

Using Attachment Theory to enhance your interviews: lessons from the Adult Attachment Interview.

Community Care Live

26th April 2017

**Clark Baim and
Lydia Guthrie**



www.changepointlearning.com

mailbox@changepointlearning.com

change point ▶▶
training and development

Aims / Topics

- a recap of the main principles of attachment theory
- an introduction to the Adult Attachment Interview
- Written transcripts and presentation of adults' speech, which indicate the use of secure and insecure attachment strategies.
- Suggestions for further reading and study options.

The Adult Attachment Interview (AAI)

- is the gold standard assessment tool for assessing attachment strategies in adults.
- However, using it is beyond the scope of most social work roles.
- This session will focus on using lessons from the AAI to enhance the way you ask questions and the way you listen to patterns of speech.
- It is relevant to anyone who speaks with adults about their attachment relationships and significant events.

Much of the material in this presentation is drawn from:



By
Clark Baim
and
Tony Morrison

Attachment-based Practice with Adults

Understanding strategies and
promoting positive change

A new practice model and interactive resource for assessment,
intervention and supervision

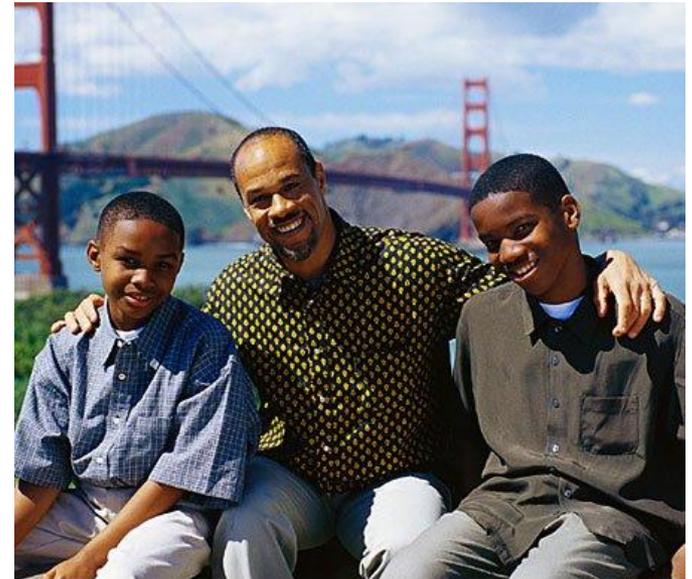
Clark Baim and Tony Morrison



Published
2011



“If relationships are where things go wrong, then relationships are where they are going to be put right.” (Howe, 2011, IX)





Health Warning



The material we are about to discuss may cause you to reflect on your own strategies and your own life history of attachments, relationships and emotional coping.

It is not intended to cause you to beat yourself up about not being a 'perfect' parent, partner, friend, colleague, worker, sibling, son or daughter.

There is great value in attuned repair; the concept of being 'good enough' is well worth remembering when considering what follows!

What is attachment?

- A unique, enduring, and affectively charged relationship (e.g., with a parent or a partner)
- A strategy for protecting oneself (of which there are three basic types A, B, and C)
- The pattern of information processing that underlies the strategies.

What does that mean?

- Attachment theory looks at how an individual organises their behaviour and thinking in relationships in order to survive and to stay safe.
- It is not just another word to describe significant relationships. It is an individual's contribution to their key relationships; their way of influencing others to achieve safety, and protection from danger.

What do we mean by “a strategy”?

- Not necessarily conscious or planned
- Doing what we **believe** will make us safer in moments of **perceived** danger
- It is a matter of perception - a person can feel anxious or scared when there is no danger, or feel safe when under threat

Crittenden's Definition of Attachment

Attachment is a lifelong inter-personal strategy to respond to threat/danger which reflects an intra-personal strategy for processing information.

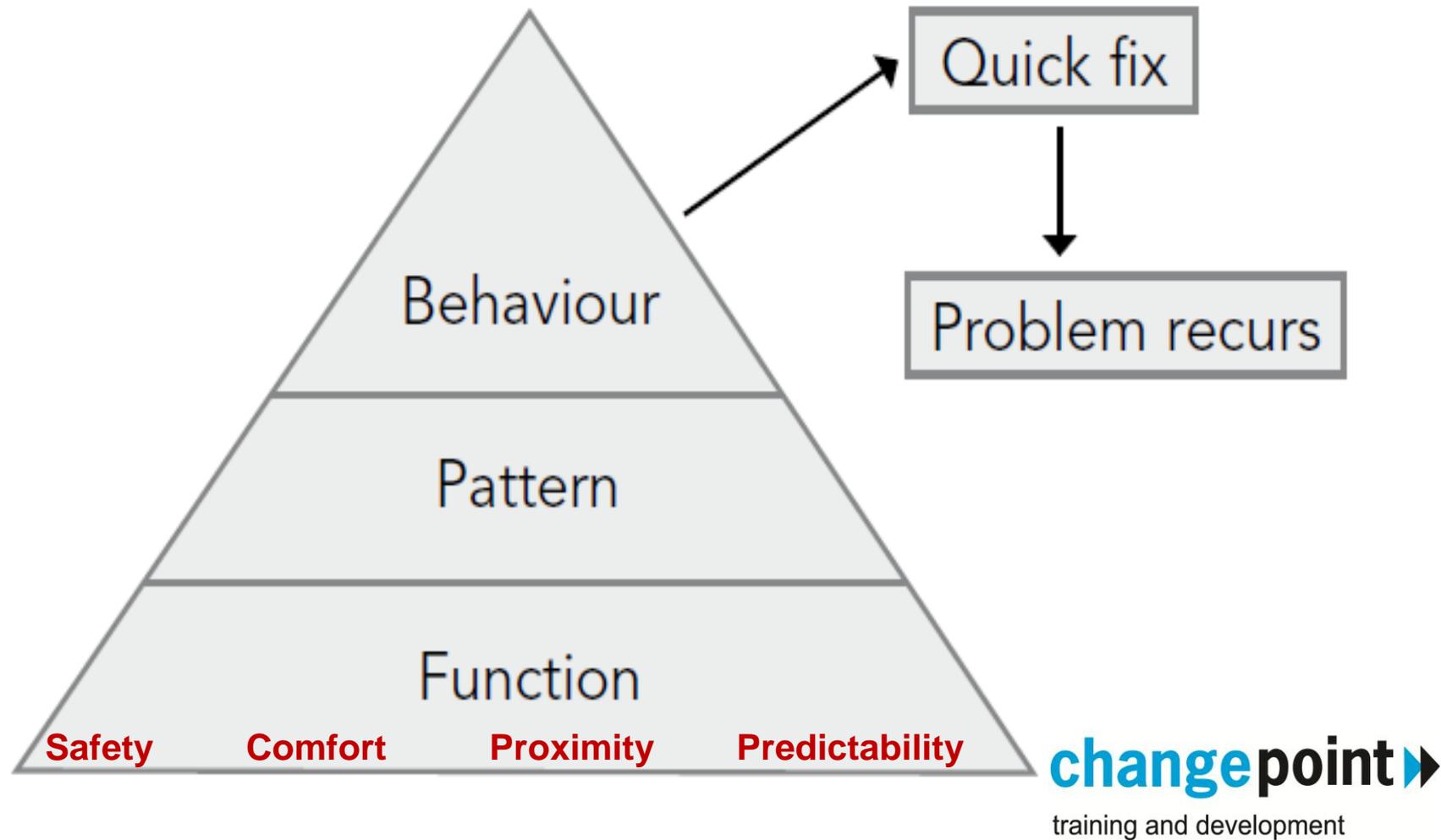
Attachment is a theory about danger, and how we organise in the face of it.

