

# **ATTACHMENT TREATMENT: THEORY & TECHNIQUES**

**November 12, 13 and 14, 2008**

**Pt. Hardy**

**Presenters: Kimberley Barthel and Irmie Nickel**

**Sponsored by: North Island Early Child Development Society**

## **CONFERENCE SYNOPSIS:**

A healthy attachment between an infant and loving parents or caregivers creates a lasting sense of security and safety for the child. This allows for optimal growth and development. In fact, attachment relationships profoundly influence every aspect of human development. Numerous longitudinal studies have demonstrated that securely attached infants and toddlers do better in life regarding:

- Self-esteem
- Independence
- Autonomy
- Enduring friendships
- Trust and intimacy
- Impulse control
- Empathy and compassion
- Resilience

When the attachment relationship is disrupted or fails to develop, children feel insecure, unsafe and anxious. Many difficulties experienced by individuals throughout the life span can be traced back to growing up in relationships and environments that do not feel safe. For this reason, the goal of this workshop is to give a wide range of service providers a solid understanding of attachment patterns and the attachment relationship as well as job relevant, child specific, attachment focused skills that can be used to educate and support families, caregivers and adults in a child's community.

It is important to keep in mind the context in which the attachment relationship is rooted. Cultural, social, and economic environments, family strengths, areas of vulnerability, historic experiences and intergenerational learning are all factors that have an influence on children and their families, and should not be overlooked when attending to attachment relationships. The importance of multiple attachment figures and the development of self-regulation will also be discussed.

# **ATTACHMENT TREATMENT: THEORY & TECHNIQUES**

## **Workshop Schedule**

**Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>**

### **The Theory and Science of Attachment**

*This day will focus on developing an understanding of why attachment relationships are important and how attachment relationships lay the groundwork for success in the future.*

*Presented by: Irmie Nickel, BOT, M.A.(Cand.) (Theory) and Kim Barthel, BMR, OTR (Science)*

#### Learning Objectives

1. Develop an understanding of attachment theory.
2. Develop an understanding of the significance of an attachment relationship in human development throughout the lifespan.
3. Develop an understanding of how the growth of the brain occurs in critical periods and is influenced by the social environment.
4. Introduction to the function of the right orbitofrontal cortex and its role in attachment processes.
5. Understand the neuro-endocrine influences on brain development resulting from attachment phenomenon.
6. Preliminary understanding of brain-behavior relationship resulting from attachment.

#### **Day 1 AM**

##### **Theory of Attachment**

- Attachment theory: Bowlby, Ainsworth and Crittenden
- Safety, exploration and balance versus danger
- Social, emotional, cognitive and physical development

#### **Day 1 PM**

##### **Science of Attachment**

- Interaction between Nervous System and the Environment
- Structure and Function of the Right Orbitofrontal Cortex
- Neuro-endocrine Imprinting Effects on Behavior
- The connection between Orbitofrontal Cortex and Social Interaction and Relationship

**Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>**

### **The Theory and Science of Self-Regulation**

*This day will focus on developing an understanding of the impact of problems with emotional regulation on daily living and coping. Techniques for learning self-regulation and teaching it to others will be discussed.*

*Presented by: Kim Barthel, BMR, OTR*

#### Learning Objectives

1. Preliminary understanding of brain contributions to self-regulatory capacity
2. Interaction between arousal, trauma and self-regulation
3. Sensory, Affectual and Cognitive contributions to self-regulation

4. Understand how the contributing neurological structures function to support self-regulatory behaviors. Thoughts for intervention.
5. Develop an understanding of how dyadic interactions contribute to the process of emotional self-regulation.
6. Preliminary understanding of sensory modulation and self-regulation
7. Understand function of self-regulation in learning and interaction
8. Understand potential outcomes of dysregulation

## **Day 2 AM**

### **Theory of Self-Regulation**

- Origin of the Adaptive Capacity to Self-Regulate Emotion
- Sensory Modulation and its Effect upon Self-Regulation
- The contribution of Self-Regulation to Attentional Process, Learning and Behavior
- Self-regulation and Executive Functions: Impulsivity, Hyperactivity, Self-Harm

