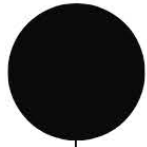


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working with **STUCK KIDS**

- an attachment-based developmental perspective -

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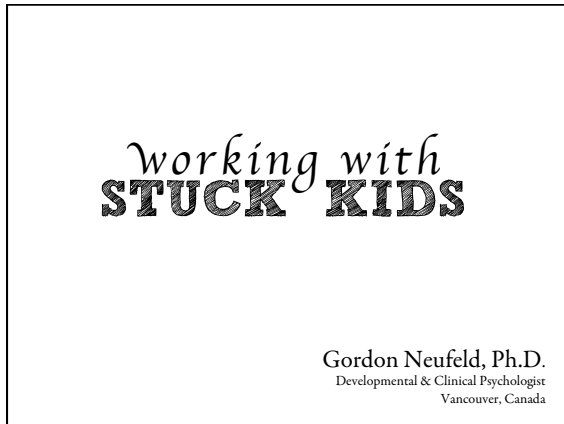
A JACK HIROSE CONFERENCE ON
Developmental & Emotional Challenges
with Children & Adolescents

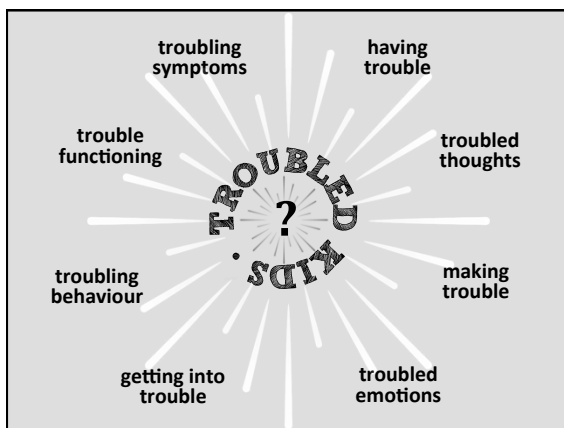
Victoria, British Columbia
November 5, 2025

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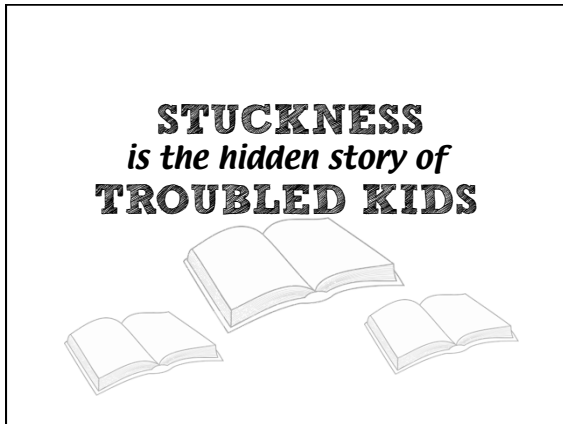
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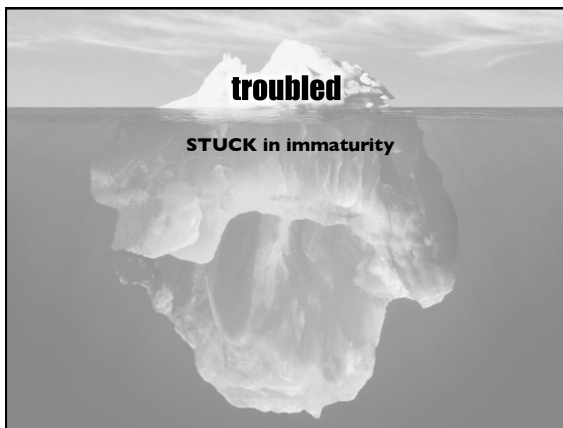
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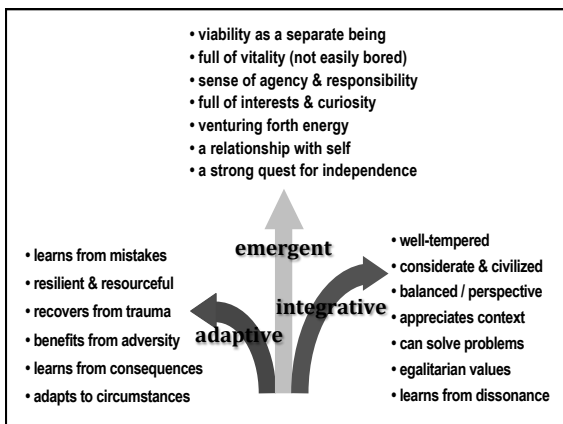


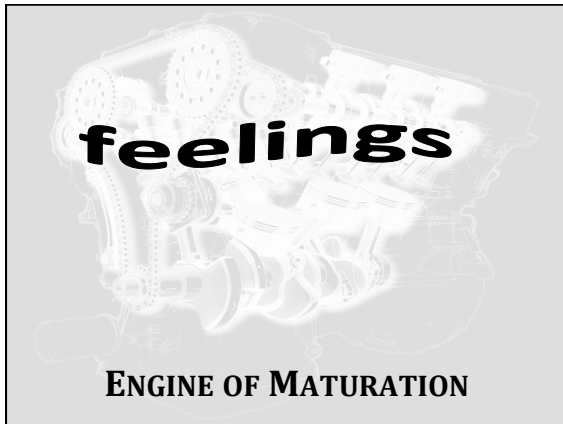


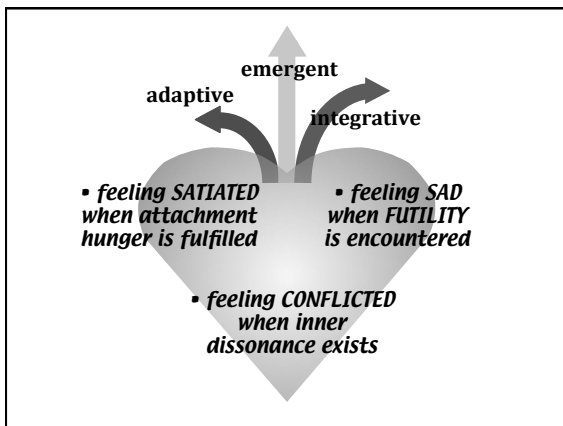


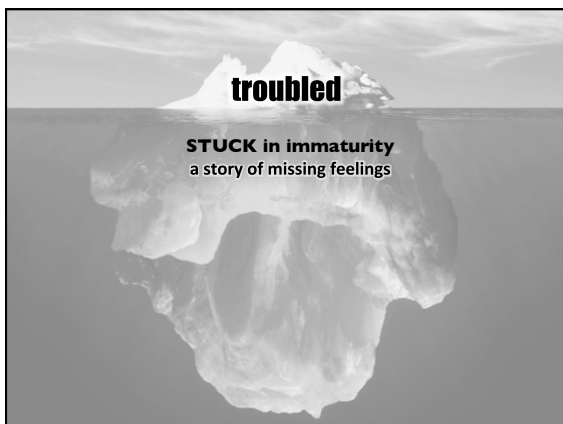










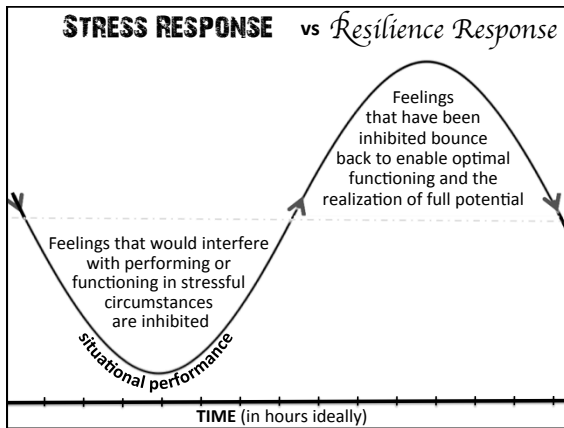


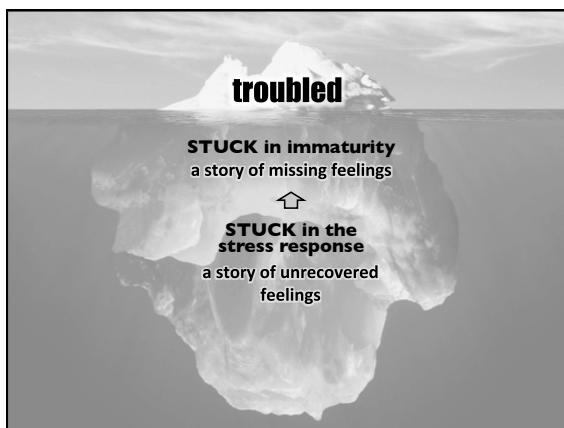
*Why would feelings
be missing?*

STRESS RESPONSE

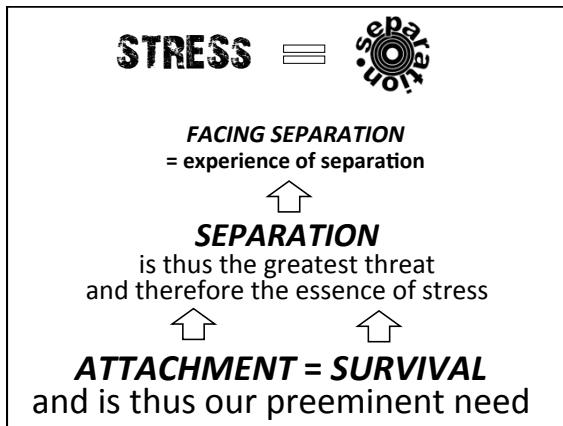
Feelings that would interfere
with performing or
functioning in stressful
circumstances
are inhibited



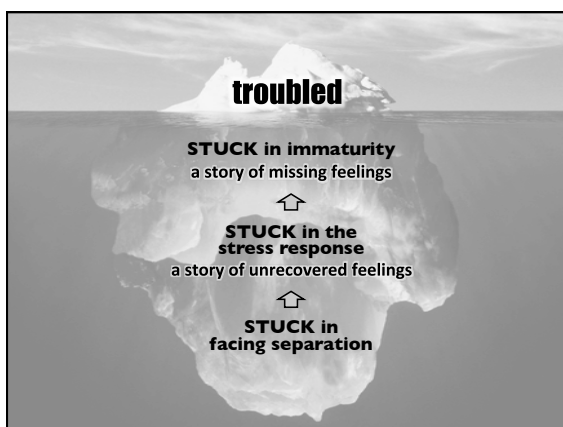




What causes stress?

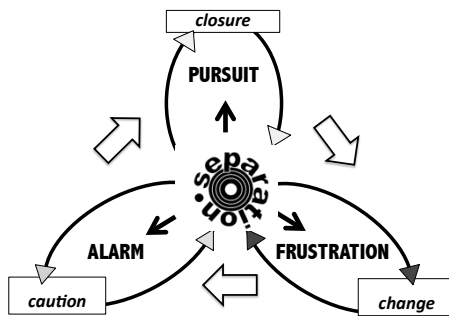






***What happens
when facing
separation?***

EMOTIONAL SOLUTIONS TO FACING SEPARATION



troubled

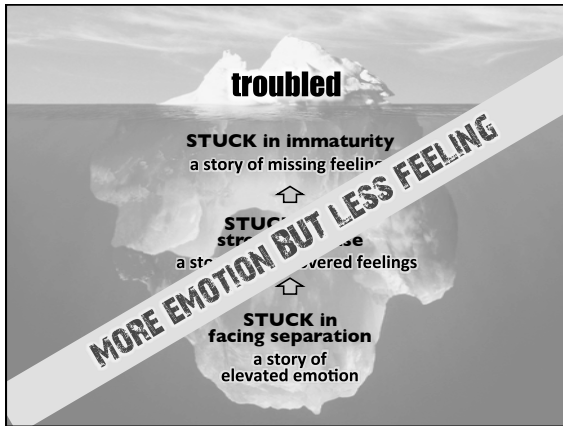
STUCK in immaturity
a story of missing feelings

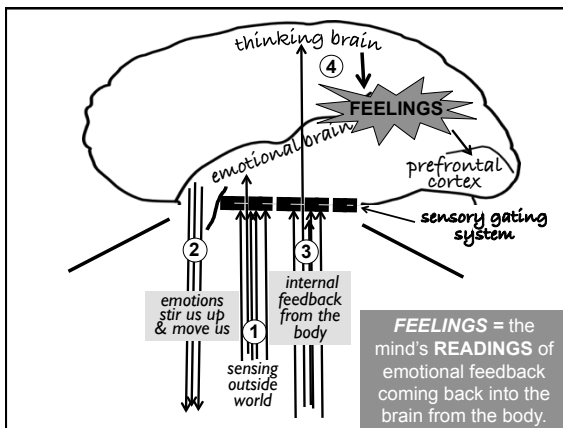


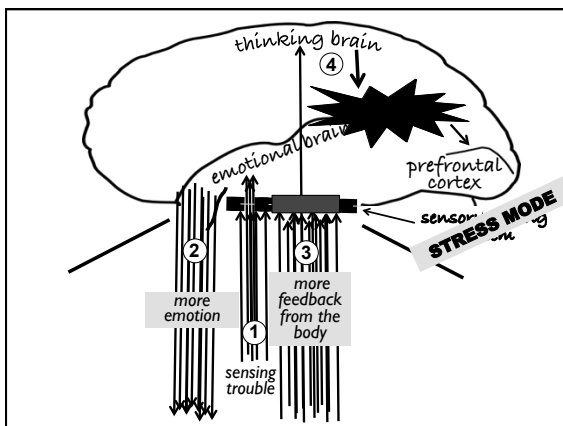
**STUCK in the
stress response**
a story of unrecovered feelings

