

**Webinar**  
**ADDICTION TREATMENT**  
**THROUGH THE LENS**  
**OF DISORGANIZED ATTACHMENT**

with  
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HARMONY PLACE MONTEREY

# Levels of Intervention



# Legacy Burdens. (R.C. Schwartz, 1995)

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Sally's father hated weakness inside and outside him. He was dominated by stoic, critical parts and was ashamed of his own hurt parts. When Sally was a child, every time she was sad or cried, her father became agitated and impatient. As a result, Sally tried to keep that sad part out of her life.

Stoic, critical parts that disdained weakness came to dominate her life the same way they dominated her father. In this way, he passed on to her the legacy burden of stoicism.

“More understanding is needed in psychological and physiological processes underlying intergenerational transmissions of trauma.”  
(p. 202)

“...A child who herself did not suffer sexual abuse, for example, but is nonetheless subjected to her mother’s overly promiscuous attitudes (or, conversely, a strict approach to dating) will inhabit many shades of her mother’s fears, emotional reactions to men, and defensive adaptations.”

Ginot & Shore, *Intergenerational Enactment of Trauma: The Role of Unconscious Self-Systems*

# Examples of Burdens Leading to Specific Disorders (Guidano & Liotti)

## DEPRESSION

- Not having control of the trauma, followed by actively cutting themselves off from resources
- Sense of personal deficiency, passivity
- Parent being ill or away from home

## PHOBIA

- Can't avoid a feared stimulus while experiencing terror independently
- Loss of control and inability to deal with danger
- Can't elicit sense of safety from caretaker

## OCD

- Rumination with strong anxieties and fear of danger
- Rituals to control consequences
- Frequently scanning environment, creating fears
- Unsolvable dilemmas, helplessness
- Feels hatred toward parent while simultaneously wanting to be cared for

## ED

- Fear of stopping maladaptive behavior and loss of control
- Anticipation of failure, ineffective otherization and enmeshment
- Disappointment with father's bonding
- Autonomous thoughts not confirmed
- Sense of emptiness, withdrawing into self






Sex addiction is not about sex.

Eating addition is not about food.

Feelings of shame, fear, and helplessness  
blend into affect scripts related to power  
and control, or loss thereof.

Rage and powerlessness are efforts to  
re-establish a sense of control.



Depending on something external,  
which provides an illusion of control,  
is a means of dealing  
with something inside.

It becomes a distress-reducing behavior  
(DRB) to escape pain and adversity.

# DISSOCIATION

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Perceived danger may be split off and dissociated, as a defense — the sensory, emotional, and cognitive processes are locked away — and because of a lack of integration, a memory is not established and is not available to the conscious self.

(Orcutt, 1995)



# ATTACHMENT STATES OF MIND

## ANXIOUS (Hyperactive)

- Other-focused
- Clingy, controlling
- Overdependence
- Sex for closeness and increase in quality of relationships
- Hypervigilant
- Other-focused
- Prone to rumination
- Rejection sensitive

## AVOIDANT (Deactivated)

- Distant, ignores
- Fault-finding
- Disparaging
- Non-intimate
- Controlling
- Emotionless sex
- Less enjoyment, discomfort in intimacy
- Inattentive
- Self-reliant

## DISORGANIZED

- Incoherent
- Inconsistent
- Polarized internal and external representations of self and others
- Overwhelming affect storms
- Regulates self by regulating others

# DISORGANIZED ATTACHMENT

Attachment systems activate the fear systems, resulting in approach-avoidance.

Contradictory affects interfere with capacity for coherent organization, exceed integrative ability, and interfere with achieving a core sense of self and ways of regulating affect.

They become compulsive caretakers of their parents or aggressively bossy as children (Lyons-Ruth, 2001).

As adults, they regulate themselves by regulating others.

# RUPTURE IN ATTACHMENT IMPINGEMENT (GREENBURG & MITCHELL)

The child's psychological survival must not depend upon meeting the mother's needs. The major consequence of prolonged impingement is fragmentation of the infant's experience.

- + • Out of necessity, he/she becomes at the request of others. The child's "true self," — and source of spontaneous needs, images, and gestures — goes into hiding and becomes detached and atrophied.

The "false self" provides an illustration of personal existence whose content is fashioned out of maternal expectation. The child becomes the mother's image of the child.



