Therapeutic Implications & Strategies:

Working with Clients High on Attachment Avoidance

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Attachment Avoidance

- Confronting vulnerabilities or challenging avoidant individuals can activate the defence strategies of these people (Berant, 2009)
  - In Schema Therapy Terms, this is likely to manifest in various avoidance and over-compensation modes
  - Excessive self-reliance and exaggerated views of being capable and independent
    - *Defensive self-enhancement*
  - To start, sidestep issues requiring deep reflection to reduce provoking resistance. Challenging clients will increase this resistance and further trigger coping modes of avoidance and over-compensation
  - But… over-stressed avoidant individuals begin to demonstrate anxious tendencies (priming studies show this, Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007)
    - *Some suggestion that avoidant individuals have the same underlying needs and attachment worries as anxious people but have developed complex defence mechanisms minimise dealing with these worries – deactivating strategies*
  - When see opportunity that defences are down then may be an opportune time to challenge clients
- While not wanting to buy into self-views as excessively independent, framing therapeutic activities in terms of:
  - Empowering the individual, giving them tools to deal with things themselves may be a way to get "buy-in" from an avoidant client
- Avoidant individuals may also be dismissive of therapy because of their worries of concerns that the therapeutic relationship will end at some point

Coping Modes
Avoidance (flight)
Detached protector
Detached self-soother/self-stimulator
Angry protector
Avoidance protector
Overcompensation (fight)
Self-aggrandiser
Bully and attack
Over-controller

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