(Crittenden and Claussen 2000)

Four main drivers of the attachment system

- Faced with danger, we seek **safety**
- Faced with isolation, we seek **proximity**
- Faced with distress, we seek **comfort**
- Faced with chaos, we seek **predictability**
(or “the familiar”)

Meeting normal needs in problematic ways



Seeing strategies as strengths

- Attachment strategies are not 'good' or 'bad.'
- There are very significant cultural / social variations.
- What appears to be a 'broken' strategy may at one time in the person's life been the only strategy they knew to survive.

The Danger of Labelling

- Avoid use of labelling, as in ‘he is *avoidant*’ or ‘she has a *preoccupied* attachment style.’
- Our strategies can change over time. Hence, the term ‘**Dynamic-Maturational Model of Attachment and Adaptation**’ (DMM).
- The DMM is based on understanding the *function / meaning* of strategies.
- Attachment strategies should only be assessed using proven instruments, and by people trained to use them.

Key Figures



John Bowlby



Mary Ainsworth



Patricia Crittenden



Mary Main

Predictability and Attunement



Type B Infancy

- Predictable and attuned care from AF
- Aligned states of mind –contingent communication
- Process of co-regulation
- Learns to trust predictive nature of thoughts and feelings



Type B - balanced

- Accurate display of positive & negative affect
- Use thoughts and feelings to guide behaviour
- Clear & reciprocal communication of feelings and intentions
- Cooperative relationship with AF
- Able to accept comfort

Type B development

- Recognise AF has own thoughts/feelings
- Can differentiate own perspective
- Collaborative approach
- Capacity to reflect – mentalization
- Self worth, trust and competence



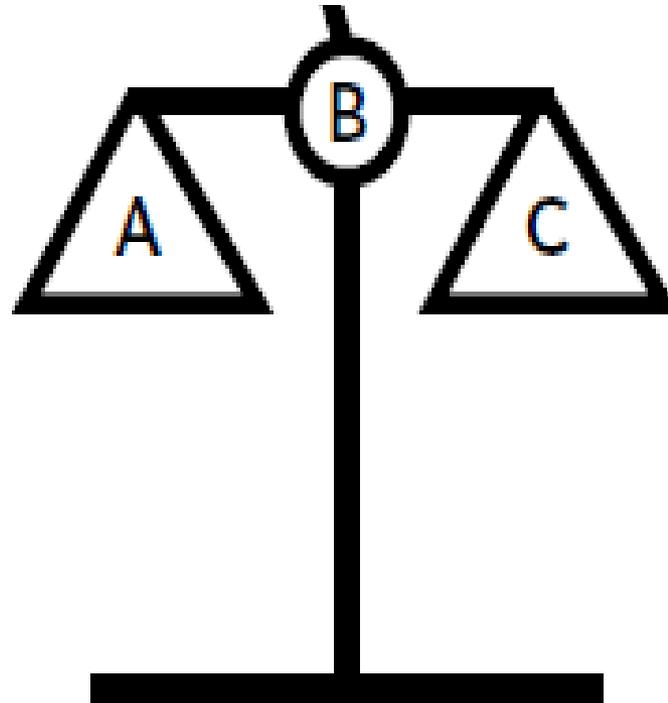
Cognition / Thinking

'B' Pathway

Affect / Feelings

Predictable and attuned
caregiver response

Infant / child learns to
integrate and give equal value
to both thoughts and feelings
(cognition and affect in
balance)



Type A infancy

- Predictable but inappropriate or unattuned responses from AF
- Learns to inhibit own negative affect
- Relies on predictable contingencies – thoughts not feelings to guide behaviour

Type A: 'How can I please you?'

- Inhibit own negative feelings
- Split positive/negative affect
- Show false positive affect
- Steady state to prevent rejection
- 'too good' child –
praised and reinforced



Type A development

- Inhibition, withdrawal
- care taking of parent, role reversal
- Compliance, compulsive achievement
- Social and sexual promiscuity
- Self reliance

Type A risks

- Inhibition
- Vigilance
- Passivity
- Developmental delay/over achievement
- Compulsion –attention, care giving, performance
- Isolation/depression
- Social & emotional promiscuity
- Somatic symptoms – dismissed
- Intrusion of forbidden negative affect- outbursts

Cognition / Thinking 'A' Pathway

Affect / Feelings

Predictable and unattuned caregiver response

Infant / child learns to value to thinking and cut off feelings
(becomes *cognitively* organised)

Normative (age 0 +)

People-pleasing / Inhibited
(adaptive in safe contexts)

Concerning (ca. 3 +)

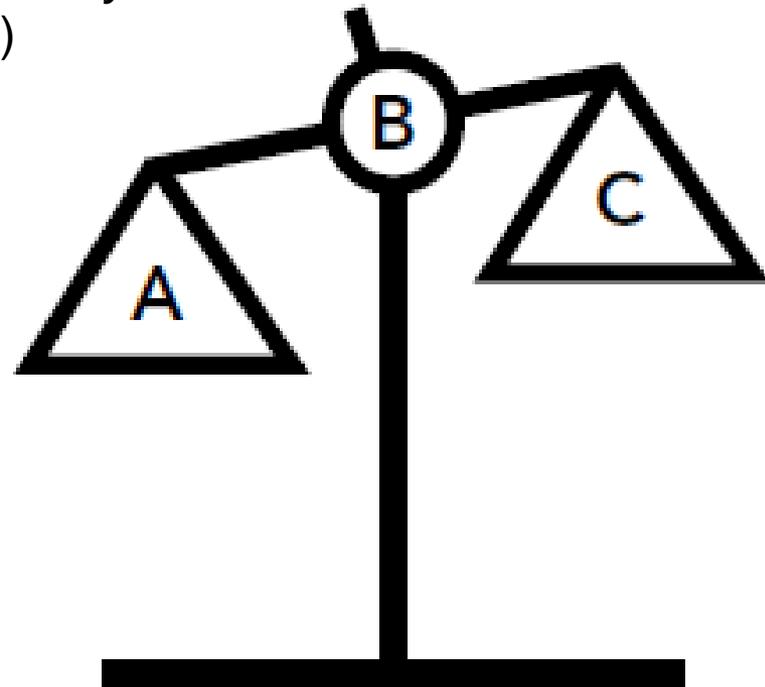
Compulsively care-giving / Compliant
(adaptive when comfort is obtainable with contingent behaviour)

Endangering (ca. 11 +)

Promiscuous / Self-reliant
(adaptive when closeness = predictable danger)

Delusional (ca. 18 +)

Delusional idealisation ('Stockholm syndrome') /
Externally assembled self
(adaptive when life-threatening danger is predictable and inescapable)



Type C Infancy

- Unpredictable and inconsistently attuned responses from attachment figure
- Confusing for infant – can not predict if attachment figure will comfort them if distressed
- Exaggerating the display increases chance of a response
- Keep changing the problem to keep their attention
- Learn that own feelings are the most useful information

Type C: 'if I feel it, then it's true'

- Alternate displays of affect to regulate others behaviour
- Anger & desire for comfort as aggression and coyness
- Attachment figure habituates so have to increase risk to elicit protection



Type C development

- Increase provocative behaviour (attachment figure habituates)
- Alternate with coyness (when attachment figure gets angry)
- Aggression/feigned helplessness
- Punitive/seductive behaviour