# DISORGANIZED ATTACHMENT CONT'D...

Attachment figure is uninterested, invalidating, unavailable, unempathetic, unhelpful, and frightening. Person fails to regulate distress.

## **ORGANIZED states of mind:**

- Dismissive of attachment
- Focuses on one's vulnerabilities and inadequacies

## **DISORGANIZED states of mind:**

- Abusive, frightening, inconsistent
- Lack of trust
- Dissociative states
- Contradictory beliefs
- Failure to develop a single, organized attachment strategy to protect
- Alternate between avoidant and preoccupied defense strategy



# INTERNAL WORKING MODELS (Blatt) CONT'D...

- ❖ Sense of self, others, and the world around me
- ❖ Accurately reflects mother's frightening, rejecting stance
- ❖ Multiple self-states
- ❖ Can't decentrate
- ❖ Negative expectations
- ❖ "Others see me as I see myself"

# DISORGANIZED ATTACHMENT CONT'D...

Inherent, simultaneous, polarized representations of self and attachment figure:

- 1) Exceeds capacity for coherent organization
- 2) Can't find a coherent sense of self or means of regulating affect
- 3) Regulates self by regulating others
- 4) Having multiple self-states with certain states taking over at different times is the norm
- 5) Internalizations of withdrawal, role confusion, and intrusive and frightening behavior become self-states. Parents' rage, hatred, and fear become the child's, which is then externalized.

# DISSOCIATIVE CLIENT

## CHILD (VICTIM)

Needy  
Clingy

## PERSECUTORS (PERPETATORS)

Controlling  
Hostile  
Identifies with aggressor  
Distrusting

## RESCUERS

Codependent  
Cares for others to meet  
own needs

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graph TD; C[CHILD (VICTIM)] --> D[Odd beliefs<br/>Lack of reasoning<br/>Lapse in discourse]; P[PERSECUTORS (PERPETATORS)] --> D; R[RESCUERS] --> D;
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Odd beliefs  
Lack of reasoning  
Lapse in discourse

# MENTALIZATION (Fonagy)

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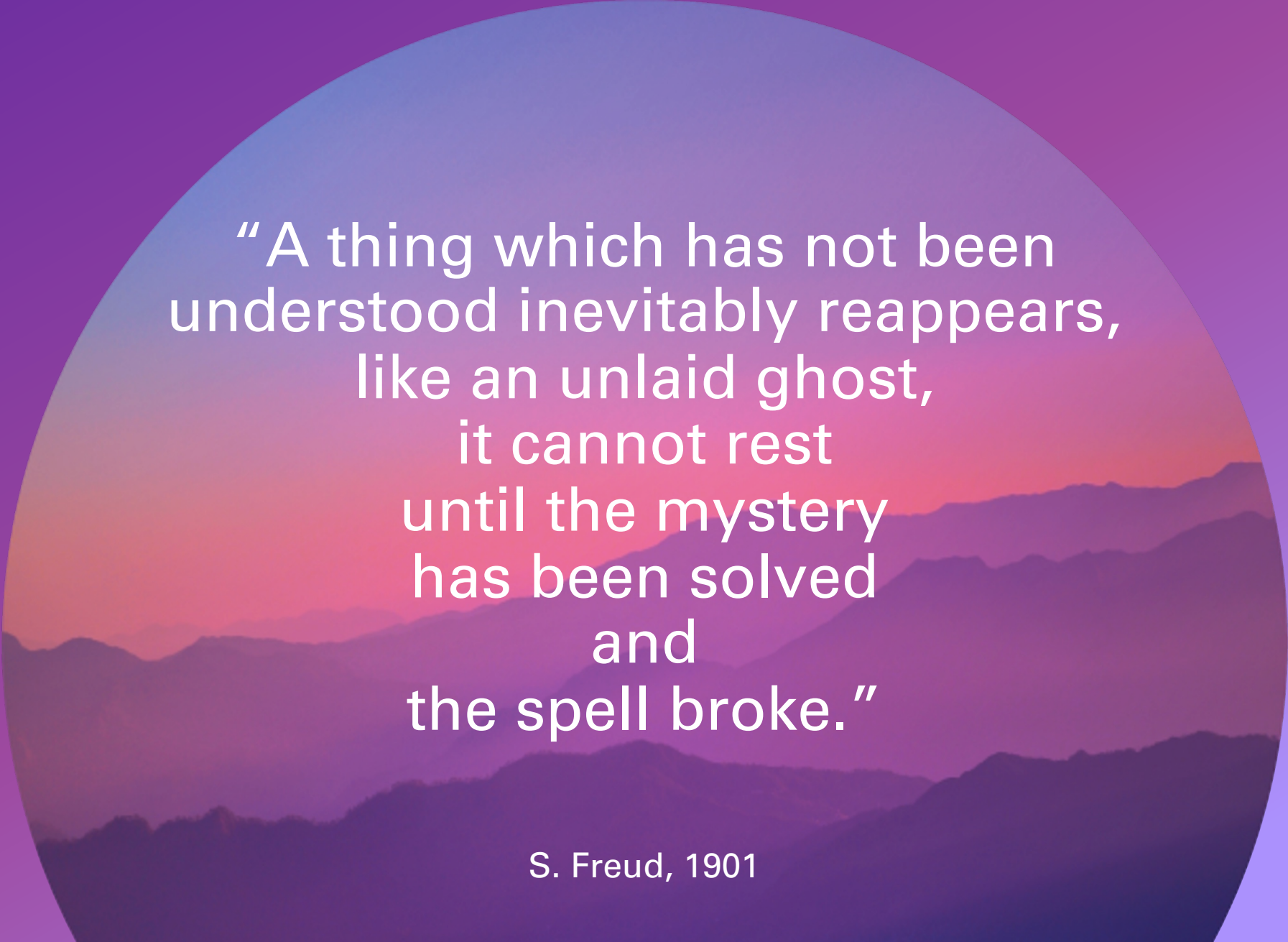
Mentalization involves both self-reflection (intra-) and interpersonal components. When disorganized, the caretaker does not mirror and interpret outside experiences. Perceived confidence in the caretaker becomes confidence in the self.

