Is there anybody out there...?

Disorganized attachment style and the drama triangle in children who suffered from “Invisible” Attachment Trauma.

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Attachment Trauma

[Diagram showing the relationship between Abuse, Neglect, and "Invisible" Trauma leading to Attachment trauma]
“Invisible” Attachment Trauma

Disruptions in the bond

Ineffective regulation

"Invisible" Attachment Trauma

Ghosts in the nursery

Disruptions in the Attachment Bond
Disruptions in the Attachment Bond

- Fear of abandonment is among the most anxiety-provoking situations in childhood
- Bowlby
  - Continious relationship
- Physical availability
- Emotional availability
- When not fulfilled = disruption in the attachment bond

Physical Inaccessibility

- Forced separation very early in life from the primary caregiver
- Prolonged separation resulted from parental illness
- Early loss of primary caregiver
- Changes in primary caregiver
- Or other family disruptions: divorce
Psychological Inaccessibility

- Psychological/ emotional disruptions:
  - Inappropriate response
  - Stressful life episodes
  - Suicide threat
  - Parent psychopathology
  - Relationship problems
Mother as External Regulator

- Regulatory theory (Allan Schore)
- Be attuned to the internal state
- Able to regulate the own arousal state
- Down-Up regulate

Effective Regulation = Emotional Available

- Emotional Available
  - Sensitive Responsiveness
  - Containment
  - External Regulator
  - Play
Ghosts in the nursery

- Parents unresolved trauma- and attachment history
- Parent’s lack:
  - Reflective functioning
  - Mentalization
“Invisible” Attachment Trauma

- Disorganized attachment
- Care-seeking or attachment system
- Inborn control system activated by distressing experiences
- Throughout the life span (“From the cradle to the grave”)
- “Unresolved” parents ➔ “The source and the solution”
- The simultaneity of approach and avoidance ➔ lack of organization
Caregiving styles

- Caregiver's Behavior
  - Helpless
  - Hostile/Intrusive
- Role-confused Behavior
- Punitive Behavior

The Drama Triangle

**Rescuer**
- "Let me fix it for you."
- Needs to be needed
- Avoiding own issues by rescuing others
- Enables victim
- Temporary pain relief / Temporary responsibility

**Persecuter**
- "It's all your fault."
- Judging / Blames
- Critical
- Angry
- Superior
- Controlling

**Victim**
- "Poor me."
- Helpless / Hopeless
- Powerless to change
- Not responsible
- Not in control of own life
Disorganized Attachment and The Drama Triangle

**Child:**
- Punitive Behavior
- Persecutor
- Parent = Victim
- Care-giving Behavior
- Rescuer

**Caregiver:**
- Helpless
- Comforting
- Hostile
- Victim
- Rescuer
- Persecutor

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Disorganized Attachment and IWM

- IWM
  - Internal working model (IWM)
    - Memories of attachment interactions → accessibility
    - Mental representations of self/others
    - Cognitive structure
    - Typical emotions
    - Implicit memory

Disorganized Attachment and The Drama Triangle
Victim- hood

But it’s an injustice!

Everyone becomes a victim in the end

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Moving Around

Rescuer: agree being nice and strong

Victim: scared and moves up to Rescuer

Rescuer: fed up, angry and resentful

Persecutor: feeling of unfair, blaming

Victim: agree being unable and overwhelmed

Moving Around

Victim: fed up with the role

Persecutor: feels bad

Persecutor: angry, blaming

Victim: scared and moves up to Rescuer

Rescuer: hears this message

Persecutor: feels bad
Victim Consciousness

- Denial of personal responsibility
- External locus of control
- Lack of affectregulation
- Needs not being met
- Lack of development of a coherent self
- Not completed two psychological tasks:
  - Be emotionally separate from your parents
  - Develop “both/and” thinking
The Drama: The Victim Role in the Child

• Survival strategy:
  – To respond to fears and to seek a sense of safety and security.
  – An attempt to become organized internally.
  – Help to meet the needs.
Anxiety Based

Victim

Anxiety

Rescuer

Persecutor

what's in your
Toolkit?
The Winner’s Triangle

The toolbox

The Child  The Parent  The Therapist
The Child

Develop Self-awareness  Emotion regulation  Needs

Building resilience  Self-development
Develop Self-Awareness in the Child

Develop Self-Awareness

- Psychoeducation on:
  - Mentalization
  - The Drama Triangle
- Symbolize/Recognize/Understand:
  - Mentalization capacity
  - The three roles of the drama triangle
Psychoeducation on Mentalization

- Internal world as a metaphor for the mental states.
- Visualize the Internal world as an island:
  - Let het child draw an island
  - There are 4 States:
    - Body
    - Feelings
    - Thoughts
    - Needs

Internal World Symbolized: Island

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Internal World Symbolized: The Tree

Recognizing the Three Roles

- Affect
- Thought
- Victim
- Hero
- Villain
- Sensation
- Need
Recognizing and Understanding Behavior

