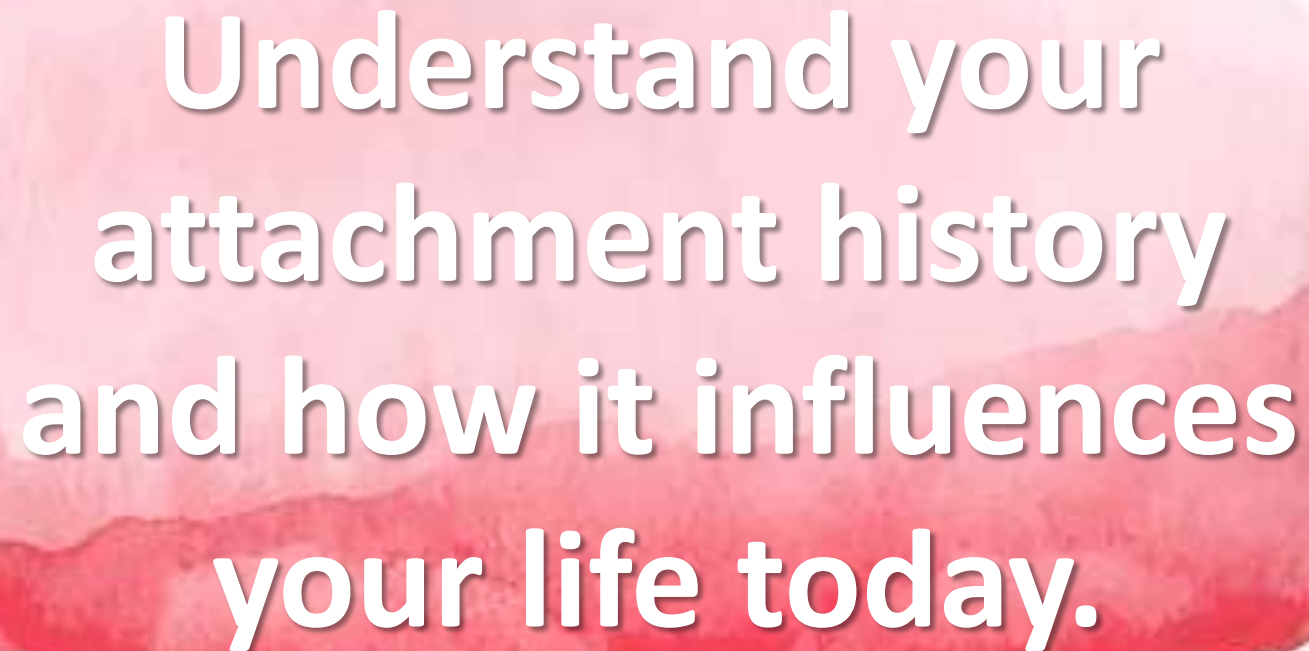




# Understanding Attachment

## Lesson 3

# Intention:

A red watercolor-style speech bubble with a soft, textured appearance. The bubble is irregular in shape, with a pointed bottom and a wider top. It contains white text with a slight drop shadow.

**Understand your  
attachment history  
and how it influences  
your life today.**

# What is Attachment Theory?



**At the very beginning of our lives, we form attachments to our primary caretakers as a survival mechanism.**

**Our attachment style forms as a result of the adaptations we made in infancy to get our needs met.**

**Children make the best adaptations they can to their family.**

# What is Attachment Theory?



How do I get these  
people to take  
care of me?