## **Day 2 PM**

### **Science of Self-Regulation**

- The Neurobiology of self-regulation
- Self-regulation and arousal
- Sensory Contributions to Self-regulation and Arousal
- Affectual Contributions to Self-regulation and Arousal
- Cognitive Contributions to Self-regulation and Arousal

## **Nov. 14<sup>th</sup>**

### **Intervention Techniques and Attachment Styles Throughout the Lifespan**

*The focus of this day will be on applying the above learned theories toward understanding attachment styles throughout the lifespan and choosing effective intervention techniques. Presented by Irmie Nickel, BOT, M.A.(Cand.)*

Learning Objectives (see Appendix B for details)

1. Review developmental tasks of life stages
2. Introduction to attachment patterns throughout the lifespan
3. Observing behaviours
4. Developing Hypotheses
5. Planning, selection and delivery of interventions

## **Day 3 AM**

### **Infancy and Childhood**

- Developmental tasks and attachment patterns of infancy and toddlerhood.
- Assessment and treatment of attachment issues in infancy and toddlerhood.
- Developmental tasks and attachment patterns of childhood.
- Assessment and treatment of attachment issues in childhood.

## **Day 3 PM**

### **Adolescence and Adulthood**

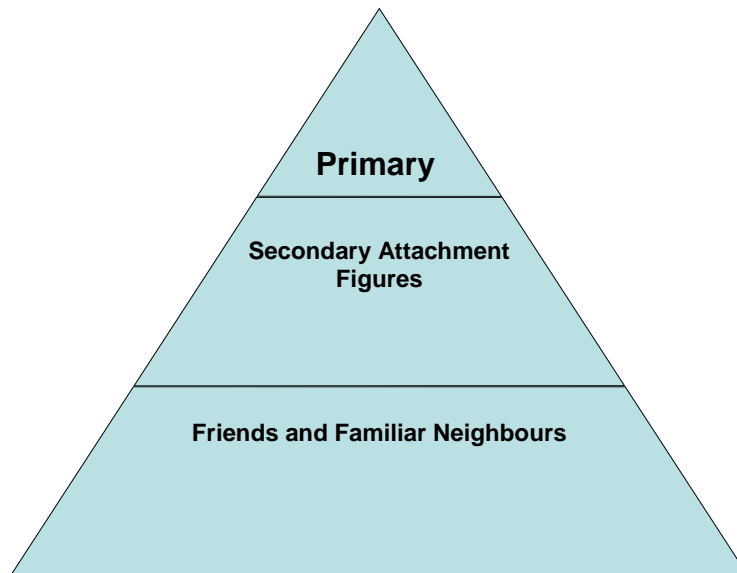
- Developmental tasks and attachment patterns of adolescence.
- Assessment and treatment of attachment issues in adolescence.
- Developmental tasks and attachment patterns of adulthood.
- Assessment and treatment of attachment issues in adulthood.

## APPENDIX A

### Attachment Hierarchy

“My father ... was keen to emphasize that we need *multiple* attachment figures but that they are arranged in a hierarchy.”

Sir Richard Bowlby (2004, pg.17).



### **Core Beliefs**

- Patterns of attachment are self-protective strategies
- Self-protective strategies are learned through interaction with attachment figures
- Symptomatic behaviours are part of a dyadic strategy or are consequences to a strategy (i.e. anxiety)
- Strategies will change if individuals perceive that strategies no longer fit, find new strategies and believe and feel that the new strategies will be safe.
- Intervention should enable individuals to understand their strategies, learn and practice new safe strategies and generalize new strategies to their environments.

### Three Basic Attachment Strategies

- Type A strategies organize around predictable, experienced outcomes. They minimize negative feelings, do what is expected and avoid doing that which may lead to punishment. Disorders of inhibition and compulsion may be related to too much reliance on cognition.
- Type C strategies are motivated by somatic feelings. Lacking confidence in caregivers to be reliable, they focus on feelings as guides to behaviour. Many anxiety disorders may be related to an over focus on somatic triggers.
- Type B strategies are the integration of cognition and affect. Information is processed through well developed neural networks connecting the limbic system with the cerebral cortex, left and right hemispheres.
- Result in open, direct and reciprocal communication of expectations and feelings.
- Intra-personal reflection, integration and interpersonal discussion and negotiation mitigate against the biases of over-reliance on cognitive or affective information.
- Type B psychological *balance* is the least vulnerable to psychopathology.