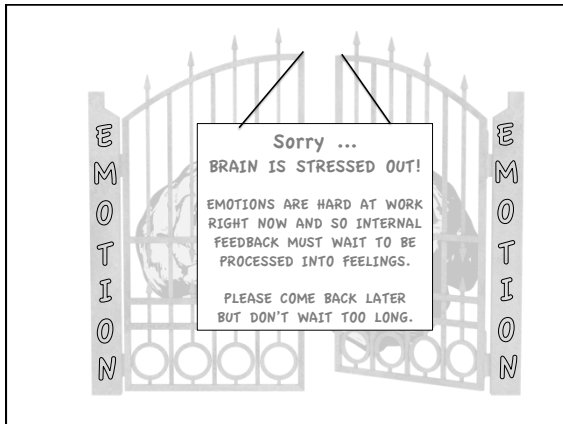


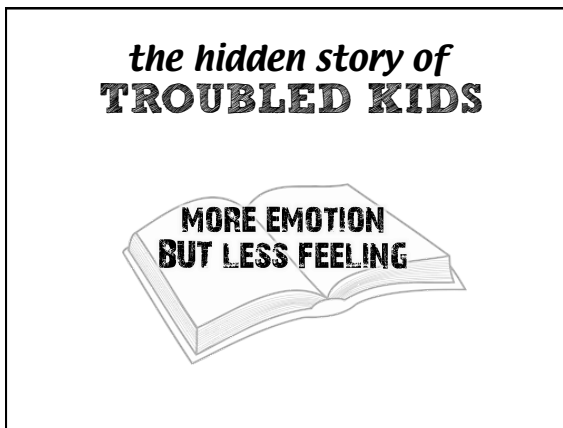
**STUCK in
facing separation**
a story of
elevated emotion

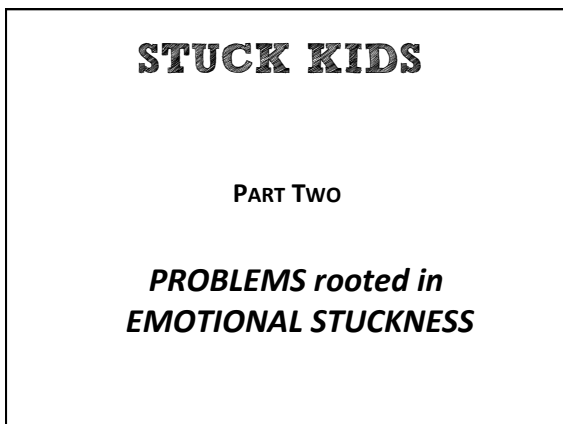


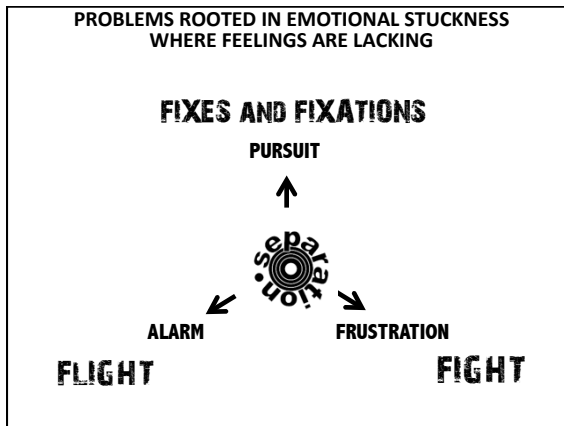


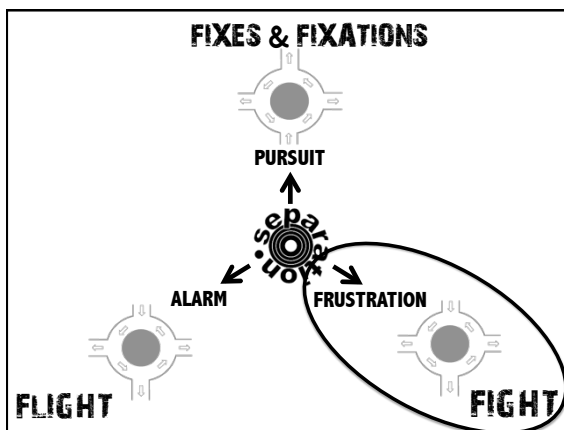


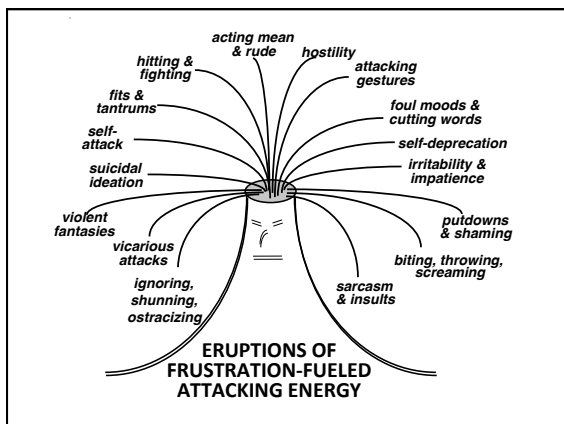


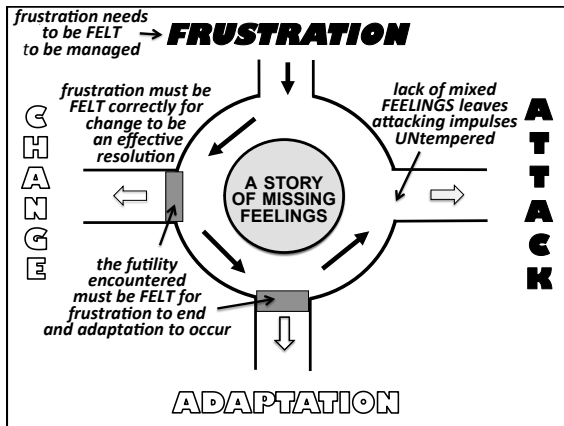


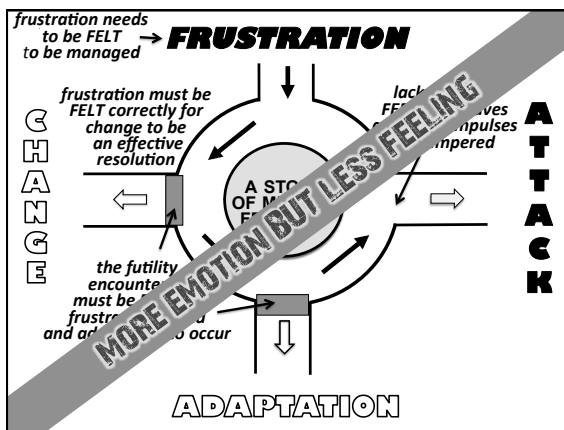


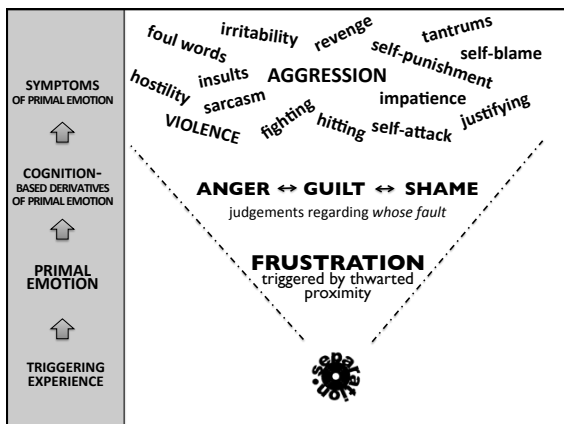


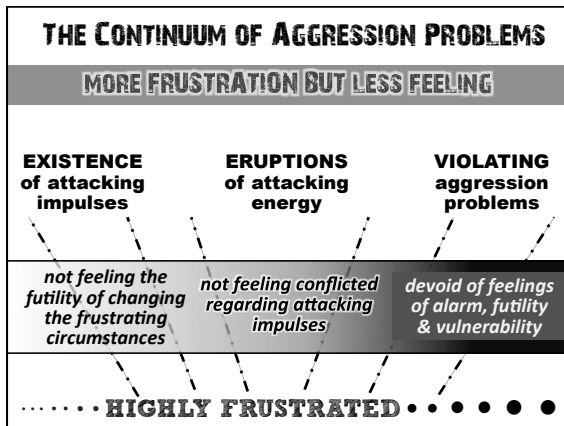


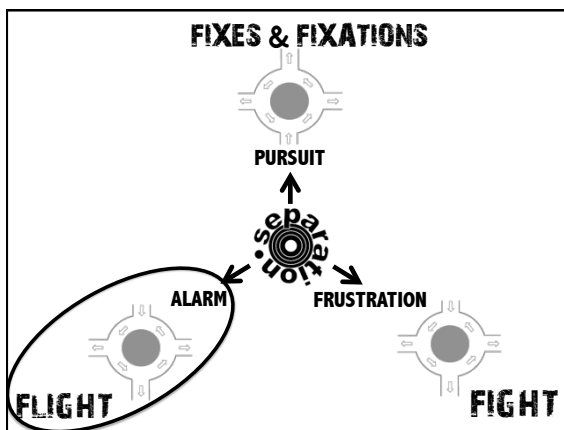


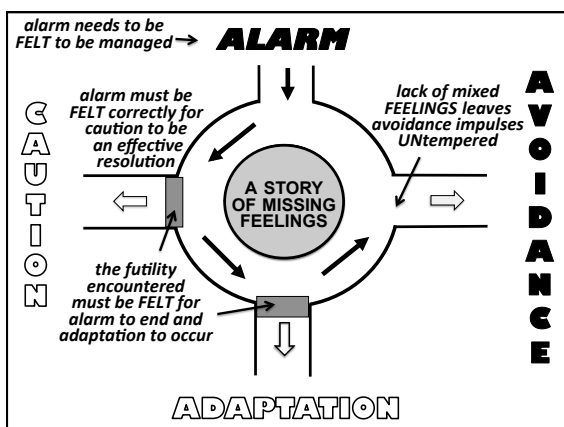


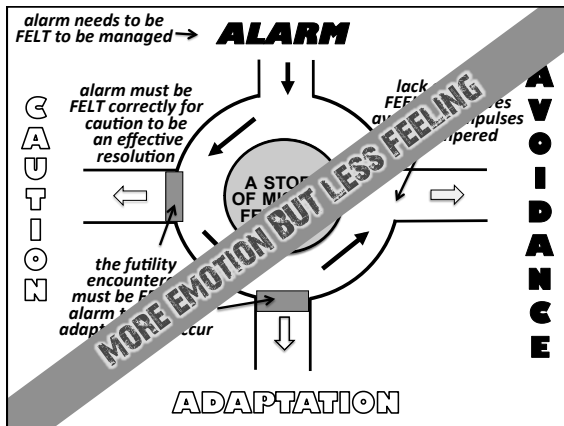












ALARM - BASED AVOIDANCE

LEVEL 1 – ANXIETY PROBLEMS

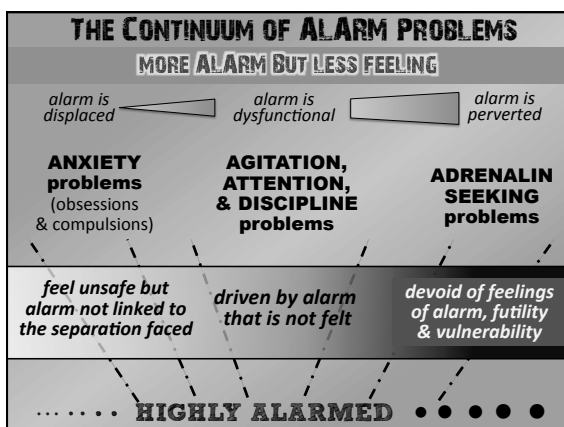
- *avoiding alarming things and situations* – results in obsessions and compulsions, including phobias and paranoia, as well as a preoccupation with staying out of trouble

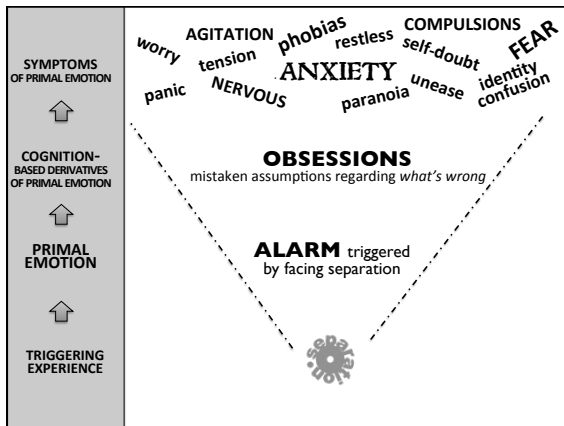
LEVEL 2 – AGITATION & ATTENTION PROBLEMS

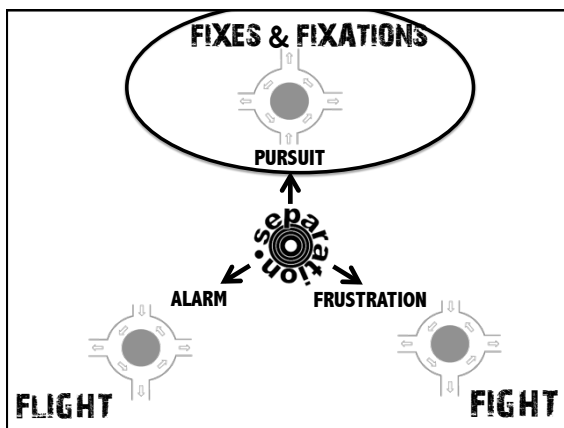
- *avoiding attending to what alarms* - results in significant attention deficits, not being able to stay out of trouble, not being moved to caution, recklessness and carelessness

