



SECURE
Attachment Matters
IRELAND

Promoting secure attachment and placement stability
for children in residential care, foster care and adoptive care.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO MENTALIZING

Dr John Gibson

Secure Attachment Matters

www.attachmentmatters.ie

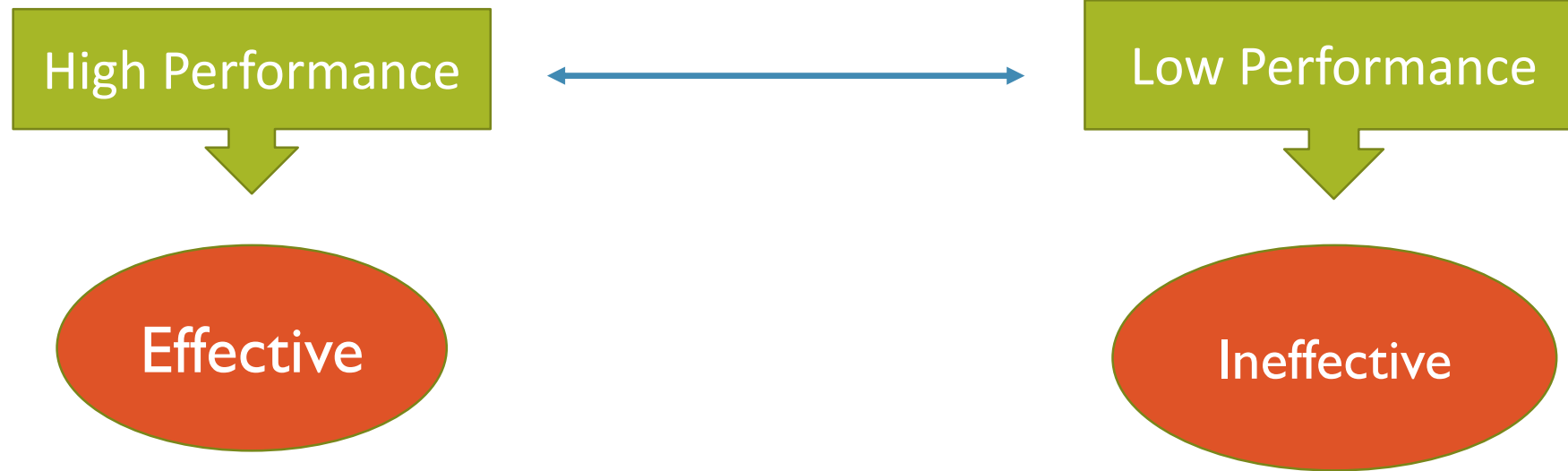
Mentalising: The least novel yet the most profound human capacity

“Mentalizing is defined as the ability to imaginatively try to make sense of people’s actions in terms of what might be going on in their minds: What they might be feeling, thinking, and what they might need, desire, believe or hope...”

“The opposite of mentalization is to interpret actions in a mindless way.....i.e. in ways that do not take account of mental states.”

(Bevington, Fuggle, Cracknell and Fonaghy, 2017)

Mentalizing Spectrum



MENTALIZING AND NON-MENTALIZING – AN EXAMPLE – BOSTON 24/7

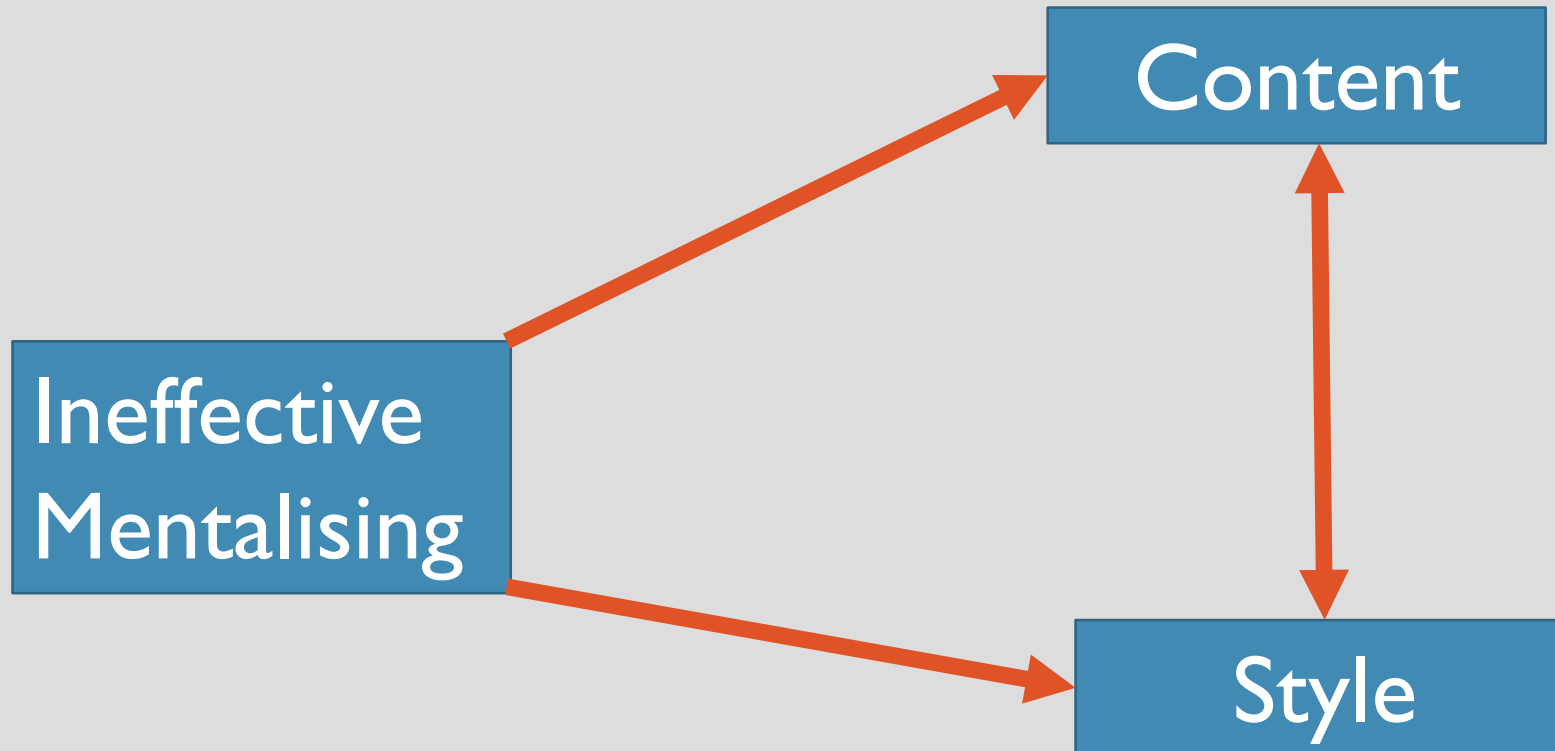
Ingredients of Good Mentalising “The Other”

