Contextual Triggers in Relationships: Implications for Attachment Style Dynamics & Modes

Social / Partner Support

1

Contexts that Trigger Attachment Dynamics, Schemas, & Modes

LACK OF SOCIAL/PARTNER SUPPORT

- **Social support: Resources provided to an individual by significant others in times of need/adversity** (Cutrona, 2012; Thoits, 1985)
- **Social support is one of the most widely studied topics in the field of relationships**
- **Over the last few decades, research has investigated social support influences on individual and relationship outcomes**
- **Social support associated with:**
  - Trust (e.g., Gleason, Iida & Shrout, 2008)
  - Intimacy (e.g., Reis, Clark & Holmes, 2004)
  - Relationship satisfaction (e.g. Simpson et al., 2002)
- Social support → partner is caring and available



2

© Gery Karantzas & Rita Younan (2021)

Contexts that Trigger Attachment Dynamics, Schemas, & Modes

Attachment and Links with Social Support (Giving)

- Interview and self-report studies with have demonstrated that attachment influences people's caring of their partners (Alexander, et al., 2001; Feeney et al., Simpson et al., 1996, 2001).
  - Secure people are more responsive and can detect people in distress quickly. They will even put others needs ahead of their own
    - *If the relationship partner appears to need more support or less support, secure individuals adjust their involvement accordingly → constructive strategies*
  - Anxious people try to help but do so to alleviate their own feelings of distress. In so doing they are not very helpful – overinvolved, intrusive and compulsive, don't know when to stop or to provide the right help
    - *Thought to be driven by own needs of validation and to maintain proximity to the relationship partner → hyperactivating strategies*



3

Contexts that Trigger Attachment Dynamics, Schemas, & Modes

Attachment and Links with Social Support (Giving) CONT…

- Interview and self-report studies with have demonstrated that attachment influences people's caring of their partners (Alexander, et al., 2001; Feeney et al., Simpson et al., 1996, 2001).
  - *Avoidant people don't help, they do not know how to help, are uncomfortable helping → take a very uninvolved/distancing approach to helping*
    - *Reducing distress and maintaining emotional distance → deactivation strategies*
- Support seems to be driven by egoistic needs for anxious and avoidant



4

© Gery Karantzas & Rita Younan (2021)

Contexts that Trigger Attachment Dynamics, Schemas, & Modes

Attachment and Links with Social Support (Seeking)

- Avoidant individuals: reluctant to seek out support – partners are not appraised as a safe haven. Reflected in partner perceptions and behaviour towards partners
- Anxious individuals: demonstrate an ambivalent pattern
  - Sometimes they don't express the need for help if suspect neediness will result in rejection
  - Sometimes will engage in excessive reassurance seeking, which can be viewed as intrusive and demanding by relationship partners



5

© Gery Karantzas & Rita Younan (2021)