The emotional interchange (attunement) with caretakers molds the sense of self, agency, and regulation of emotions.

With disorganized attachment, we come to misunderstand that we think and feel one thing, while truly feeling another emotion — and then remain immune to new information.

The result is feeling emptiness and shame.





“A thing which has not been  
understood inevitably reappears,  
like an unlaidd ghost,  
it cannot rest  
until the mystery  
has been solved  
and  
the spell broke.”

S. Freud, 1901

# THERAPY FOCUS & GOALS

- Build interpersonal, interpretive capacities
- Develop a stable sense of self and secure relationships
- Become curious about thoughts and feelings
- Extend expression of internal emotional experiences outward
- Become curious regarding inner child's thoughts

# METACOGNITION

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## **UNDERSTANDING one's own mind:**

Self-reflection, self-doubt, emotional state (thoughts  $\neq$  reality)

## **UNDERSTANDING others' minds:**

Thinking about others' mental states, acknowledging others as separate people, considering others' emotional states, accepting the possibility of being wrong, existing independently

## **DECENTRATION:**

Other people lead different lives, other people have their own agendas, all exist independently

## **MASTERY**

Ability to describe, solve, and cope with problems

Ability to modify beliefs and expectations



# FOCUS OF ATTACHMENT THERAPY

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- (1) Therapeutic alliance
- (2) Expression of affect; affect tolerance
- (3) Self-awareness
- (4) Errors in reasoning; reality testing
- (5) Appearance of Self states
- (6) Appraisal of others
- (7) Positivity
- (8) Curiosity about thoughts and feelings of self and others
- (9) Internal working models
  - Availability of others to meet needs
  - Self-reliance and grandiosity
- (10) Ability to conceptualize problems and self-efficacy



# INTRAPERSONAL

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The dissociated part of the self contains the image of the aggressor — the uncontrived, frightening, rageful, fear, or hatred — and affect generated by the abusive caretaker.

The child will seek to control the caretaker by punitive and/or caregiving acts. Self-cohesion then requires continual mirroring from others, which conforms to expectations. The result is “Groundhog’s Day” or what may be described as **Intimacy Disorder**.

