

Adolescents, Attachment and Developmental Trauma

Exploring the Paths to Healthier Relationships

“The young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no reverence for parents or old age. They are impatient of all restraint... As for the girls , they are forward, immodest, and unladylike in speech, behaviour and dress”

Sermon of Peter the Hermit, AD 1274

What to expect when you're expecting... a teenager

- Friends
- Lovers
- Heroes
- Focus
- Opportunity
- Experience
- Empathy
- Bully/bullied
- Sex/hurt
- Idealization
- Obsession
- Risk
- Pain/death
- Conflict

Yes but.. does it have to be so hard?

- Adult Essence - what we need to survive, adapt, prosper (Dan Siegal)

When it's good enough?

- **F**lexible
- **A**daptable
- **C**oherent
- **E**nergised
- **S**table

Daniel Siegel

Casting out... or casting off...

(Archer and Gordon)

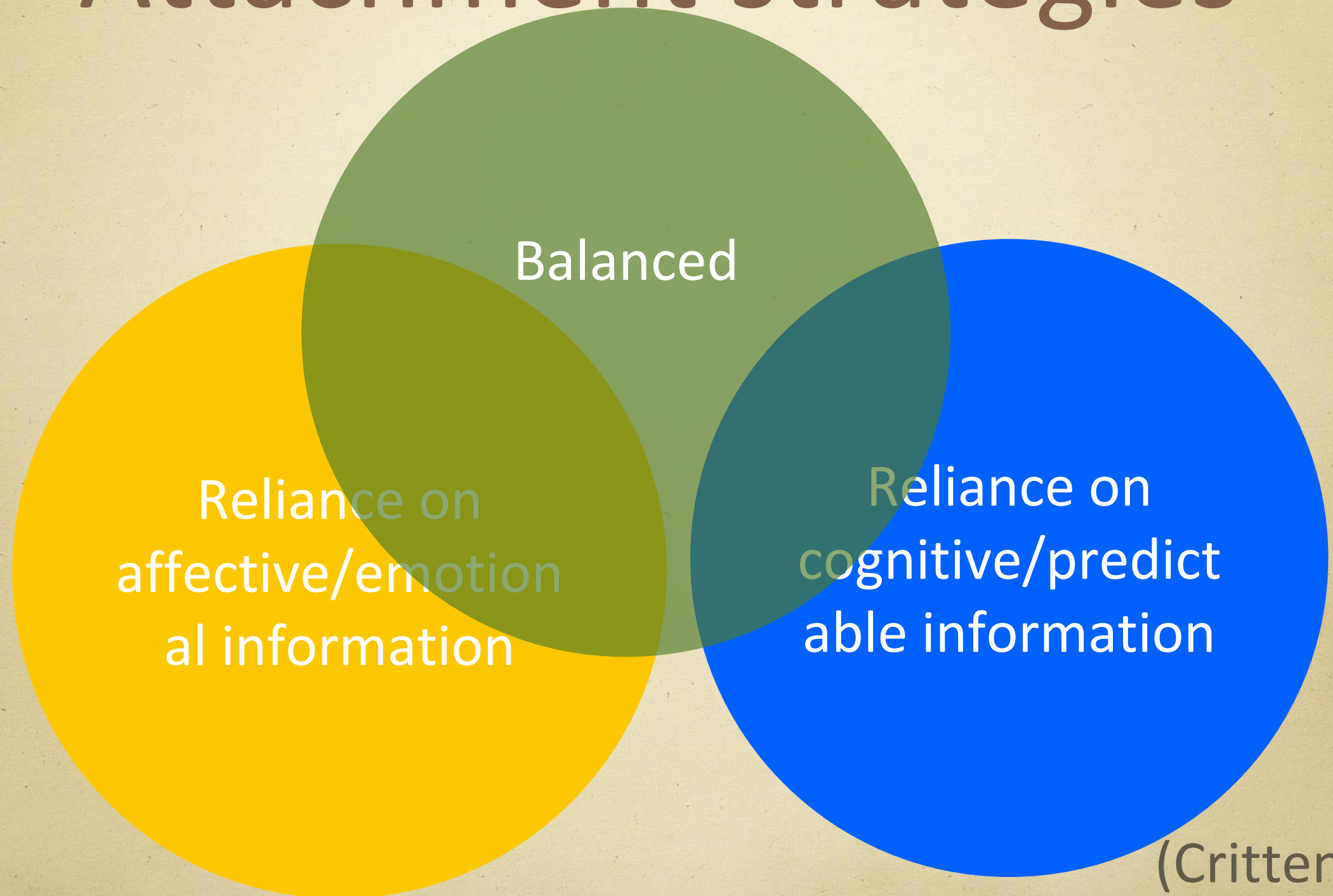
- Independence
 - Self reliance (too much)
 - Dependent (too little)

Attachment and adolescents - what's the plan?

