Play Therapy for Attachment Issues

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What is Attachment?

- special emotional relationship that involves an exchange of comfort, care, and pleasure.

- Freud’s beginnings... Bowlby’s credits....
What is Attachment?

- "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (Bowlby, 1969, p. 194).

- “...early experiences in childhood have an important influence on development and behavior later in life.”

- “Our early attachment styles are established in childhood through the infant/caregiver relationship.”

- "The propensity to make strong emotional bonds to particular individuals [is] a basic component of human nature" (Bowlby, 1988, 3).
How Do You Assess Your Client’s Attachment Style in Play Therapy?

- Parent’s Report
- Observations of Child
- Assessments
- Not at all
VIDEO

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bul1mecige
4 Distinguishing Characteristics

- **Proximity Maintenance** - The desire to be near the people we are attached to.
- **Safe Haven** - Returning to the attachment figure for comfort and safety in the face of a fear or threat.
- **Secure Base** - The attachment figure acts as a base of security from which the child can explore the surrounding environment.
- **Separation Distress** - Anxiety that occurs in the absence of the attachment figure.

BOWLBY
Bowlby’s Attachment

- Proximity Maintenance
- Safe Haven
- Secure Base
- Separation Distress
10 Basic Tenets of Attachment Theory

- Intrinsic motivation
- Security equals enhanced autonomy
- Security offers a safe haven
- Attachment offers a secure base
- Accessibility and responsibility builds bonds
- Fear and uncertainty activate attachment needs
- Separation distress is predictable
- Insecure forms of engagement can be identified
- Separation and loss are traumatizing
- Working models of self and others

Johnson & Whiffen, 2003
Review of Attachment

- Attachment Theory
  - Goal-Corrected Behavioral System
  - Sense of Felt Security
  - Emergence of Self
  - Autonomous Self
Formation of Attachment

- Representational Models
- Internal Working Models
- Development of Self and Self and Others
- Intergenerational Attachment Styles
  - Internal/External Factors
Ainsworth

- “further expanded upon Bowlby's groundbreaking work in her now-famous "Strange Situation" study.”

- The study involved observing children between the ages of 12 to 18 months responding to a situation in which they were briefly left alone and then reunited with their mother (Ainsworth, 1978).
Ainsworth and Main & Solomon

- Ainsworth
  - secure attachment,
  - ambivalent-insecure attachment,
  - and avoidant-insecure attachment.

- Main and Solomon (1986) added a fourth attachment
  - disorganized-insecure attachment.

- “these early attachment styles can help predict behaviors later in life.”
Strange Situation Videos...

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTsewNrHUHU
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DH1m_ZMO7GU
Studies also report….

“Researchers Hazen and Shaver (1987) found a number of different beliefs about relationships amongst adults with differing attachment styles.

- Securely attached adults tend to believe that romantic love is enduring.
- Ambivalently attached adults report falling in love often, while those with
- avoidant attachment styles describe love as rare and temporary.”

Kendra Cherry – About.com
Research States...

- Studies show that there are correlations between the attachment representation of the parents, their observable behavior in caregiving and the interaction between their infants and the later development of attachment quality in their children.

(Grossmann, Grossmann, & Zimmermann, 1999, p. 760-786)
Research Shows...

- Children with secure attachment styles are:
  - More socially adept
  - Have enhanced cognitive abilities
  - Are more competent in problem-solving
  - Are more independent
  - Have a more positive self-concept

Johnson & Whiffen, 2003; Levy & Orlans, 1998
The Clinician’s Tools

- Adult Scale of Parental Attachment (ASPA; Snow, Martin, & Helm, 2008)

Theraplay (Jernberg, 1993b)


- Filial Problem Checklist (Horner, 1974)

- Child Parent Relationship Training (CPRT; Landreth & Bratton, 2006)
Attachment Styles

- Secure
- Insecure
  - MIM-RS
    - Secure
    - Insecure
    - Ambivalent
    - Disorganized
  - ASPA
    - Safe
    - Dependent
    - Parentified
    - Distant
    - Fearful
ASPA

- Adult Scale of Parental Attachment
- 5 Subscales
  - Safe
  - Dependent
  - Parentified
  - Distant
  - Fearful
The Adult Scale of Parental Attachment

- **Safe.** This pattern measures the extent to which the child felt the relation provided comfort and security. A child with a safe pattern of relating may have experienced confidence in the parent’s availability and support.

- **Dependent.** This pattern measures the extent to which the child felt a need for the parent to be available. A child with a dependent pattern of relating may have experienced helplessness and uncertainty when the parent was not available.