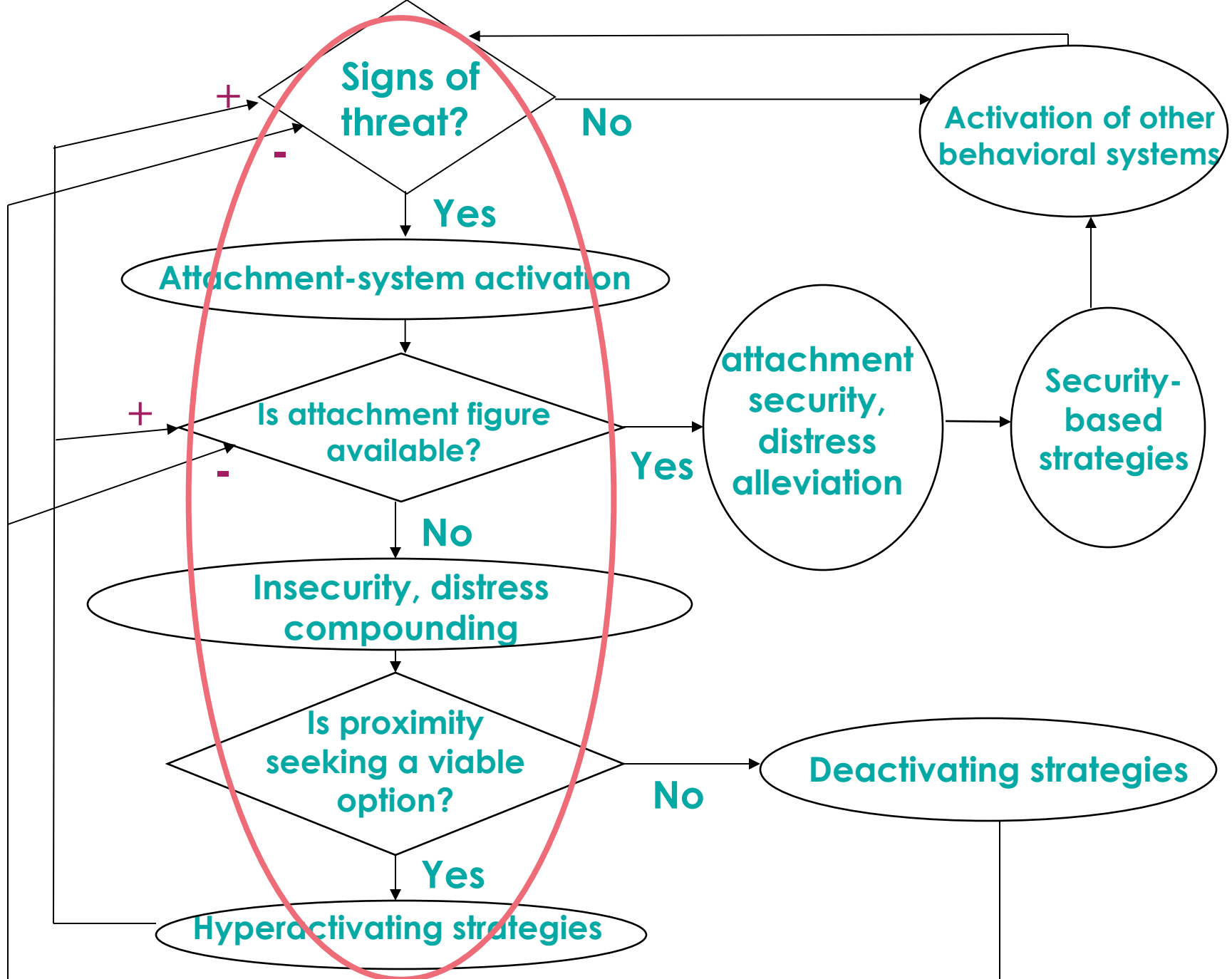


# What is Attachment Theory?

- The attachment system is activated when we are distressed.
- The way our parents interact with us (particularly during times of distress) forms the basis of our attachment style.



**Attachment  
system  
activating!**



From: "Secure and Insecure Love: An Attachment Perspective" Phillip R. Shaver, Ph.D.

# What is Attachment Theory?

**Attachment styles are formed in infancy,  
during the first two years of life.**



# What is Attachment Theory?

**Once established, it is a style that stays with you and plays out in how you relate in intimate relationships and in how you parent your children.**





# The Importance of Understanding Your Attachment Style

**Understanding your style of attachment is helpful because it offers you insight into how you felt and developed in your childhood.**

**It also clarifies ways that you may struggle emotionally as an adult and what you need to change to improve your close relationships and your relationship with your own children.**



# The Importance of Understanding Your Attachment Style

**Adult Attachment Interview predicts the baby's attachment to the parent with 80% accuracy before the baby is even born.**





# Attachment Theory Distilled

Humans rely on attachment figures for:

- Protection (*safe*)
- Support (*seen*)
- Emotion regulation (*soothed*)



From: "Secure and Insecure Love: An Attachment Perspective" Phillip R. Shaver, Ph.D.