- Negotiate safety outside of the family
- Find peer group (self governing membership)
- Interest in sexual partner/s
- Negotiate hierarchy
- Establish safe attachment figures outside of family (transition to adulthood)

(Crittenden)

Attachment strategies



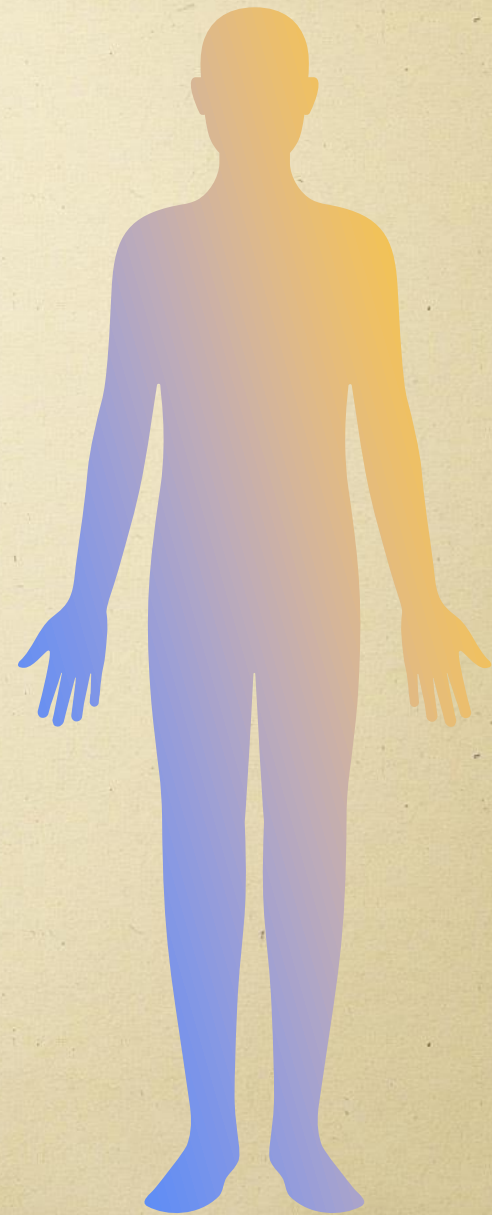
(Crittenden)

Unpredictably protective/comforting OR
punitive/dangerous

Protective and comforting

Predictably punitive/dismissing/dangerous

Developmental trauma



Developmental tasks

If they happen.... If they don't

➤ Physiological regulation (eat, sleep, warmth, comfort)

➤ Turn taking

➤ Play and exploration

➤ Using language to explore and play

➤ Hierarchy - the addition of structure

➤ Stepping outside - school and friendships

➤ Sensory (hunger, pain, tiredness)



➤ Causation and correlation



➤ Language and meaning



➤ Sense of danger



➤ Curiosity and exploration



➤ Appearance v reality

➤ Trust and deception

Is it too late?

- Neurons that fire together wire together - repetition required
- Like riding a bike, you cant unlearn trauma pathways (wired for danger). For many of these children we do not want them to unlearn protective strategies as these will be useful in some area of their life.
- You can learn new or additional skills that might allow for flexibility. The more opportunities there are for these new skills the more likely the person is to rely on these, and less on the old.
- Lots of adults would drive a car without much thought, but riding a bike might take a bit of reorientation before you were proficient again. During times of **safety** we want young people to rely more on flexible and integrated skills and less on inflexible or defensive ones.

How do we get there? Walk the walk

➤ **F**lexible

➤ **A**daptable

➤ **C**oherent

➤ **E**nergised

➤ **S**table

➤ Playfulness

➤ Acceptance

➤ Curiosity

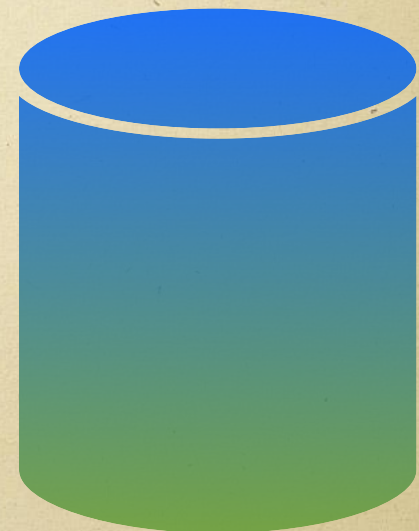
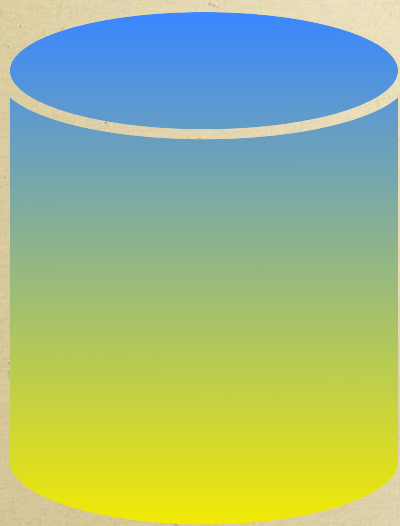
➤ Empathy

Dan Hughes

Stormy days

We are not our strategy or our trauma. They become more prevalent during stress and danger (implicit or explicit) so on these days....

- Where is the danger?
- Are they pushing up and pulling in or pushing down and pushing on?
- Am I pushing or pulling?



Casting off - being a safe place to leave and return to.

- Listen
- Accept
- Negotiate
- Develop
- Reflect
- and
- Repair
- Strengths
- Explore
- Adapt

Being the calm in the storm

- Hierarchy
- Modeling
- Thinking about thinking
- Thinking about feeling

Or not... putting on your own life jacket first

- Modeling regulation
- Modeling self care
- Modeling push and pull
- Modeling reflection

Creating a safe harbour

- The power of co-regulation - who I need and how I let them know
- Modeling repair in other relationships - how to sort things out
- Holding in mind - You're always with me
- Modeling reflective thinking - predicting positives as well as risks
- Unconditional positive regard (unconditional love): You are not your past, your trauma or your strategy.