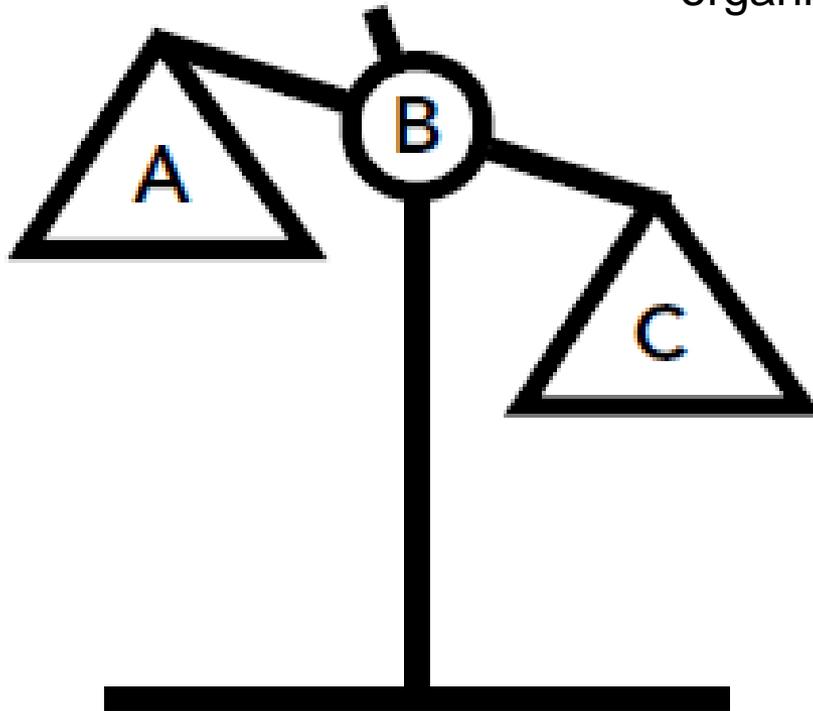
Type C risks

- Emotional intensity/lability
- Attentional problems
- Hyperactivity
- Provocative behaviour
- Risk taking/accident prone
- Social rejection
- Coy shyness
- Somatic symptoms – exaggerated

'C' Pathway

Unpredictable and variably attuned caregiver responses

Infant / child learns to value to feelings more than thinking
(becomes *affectively* organised)



Normative (age 0 +)

Threatening / Disarming
(adaptive in safe contexts)

Concerning (ca. 3 +)

Aggressive / Feigned Helpless
(adaptive when comfort / protection is obtainable with exaggerated affect and ongoing struggle)

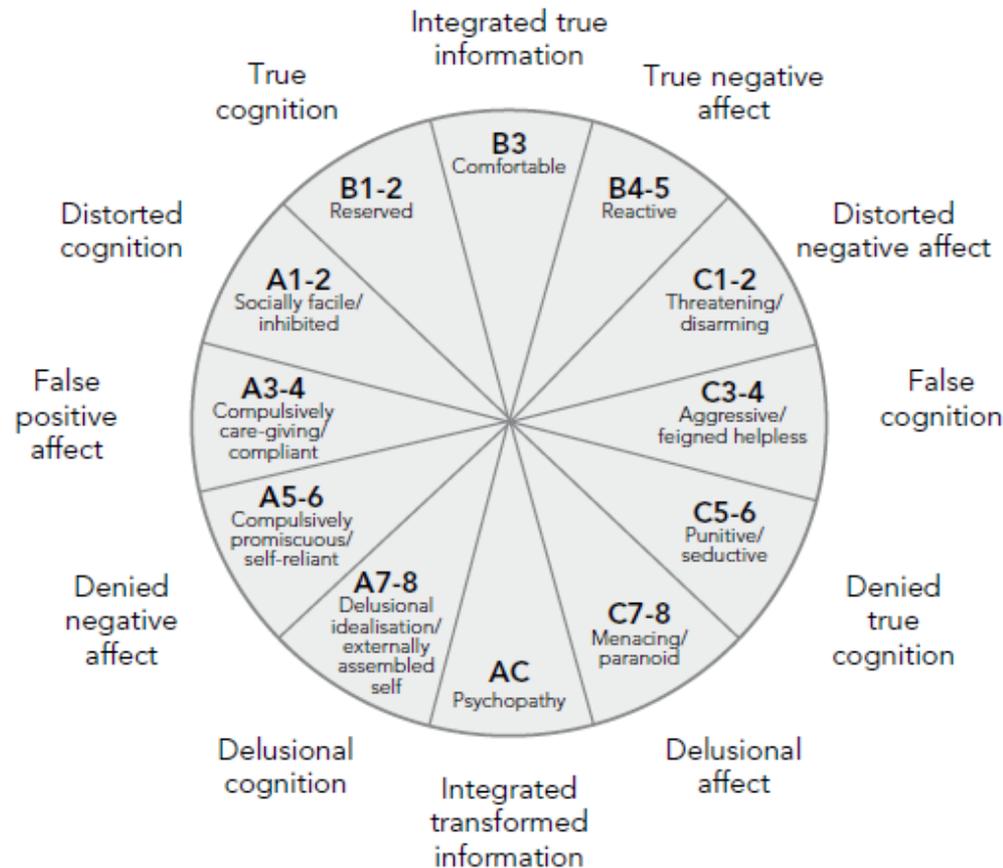
Endangering (ca. 7 +)

Punitive / Seductive
(adaptive when comfort / protection can be gained through deceptive / passive aggression and / or seducing rescue)

Dangerous deception / Delusion (ca. 18 +)

Menacing / Paranoid
(adaptive when life-threatening danger is ongoing, deceptive and unpredictable)

Crittenden's Dynamic-Maturational Model of Attachment and Adaptation



AAI Questions (1)

- **Introduction to family**
- **First memory**
- **Relationship with each Attachment Figure**
- **Five words to describe each relationship**
- **Episode for each word**
- **Common childhood threats**

AAI Questions (2)

