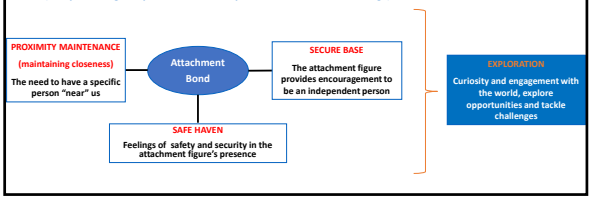
Attachment Theory

Basic Concepts

1

Attachment Bonding

- Attachment: **the ability of humans to develop strong emotional bonds with people** we regularly turn to for love, care and comfort in times of distress and threat
  - –The ability to attach exists from infancy
- Attachment figures: **People who fulfill our most important needs are referred to as attachment figures (i.e., parents, grandparents, romantic partners, best friends, siblings)**



2

The Fulfillment of Attachment Needs/Functions

- **Sensitive & Responsive Caregiving: The extent to which an attachment figure quickly and accurately detects the needs of another and responds in a manner that meets the person's needs**
  - Responding with the **right type of support at the right time**
    - *Safe haven (comfort) support: Empathy, love, and alike*
    - *Secure base (esteem) support: Encouragement, validation (of skills, abilities, competencies) – broadening and building the individual*
- **Sensitive & Responsive Caregiving is the cornerstone for the development of secure attachment bonds early in life and beyond**
  - Deviations from this pattern of caregiving thwarts the development of attachment security
- **Sensitive & Responsive Caregiving is necessary for the fulfillment of attachment needs/functions, and relatedly, the 5 core emotional needs (as outlined in Schema Therapy).**
  1. Secure attachments
  2. Autonomy, competence, and sense of identity
  3. Freedom to express valid needs and emotions
  4. Spontaneity of play
  5. Realistic limits and self control
- **Drawing on attachment theory, the Schema Therapy Model assumes that the content of maladaptive schemas is related to:**
  - Experiences with attachment figures early in life and elaborated/reinforced through experiences in adolescence and adulthood (which can again include attachment figures)

3

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Deviations from Sensitive and Responsive Caregiving

- According to an attachment theory perspective, deviations from sensitive and responsive caregiving typically take one of two forms:
  - Inept and / or inconsistent caregiving
  - Consistent rejection / neglect



4