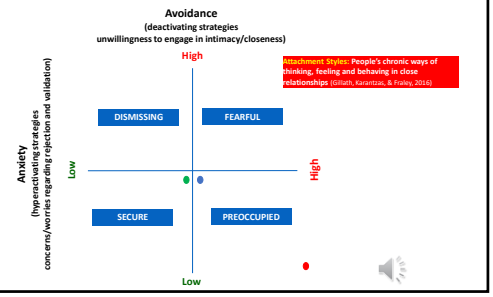
Adult Attachment Styles

Conceptual Background: Attachment Dimensions

1

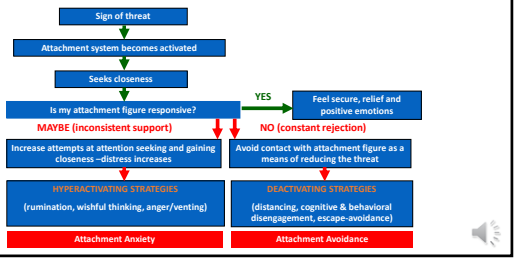
Adult Attachment Styles



2

Returning to the Model

- The attachment figure's responsiveness to a person's needs leads to particular behaviour patterns for individuals (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007)



3

Attachment Styles

- **Attachment style:** People's most chronic way of thinking, feeling and behaving in relationships (Gillath, Karantzas, & Fraley, 2016)
- **Individuals high on attachment anxiety are characterised by:** An excessive need for approval and validation, a preoccupation with relationships
  - A function of inept and inconsistent support in past
  - Hyperactivating strategies
  - Negative IWM of self, ambivalent IWM of others [frustration]
- **Individuals high on attachment avoidance are characterised by:** Discomfort with emotional closeness, a lack of confidence in depending on others, excessive self reliance, view relationships as secondary to achievement in other life domains
  - A function of consistent rejection/neglect in past
  - Deactivating strategies
  - Fragile IWM of self (e.g., outwardly portraying self-confidence, but inwardly experiencing self-doubt), negative IWM of others

4

Attachment Styles

- Individuals low on anxiety and avoidance are securely attached and characterised by: feelings of confidence regarding one's own worth and competencies, trusting of others (confident they can rely on people), comfortable with emotional closeness
  - A function of sensitive and responsive care in past
  - Security-based constructive strategies (solve problems, ask for help)
- Individuals high on anxiety and avoidance are fearfully attached and characterized by: A need for approval coupled with a discomfort with closeness; wanting to turn to others but maintaining self-reliance
  - A function of a mix of rejecting and inept care in the past
  - Confused activation of exacerbating distress and suppressing distress

5