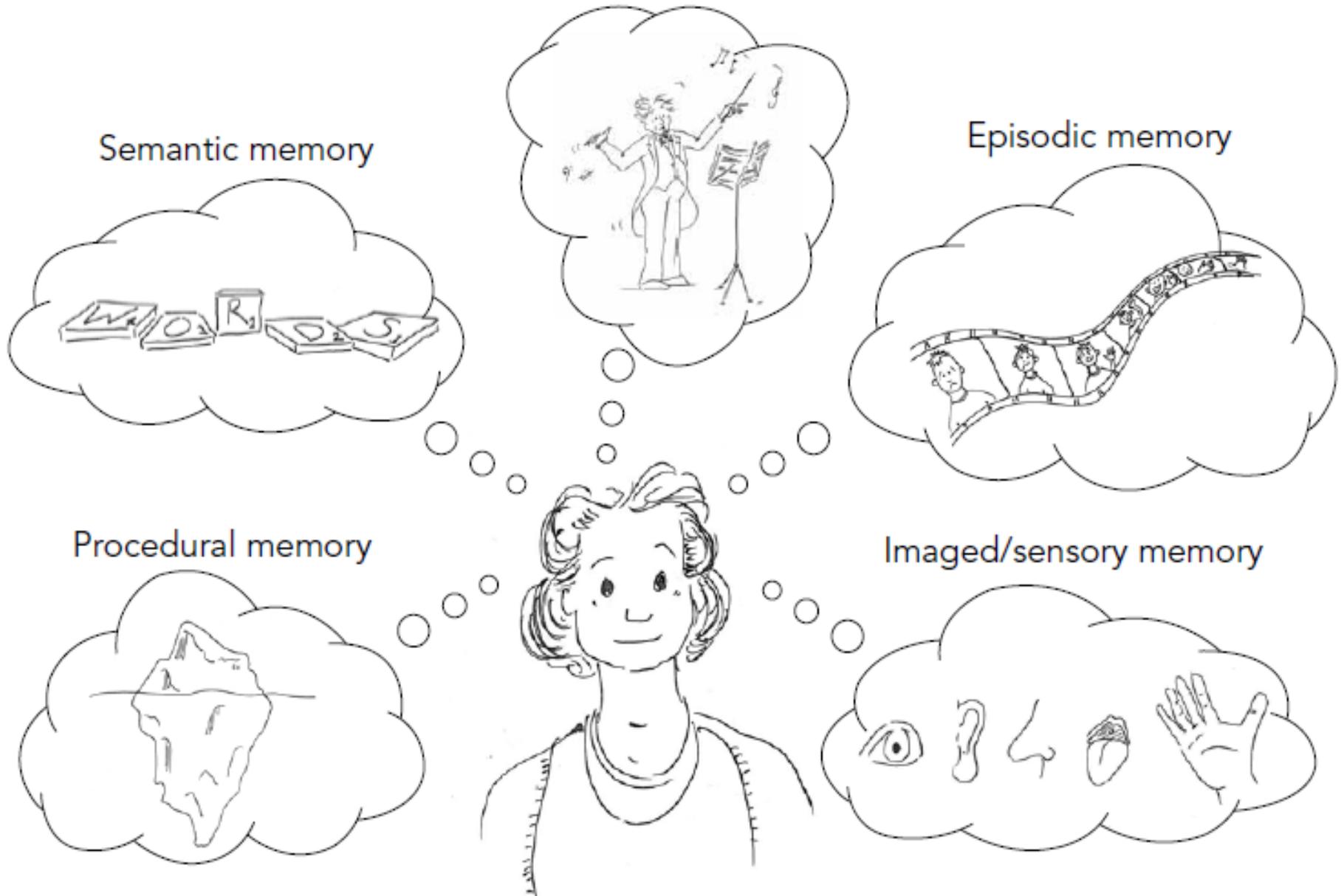
- **Extraordinary childhood threats**
- **Loss**
- **Adolescence**
- **Adult love relationships**
- **Integration**

Adult Attachment Interview

- **Semi-structured interview**
- **Guided follow-up questions**
- **Systematic increase in threat to the self**
- **Probe different memory systems**

Figure 2.9 Five memory systems that are active in shaping attachment strategies

Integrative/working memory



AAI Coding

- **Discourse – by memory system**
- **Dysfluency / mental conflict**
- **Contradiction**
- **Expressed affect**
- **Relationship with interviewer**
- **History vs. Discourse**
- **Morphology vs. Function**
- **Quantity, quality, relevance, manner (Grice's maxims)**

‘Anthony’

'Anthony'

I: Can you give me three words to describe your relationship with your dad while you were growing up?

A: Well, he was a hard worker, strong, and..... Liked a drink.

I: Can you give me an example of a time when your dad was 'a hard worker'?

A: One time when I was 10..... I was a little shit, you know (smiling) I didn't come home at night when I should have and because he worked so hard, he was tired, like. He needed me to be in so I didn't disturb him. He was a roofer and had to get up at 6 to do to work so I needed to be in on time. I would get battered for being late..... This one time, I preferred being with my mates, I didn't like to go home. This one time I got home and just dropped to the floor, Like kids do. You know..... Like kids do.

I: Why did you drop to the floor like kids do?

A: I knew he was mad and he just stomped on me with his boot. But it were me own fault cos I were a little shit, and I knew I shouldn't be late because he worked so hard.

I: Tell me more about what happened when your dad stomped on you with his boot?

A: I were a little shit., I stayed out late all the time. I just didn't want to go home.... I'd played out all day with me mates and I just didn't want to go home.

I: Take your time, Anthony.

A: He just stomped on me.... I dropped to the floor like a ball to protect meself Then he stopped.

'Anthony' – Annotated

I: Can you give me three words to describe your relationship with your dad while you were growing up?

A: Well, he was a hard worker, strong, and..... Liked a drink. **Two positive words / phrases, and one that is likely to contain negative connotations ('liked a drink'). The balance of positive and negative words / phrases suggests Anthony is not idealising his father or his childhood relationship with his father. Speakers who are idealising their attachment figures will typically give only positive words and phrases to describe their early relationship with them (Semantic memory).**

I: Can you give me an example of a time when your dad was a hard worker?

A: One time when I was 10..... I was a little shit **self-disparage (Procedural memory – anger at self)**, you know (smiling) I didn't come home at night when I should have and because he worked so hard, he was tired, **Parental perspective (Episodic memory)** like. He needed me to be in so I didn't disturb him. He was a roofer and had to get up at 6 to do to work so I needed to be in on time. **Parental perspective (Episodic memory)** I would get battered **Connotative language that is evocative and captures the degree of violence (Connotative language)** for being late..... This one time, I preferred being with my mates, I didn't like to go home. **(Historical evidence: Query fear of going home?)** This one time I got home and just dropped to the floor **Intense imaged memory that conveys the fear he experienced and the regularity and predictability of the severe punishment (Imaged memory)** home + angry father = 'dropped to the floor', Like kids do. You know..... Like kids do. **Normalises his fear response (Semantic memory).** Evidence here of possible **unresolved trauma** from physical abuse (by **normalising** his fear response, there is a risk that Anthony does not recognise the severity of the punishment and the intensity of his fear at the time). This would – with other corresponding evidence – be classified as evidence of 'unresolved trauma in a dismissed form (physical abuse),' where the speaker dismisses the severity of the violence and the significance of its effects of himself.

I: Why did you drop to the floor like kids do?

A: I knew he was mad and he just stomped on me **Intense image and word – stomped - that capture the severe violence (Imaged memory and Connotative language)** with his boot. But it were me own fault cos I were a little shit **self-disparage (Procedural memory – anger at self)**, and I knew I shouldn't be late because he worked so hard. **Self-responsibility and self-blame for his father's violence (Semantic memory) and exoneration of his father for the violence (Semantic memory).**

I: Tell me more about what happened when your dad stomped on you with his boot?

A: I were a little shit. **self-disparage. Third time he has called himself 'a little shit' (Procedural memory – anger at self)**, I stayed out late all the time. **Absolute; emphasises self as bad** I just didn't want to go home I'd played out all day with me mates and I just didn't want to go home. **(More historical evidence which fits with episode and discourse: fear of going home)**

I: Take your time, Anthony. Interviewer aware that this is difficult for Anthony

A: He just stomped on me.... I dropped to the floor like a ball to protect meself **Repeated: Intense image and word – 'stomped' – and also image – 'dropped to floor' - that capture the severe violence and fear (Imaged memory and Connotative language).....** Then he stopped.

Comment: This is an example of a **distorted guilt episode**. To offer evidence for the positive phrase offered to describe father ('hard working'), Anthony recounts an episode in which he is severely kicked / stomped on by his father. Anthony blames himself for his father's violence and exonerates his father. This is what is meant by a 'distorted guilt episode.'