LEVEL 3 – ADRENALIN SEEKING PROBLEMS

- *avoiding any sense of vulnerability* – the adrenalin rush involved in doing alarming things when devoid of a sense of vulnerability results in being attracted to what alarms and a predisposition for being a trouble-maker







The Depersonalization & Fragmentation of Pursuit
the **DEPERSONALIZATION** of attachment

the PURSUIT	of	PROXIMITY	with a PERSON
ATTRACTING	the	ATTENTION	of <u>Sarah</u>
WINNING	the	APPROVAL	of <u>Matthew</u>
MEASURING UP	to be	VALUED	by <u>Genevieve</u>
DEMANDING	to be	SPECIAL	to <u>Rorie</u>
IMPRESSING	to be	ESTEEMED	by <u>Scott</u>
HELPING	to be	IMPORTANT	to <u>Ms. Lem</u>
BEING NICE	to be	LIKED	by <u>Kendall</u>
BEING CHARMING	to be	LOVED	by <u>Sherry</u>
SEEKING STATUS	to be	RECOGNIZED	by <u>Uncle Jack</u>

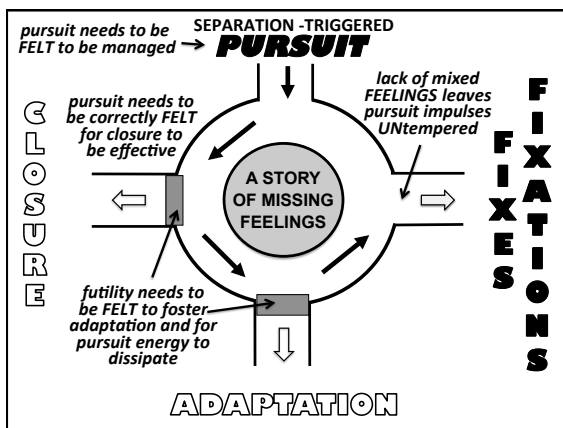
The Depersonalization & Fragmentation of Pursuit the DEPERs

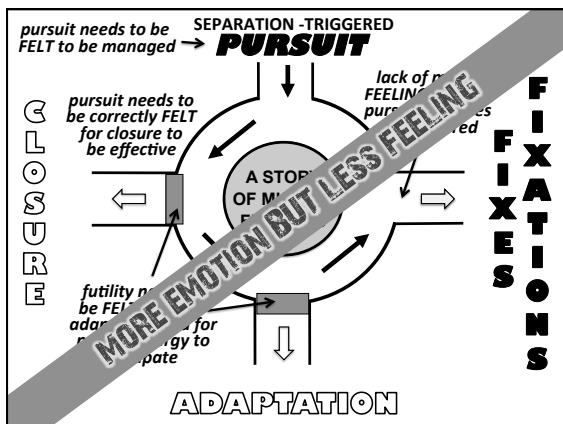
the PURSUIT

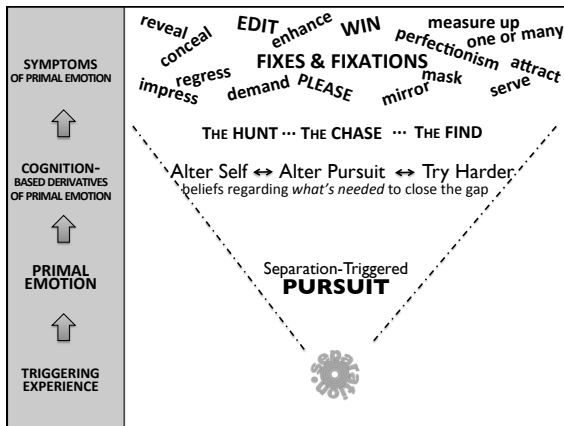
- ATTRACTING
- WINNING
- MEASURING UP
- DEMANDING
- IMPRESSING
- HELPING
- BEING NICE
- BEING CHARMING
- SEEKING STATUS

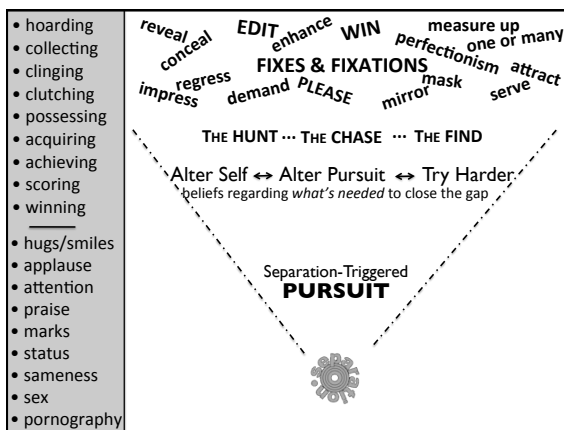
The absence of timely feelings results in losing the connection between the separation faced and the triggered pursuit that was meant to fix this.

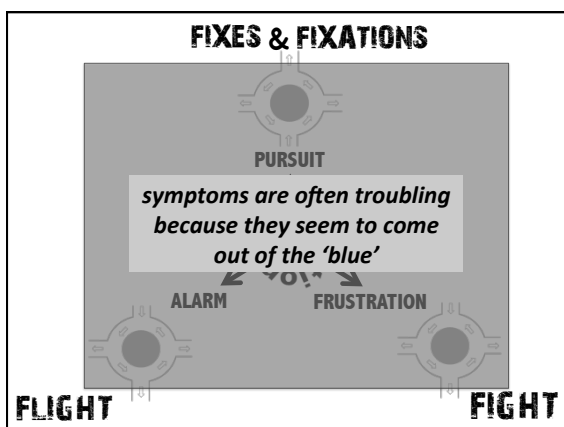
The result is fragmented and depersonalized 'fixes' that are divorced from their original purpose. These 'fixes' often develop into obsessive 'fixations' that can permeate our personalities.











STUCK KIDS

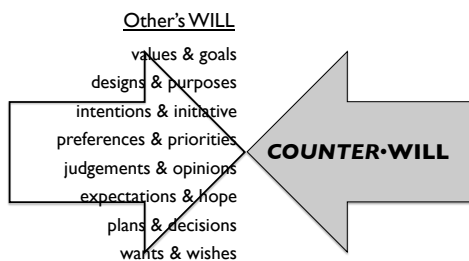
PART THREE

PROBLEMS when stuck in BASIC ATTACHMENT INSTINCTS

PROBLEMS rooted in BASIC ATTACHMENT INSTINCTS when feelings are lacking

- counterwill instinct
- alpha or displacement instinct
- shyness & tribalizing instincts

CounterWill refers to the instinct to resist or oppose the will of others when the attachment instincts are not engaged.



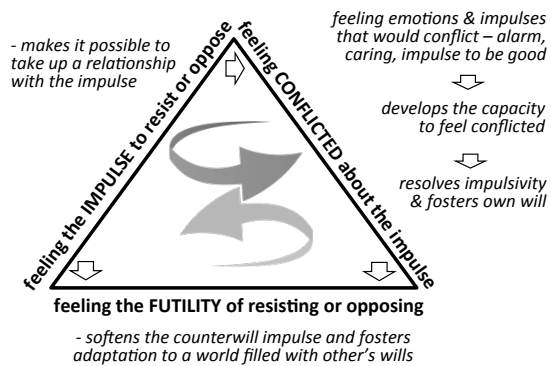
CounterWill serves attachment by protecting against 'outside' control and influence

CounterWill is triggered when...

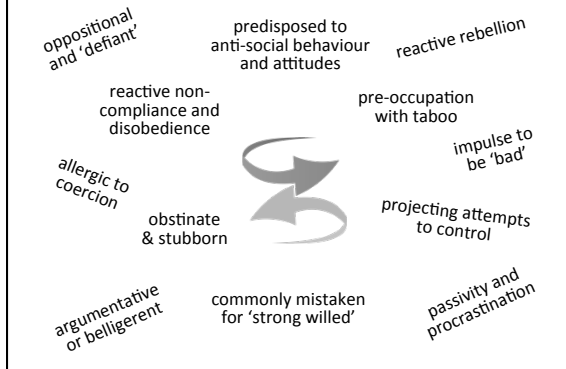
the pressure experienced > the pursuit of proximity

commands	> impulse to comply
obligations	> urge to make it work
expectations	> desire to please
demands	> inclination to defer
pressure	> desire to measure up
forcefulness	> desire to be good

FEELINGS civilize the CounterWill impulse



CounterWill UNTAMED by FEELINGS



**PROBLEMS rooted in BASIC ATTACHMENT
INSTINCTS when feelings are lacking**

- counterwill instinct
- alpha or displacement instinct
- shyness & tribalizing instincts

Common manifestations of the DISPLACEMENT instinct

- to take charge, to take over, to take the lead
- to command attention, to take centre stage
- to talk louder, to talk over, to talk for another
- to be first, to be the best, to be on the top
- to demand deference, to give the orders, to take command
- to give the directions, to provide the meanings
- to trump interaction, to have the last word
- to be in the know / to be the most knowledgeable

- is part of the **ATTACHMENT** drive which is Nature's answer to **SURVIVAL** for birds and mammals

- it's ultimate purpose is to take **CHARGE** of the **CARE** of one's dependents

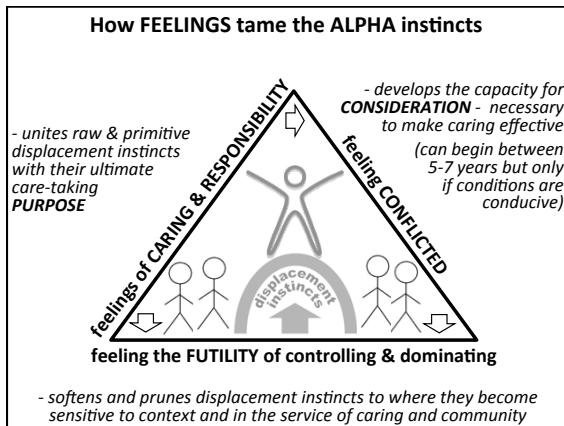
- is meant to create a **LEAD** in the *attachment dance*, inspiring trust and dependence in response

- should never be characteristic of an individual, only an attachment **DANCE** with a 'dependent' in need

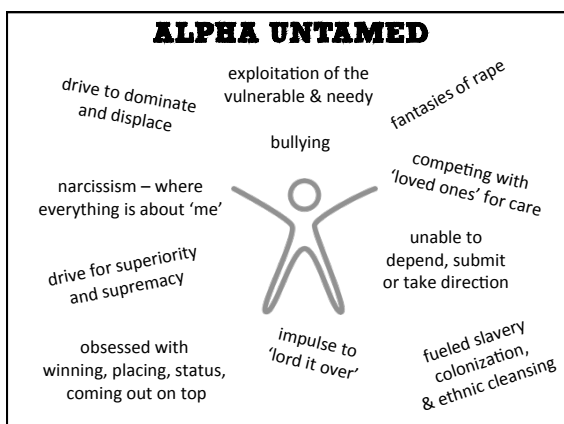
- requires extensive taming and development to turn the raw displacement instincts into an effective **ALPHA CARING RESPONSE**

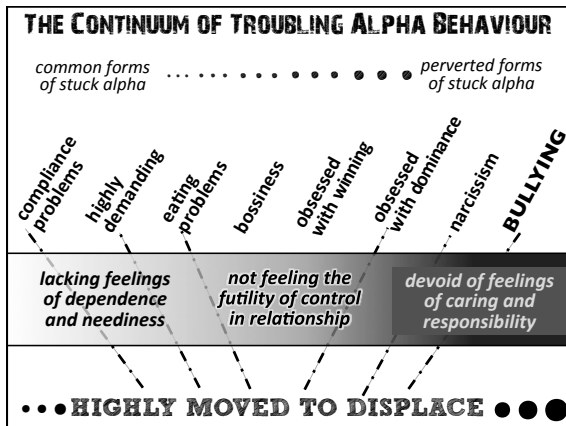
- successful development requires ample **PRACTICE** in a context rich with **FEELING**, yet preserved primarily for adulthood for the purpose of taking care of one's offspring and one's mate

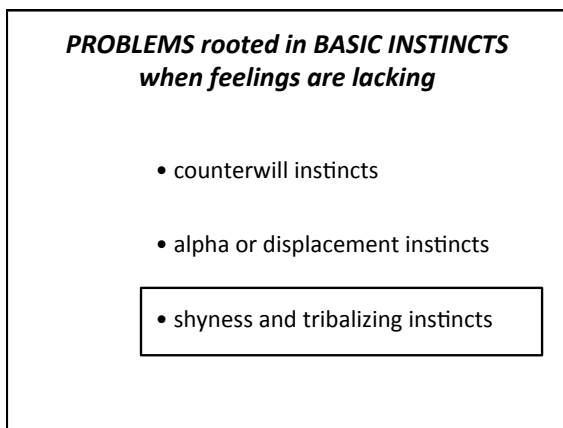
- if characteristic of a child, can seriously **INTERFERE** with development and being taken care of, including being parented or taught

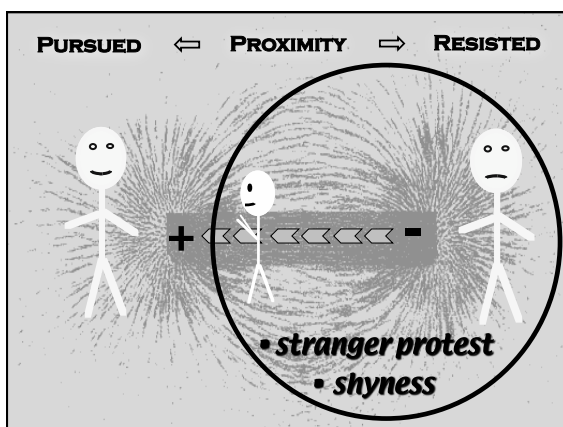













PEER ORIENTATION



Children taking their cues from each other as to how to act, what to do, how to talk, what to wear, how to express oneself, what is valued, what is expected, what is right and what is wrong