- Curiosity
- Other’s minds are opaque – cannot be read like a book
- Non-compulsive contemplation and reflection
- Perspective taking
- Capacity to trust
- Give and take

Ingredients of Good Mentalising “The Self”

- Self-inquisitive stance
- Narrative continuity – my story – coherence
- Internal conflict awareness
- Awareness of affect impact
- Belief in changeability
- Humility
- Taking responsibility

Ineffective Mentalising



Content Indicators of ineffective mentalization

1. Focus on external factors – school, the neighbourhood, poor training, lack of support
2. Focus on labels – lazy, stupid, self-destructive, controlling, short-fused
3. Pre-occupation with rules “Should and Should Not”
4. Absence of content (paucity of thought as in depression)
5. Blaming others



Style - Indicators of ineffective mentalization

1. Excessive detail to the exclusion of thoughts and feelings – nothing is prioritised – hard to determine what is important
2. States of mind do not get inserted into the narrative. “The humanity of others is missing from the narrative”.
3. Untested / unfounded assumptions begin to be made about mental states of others, “I know she didn’t phone because she was annoyed.”
4. Absence of perspective taking
5. Certainty / literal thinking



ORIGINS OF EFFECTIVE MENTALISING ARE
ROOTED IN EXPERIENCES OF SECURE
ATTACHMENT

THE WORKSHOP INCLUDED VIDEOS – THESE
CAN BE ACCESSED AT YOUTUBE REFERENCES

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=MCQ
RGQSE2MY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCQ
RGQSE2MY)

AMBIT

*Adaptive Mentalization Based
Integrative Treatment*

Why mentalizing really matters: Learning about learning, and *Epistemic Trust*



Reading References

- Bateman, A. Mentalizing, Attachment, and Epistemic Trust in Group Therapy. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 67, 176-201.
- ALLEN, J. G. 2006. Conceptual and Clinical Implications; Mentalising in Practice. *In: ALLEN, J. G. & FONAGHY, P. (eds.) The Handbook of Mentalisation Based Treatment* Chichester England: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.
- ALLEN, J. G. 2014. *Mentalizing in the Development of and Treatment of Attachment Trauma* London, Karnac.
- ALLEN, J. G., FONAGHY, P. & BATEMAN, A. 2008. *Mentalising in Clinical Practice*, Washington DC and London, England, American Psychiatric Publishing Inc.
- BATEMAN, A. & FONAGHY, P. 2004. *Psychotherapy for Borderline Personality Disorder: Mentalisation-Based Treatment* New York, Oxford University Press
- BEVINGTON, D., FUGGLE, P., CRACKNELL, L. & FONAGHY, P.** 2017. *Adaptive Mentalization Based Integrative Treatment: A guide for teams to develop systems of care* Oxford Oxford University Press.
- FONAGHY, P., BATEMAN, A. & CAMPBELL, C. 2017. Mentalizing, Attachment, and Epistemic Trust in Group Therapy. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, , 67, 176-201.
- FONAGY, P. & BATEMAN, A. 2013. Mentalization-Based Treatment *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 33, 595-613.
- G, A. J. 2013. *Mentalizing in the Development and Treatment of Attachment Trauma*, London Karnack.
- HOLMES, J. 2006. Mentalizing from a psychoanalytic perspective: What's new? *In: ALLEN, J. G. & FONAGHY, P. (eds.) The Handbook of Mentalisation-Based Treatment*. Chichester England Wiley and Sons Ltd.
- SCHMEETS, M. G. 2008. Theoretical Concepts *In: VERHEUGT-PLEITER, A. J. E., ZEVALKINK, J. & SCHMEETS, M. G. J. (eds.) Mentalizing Therapy in Child Therapy*. London Karnack Boks
- VERHEUGT-PLEITER, A. J. E., ZEVALKINK, J. & SCHMEETS, M. G. J. (eds.) 2008. *Mentalizing in Child Therapy - Guidelines for Clinical Practice*

ajg64@cornell.edu