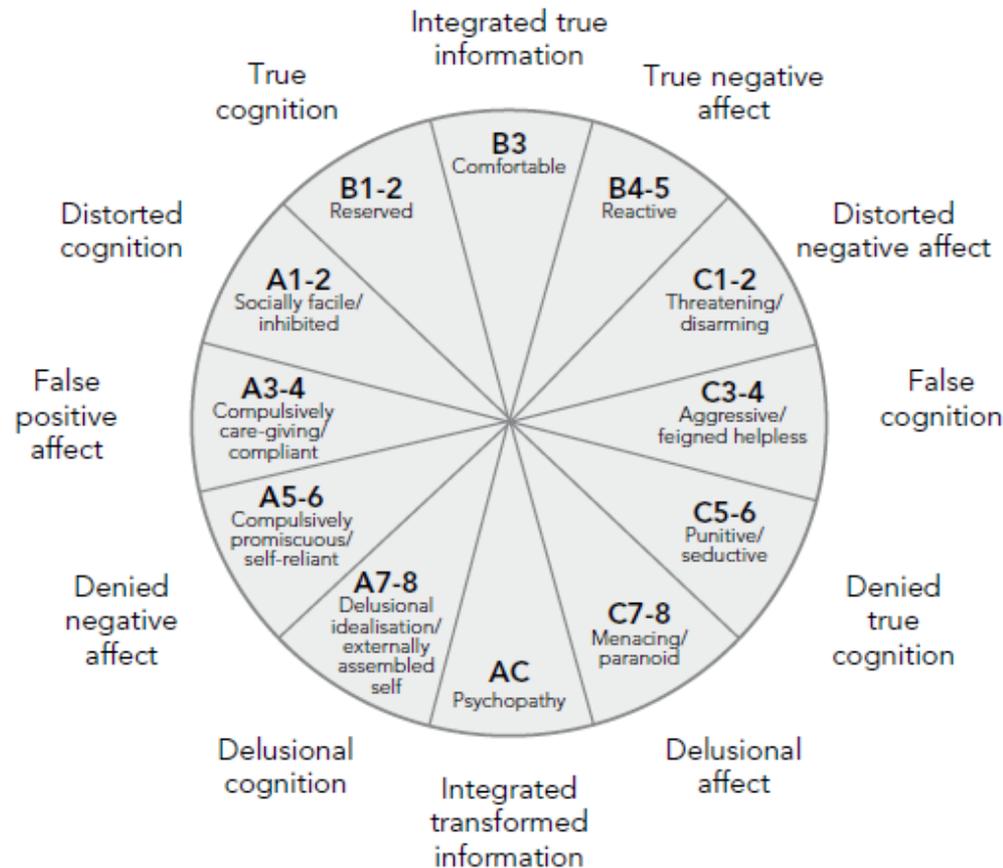
This excerpt would be typical of a transcript classified as A4 (Compulsive compliance) or A6 (Self-reliance). It is an even-numbered 'A' sub-classification because of the self-derogation:

- *Odd* numbered A sub-patterns place more emphasis on idealising others.
- *Even* numbered 'A' patterns place more emphasis on making the self responsible and 'deserving' of punishment or discipline.

Implications for Anthony

- He is likely to suffer from unresolved trauma regarding physical abuse by his father
- He continues to take responsibility for his father's violence towards him. How will this impact his ability to parent his child?
- Under pressure, he may struggle to recognise his difficult feelings (anger, sadness, need for comfort), and therefore may find it hard to access help
- He may try to give you the “right” answer, so be careful to help him to think things through for himself

Crittenden's Dynamic-Maturational Model of Attachment and Adaptation



‘Colin’

‘Colin’ is in his late 20s. He has prior convictions for possession of indecent images of children and for online grooming of a child. He is being interviewed as part of an assessment for possible treatment / intervention.

In describing your relationship with your mother when you were young, you said that she ‘put me first.’ Can you think of a particular time when she ‘put you first’ when you were a child?

Because ... my sisters was always getting everything and one day I’d had enough of it and I said ‘What about me?’, and she said ‘You’ve got everything’ and I said ‘No I haven’t’ and we spent hours talking and then she realised what she was doing and for about three weeks after that she actually started asking me what I wanted....and didn’t worry about anybody else. Well, she did worry about my sisters butit was just nice to know that that happened. But nowadays it’s back to square one again now, where my sisters will get everything and I get nothing....so its swings and roundabouts.

[...] Do you think your parents loved you when you were a child?

Well, I don't know exactly how my mom loved me because before my granddad died, this is my dad's dad this year, I got told by her that she actually used to drop me on my head as a baby and she said that she fucking hated me, she wished she'd never had me. But I don't know whether that was my grandma being vindictive towards my mother, or actually it was the truth because I've asked them about it and they won't give any answers to me.

'Colin' – Partial annotation

In describing your relationship with your mother when you were young, you said that she 'put me first.' Can you think of a particular time when she 'put you first' when you were a child? This is an episodic memory probe, asking for an episode that provides evidence for the semantic phrase 'put me first'.

Because ... my sisters was always **Absolute (Procedural memory)** getting everything **Absolute (Procedural memory)** and one day I'd had enough of it and I said 'What about me?', **Auditory image**; Colin is getting involved in the retelling of the episode (**Procedural memory**) and she said 'You've got everything' and I said 'No I haven't' and we **Auditory images**; Colin is getting involved and recreating the argument he had with his mother. There is a distinct tone of complaint. In C discourse, episodes often convey a sense of 'time collapse,' when events in the past are recalled almost as if they are happening now. This helps the speaker to clarify their feelings about the event, e.g. how angry, sad, or afraid they are. This is typical of how, in C discourse, speakers focus much more on feelings as compared with cognitive information such as time, place, cause, effect, sequences of occurrences, etc. spent hours talking and then she realised what she was doing and for about three weeks after that she actually started asking me what I wanted....and didn't worry about anybody else. Colin is clearly placing himself at the centre of his story. He is not giving up his perspective and taking his mother's point of view (as Anthony does when he prioritises his father's point of view). Speakers using C discourse stay in their own perspective and struggle to empathically understand the points of view of other people. Accurate perspective taking is not a useful strategy when the attachment figure is unpredictable. Emphasising one's own feelings of anger, sadness, fear or need for comfort are more likely to gain the unpredictable attachment figure's attention, as compared with 'good' or compliant behaviour.

Well, she did worry about my sisters but **Evaluative oscillation**. Colin goes back and forth in his assessment of his mother's behaviour. This functions to keep problems going; the past remains unsettled and **unresolvable**it was just nice to know that that happened. But nowadays it's back to square one again now, where my sisters will get everything and I get nothing....so its swings and roundabouts. **Again**, there is evaluative oscillation here, highlighted by the use of 'but' – i.e. whenever Colin acknowledges mother's positive behaviour, he then offers a contrasting negative, and then reverses that. To complicate matters further, Colin moves from the past to the present ('it's back to square one again now') – again, an example of how in C discourse we see speakers collapse time – the past plays out forever in the present. This is in the C pattern of discourse which confuses, complicates, contradicts and leaves many problems 'hanging' and unsolvable. The function is to maintain difficulties and keep attachment figures (including therapists) engaged in an ongoing, ever-lasting struggle with unsolvable problems.

'Colin'

Colin is in his late 20s. He has prior convictions for possession of indecent images of children and for online grooming of a child. He is being interviewed as part of an assessment for possible treatment / intervention.

In describing your relationship with your mother when you were young, you said that she 'put me first.' Can you think of a particular time when she 'put you first' when you were a child? This is an episodic memory probe, asking for an episode that provides evidence for the semantic phrase 'put me first'.