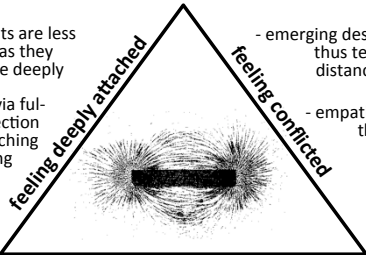
The competing nature of most peer attachments today (ie, can't be close to both peers and adults simultaneously) pulls children out of orbit from around the adults responsible for them.

positive polarity	negative polarity
seeks to be with	shies away from
makes contact	resists contact
endears	alienates
looks up to	looks down upon
attends & listens to	ignores & disregards
imitates & emulates	mocks & mimics
possesses	disowns
is loyal to	opposes & betrays
holds dear	holds in contempt
attempts to find favour	ridicules and derides
makes things work for	spoils things for
seeks to matter to	discounts as not mattering
seeks to please	annoys and irritates
befriends	eschews
loves	loathes
shares secrets with or keeps the secrets of	keeps secrets from or creates secrets about

How FEELINGS soften SHYNESS and tame TRIBALIZATION

- attachments are less threatened as they are felt more deeply
- attaching via fulfilling connection trumps attaching via distancing

- emerging desires conflict, thus tempering the distancing instincts
- empathy confronts the defensive distancing instincts



feelings of futility re tribalization

- feeling the futility of avoiding strangers renders more adaptive
- increased resilience reduces the sense of vulnerability in being exposed or outside of one's tribe or village

Some common SYNDROMES of stuck kids

ALPHA problems including bossiness, bullying, eating problems, and narcissism

AGGRESSION problems including self-attack, violence and suicidal impulses

ALARM problems including anxiety, obsessions, compulsions, agitation, attention problems, adrenalin-seeking, cutting & burning

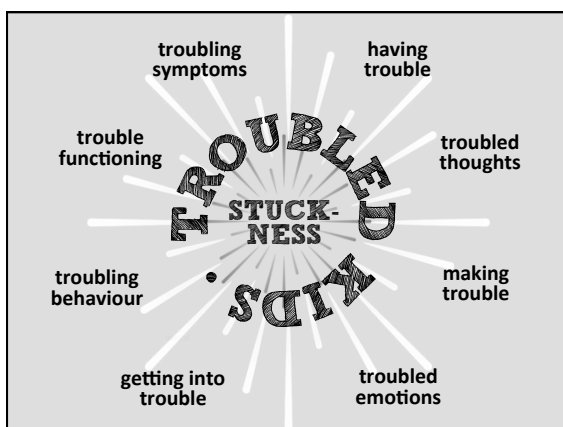
ADDICTION problems including to drugs, food, digital connection, pornography, video games, etc

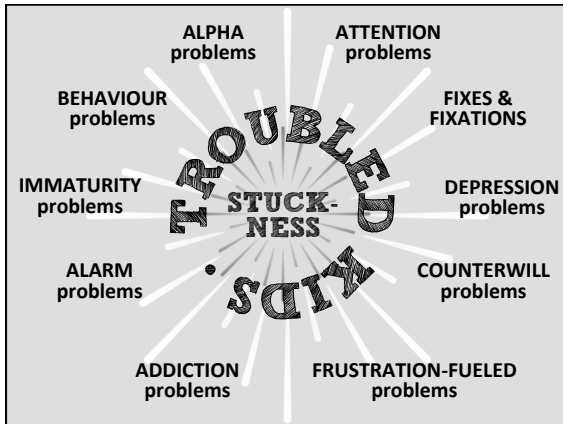
ATTENTION problems stemming from immaturity, alarm, peer orientation and lack of playfulness

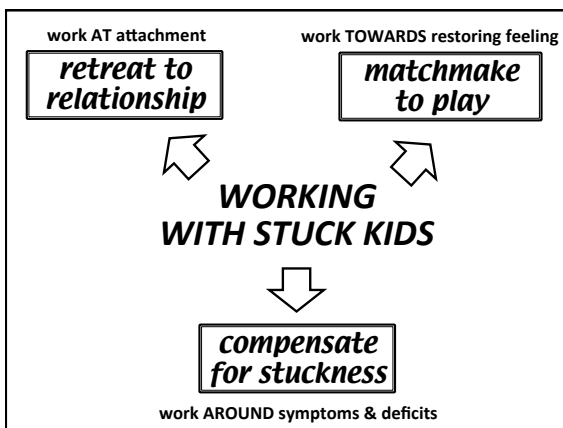
PART FOUR

WORKING WITH STUCK KIDS

- a three-pronged approach derived from **INSIGHTS** regarding stuckness







Back away from using conventional discipline to treat the problem

- from trying to teach a lesson
- from attempting to make accountable
- from using separation punitively
- from applying sanctions or withdrawing privileges
- from shaming or attempting to alarm
- from lecturing or admonishing

COMPENSATE for STUCKNESS

- employ structure, routine and ritual
- collect before directing
- script behaviour that would be spontaneous if more mature
- point out what works instead of what doesn't
- cultivate a leading edge of success

RETREAT to RELATIONSHIP

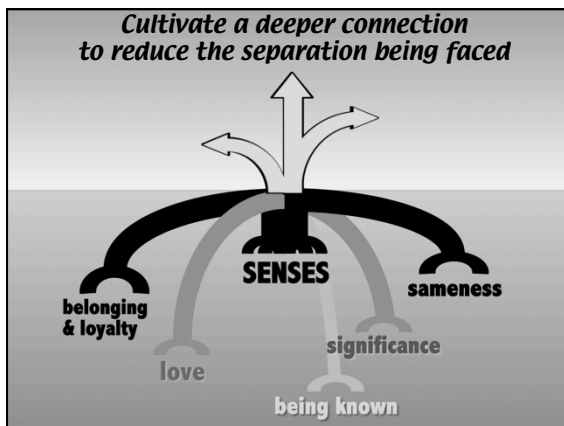
- to **REDUCE** the separation being faced – the root cause of almost all emotional and behavioural problems
 - deprives problems of their emotional fuel and reduces the load on the emotional brain
- to **cultivate the relational CONTEXT** needed for dealing with the immature, the stuck, and the troubled
 - reverses shyness and tribalization, renders receptive, trumps counterwill, reverses peer orientation
- to **enable us to COMPENSATE** for the immaturity, dysfunction and developmental deficits that are rooted in stuckness
 - harnesses the power of attachment, evokes the desire to be good for us, enables us to script appropriate behaviour
- to **create the sense of SAFETY** needed to recover feelings

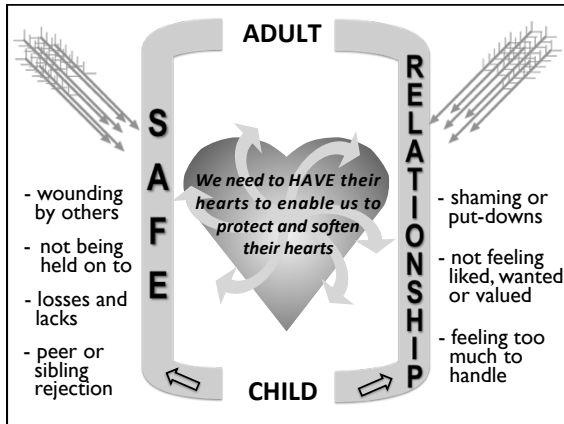


AVOID unnecessary separation

- get adults in the child's life to assume more responsibility for providing proximity generously
- refrain, if possible, from all separation-based discipline and reactions
- reduce separation experiences wherever possible; help a child to hold on when apart
- reverse peer orientation if possible
- try to keep the troubling symptoms from causing more separation

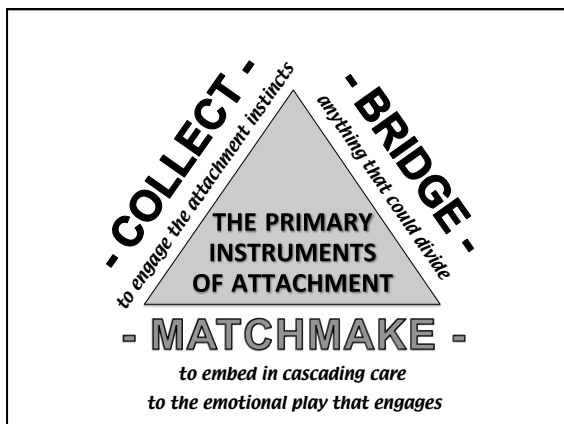






Create timely spaces for feelings to bounce back

- **AFTER** times of stress including separation, school, strained interactions, discipline, special performances, wounding, loss, etc
- ideally **BEFORE** sleep or the passing of time interferes with the ability of the thinking brain to interpret emotional feedback and link to the situations that stirred one up
- **FREE** of digital pursuit (social or videogames) and other competing activities
- **FREE** of problem solving, judgment, correction or teaching
- through **RITUALS** involving safe relationships and/or emotional playgrounds

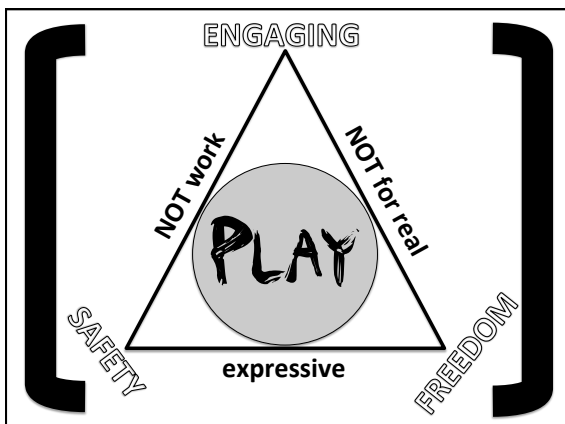


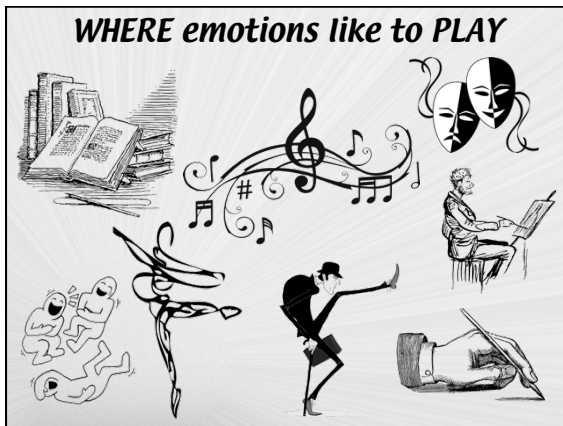
Cultivating a SAFE RELATIONSHIP:

- **COLLECT** the child or student at the beginning of each day and at least a few times throughout the day, where there is no apparent reason to engage other than to affirm the relationship
- use the engaging power of **PLAY** if necessary to jump-start a relationship (especially if there is reticence to attach)
- position oneself as an **ANSWER** by orienting the child or student and providing a 'touch of proximity' to hold on to
- find some way of conveying the **INVITATION** to exist in one's presence – very few will turn this invitation down
- take care to **BRIDGE** anything that would threaten the union or togetherness of the relationship

Matchmake to Play

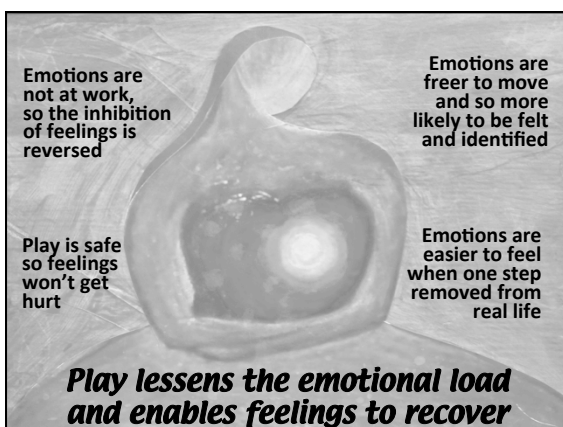
- engage in play to **PRIME** the relationships they need
- take emotions to play to **REDUCE** breakthrough expression that is harming the relationships they need or getting them into trouble
- use play to provide them some safety and **RELIEF** from distressing situations
- employ play to **ENGAGE** in learning
- use play to reduce and **COMPENSATE** for attention problems
- take emotions to play to **RECOVER** lost feelings






about EMOTIONAL PLAYGROUNDS

- any activity – social or solitary – in which emotions are at play or can be played out safely, without repercussion for relationships
- where play is expressive instead of stimulating in nature. Most screen play is emotionally evocative, not emotionally expressive.
- where play is freely entered and thus does not evoke any resistance or counterwill. One can never be forced to play.
- where one is free of the concept of performance or working towards an outcome
- emotional playgrounds can be anything in the imagination or in real life where emotions are at play and so can be felt



Sadness is easier to access when emotions are at play

- the engagement of play is usually greater than the aversion to sadness, setting the stage for what needs to happen
- shifts the locus from the 'head' to the 'heart'
- removes the impediments to 'tears', including shame and self-consciousness
- gives us something to 'cry' about that is one step removed and thus not too much to bear
- suffering is contained and so much easier to bear in the play mode, and sadness feels 'sweeter'
- finds & releases stuck or orphaned sadness, making it easier to access wordless tears



Summary & Review:

