

Attachment-based psychoanalytic psychotherapy

Special Issue of the Attachment & Human Development Journal

Publisher:

Brunner-Routledge, part of the Taylor & Francis Group

Issue:

Volume 6, Number 2 / June 2004

Cost

£10 (inc p&p) from CAPP office

Introduction to the special issue: Attachment-based psychoanalytic psychotherapy

Joseph Schwartz and James Pollard

Developing a secure-enough base: teaching psychotherapists in training the relationship between attachment theory and clinical work

Kate White

Abstract:

I present an account of a post-graduate training module I have developed for psychotherapy training students at The Centre for Attachment-based Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy entitled *From Attachment Theory to Clinical Practice*. I situate my interest in this work in my own life and my background in education. In describing the curriculum content, I focus in particular on an educational process that enables students to engage with the concepts from attachment theory which are both relevant to their own lives and their future work as psychotherapists. I show how the findings of the Adult Attachment Interview can be understood more deeply through a project the students are asked to present and evaluate. The article also includes some personal reflections on my experience of attachment research training from a clinician's perspective as a way to think about the divide between these two worlds. I conclude with a consideration of the strengths and limitations of attachment theory to understanding the effects of inequalities of power relations on the formation of intimate bonds.

Keywords:

attachment theory-, clinical training-, curriculum development-, psychoanalytic psychotherapy-, adult attachment interview

Walking the tightrope: Developing an attachment-based/relational curriculum for trainee psychotherapists

James Park

Abstract:

I describe how the Centre for Attachment-based Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (CAPP)

in London has gone about developing an attachment-based/relational curriculum for training psychotherapists. A key problem the training is meant to address is how to maintain a balance between enabling students to absorb research and clinical knowledge of psychological processes at the same time as they learn to maintain the flexibility necessary to address the uniqueness of each individual encounter in the consulting room. I describe the task of the training in terms of a linguistic metaphor: the training needs to ensure that students are theoretically multi-lingual while developing higher levels of fluency in the language of attachment-based/relational psychotherapy. In the pursuit of this approach, my colleagues and I developed a set of ten key propositions - the spine of the relational world - which we felt encapsulated the main theoretical assumptions of attachment-based practice that students need to understand and explore. This has been used to evolve a spiral curriculum, designed to help students engage constructively with the often confusing emotional aspects of clinical work, and with the multiplicity of clinical viewpoints that characterises contemporary psychoanalytic psychotherapy.

Keywords:

clinical training-, attachment-based-, relational psychoanalysis-, attachment theory

What can we learn from the therapist's body?

Susie Orbach

Abstract:

I suggest a re-theorization of the relationship between psyche and soma in which the body is no longer seen as 'mere' receptacle for unwanted contents of the mind but in which a body subjectivity has a developmental history in its own right. I argue that the body has its own history arising out of the attachment nexus and the internalization of the bodies of its caregivers and the bodies they are able to recognize in their infants and children. I illustrate the way developmental body issues appear in the clinical setting and how the therapist's body can be used to locate and identify the troubled bodies of our clients. A long history of work with women with eating problems and troubled bodies shows that bodies are not born but are acquired in relationship with key caregivers.

Keywords:

mind/body-, body countertransference-, body and attachment-, eating disorders-, subjectivity-, body image

Sexuality and attachment from a clinical point of view

Bernice Laschinger, Chris Purnell, Joseph Schwartz, Kate White, Rachel Wingfield

Abstract:

The clinical experience of five attachment-based psychoanalytic psychotherapists is pooled in an exploration of how issues in relation to sexuality and attachment emerge in the consulting room. Our clinical experience shows that sexuality, far from being a powerful instinctual drive that invariably needs to be explored clinically, is far more a

reflection of early attachment histories. Instead of the standard pressure cooker of sexuality, which if not expressed leads to pathological emotional conflict we identify a melancholy sexuality, a cold arctic-like desert unwarmed by human relationship that barely achieves expression. We find that a broader and more fluid conception of sexuality as not just genitally focused but as erotic helps us relate to difficulties around sexuality as having to do with conflicts in relation to or associated with desire for contact and connection linked to past histories of loss, abandonment and sexual abuse. We argue theoretically that the psychological dimension of the biological system of human reproductive capacities, that is to say, the actually lived experience of human sexuality cannot be separated from the psychological dynamics of attachment within a social and cultural context. We discuss clinical issues including the sequelae of primary erotic attachments and working with sexual fantasies and working with erotic transference/countertransference re-enactments. A clinical example illustrates in some detail how we work with an adult survivor of sexual abuse troubled by intrusive sexual fantasies.

Keywords:

sexuality-, attachment-, erotic transference/countertransference-, clinical issues-, social construction

Cumulative phobic response to early traumatic attachment: Aspects of a developmental psychotherapy in midlife

Susan Vas Dias

Abstract:

This paper is an attempt to look at the impact of early traumatic attachment and disorganized attachment system in the evolution and maintenance of phobic response. It will explore the way in which the therapeutic attachment relationship plays a core role in facilitating development that was obstructed in infancy, childhood and adolescence involving the integration of developmental issues and the undoing of the need for phobic response. The tenacity of the need for a good enough primary attachment figure and the impact of the search for one on development are starkly revealed in the therapeutic work.

Keywords:

trauma-, disorganized attachment-, phobia-, therapeutic attachment

Disorganized attachment and Borderline Personality Disorder: A clinical perspective

Jeremy Holmes

Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to explore the links between the attachment-theory derived concept of disorganized attachment, and the psychiatric diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). Disorganized attachment can be understood in terms of an approach-avoidance dilemma for infants for whom stressed or traumatized/traumatizing

caregivers are simultaneously a source of threat and a secure base. Interpersonal relationships in BPD including those with care givers is similarly seen in terms of approach-avoidance dilemmas, which manifests themselves in disturbed transference/countertransference interactions between therapists and BPD sufferers. Possible ways of handling these phenomena are suggested, based on Main's (1995) notion of 'meta-cognitive monitoring', in the hope of re-instating meaning and more stable self-structures, in these patients' lives.

Keywords:

disorganized attachment-, Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)-, approach/avoidance dilemma-, clinical work with disorganised attachment

Discussion of the Special Issue: Chef or chemist? Practicing psychotherapy within the attachment paradigm

Tirril Harris