*Snow et al., 2008*
The Adult Scale of Parental Attachment

- **Parentified.** This pattern measures the extent to which the child felt responsible for meeting the parent’s needs. A child with a parentified pattern of relating may have experienced feelings of importance and enjoyed being helpful.

- **Distant.** This pattern measures the extent to which the child experienced disappointment in the parent’s support and availability. A child with a Distant pattern of relating may have experienced a need to distance from the parent and may have experienced anger toward the parent.

Snow et al., 2008
The Adult Scale of Parental Attachment

- **Fearful.** This pattern measures the extent to which the child experienced a fear of abandonment and a belief that the parent would not be available for support. A child with a fearful pattern of relating may have experienced anger toward the parent or frustration with the parent.

  *Snow et al, 2008*
MIM-RS

- Marschak Interaction Method Rating System
- 4 Dimensions
  - Structure
  - Engage
  - Nurture
  - Challenge
MIM-RS

- 8 Summary Rating
  - Mother’s Ability to
    - Structure, Challenge, Engage, Nurture, Facilitate Child’s Regulatory Processes
  - Child’s Ability to
    - Demonstrate Exploratory Behaviors, Reciprocity with Their Parents, and Regulatory Behaviors
INFLUENCE OF ATTACHMENT ON PLAY THERAPY

- Determining the attachment style of the primary caregiver is important to issues concerning play therapy.
- Determining the attachment style of the child through an MIM-RS influences the direction of play therapy.
- Attachment issues in play therapy can influence the success of play therapy.
Psychosocial History Info

Intake interview helps the therapist understand the following types of questions (Jernberg, 1993b, 47-48):

- What kind of world was the child born into?
- How did the marriage come about?
- What kind of world greeted each of his or her parents?
- What is this marriage like today?
- What about siblings?
- What is the degree of emotional overlay?
- What are the most effective methods for instituting growth?
Filial Problem Checklist

- Horner, 1974

- Measure the effectiveness of filial in reducing children’s problematic behaviors by comparing pre-test and post-test scores.
  - Not true for my child
  - Some: do not view as problem
  - Viewed as moderate problem
  - Severe problem
Filial Therapy

- Goal of Filial Therapy
  “To allow parents to become the primary change agents as they learn to conduct child-centered play sessions with their own children.” (VanFleet, p.1, 2005)
Filial Therapy Core Values

- Honesty - Relationship
- Humility - Playfulness and humor
- Openness - Emotional expression
- Collaboration - Family strength
- Respect - Balance
- Genuineness - Empathy, acceptance,
- Empowerment, self-understanding efficacy, education

Filial Therapy
Goals for Children....

Goals for Parents...

Goals for Child – Parent Relationship...

(VanFleet, R., 2005, p.4)
Summary

- Eliminate the presenting problems at their sources
- Develop positive interactions between parents and their children
- Increase families’ communication, coping, and problem-solving skills so they are better able to handle future problems independently and successfully

(VanFleet, R., 2005, p.4)
Filial Therapy Skills

- Structuring
- Empathetic Listening
- Child Centered Imaginary Play
- Limit-Setting

(VanFleet, R., 2005, p.4)
Child Parent Relationship Therapy

Objectives

- Play = child’s language
- Communication of experiences, thoughts, feelings, and wishes
- “keen observers” of child
- Learning to understand that the child’s play provides you with a window to your child’s world
- Child feels better = child behaves better

Landreth & Bratton, 2006
Child Parent Relationship Therapy

- Goals
  - Tools that parents need to better understand their child
  - Strengthens the parent child relationship
  - Parent regains control
  - Child develops self-control
  - Effective discipline

*Landreth & Bratton, 2006*
Child Parent Relationship Therapy

- Skills
  - Reflective Responding
  - Limit Setting
  - Empowerment
  - Encouragement
  - Esteem Building Responses
  - Rules of Thumb

Landreth & Bratton, 2006
Child Parent Relationship Therapy

Rules of Thumb

- Focus on the donut, not the hole
- Be a thermostat, not a thermometer!
- What’s most important may not be what you do, but what you do after what you did!
- The parent’s toes should follow his/her nose!
- You can’t give away which you don’t posses!
- “Be With” Attitudes
- When a child is drowning, don’t try to teach her to swim!
- If you can’t say it in 10 words or less, don’t say it!

(Landreth & Bratton, 2006)
References

References

- [www.play-therapy.com](http://www.play-therapy.com) (2007.)“Play and Culture” Rise Van Fleet


Diagrams and figures obtained online via aboutus.com Kendra Cherry