- underlying a diverse manifestation of troubling symptoms is a condition of emotional and developmental **STUCKNESS**
- underlying stuckness is a **LOSS OF FEELING** that is critical for optimal functioning, for healthy development, for adaptation, and for rendering fully human and humane
- underlying the loss of feeling is the experience of **FACING SEPARATION** that has been too much to bear
- to prevent things from getting worse, we must first **COMPENSATE** for the symptoms and problems that are rooted in stuckness
- we must **RETREAT to RELATIONSHIP** to reduce the separation faced and the resulting emotional load, and to create a context for
- our best bet for the **RECOVERY OF FEELINGS** is to cultivate safe relationships and engage in emotional playgrounds

working with
STUCK KIDS

Gordon Neufeld, Ph.D.
Developmental & Clinical Psychologist
Vancouver, Canada

addressing the root causes of
ANXIETY
in children and adolescents

- an attachment-based developmental approach -

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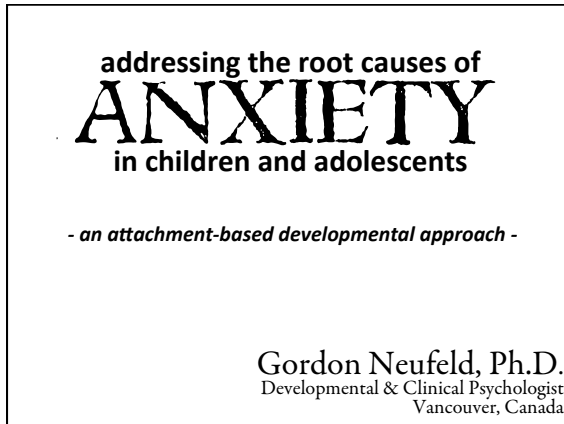
A JACK HIROSE CONFERENCE ON
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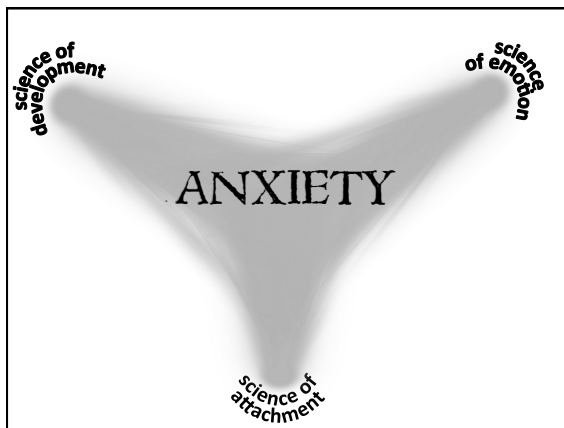
Victoria, British Columbia
November 6, 2025

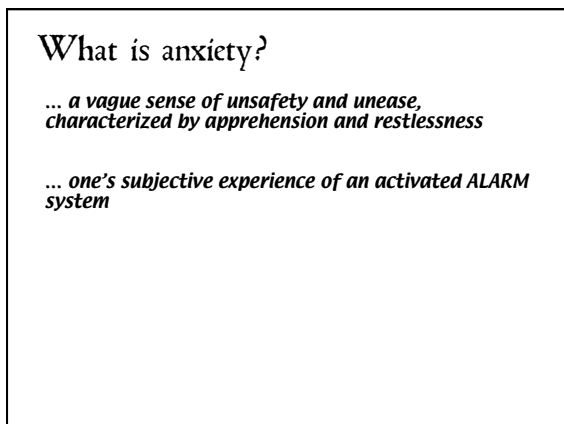
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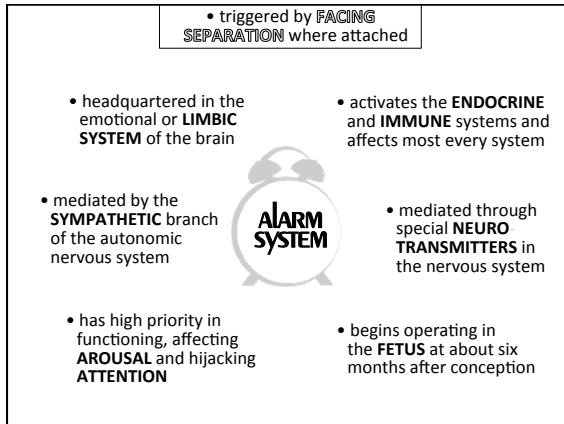
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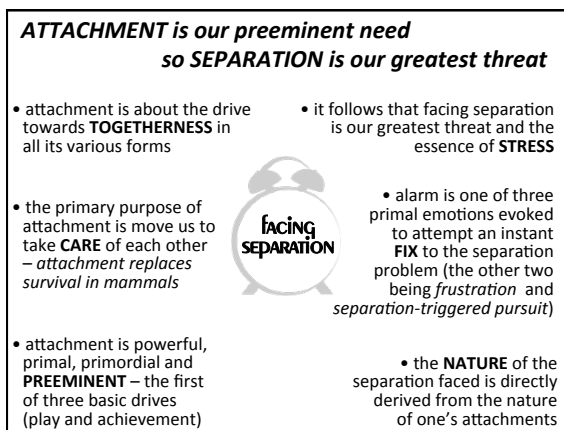
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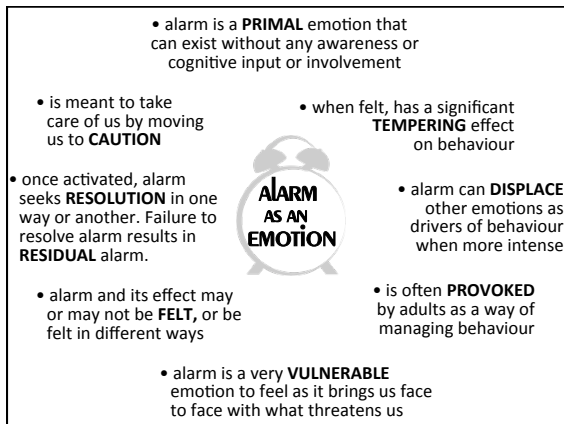


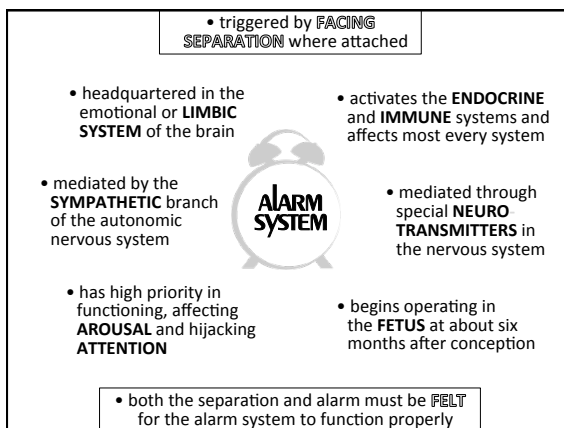






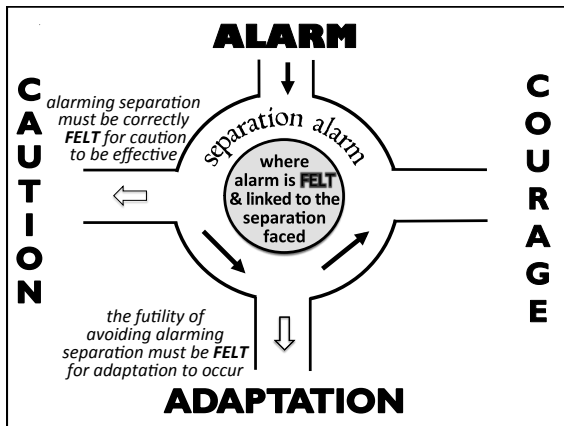






ABOUT FEELINGS AND ALARM

- One can **BE** alarmed without **FEELING** alarmed.
*- just as one can **BE** sick, hurt, hungry, tired, frustrated, angry, attached, in love, pregnant – without feeling it at any given moment or even at all for that matter*
- We only **FEEL** alarmed if the cognitive brain receives the feedback coming back into the brain from the body, and interprets it as alarm.
*- this feedback does **NOT** have high priority for processing, is **LESS** likely when the brain is under stress or has other work to do, must be **TIMELY** for the links to be made, and can be defensively **INHIBITED***
- The more directly one **FEELS** the alarm as **separation alarm**, the more likely the links will be made, setting the stage for alarm to be resolved.
- Alarm can **ALSO** be felt vaguely as **anxiety** (unsafe, uneasy, apprehensive), indirectly as **agitation** or restlessness (the arousal system) or energetically as an **adrenalin rush**.



ALARMING SEPARATION WHERE AVOIDANCE IS FUTILE

- bedtime, loss and mortality
- separation resulting from going to school, moving, divorce of parents, parents working, hospitalization, etc, etc
- the dawning realization of the inevitability of loss and losing
- always being wanted, chosen and preferred by those whom we want, choose or prefer
- being liked by everyone or avoiding rejection
- the lack of invitation to exist in another's presence
- the loss of affection or significance to another
- securing the contact and closeness in an attachment

facing separation

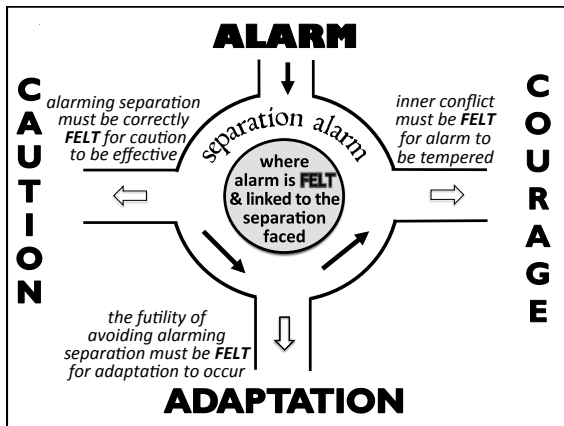
To attach is to face separation, but we must attach and so facing separation cannot ever be truly avoided.

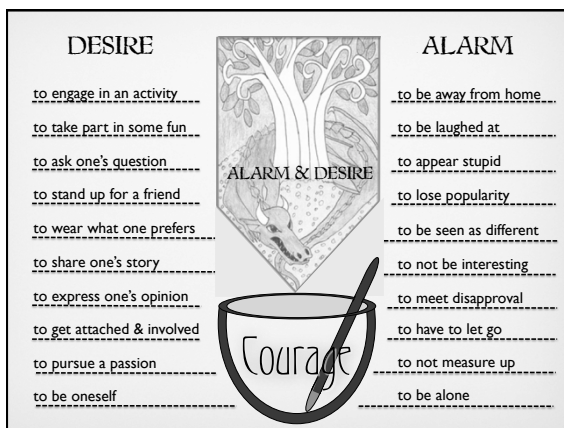
Adapting to Alarming Separation that Cannot be Avoided

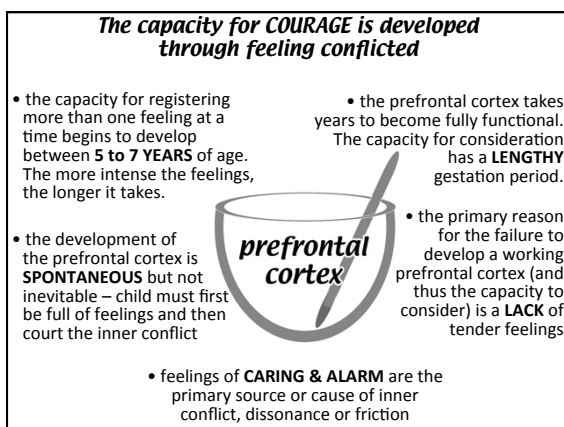
Encounters with futility

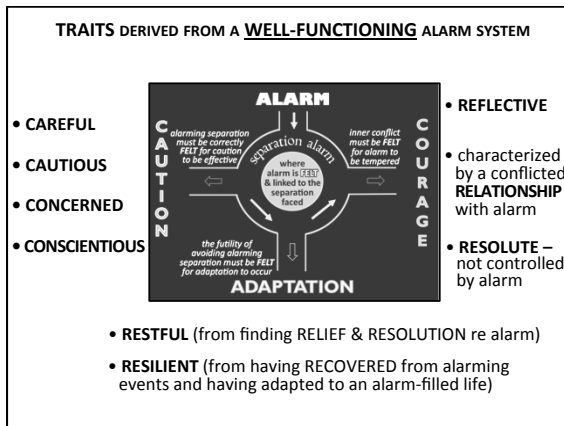
feeling of futility

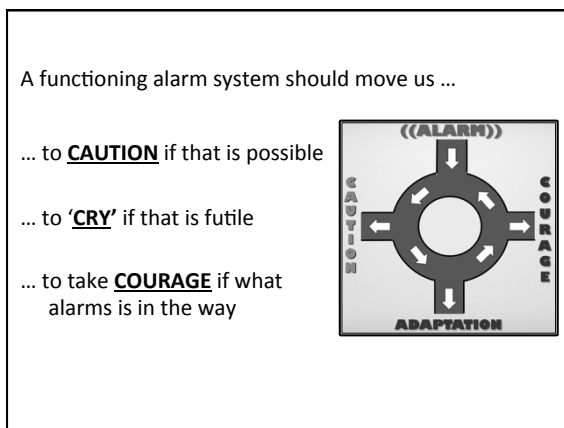
- **RESOLVES** alarm, providing some **REST** and **RELIEF** from the primal emotion
- develops the **RESILIENCE** to handle a world full of separation alarm
- enables **RECOVERY** from alarming events and alarming attachments