Because ... my sisters was always Absolute (Procedural memory) getting everything Absolute (Procedural memory) and one day I'd had enough of it and I said "What about me?", Auditory image; Colin is getting involved in the retelling of the episode (Procedural memory) and she said "You've got everything" and I said "No I haven't" and we Auditory images; Colin is getting involved and recreating the argument he had with his mother. There is a distinct tone of complaint. In C discourse, episodes often convey a sense of 'time collapse,' when events in the past are recalled almost as if they are happening now. This helps the speaker to clarify their feelings about the event, e.g. how angry, sad, or afraid they are. This is typical of how, in C discourse, speakers spend much more on feelings as compared with cognitive information such as time, place, cause, effect, sequences of occurrences, etc. spent hours talking and then she realised what she was doing and for about three weeks after that she actually started asking me what I wanted.....and didn't worry about anybody else. Colin is clearly placing himself at the centre of his story. He is not giving up his perspective and taking his mother's point of view (as Anthony does when he prioritises his father's point of view). Speakers using C discourse stay in their own perspective and struggle to empathically understand the points of view of other people. Accurate perspective taking is not a useful strategy when the attachment figure is unpredictable. Emphasising one's own feelings of anger, sadness, fear or need for comfort are more likely to gain the unpredictable attachment figure's attention, as compared with 'good' or compliant behaviour. Well, she did worry about my sisters but Evaluative oscillation. Colin goes back and forth in his assessment of his mother's behaviour. This functions to keep problems going; the past remains unsettled and unresolvableit was just nice to know that that happened. But nowadays it's back to square one again now, where my sisters will get everything and I get nothing.....so its swings and roundabouts. Again, there is evaluative oscillation here, highlighted by the use of 'but' - i.e. whenever Colin acknowledges mother's positive behaviour, he then offers a contrasting negative, and then reverses that. To complicate matters further, Colin moves from the past to the present ('it's back to square one again now') - again, an example of how in C discourse we see speakers collapse time - the past plays out forever in the present. This is in the C pattern of discourse which confuses, complicates, contradicts and leaves many problems 'hanging' and unresolvable. The function is to maintain difficulties and keep attachment figures (including therapists) engaged in an ongoing, ever-lasting struggle with unresolvable problems.

This is an example of an episodic fragment, where there is no particular setting and little sense of a sequence of events other than the brief back-and-forth argument. This episode would be annotated as a fragment and also as an example of a blurred episode, where the meaning is unclear. It provides partial support which is only barely evidenced with specific information ('three weeks', 'asking me what I wanted') that Colin's mother did at least once 'put him first,' but Colin returns several times to the ways in which she put his sisters first.

What complicates the struggle even more is that Colin recalls the relationship with his mother in reference to a triangulated struggle for attention, where his feeling is that his sisters received far more attention and 'everything' than he did. This feels like an angry struggle in the family when he was a child, and in his discourse the struggle continues to this day.

Do you think your parents loved you when you were a child?

Well, I don't know exactly how my mom loved me because before my granddad died, this is my dad's dad this year, I got told by her that she actually used to drop me on my head as a baby image of DANGER. (dropped on head as a baby)...and she said that she fucking Sexual explicitive, emphasising the anger in mother's statement and also Colin's anger about her telling him this hated me, she wished she'd never had me. Colin is here portraying his mother in an extremely negative light, reporting that she told him she dropped him on his head as a baby and wishes he had never been born. While this may be true, he then immediately negates what he has just said when he says: But I don't know whether that was my grandma being vindictive towards my mother, or actually it was the truth because I've asked them about it and they won't give any answers to me. Colin is confused about the truth of his past and issues of great vulnerability (being dropped on his head, and his own mother wishing he had not been born). The discourse offers some tentative evidence that Colin is likely to have been deceived in his childhood, perhaps about his paternity (what is the significance of 'Dad's Dad' being mentioned when the question is not about grandparents?) or about other significant aspects of his life that he asks about but gets no answers. Family secrets seem to loom large for Colin, and he is swerving back and forth trying to understand. This is evidenced in his discourse, which oscillates back and forth between competing 'truths.' Colin still does not understand what happened to him and why.

Comment: Colin is consistently focused on his own perspective (in contrast to Anthony, who tends to focus on the perspective of his father). This excerpt is consistent with transcripts that would be classified as CS-6, where punitive and derogatory anger and blame is directed at others (CS), and this is alternated (often in the same sentence) with powerful appeals for rescue from the position of being a very vulnerable victim (C6). This is a strategy where facts become very difficult to pin down, and this functions to keep problems unresolvable and the speaker's responsibility - as an adult - out of view. The old battles and the old secrets and deceptions dominate the current strategy. This implies that, in order to help someone like Colin, his social worker or therapist will have to work very carefully and methodically to help him to order his thinking and bring coherence to his story, including leaving in the past what belongs to the past. Only then can Colin be helped to take more responsibility for his own behaviour and the effects of his behaviour on other people, and responsibility for his process of change.

'Colin' –
Full annotation,
for reference

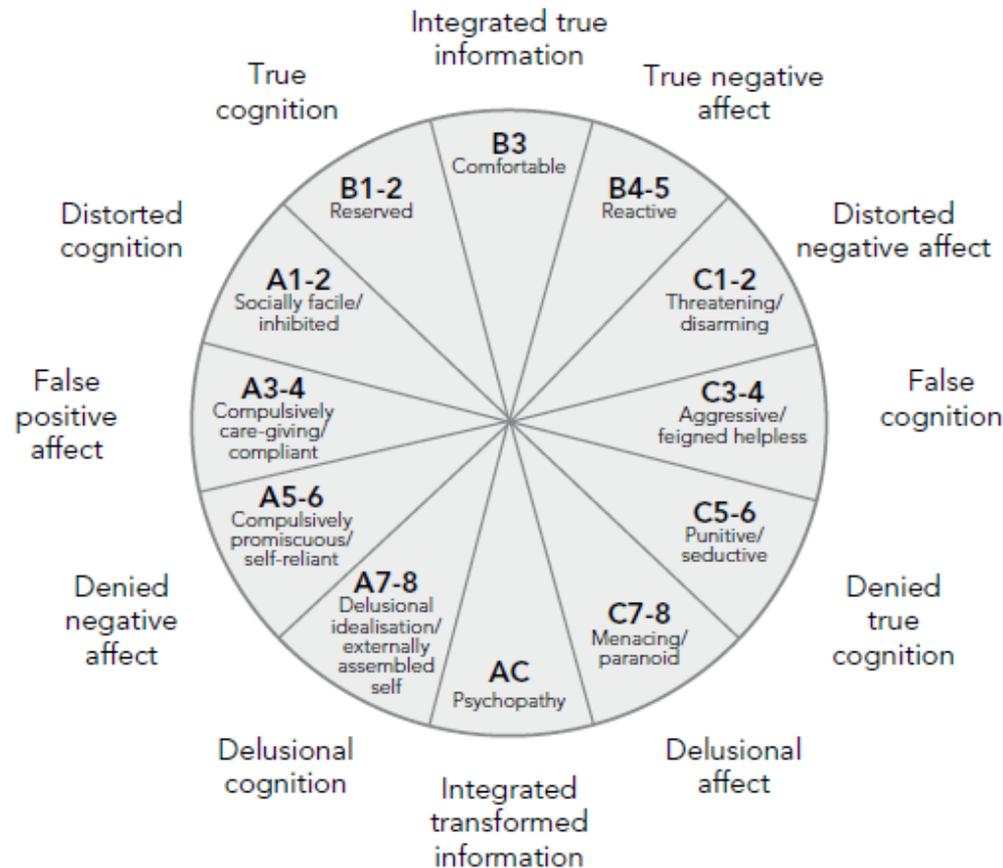
Comment:

- Colin is consistently focused on his own perspective (in contrast to Anthony, who tends to focus on the perspective of his father). This excerpt is consistent with transcripts that would be classified as C5-6, where punitive and derogatory anger and blame is directed at others (C5), and this is alternated (often in the same sentence) with powerful appeals for rescue from the position of being a very vulnerable victim (C6).
- This is a strategy where facts become very difficult to pin down, and this functions to keep problems unsolvable and the speaker's responsibility - as an adult - out of view. The old battles and the old secrets and deceptions dominate the current strategy.