# We have different attachments to different people.



**Father**



**Mother**



**Aunt  
or Uncle**



**Grandparent**



# Patterns of Attachment in Children

## Attachment Style

- **Secure**
- **Insecure – avoidant**



## Parental Interactive Pattern

- **Emotionally available, perceptive, responsive**
- **Emotionally unavailable, imperceptive, unresponsive and rejecting**

# Patterns of Attachment in Children

## Attachment Style

- Insecure-anxious/ambivalent
- Insecure - disorganized



## Parental Interactive Pattern

- Inconsistently available, perceptive and responsive and intrusive
- Frightening, frightened, disorienting, alarming



# Attachment Statistics

- **Attachment Styles:**

- **Secure** **55-65%**
- **Ambivalent** **5-15%**
- **Avoidant** **20-30%**

- **Disorganized Attachment**

- **Low Risk Populations**  
**= 20-40% Disorganized**
- **High Risk Populations**  
**= 80% Disorganized**

**Secure =  
Good Enough**

# Secure Attachment in Childhood





**When you feel secure,  
you can do other things.**



In order for a child to feel  
**SECURE**, they must feel:



**SAFE**



**SEEN**



**SOOTHED**

# Secure Attachment in Adulthood



Copyright 2015 © The Glendon Association All Rights Reserved

# Secure Attachment Promotes:

- **Flexible self-regulation**
- **Prosocial behavior**
- **Empathy**
- **Positive sense of emotional well-being and self-esteem**
- **Coherent life-story**





# What causes insecure attachment?

❖ **Unresolved trauma/loss in the life of the parents statistically predict attachment style far more than:**

- **Maternal Sensitivity**
- **Child Temperament**
- **Social Status**
- **Culture**



# Implicit Versus Explicit Memory

## Explicit Memory



## Implicit Memory



# Avoidant Attachment in Childhood





# Avoidant Attachment in Adulthood





# Ambivalent/Anxious Attachment in Childhood



# Ambivalent/Anxious Attachment in Adulthood



# Disorganized Attachment in Childhood



# How does disorganized attachment pass from generation to generation?

Implicit memory of terrifying experiences may create:

- Impulsive behaviors
- Distorted perceptions
- Rigid thoughts and impaired decision-making patterns
- Difficulty tolerating a range of emotions





# Disorganized Attachment in Adulthood



# Questions for Parental Self-Reflection

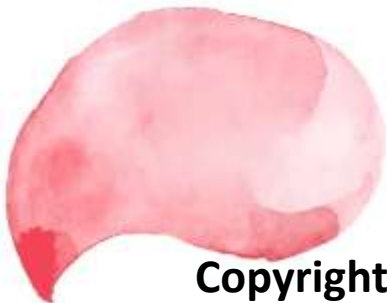
**Adapted from the Adult Attachment Interview**

- **What was it like growing up? Who was in your family?**
- **Think about your relationship with each of your parents when you were young. What were your interactions with them like?**
- **Did you ever feel rejected or threatened by your parents? Were there other experiences you had that felt overwhelming or traumatizing in your life, during childhood or beyond? Do any of these experiences still feel very much **alive**?**

# Questions for Parental Self-Reflection

**Adapted from the Adult Attachment Interview**

- **How did your parents act with you when you were happy and excited? Did they join with you in your enthusiasm?**
- **How did they act when you were unhappy or distressed? Were they sensitive to you?**
- **Was there anyone else besides your parents that you could depend on? Did they offer you comfort during difficult times?**



# How to Develop a Secure Attachment

- It is possible to develop an Earned Secure Attachment.
- Because our attachment ability is broken in a relationship, it needs to be fixed in a relationship. This can be with a romantic partner, a close friend or a good therapist.
- It takes time to develop an Earned Secure Attachment, often five years.





# How to Promote Secure Attachment in Your Children\*

## Strive to be:

### Emotionally Available

Slow down and be present. Make sure that you are 100% emotionally present *some* of the time (emphasizing quality over quantity).


### Perceptive

Try to observe and *understand* how your child feels. Rather than projecting onto your child, *learn* them.

### Responsive

Offer your child a contingent response.

# How to Promote Secure Attachment in Your Children\*

 **Secure Attachment tips underlie each week of this eCourse and we will discuss more specific strategies for promoting secure attachment in the next two weeks.**

# How to Promote Secure Attachment in Your Children

**Feel the full pain of your childhood and make sense of it.**