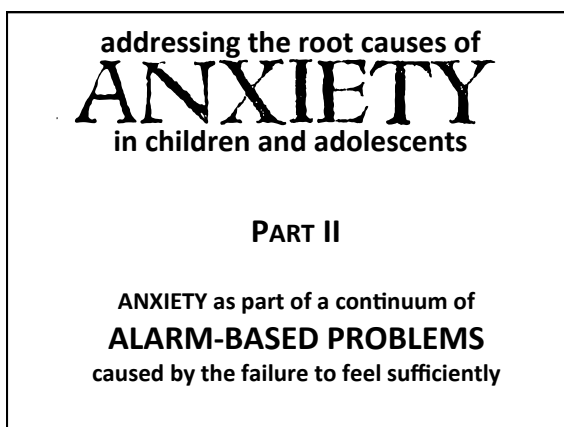


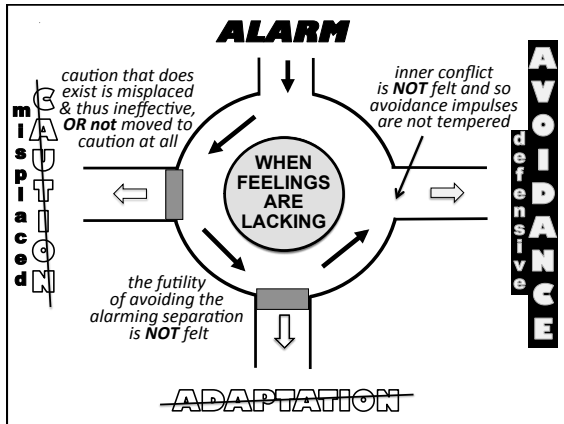












ALARM-BASED DEFENSIVE AVOIDANCE

LEVEL 1 – ANXIETY PROBLEMS

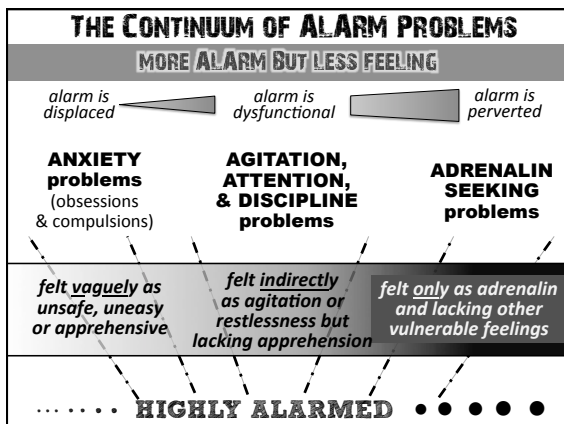
- *FLIGHT from alarming things and situations* – involves obsessions and compulsions, which can include phobias and paranoia, as well as a preoccupation with staying out of trouble

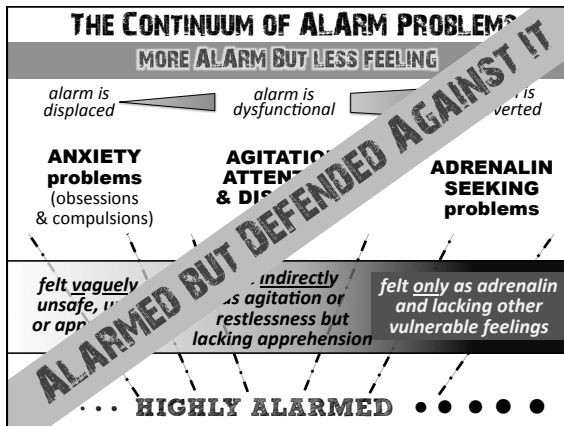
LEVEL 2 – AGITATION & ATTENTION PROBLEMS

- *FLIGHT from apprehension and attending to what alarms* - results in significant attention deficits, not being able to stay out of trouble, not being moved to caution, recklessness and carelessness

LEVEL 3 – ADRENALIN SEEKING PROBLEMS

- *FLIGHT from any sense of vulnerability whatsoever* – the adrenalin rush involved in doing alarming things when devoid of a sense of vulnerability results in being attracted to what alarms and a predisposition for being a trouble-maker





A CONTINUUM OF DEFENDEDNESS	
ANXIETY - based	The defensive inhibition of feelings is sufficient enough to interfere with linking the feelings of alarm to the separation faced, but NOT enough to keep from feeling nervous. The result is anxiety .
AGITATION - based	The defensive inhibition of feelings is significant enough to keep from feeling nervous but NOT enough to keep from feeling agitated or restless. In addition, defensiveness in attention results in a blindness to that which truly alarms. The result is agitation without apprehension plus significant deficits in attention .
ADRENALIN -based	The defensive inhibition of feelings is severe enough to keep from feeling nervous, agitated or vulnerable, resulting in feeling ONLY the chemistry of alarm. The result is being attracted to what alarms .

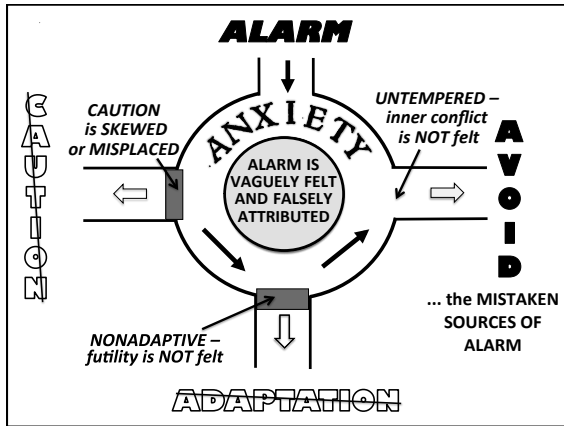
What is anxiety?

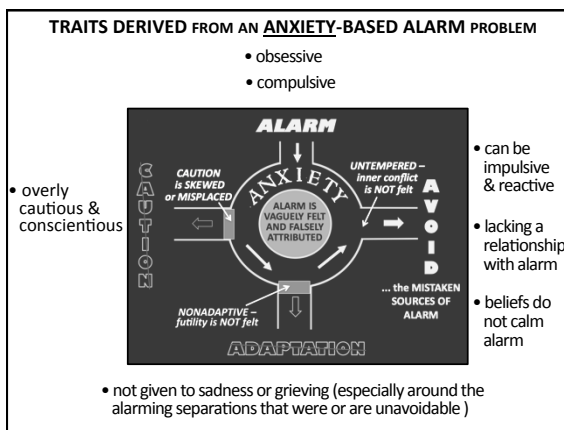
... a vague sense of unsafety and unease, characterized by apprehension and restlessness

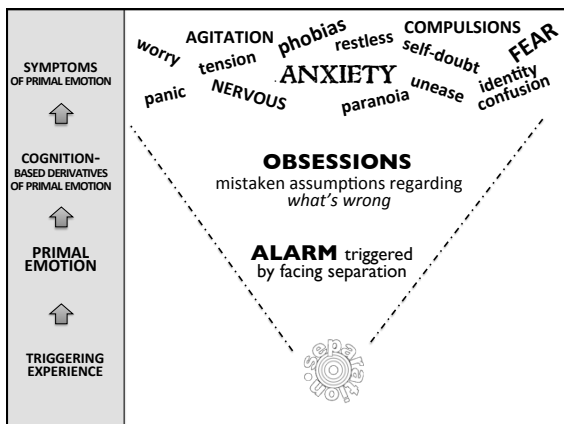
... one's subjective experience of an activated ALARM system

... a response to facing separation where the FEELINGS that link the alarm with the separation faced are missing

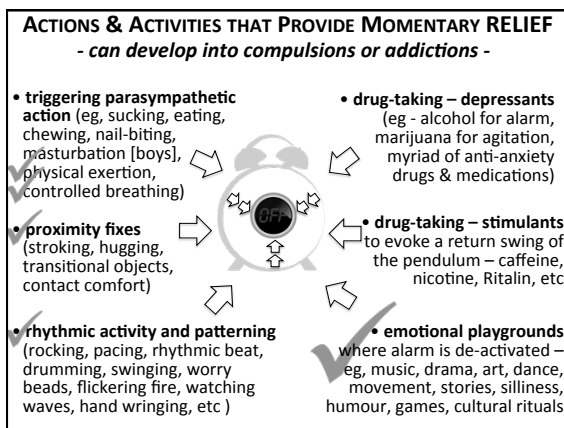
... a state of alarm-driven AVOIDANCE characterized by a FLIGHT from what our thinking brain has mistakenly assumed is the reason for alarm

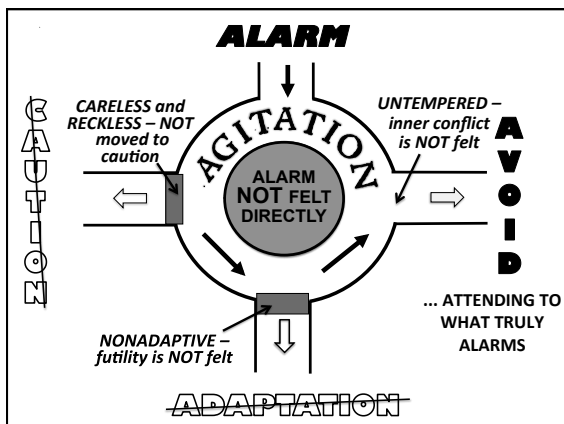


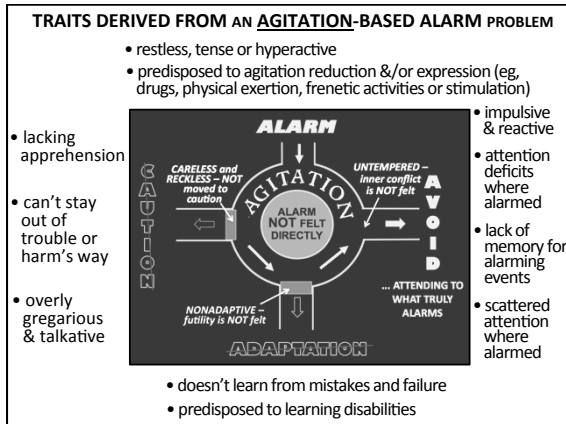


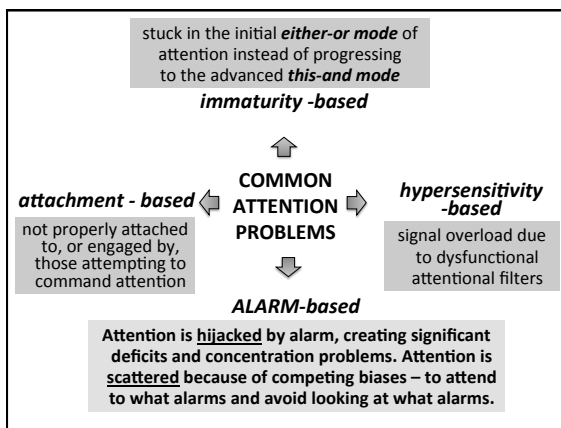


IRRATIONAL OBSESSIONS <i>(mistakes regarding 'what's wrong')</i>	RESULTING COMPULSIONS <i>(to avoid or reduce alarm)</i>
• someone or something is out to hurt me or to get me	⇒ work at avoiding the monsters and scary creatures, avoid getting conned, uncover people's plots
• something is wrong with my health or my functioning or is going to make me sick	⇒ work at keeping things clean, at not getting sick, at avoiding germs, at avoiding contamination
• something is out of order or out of place	⇒ work at putting things in order and their place
• something is wrong with my body or with how I look	⇒ work at improving one's appearance or at changing one's shape
• some places or situations are dangerous or unsafe	⇒ work at avoiding that which makes one feel unsafe (ie, phobias)
• something has been left undone	⇒ work at remembering to complete one's tasks
• one is 'too much' or 'not enough'	⇒ work at editing or enhancing, diminishing or improving oneself



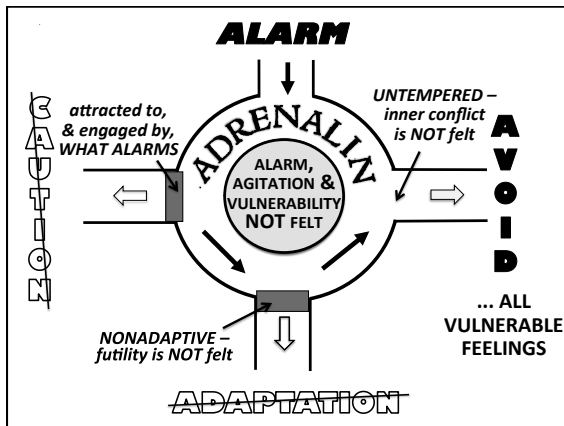






about **alarm-based** attention problems

- key signs are '**highly agitated**' as IF highly alarmed but '**without apprehension**' as if not at all alarmed
- attention system receives **mixed messages** from the brain: *pay attention to what alarms and don't look at what alarms*
- the two primary symptoms are **scattered attention** and significant **attentional deficits** around alarming situations (eg, can't see trouble coming, can't stay out of harm's way, more gregarious than would be appropriate, somewhat reckless and careless, poor memory for alarming situations)
- typically will qualify for an **attention deficit diagnosis** as the syndrome meets the three criteria: difficulty concentrating, restlessness or agitation, and impulsiveness (only two of the three are required for the diagnosis)



TRAITS DERIVED FROM AN ADRENALIN-BASED ALARM PROBLEM

- does alarming things (eg, risk-taking, cutting, burning)
- seems relatively unaffected by what should alarm

- **FEARLESS**
- risk-taking
- can become a trouble-maker
- can lack a conscience
- more able to engage in 'cold' caution

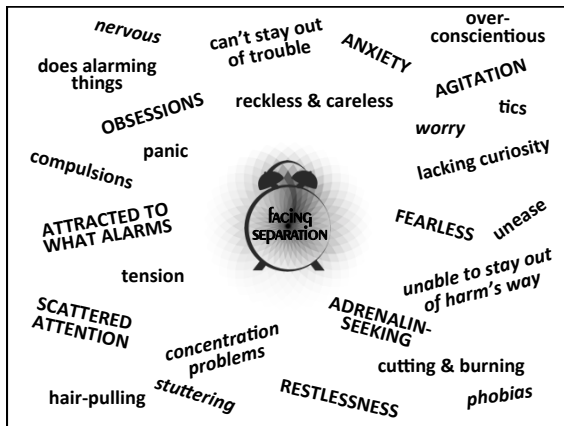
- **unreflective**
- **unconflicted**
- **inconsiderate**
- **unfeeling**

• **TEARLESS** – lacking in sadness and devoid of grief

• adversity hardens rather than softens

Some attractions of the highly defended ...