# TARGETS for “EARNED SECURE” ATTACHMENT

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- ❖ Turning to others for soothing and intimacy
- ❖ Minimizing idealization and family loyalties
- ❖ Resolution of significant losses in one's life
- ❖ Establish clarity with regard to self, and self in relation to significant others
- ❖ Metacognitive thinking in relation to family of origin
- ❖ Establishing a coherent narrative regarding one's life

# REAL SELF (MASTERSON)

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- I. The capacity to experience a wide range of feelings deeply with liveliness, joy, vigor, excitement, and spontaneity.
- II. The capacity to expect appropriate entitlements of mastery and pleasure as well as the environmental input necessary to achieve these objectives.
- III. The capacity for self-activation and assertion and to identify one's unique individuality, wishes, dreams, and goals and to be assertive in expressing them autonomously.



# REAL SELF (MASTERSON) CONT'D

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IV. Acknowledgement of self-esteem so that one can acknowledge they have coped with a problem in a positive and creative way

V. Ability to soothe painful feelings

VI. Ability to make and stick to commitments to relationships and career goals despite obstacles and setbacks.

VII. Creativity: the ability to replace old, familiar patterns of living and problem-solving with new and equally or more successful ones. This includes rearranging intra-psychic patterns that block self-expression.



# REAL SELF (MASTERSON) CONT'D

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VIII. Intimacy: the capacity to express Self fully and honestly in close relationships, with minimal anxiety regarding abandonment and engulfment.

IX. Ability to be alone without feeling abandoned.

X. Continuity of self or a sense of one's self that remains consistent in diverse situations.

# ATTACHMENT THERAPY for GROUPS - Concepts & Methods

## Week 1: Idealization and Family Loyalty

**Definition: Idealization** – The discrepancy between the overall picture or presentation of the parent and the patient's inferences regarding actual behavior of the parent.

## Week 2: Rejection and Neglect

**Definition: Rejection** – Child approaches attachment figure with tender feelings and emotions, and parent *turns away* the child's expression of those emotions: *"I'll give you something to cry about."*

**Definition: Neglect** – Parent is physically available but inaccessible emotionally and/or psychologically unavailable.

## Week 3: Loving Behaviors

**Definition: Loving Behaviors** — The attachment figure is dedicated to the development of the child as a person and is emotionally supportive and available. Loving behavior vs. instrumental love vs. non-loving behavior.

# ATTACHMENT THERAPY for GROUPS - Concepts & Methods

## Week 4: Involving and Role Reversal

**Definition: Involving** – Parent uses child's attachment system to become the object of the child's attention

**Definition: Role Reversal** – More severe form of involving behavior; the parent uses the child in the role of a spouse or a parent for their own emotional needs.

**Week 5: Caretaking Behaviors** – Involving behavior of caretakers (parents, other attachment figures) can lead to unhealthy caretaking behaviors in relationships (e.g. from AA, alcoholic as dependent, partner as *codependent*)

**Definition:** Caretaking behaviors deceptively (to self and others):

- Keep people in dependency relationships
- Keep people from dealing with own issues
- Require that everyone being cared for must conform to “caretaker’s rules and norms for living life
- Look good and proper on the surface but are, in truth, subtle manipulations and ultimately controlling
- Make the “caretaker” valuable to others who “need” assistance, rescuing, and help



# ATTACHMENT THERAPY for GROUPS - Concepts & Methods

## Week 6: Caretaking vs. Supportive Behavior

**Definition:** Review from Week 5

## Week 7: Involving Anger

**Definition: Involving Anger** is when an event triggers feelings and memories from past events, making the problem appear to be constantly or continually happening, e.g. *“She was always trying to make me into her little doll that would always do what she wanted, and she dressed me that way, and for a while I acted that way, but I’m onto her now...and I’m sorry but I am not your little baby doll anymore.”* Such statements are often longer. Though this is a short passage, it would score a 6/9 for Involving Anger in the AAI)

## Week 8: Passivity

**Contextual Definition:** The speaker appears unable to prevent sounds or phrases from arising while unable to specify its presumed intent or content.



# INDIVIDUATION AND ATTACHMENT

## Differentiating from Others:

- Developing more balanced perceptions of the partner and being able to give empathetic responses, even at times of disagreement
- Handling discrepancies in desire for closeness
- Developing mechanisms for resolving conflicts with partner
- Developing mechanisms for “how we do things as a couple”
- Recognizing and handling different value systems