

Attachment, Trauma, and the Brain

Week 2 Assignment

Participants Assigned to Activity A:

You are being asked to try the following activity over the next week and share your experience with the activity with the larger group during the upcoming week's class. If you have questions about the activity, please contact the instructor via email or phone to discuss those questions.

One of the importance components of attachment is the way in which a caregiver and a child interact. Becoming a keen observer in watching and assessing child and parent interaction can really assist clinicians when developing a treatment plan. Specific ways of coaching parents how to decrease their child's anxiety and decrease their child avoidance in relationships can be found via close observation of child/parent tasks.

As children get older, (pre-teen to teen age) observing the way they engage in tasks with peers and/or authority figures can also help in assessment and treatment planning.

This week, I want you to take 15 minutes and observe a child and caregiver interacting in a task. It can be a client and a caregiver you work with or a child and caregiver who are a friend or family member. You can create any task you would like them to work on for this or longer. Building with building blocks, Lincoln Logs, Legos, Creating a House of Cards, Completing a Drawing Together ... anything that asks them to work together at an activity.

The importance of the assignment is to practice tuning into their interactions and thinking about what it tells you about their attachment experiences, their anxiety (child and/or caregiver), and their avoidance in relationships (child and/or caregiver).

You will use the following guide taken from Steele, D'Agostino, and Blom (2005) Co-Construction Assessment to help you focus on what you are observing and noting.

In class you be prepared to share something about this experience:

- 1) What you found hard about the observation process?
- 2) What you enjoyed about this observation process?
- 3) How this technique relates to what you are learning about attachment styles ... anxiety and/or avoidance in relationships?
- 4) Based on your experience, what would you coach the caregiver to do differently?

If you are in a clinical setting that does not afford itself to watching interactions with a child and caregiver ... observe a child interacting with a peer or adult authority figure for 15 minutes. Think about questions 1 thru 3 as described. Then, based on your experience ... think about what would you coach the individual to do differently in the interaction?

Co-Construction Coding Scheme

Steele, D'Agostino, and Blom (2005)

Adapted from Oppenheim and Goldsmith's Attachment Theory in Clinical Work with Children: Bridging the Gap between Research and Practice (2007)

Below I am providing you with components included in this Co-Construction Task Assessment that you can focus on in your exercise....

Caregiver Non Verbal Communication Areas of Interest

Parents seeks physical proximity	
Parent avoids physical proximity	
Looking Behavior (parent seeks eye contact between parent and child)	
Facial Expressions (enthusiastic, not enthusiastic)	
Use of gestures in communication	
Supportive touch	
Nonsupportive touch	

Caregiver Verbal Communication Area of Interest

Positive, Neutral, or Negative Vocal Expression	
Use of child's name in interaction (how many times??)	
Use of the pronoun "we" or "us" in the interaction	
Does parent respond to child's questions?	
Does parent make suggestions or ask questions to child?	
Parent's use of positive reinforcement	
Does parent reference shared experiences in interaction?	

Child Non Verbal Communication Area of Interest

Child seeks physical proximity	
Child avoids physical proximity	
Looking Behavior (child seeks eye contact between parent and child)	
Facial Expressions (enthusiastic, not enthusiastic)	
Use of gestures in communication	
Use of touch to facilitate interaction with parent	
Use of touch to disrupt interaction with parent	

Child Verbal Communication Area of Interest

Positive, Neutral, or Negative Vocal Expression	
Use of parent's name in interaction (how many times??)	
What did he/she call parent?	
Use of the pronoun "we" or "us" in the interaction	
Does child respond to parent's questions?	
Does child respond to any suggestions/initiatives of caregiver?	
Does child take initiative or make suggestions to caregiver?	