Attachment Behaviours & the Attachment Behavioural System

Function & Dynamics

1

Attachment Behaviours

- Attachment behaviours: **Searching and attention-seeking actions designed to alert the caregiver that something is wrong (in distress)**
  - In infancy/childhood:
    - *crying*
    - *smiling*
    - *crawling, walking, running to parent*
    - *hugging, clinging*
  - In adulthood:
    - *some of the above including*
    - *recalling memories or words of wisdom*
    - *talking on the phone, email, text*
    - *turn to people other than parents (e.g., partners, friends)*

2

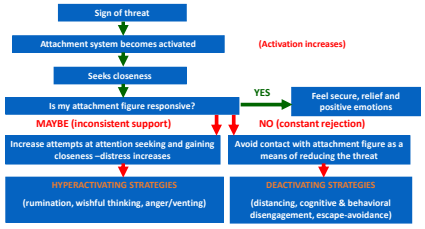
The Attachment System

- These behaviours occur when the attachment system is activated by distress
  - Believe attachment system resides in the central nervous system and switched on when threat is detected
  - It switches off when threat is removed or gone
- The goal state of the attachment system is a feeling of security (i.e., felt security)

3

Model of Attachment System Dynamics

- **The attachment figure's responsiveness to a person's needs leads to particular behaviour patterns for individuals** (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2016)



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