Implications for Colin

- Colin's worker will have to work very carefully and methodically to help him to order his thinking and bring coherence to his story, including leaving in the past what belongs to the past.
- Only then can Colin be helped to take more responsibility for his own behaviour and the effects of his behaviour on other people, and responsibility for his process of change in the present
- This is not to derogate his genuinely felt feelings about the past; they also need to be validated
- Colin may attempt to split multi-agency teams, so good communication across agency boundaries will be important

Crittenden's Dynamic-Maturational Model of Attachment and Adaptation



‘Beth’

The following segment is from an interview with Beth, aged 38, who is undergoing a foster carer assessment. Beth and her long-term partner are seeking to become foster parents.

Alright, Beth. We'll move on to the next part of the interview. Can you think of three words or phrases that describe your early relationship with your father? And what I'm going to do is I'm going to write down the words and phrases in the order you say them.

Beth: Um, OK. Um, looking back, I think it was ... well, *frightening*, especially when he was drinking, ... he could be *kind* if you caught him at the right moment, .. and .. saying that, I can remember that he seemed remote .. no, that's, that's not *quite* the right word: he seemed very *selfish* to me at the time, if I am thinking of my point of view as a little girl.

Interviewer: Hmm. .. OK, the phrases I have written down are ‘frightening, especially when he was drinking,’ ‘kind at the right moment,’ and ‘very selfish.’ Are those accurate?

Beth: Yes, that sounds right.

Interviewer: Can you think of a particular time when the relationship was ‘frightening, especially when he was drinking?’

Beth: Well, for a long time I didn’t, well I didn’t want to admit to myself that he could be like that with the drinking, and also - recognizing the violence and - the really awful things that he did to my mother. You know?

Interviewer: Mmm. Can you say a bit more about that? Can you remember a particular time, or instance, that, that would be an example?

Beth: I've just realized even after all these years, I don't find this easy to talk about. **(Interviewer: Hmm)** There is one incident that sticks in my mind. I reckon I must have been about five, maybe six. I remember this day because Mum and I had baked a cake. I remember my father burst through the door yelling at my mother, saying, 'Where's my tea?' I remember climbing off the chair I'd been standing on to help her, standing by the cooker when my father came through the back door. And, oh, he was just so *angry* with her. I'd seen him shout before, but I'd never seen him go off on one like that, you know?

(Interviewer: Hmm hmm) He threw this cake against the wall and he was really using bad language. And that's when Mam tried to calm him down, tried to get him *out the kitchen* away from me, and it was at that point that he, he lashed out with the back of his hand and he hit her across her face. I remember she fell on the chair, an, and I was saying, 'Mum, has he hurt you?' And she was saying to me, 'I'm fine, love' you know? Umm, I turned around and, he just had this most *awful* look on his face, **(Interviewer: Hmm)** baring his teeth – *really angry*, you know? – em, and I think at that point he registered how, em, well just how *shocked* I was, because he left the kitchen and he went and sat in the next room. And it all went really quiet, and my Mum and I we just cleared everything up in silence, putting all the dishes away, trying not to, to make a sound in case we, we set him off again. So yeah, I mean *that's* an example of him being really frightening.

Interviewer: Mmm, and that does sound really frightening.

Beth: Yeah.

Beth: Um, OK. Um, looking back, I think it was ... well, *frightening*, especially when he was drinking, **Qualifies the semantic word – not an absolute**... he could be *kind* if you caught him at the right moment, **Qualifies again**.. and .. saying that, I can remember that he seemed remote .. no, that's, that's not *quite* the right word: he seemed very *selfish* to me at the time, if I am thinking of my point of view as a little girl **Reflective function: Modifies the word when it is not quite right; shows contrast between adult and child perspective**

Interviewer: Can you think of a particular time when the relationship was 'frightening, especially when he was drinking?'

Beth: Well, for a long time I didn't, well I didn't want to admit to myself that he could be like that with the drinking, and also - recognizing the violence and - the really awful things that he did to my mother. You know?

Interviewer: Mmm. Can you say a bit more about that? Can you remember a particular time, or instance, that, that would be an example?

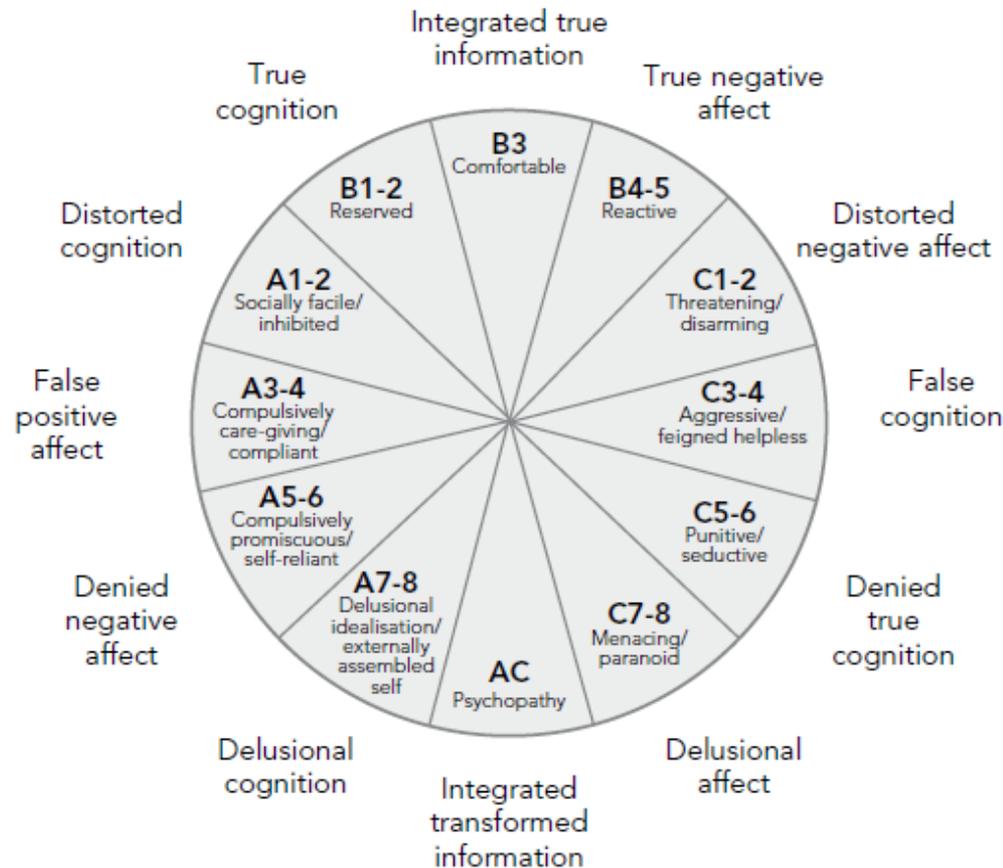
Beth: I've just realized even after all these years, I don't find this easy to talk about. **Recognises her own feelings, and continues. Even when the material is difficult, Beth is able to cooperate and continue, while also not dismissing or minimising the importance of the events she is describing.** There is one incident that sticks in my mind. **Cooperative; able to locate a specific episode.** I reckon I must have been about five, maybe six. I remember this day because Mum and I had baked a cake. I remember my father burst through the door yelling at my mother, saying, 'Where's my tea?' I remember climbing off the chair I'd been standing on to help her, standing by the cooker when my father came through the back door. **Very specific details that hold together as a credible episode. The very specific details indicate a probable A strategy at age 5 or 6 – highly focused on external details of place, time, sequence, other people – in order to stay safe** And, oh, he was just so *angry* with her. I'd seen him shout before, but I'd never seen him go off on one like that, you know? **(Interviewer: Hmm hmm)** He threw this cake against the wall and he was really using bad language. **Powerful imaged memory of the cake being thrown against the wall. The image captures the shock, fear and violence of the episode. Beth's discourse is clear and coherent. She does not minimise nor does she get overwhelmed by the memory. It is a credible and integrated account of a violent episode from her childhood.**

