirroring
• Affectdysregulation
• Emotions are feared
• Anxiety prompts an defensive reaction
• Defense push the feeling back down
• Safety is restored
EAT ➔ Affectdysregulation ➔ Affectphobia

• Triangle of conflict
EAT ➔ IWM ➔ Anxiety

My anxieties have anxieties.
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
BLOWFISH WITH SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER

Don't puff up like an idiot. Don't puff up like an idiot. Don't puff up like an idiot.
EAT ➔ IWM ➔ Social Phobia

• EAT
• Lack of appropriate response when the child is
  – Frightened
  – Threatened
  – Seeks proximity
• World = threatening and unsafe
• Self = incompetent in different life domains
EAT ➔ IWM ➔ Social Phobia

• Attachment anxiety
  • Negative feelings about the self
  • Negative feelings about others
  ↓

Give rise to perfectionism
• Perfect social performance
EAT ➔ IWM ➔ Social Phobia

• Projection of IWM
• Believe the other feels/ think that way about you
• Causes anxiety
• Withdrawal and avoidance
EAT ➔ Insecure attachment ➔ Fear of failure
EAT ➔ Insecure attachment ➔ Fear of failure

- Lack of secure base
- Ongoing concerns about attachment security
- Not safe enough to explore
- Avoidance of danger
- Avoidance of failure
- Fear of failure
EAT ➔ Parent-child role- confusion
EAT ➔ Parent-child role confusion ➔ Fear of failure

• EAT
• Lack of secure base
• Disorganized attachment
• Role reversal (the child behaves like a parent towards the caregiver)
  – Punitive behavior
  – Caregiving behavior
    • e.g., the child assists, guides, encourages, soothing, or is overly cheerful or solicitous
• Failure experiences

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EAT ➔ Parent-child role-confusion ➔ Phobia

• EAT
• Withdrawn behavior caregiver
• Child as parent
• Stay close to the parent
• To comfort, guide, soothe…
• Social phobia
• Schoolphobia
EAT and health anxiety
EAT and health anxiety

- Caregiver not securely attached to his body
  - Negative body image with rejection
  - Neglecting the body needs
- Child is deprived of the safety, security, and containment
- Physical needs left unattended
- Resulting in an insecure body attachment
- Vulnerability to concerns about bodily functioning
- A way to seek help from those who were unresponsive ("attachment cry")
EAT and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

• OCD ➔ Intrusive thought
  ➔ appraised as dangerous or threatening
  ➔ need to be neutralized
  ➔ obsession

• Attachment is fundamental in formation of IWM of self and others.

• May influence the development of obsessive beliefs
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
Anxiety = 4 levels

• Physiology:
  – Heart rate/ fatigue/ stomach pain/ muscle tension/ numbing/ nausea

• Cognitive:
  – Self- critical/ fearful/ catastrophizing/ forgetfullness/ concentration

• Emotional
  – Fear/ worry/ anger

• Behavioral
  – Avoidance/ impulsivity/ trembling voice/ avoiding eye contact/ fiht- flight- freeze
Stabilization
FAFA: First aid for anxiety

- Grounding
- Breathing
- Here and now
- Dual awareness
- Safe place
Therapy: calming the physiology

• Grounding:
Therapy: calming the physiology

• Grounding: the tree exercise
Therapy: calming the physiology

• Diafragmatic breathing
Therapy: calming the physiology

- Diafragmatic breathing
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.
Safe place
Safe place script

• Image an Actual or Imaginary place with positive associations, where s/he feels safe, comfortable, peaceful or calm.
• Enhancement
  – What do you see/ hear/smell/taste/feel
• Say: “I know that I’m save”
• Say: “I feel safe”
• Which sensations do you experience in your body right now?
• Cue word
Therapy: calming the physiology
Long term

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

• Identifying (awareness + naming)
• Regulating
• Expression
Affectregulation: Awareness of the feeling

WHAT’S GOING ON INSIDE ME AT THIS MOMENT?

Don’t analyze, just watch. ~Eckhart Tolle
“Name it to tame it”

• Dan Siegel
  – Integrating the right and the left brain
  – Feeling in the right side of the brain
  – To make sense of what happens, use the left and link it to the right.
  – Name the inner experience
  – The left hemisphere names what’s going on to the right
  – The whole system calms down
Emotional flooding
Down regulation

- Perceive bodily signals (interoceptive sensitivity)
- Use reappraisal
- Name the emotion
- Increase the opposite feeling
- Changing our bodies (rest)
Emotional blocking
Up- regulation

• Focus on humor
• Think about a positive experience
• Focus on a certain aspect of the situation
• Express positive feelings
• Share your feeling with others
• Build on positive experiences
• Increase the number of pleasant things
• Focus on goals
• Build a life worth living
• Changing our appraisals of a situation.
• Modulating our responses in the situation.
Therapy: Cognition
Therapy: Cognition

• Stop!

• Container exercise
Sorrow eater
Therapy: Cognition

• Distraction (do something!)

• Another thought
Restructuring the internal working model

Piglet sidled up to Pooh from behind. "Pooh!" he whispered.

"Yes, Piglet?"

"Nothing," said Piglet, taking Pooh's paw. "I just wanted to be sure of you."
Restructuring the internal working model

- Corrective relational experiences
- Affect regulation
- Dual awareness
- Dis- identification
- Resource development
- Inner child work
Resource development
Resource development

• Resource-focused interventions can be conceptualized as including a wide range of methods and foci encompassing
  – Physical well-being
  – Spiritual well-being (meditation, prayer…)
  – Creativity (creative arts, movement and music therapies…)
  – Ego resources (assertiveness training, mentalization, self-care, empowerment techniques…)
  – Self-capacities (self-regulation skills, such as relaxation training…)
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.”
Inner child work

- Gestalt therapy: “Empty chair”
- John Bradshaw ("Homecoming")
- Inner child writing
- Imagine your inner child
Reconnecting with the body
Reconnecting with the body

• Safe touch
• Bodyscan
• Chacrawork
• Peter Levine
• Pat Ogden
EMDR

Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing
Therapeutic relationship
Therapeutic relationship

• Vitalizing attunement
• Attunement = psychobiological synchrony

Right-brain to right-brain

Implicit self to implicit self

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