Attachment-Informed Questioning

Using Knowledge of Attachment to Probe Attachment Relationships and the Meeting of Core Emotional Needs

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Beyond Self-Report Assessments

- The Schema Therapy Model assumes the development of maladaptive schemas reside in:
  - The role of early life experiences with attachment figures/primary caregivers
  - The role of relationship experiences in adolescence and adulthood
- From an attachment perspective, there are questions we can ask about early-life experiences and current relationship experiences to inform assessment and Schema Therapy case conceptualization
  - But what kind of questions can you ask?
    - *Think about attachment concepts we have covered*
    - *Think about different attachment relationships*



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Attachment-informed Questioning: Some Examples

- Here are some questions that have an attachment-focus…
  - How did your parent(s) typically respond to you when you were feeling stressed/worried and in need of help?
  - Do you feel that the care you received met your needs, if so yes, if not, how so?
  - How did your parent(s) typically respond when something good happened to you, or you had good news to share?
  - How well do you think your parent(s) met your need… (you can then ask it for each core emotional need):
    1. *For love, comfort and security?* ***(safe haven)***
    2. *To develop a sense of autonomy, competence, and identity?* ***(secure base)***
    3. *Express valid needs and emotions freely?* ***(exploration)***
    4. *To engage in spontaneous play?* ***(exploration)***
    5. *To develop a sense of control and realistic limits?*
- Note: The same questions above can be asked about other close relationships (such as client's romantic partner).
  - Are there some important people in your life that you think do a better job at meeting your needs than others? Why do you think they are better at meeting your needs?



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Attachment-informed Questioning:
Integrating as part of the Schema Therapy Conceptualisation Form

- Schema Therapy Conceptualisation Form
  - Attachment-informed questions can be included as part of the form under Section 4 Part B (the relationship life areas)
  - Section 5 – major life problems & symptoms – if presenting issue is relationships
  - Section 6 – child and adolescent origins of major problems

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