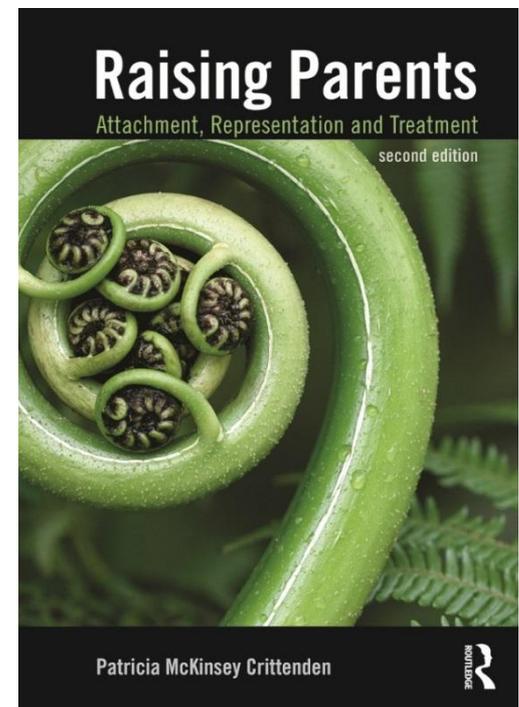
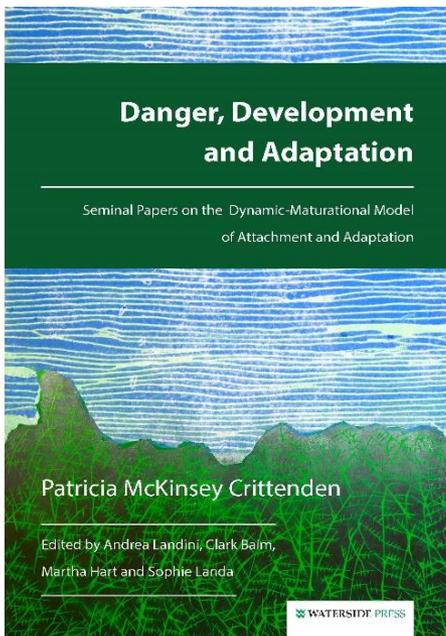
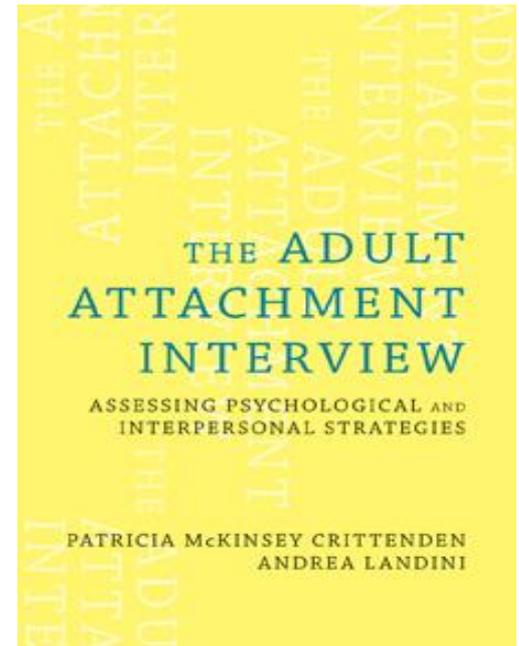
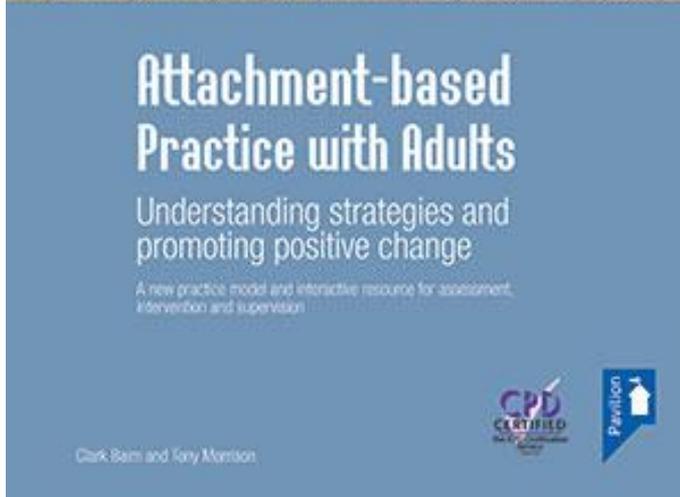
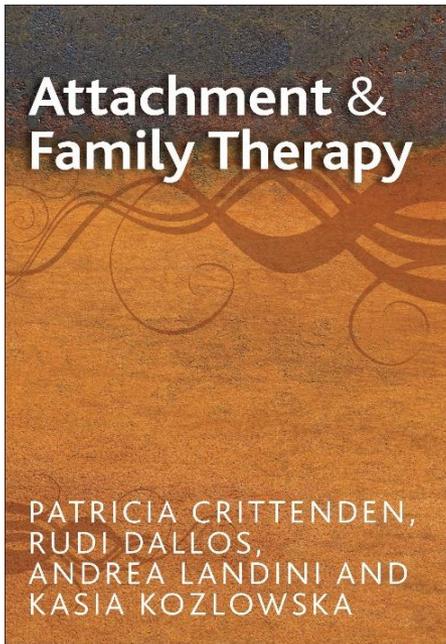
And that's when Mam tried to calm him down, tried to get him *out the kitchen* away from me, and it was at that point that he, he lashed out with the back of his hand and he hit her across her face. I remember she fell on the chair, an, and I was saying, 'Mum, has he hurt you?' And she was saying to me, 'I'm fine, love' you know? Umm, I turned around and, he just had this most *awful* look on his face, **(Interviewer: Hmm)** baring his teeth – *really angry*, you know? **Again, Beth is giving a highly detailed account, which is clear, coherent and temporally ordered, with a variety of images (back of the hand; voices and words; bared teeth) that reinforce in an integrated way the episode she is recounting. The historical episode was filled with fear; her discourse in recounting the event is clear and well balanced with cognitive as well as affective information** – em, and I think at that point he registered how, em, well just how *shocked* I was, because he left the kitchen and he went and sat in the next room. And it all went really quiet, and my Mum and I we just cleared everything up in silence, putting all the dishes away, trying not to, to make a sound in case we, we set him off again. So yeah, I mean *that's* an example of him being really frightening.

Interviewer: Mmm, and that does sound really frightening. Interviewer agrees with Beth's summary statement about the episode – yes, it was frightening.

Beth: Yeah.

Crittenden's Dynamic-Maturational Model of Attachment and Adaptation





Further study

Websites:

www.iasa-dmm.org

www.familyrelationsinstitute.org

Book:

Baim, C. and Morrison, T. (2011). *Attachment-based Practice with Adults: Understanding strategies and promoting positive change*. Brighton: Pavilion.

Course:

3 day course with Clark Baim and Lydia Guthrie:

10th – 12th October 2017, Birmingham

mailbox@changepointlearning.com