Sensation  Affect  Thought  Need  Behavior

Puppet show
Different Characters

Emotionregulation
The Rescuer - Anxiety

- Grounding
- Breathing
- Here and now
- Dual awareness
- Safe place
- Meditation
- Relaxation
- Yoga
- Sports/ movement
- Increase endorphins (laughter/humor)

The Victim - Sadness

- Release
- Cry
- Share
- Develop emotional resilience
  - Emotion regulation
- Soothing:
  - Soothing yourself
    - Music
    - Relaxation
  - Soothed by others
    - Safe touch/hug/massage

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The Persecutor - Anger

- Be safely angry ➔ three rules:
  - Don’t harm anyone
  - Don’t harm yourself
  - Don’t destroy anything
- Safely discharging anger:
  - Physically:
    - Sport/ Kicking a ball/ Trampoline…
  - Visualization
  - Writing
Self-Awareness about their own Emotional Needs.

basic human emotional needs

- accepted
- acknowledged
- admired
- appreciated
- approved of
- believed in
- capable
- cared about
- challenged
- clear (not confused)
- competent
- confident
- forgiven

free, fulfilled, heard, helped, helpful, important, in control, included, listened to, loved, needed, noticed, powerful

private, productive / useful, reassured, recognized, respected, safe / secure, supported, treated fairly, trusted, understanding, understood, valued, worthy
Types of Safety

• **Physical safety:**
  – Your body is not in danger.

• **Mental safety:**
  – You are able to choose belief systems and patterns of thinking and awareness that get you where you want or need to go.

• **Emotional safety:**
  – That you are able to identify how you feel in situations

• **Spiritual safety:**
  – When you learn and identify and trust in your beliefs about Higher Power, God.
Love and Belonging

• Become:
  – Non-defensive by exploring the thoughts and the roles you are identified with
  – Non-controlling/ non-manipulative/ non-threatening
  – Understand the other ( mentalizing capability)
  – Open
  – Allow physical affection
Stimulating the Seeking system

• Jaak Panksepp (Affective Neuroscience)
• Seven major emotional tendencies of the brain.
• The seeking system is integral to our:
  – Motivation
  – Urge to explore
  – Desire to understand.
• Responsible for
  – our feeling alive and alert
  – for the positive experiences we seek in our lives.
Stimulating the Seeking system

- Increasing Dopamine
  - Exercise
  - Gratitude
  - Touch/ massage
  - Music
  - Remembering happy events
- Play
- Social joy
- Encourages exploration, investigation, curiosity, interest and expectancy.

Building Resilience

Life is not about how fast you run or how high you climb but how well you bounce.

~ Vivian Konori
Building Resilience

• Feel as strong as possible:
  – Developing internal resources
  – Positive experiences
  – Installing positive cognitions

• Basic skills set:
  – Independence
  – Problem solving
  – Optimism
  – Social connection
  – Emotional safety

Self-development
Self-development

The Parent
Psychoeducation on the Drama Triangle

• Be aware of the game
• How does the game work?
• Which roles do you play?
• What role did you play as child?
• Identify the roles family members play

The Parent

• Develop a secure attachment with the child:
  – Sensitive responsiveness
  – Mentalization
  – Reflective functioning
  – Caregiver as external regulator
  – Containment
  – Shared pleasure/ play
The “Frightened” Victim

Victim ➔ Creator

“I can do it”

• Skill: Problem solving
  – Use creative thinking
  – Belief in your capabilities
  – Make clear decisions

• Envision your future and set goals

• Vulnerable:
  – Share real feelings

• Self-acceptance
Victim ➔ Creator
“ I can do it”

• Work with the “frightened” part:
  – Triggerwork
  – Ghosts in the nursery
  – Traumawork
  – Anxiety reduction
    • Feeling centered, grounded
    • Internal locus of control

The “Frightening” Persecutor
Persecutor ➔ Challenger

“ You can do it”

• Skill: Assertiveness

• Developing ways of getting needs met ➔
  – Parent :
    • Resolve “ Ghosts in the nursery”
    • Learn about the developmental stages of the child

• Call for growth
  – When secure base and safe haven is installed ➔
    • The child:
      – Independence
      – Exploration
      – Resilience
Rescuer ➔ Coach
“ How will you do it”

• Skill: Listening

• Caring
  – Building relationship
  – Belonging
  – Love

• Understanding = Mentalizing
  ↩ Parent
  ↩ Child
  ↩ Parent- Child

Therapeutic relationship

"Doctor, I’m not sure I can trust you."
Importance of the therapeutic relationship

• Right brain to right brain therapy
• Allan Schore: 3 R’s

Drama Triangle = Anxiety based
Therapeutic Relationship Based on the Polyvagal Theory

• Overall therapeutic goal is to re-establish the Social Engagement System
The Therapist in the Triangle

- Therapist being aware of his own trauma- and attachment history.
- Become conscious of the various roles and use that awareness to ensure we don’t act out the roles in the therapy room.
- Which position do you take in the triangle?
- Notice which positions you take more often.
- Do you take different positions with different people?
- How does your drama triangle position connect with your experiences in childhood?
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!
ANY QUESTIONS?