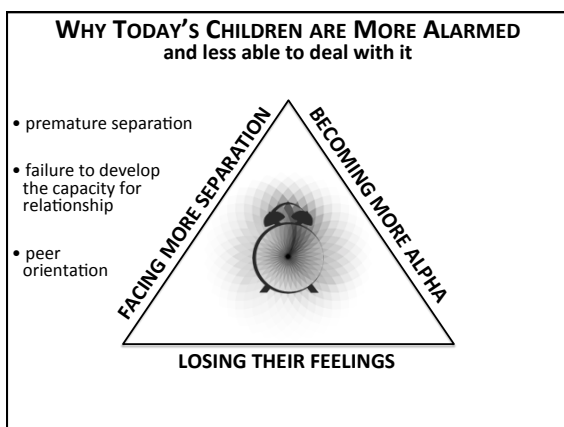
- scary rides and horror movies
- breaking taboos and out-of-bound behaviour
- dangerous activities
- daredevil stunts
- delinquent activity and being 'bad'
- extreme sports
- cutting and burning

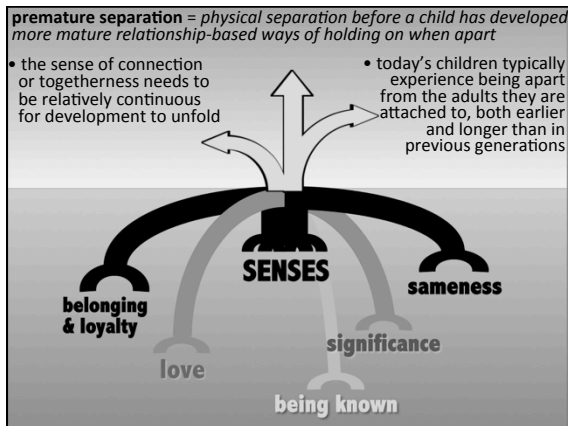


addressing the root causes of
ANXIETY
 in children and adolescents

PART III

A closer examination of the
ROOT CAUSES of ESCALATING ALARM
 in our children and youth





TODAY'S CHILDREN FACE MORE SEPARATION

- 1) more likely to be **APART** from their parents for reasons of divorce, schooling, parental employment, out-of-home care, after-school activities, and digital preoccupations
- 2) when apart from their parents, **NOT** as likely to be **ATTACHED** to the **ADULTS** responsible for them (*contributing factors include smaller nuclear families, loss of extended families, loss of the village of attachment, gradual drifting of school outside the attachment village, loss of culture that would foster the needed child-adult attachments, lack of focus on student-teacher relationships*)
- 3) more likely to become **PEER ORIENTED** as a result of falling through the attachment cracks of today's society


PEER ORIENTATION



Children taking their cues from each other as to how to act, what to do, how to talk, what to wear, how to express oneself, what is valued, what is expected, what is right and what is wrong

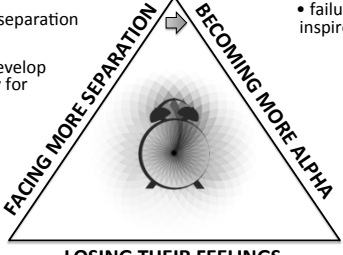
The competing nature of most peer attachments today (ie, can't be close to both peers and adults simultaneously) pulls children out of orbit from around the adults responsible for them

PEER ORIENTATION FUELS ALARM




- peer attachments are inherently **INSECURE** – the more one's peers matter, the more separation is being faced by default
- robs adults of the power they need to keep social interaction safe
- powerless adults, in turn, resort to alarm-based methods of behaviour management, fueling alarm further
- the peer oriented are drawn to social media where alarming interaction is the norm
- the peer-oriented can be cruel and uncaring to those outside their 'tribe', fueling alarm
- peer orientation robs children of the shielding and protection they need to live in an alarming world
- drives alarm underground as fearlessness is venerated by the peer-oriented and any show of alarm can be shamed or exploited
- peer orientation breeds **ALPHA** children, fueling alarm even further

WHY TODAY'S CHILDREN ARE MORE ALARMED and less able to deal with it

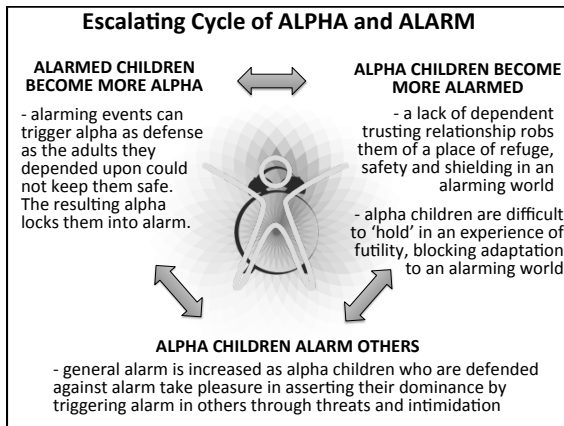


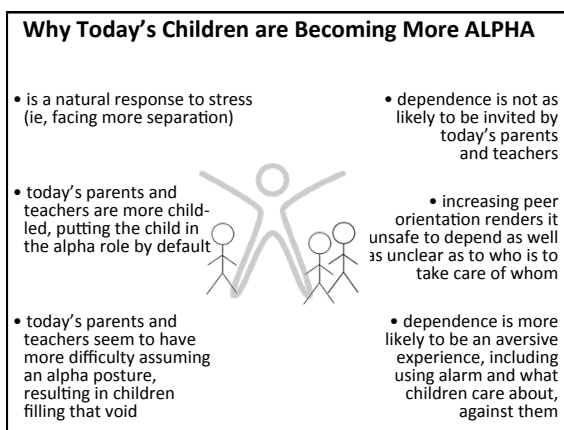
- premature separation
- failure to develop the capacity for relationship
- peer orientation
- failure of adults to inspire dependence
- not safe to depend
- peer orientation

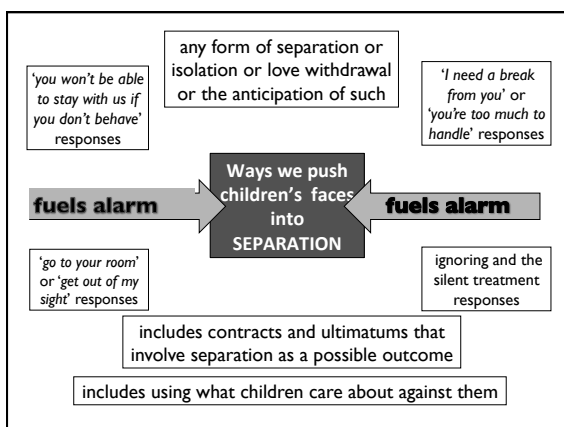
Common Manifestations of ALPHA Children

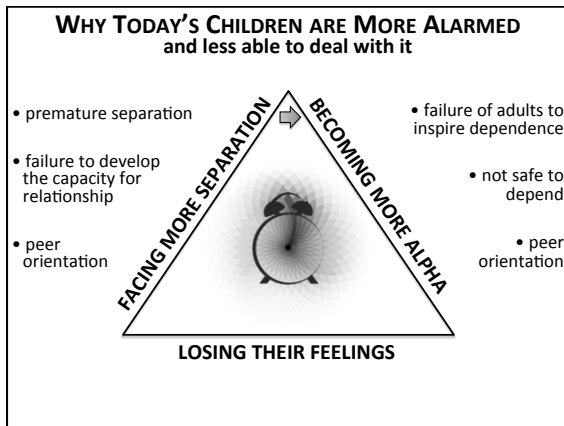


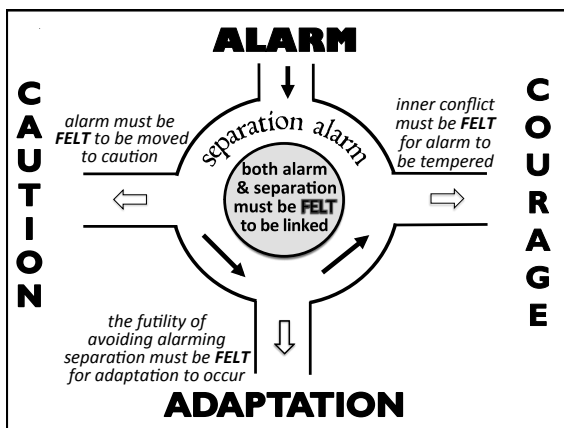
- predisposed to take charge, to take over, to take the lead
- tend to demand deference, to give orders, to take command
- inclined to command attention, to take centre stage
- insist on being the one to give directions and define the meanings
- moved to talk louder, to talk over, to talk for another
- compelled to trump interaction, to have the last word
- compelled to be first, to be the best, to be on the top
- often need to be in the know, to be the most knowledgeable

