Practicum: Developing an Attachment Narrative – A Client's Relationship Story

In this practicum, your task is to start developing the relationship story of your client. This story has three purposes.

1. **Aspects of this story can be integrated into the feedback provided to clients as the part of assessment feedback offered within the Schema Therapy Model. That is, information on the person's attachment style, such as the characteristics features of the style, details about how they interact with others in relationships, and the life experiences that have informed the development of the style can form part of the story and fed back to the client (see the written feedback example document for the case of Tom uploaded in Module 2).**

2. **The relationship story moves the focus away from explicit attention on coping modes which can mitigate the triggering of such modes. Moreover, the development of the relationship story can be collaborative with the client, such that the client can provide detail to help enrich and broaden the story, as well as open up a conversation on relationship difficulties.**

3. **The story can include a future-oriented element. This is about creating a narrative and associated images of what it is to be in a secure, loving relationships, and the role of the healthy adult as an active agent in creating secure relationships. This latter part of the story can seamlessly integrate into imagery rescripting endeavours and can also offer the opportunity to invoke security priming.**

Given these purposes, spend some time trying to develop the relationship story of your client. At this stage, it need not be a fully-fledged story; develop it as far as you think is appropriate based on your knowledge of the client, the strength of your working alliance, and your own sense of acting as a secure base in therapy.

In developing the relationship story of the client, consider the following:

Draw on your formulation and the administration of measures (ECR-RS, ASQ-SF) to the client

Use the language commonly employed to describe the characteristics of attachment styles

Uses the terminology to label the attachment style (i.e., dismissing/avoidant, anxious/preoccupied, fearful, secure)

Cast a narrative that goes back to childhood and then moves forward to demonstrate the recurrence of patterns in adult relationships.

Some further prompts to assist – consider the following questions as part of the relationship story development of your client…

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- Do you see opportunities to invoke security priming as part of the story, and how would you do it? Would it be the words you use in the story, would you pivot to incorporate imagery, is there anything else you would do?
- If you wish to add a future-oriented element, what content would you add into the story, and how would you end the story arc in which the healthy adult is strengthened?
- If you did want client input, how would you frame the invitation of input – keep in mind the client's attachment style and the schemas and modes that are typically evidenced.

Below, write-up your first draft of the client's relationship story.

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