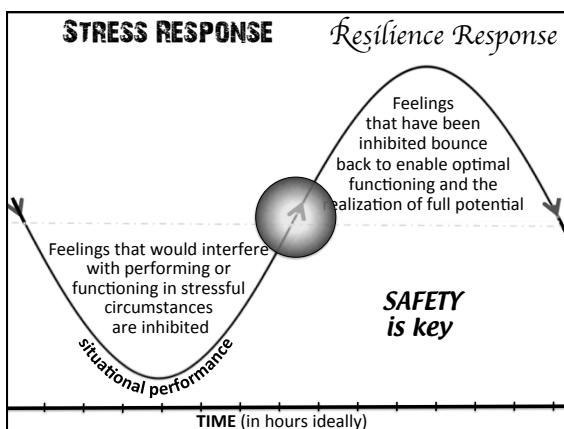


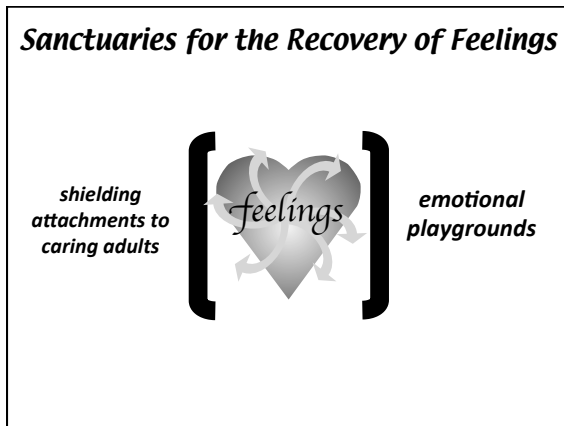


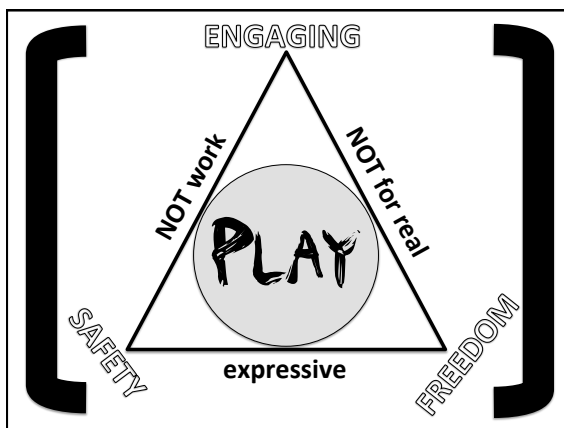


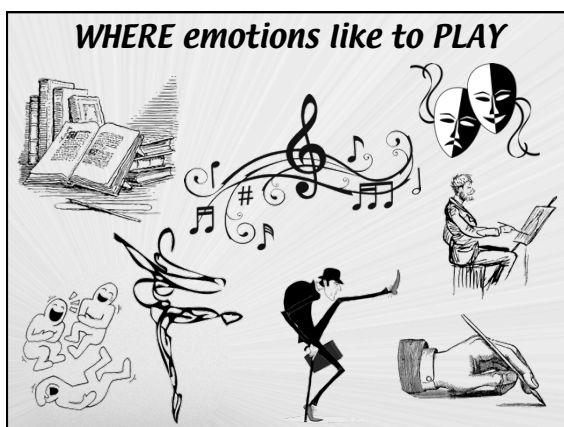




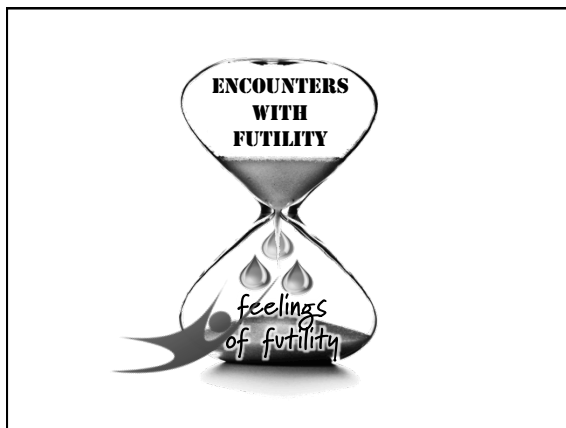


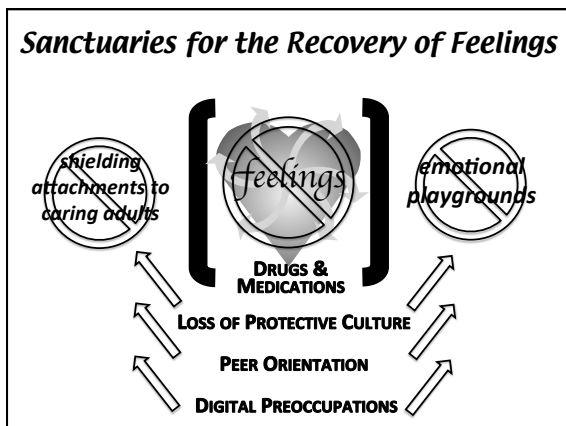


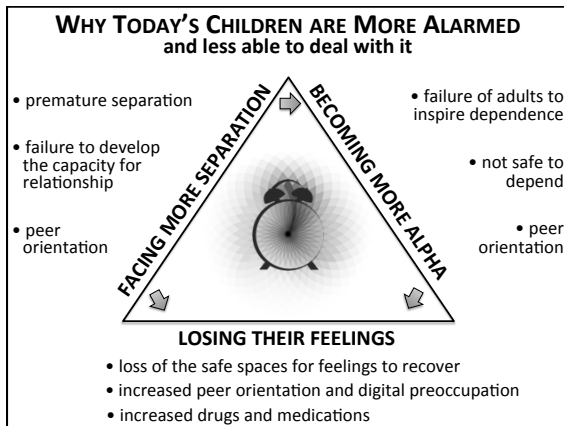


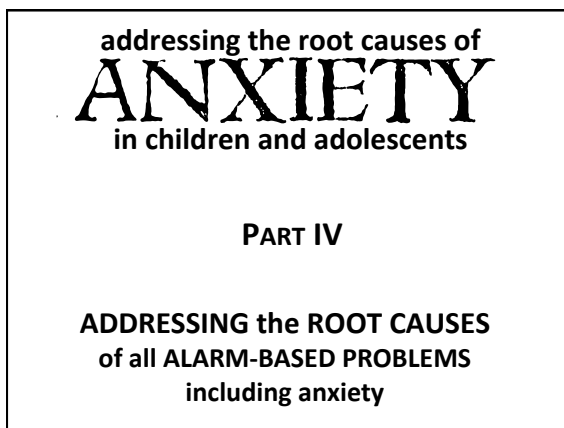


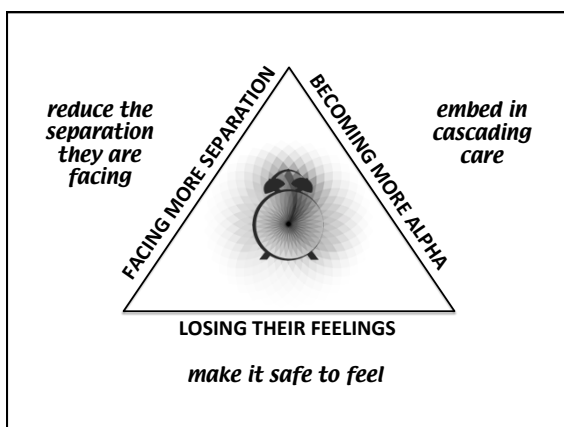


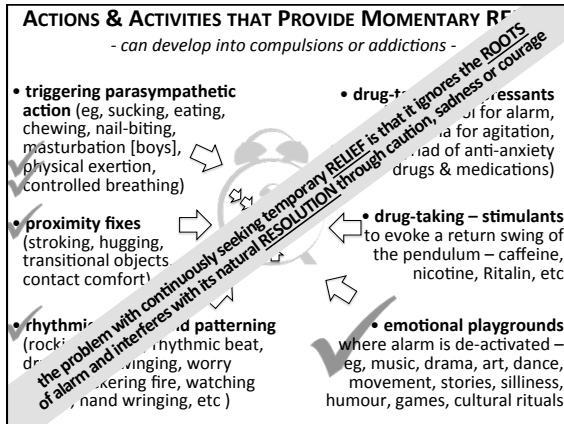


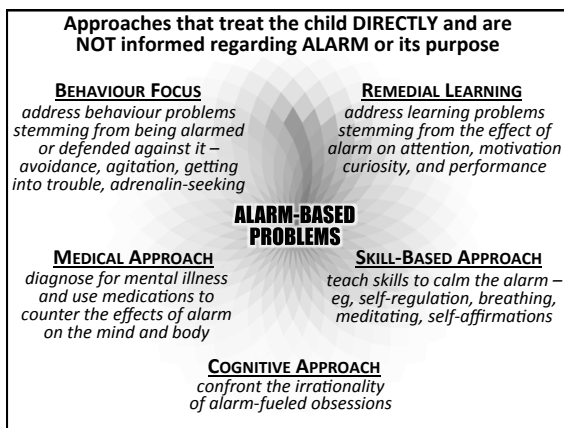


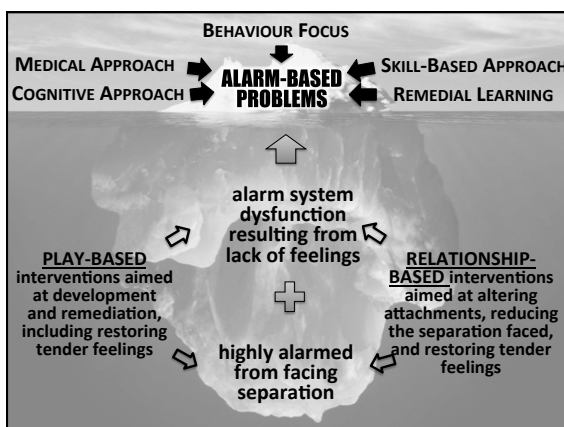


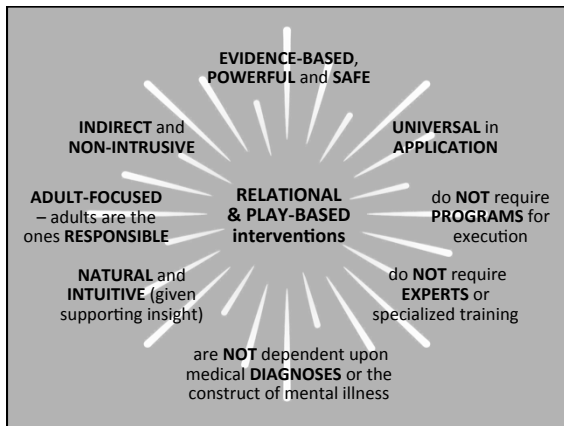










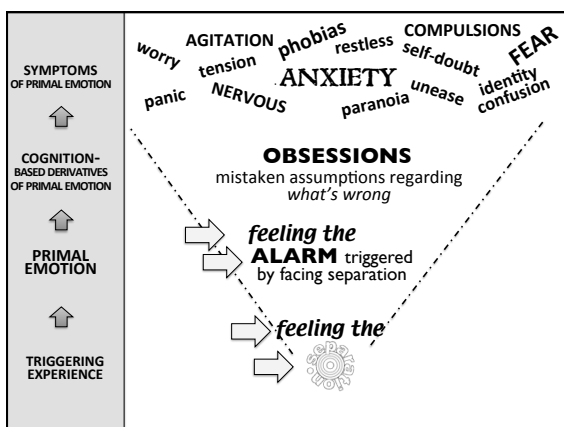


The ultimate challenge in addressing alarm problems is to **REDUCE the SEPARATION** being faced and **RESTORE the FEELINGS** of separation and alarm, to the point where the alarm system can more easily move the child ...

... to **CAUTION** if that is possible

... to **'CRY'** if that is futile

... to take **COURAGE** if what alarms is in the way



GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ADDRESSING ALL ALARM-BASED PROBLEMS

Treat all as HIGHLY ALARMED, especially those not manifesting feelings of apprehension

COME ALONGSIDE - using the insight of ALARM to find one's way to their side

ALARM-BASED PROBLEMS

NORMALIZE alarm, no matter how exotic or extreme the symptoms or pathologized by clinical diagnoses

- to develop, activate and maintain a relationship as well as take the lead

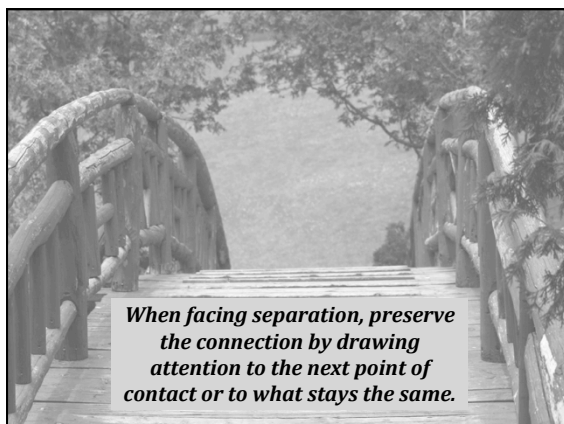
- COLLECT -
to engage the attachment instincts

THE PRIMARY INSTRUMENTS OF ATTACHMENT

- to take the alarm out of attachment, making it safe to attach

- BRIDGE -
anything that could divide


- MATCHMAKE -
- to caring adults and emotional playgrounds in order to provide safe refuge from alarm and safe sanctuary for their feelings



When facing separation, preserve the connection by drawing attention to the next point of contact or to what stays the same.

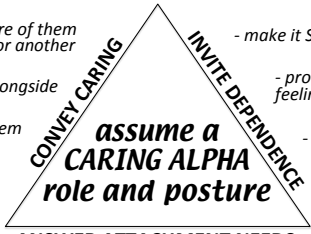
Embed in Cascading Care

- to **ADDRESS** peer orientation and alpha stuckness in order to reverse their impact on alarm
- to create a **REFUGE** as well as a safe place for feelings to **BOUNCE BACK**
- to **EMPOWER** adults to help cultivate a child's relationship with alarm and resolve it via caution or sadness or courage



- to give adults more **CONTROL** over the wounding and alarming social interaction between children
- to **SHIELD** a child against the impact of alarming interaction
- taking care of younger children provides a suitable & non-alarming **OUTLET** for children's own ALPHA instincts

- hierarchical relationships with caring adults as well as younger children in need of their care and protection -



- by taking care of them in some way or another

- by coming alongside

- by having them on your radar

- make it SAFE to depend

- provide SPACES for feelings to recover

- inspire TRUST

**assume a
CARING ALPHA
role and posture**

ANSWER ATTACHMENT NEEDS

- for sameness, belonging and significance
- for an invitation to exist in one's presence
- for a sense of togetherness that is not threatened

• **SCRIPT** cautious behaviour when needed

• teach the **LANGUAGE** of alarm indirectly through reflective mirroring

• prime **SADNESS** if possible, indirectly and one step removed, if needed

• **MODEL** a healthy relationship with alarm including the options of caution, 'crying' and courage


**from a place
of trusting
dependence**

• foster a **RELATIONSHIP** with **ALARM**, starting with accepting its inevitability

• lead into **MIXED FEELINGS** if inner conflict exists

• serve as **TRAFFIC DIRECTOR** if you can, helping to a resolution that is most suitable to the situation

Addressing ALARM through PLAY




- playfully alarming DEVELOPS the alarm system and BUILDS tolerance of alarm
- play provides temporary REST and RELIEF from alarm
- RE-PLAY of alarming scenarios can lead to eventual resolution
- alarm can be MASTERED in play
- play can provide SAFE DISCHARGE for alarm-fueled compulsions, agitation and adrenalin-seeking
- SADNESS is much easier accessed in the play mode
- play is the perfect scenario for the 'DRAGON & TREASURE' experience
- obsessions and compulsions can be DEFUSED in play
- ATTENTION problems are best addressed through play

PLAYING with ALARM



- peek-a-boo play
- rescue play
- startle play
- safe hide-away play
- ambush games
- dare games
- 'falling' play
- monsters & scary creature play
- safe-at-home play
- scary stories, games and activities

Playing with facing separation



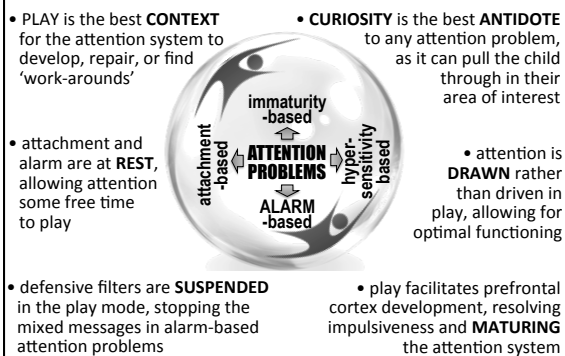
- GAMES
- POETRY & ART
- TRAGIC STORIES
- HUMOUR
- MUSIC
- CULTURAL FESTIVALS

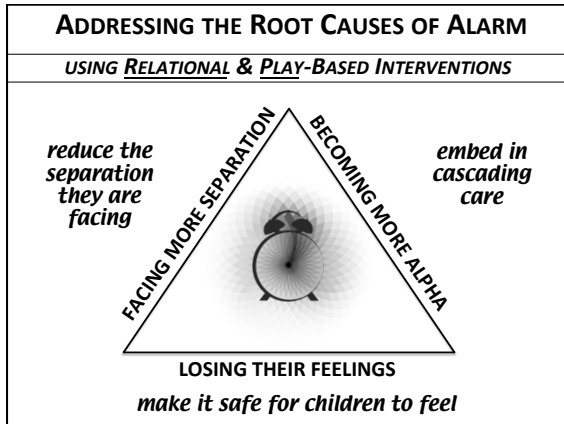


Bringing obsessions and compulsions into play

When my son was younger, around 4 or 5, he developed rituals upon walking from room to room, from inside the car to outside and so on. He would walk one step forward and then back and then forward and then back again a certain number of times. At some point I began taking his hand and "dancing" back and forth with him - which made him smile. After some time, I would lead him - get there first and eventually began to add new motions to his "dance". That turned it into a game and at some point, I'm not even sure when, this habit disappeared.

Play Holds the Most Promise





addressing the root causes of
ANXIETY
in children and adolescents

- an attachment-based developmental approach -

Gordon Neufeld, Ph.D.
Developmental & Clinical Psychologist
Vancouver, Canada
