

**FROM REACTIVITY TO RESILIENCE:
ACCEPTANCE AND MINDFULNESS STRATEGIES
FOR CLINICIAN SELF-MANAGEMENT**



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WHY? . . .



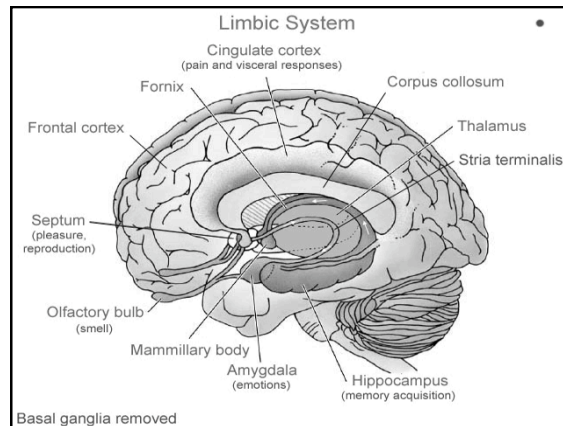
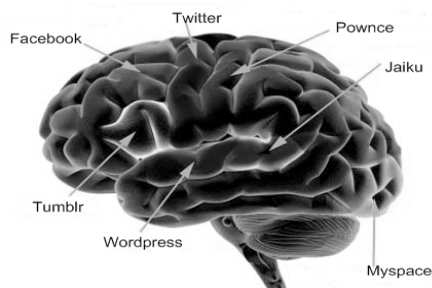
ORIENTING QUESTIONS:

- Have you ever . . .
 - . . . felt yourself fighting against strong, negative reactions to a client?
 - . . . been in a “power struggle” with someone in your care?
- What do we *WANT* from our caregiving efforts? @
- How willing are you to . . .
 - Learn to recognize *YOUR* role in difficult interactions with clients?
 - Develop self-management skills to end the “tug-of-war” and enhance alliances (even if it’s not “pleasant” to do so)?

ORIENTING ASSUMPTIONS

- ✘ “Social neuroscience” : Humans are biologically “wired” for relationships (from Harry Harlow to Helen Fisher)
- ✘ “Rope pulling” is ADAPTIVE (evolutionary heritage)
- ✘ Principle of reciprocity . . . We are ALWAYS mutually influencing one another
- ✘ “Mind” can activate and change wiring in the brain (neuroplasticity)
- ✘ Mindfulness: What it IS and what it is NOT

“SOCIAL NETWORKS” IN THE BRAIN



IT TAKES TWO . . .



THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

- ✘ “Therapeutic Alliance”: Bordin’s (1979) 3 Components:
 - + 1. Affective Bond
 - + 2. Agreement on Goals
 - + 3. Agreement on Tasks
- ✘ Best predictor of outcome in psychotherapy; possible direct impact on outcome
- ✘ Strong alliance = “Attachment” relationship
- ✘ Concept of attunement -- coordinated “dance” of emotional responses; synchrony of nervous systems

ALL ABOARD THE ACT TRAIN . . .

- ✘ We are all “trains” . . .

+ Past

- ✘ *Freight cars*: learning history, emotional/social patterning, expectancies

+ Present

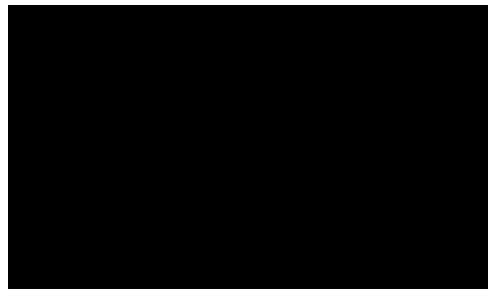
- ✘ *Engine car*: present moment (“NOW!”); thoughts, feelings, actions
 - ✘ Brain processes
 - ✘ Behavioral responses

+ Future

- ✘ *Track* out ahead; our values for our work and lives generally



EMOTIONAL “INHERITANCE” . . .



UNDER THE . . . THE “PAST” @



Deriving Your Own Social/Emotional Scripting

- *Using mindful awareness to assist in discerning the emotional “messaging” developed/shaped across time within your primary relationships*
- *Goal: deeply knowing your past so that it does not rule the present with clients*

1. What was it like to openly express worries/fears in your family as a child?
2. What were the unwritten “rules” about what was acceptable/not acceptable about expressing these emotions?
3. What was the emotional “volume level” in your family?
4. When you did something really well, who noticed and how was this shown?
5. How was affection shown in your home as a child?
6. How was failure or loss responded to in your family?
7. What did you do when you were upset as a child?
8. How is it NOW when you are separated from loved ones? How about when you are separated during times of upset, distress, or conflict?
9. What is it like for you NOW when people close to you are angry/sad/anxious?
10. What role does “vulnerability” play in your life NOW?
11. How do you respond to betrayals of trust?

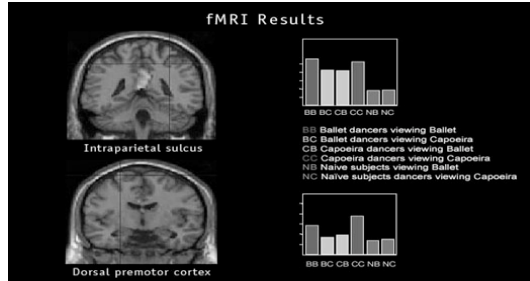
UNDER THE . . . THE “PAST” @



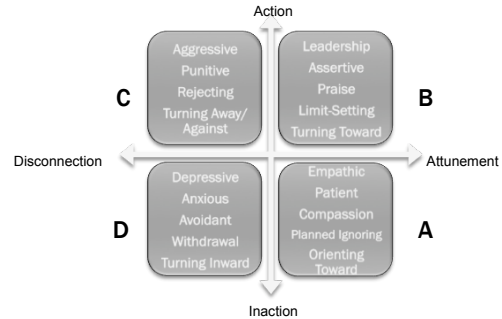
Emotional “Philosophy” (Gottman, 2001) @

Emotional Philosophy	What this sounds like	How it affects “bidding”	Response to bids?
Emotion-dismissing	“You’ll get over it.”	Less bidding	Turning away
Emotion-disapproving	“You should not feel that way.”	Less bidding	Turning against
Laissez-faire	“I understand how you feel.”	May/may not lead to more bidding	Turn toward, but w/o guidance
Emotion-coaching	“I understand how you feel . . . Let me help you.”	More bidding	Turning toward with guidance for coping

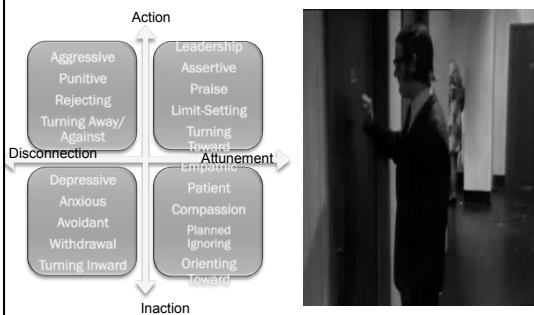
“Mirror, Mirror . . .” The Observing Brain



INTERPERSONAL PROCESS GRID @



INTERPERSONAL PROCESS GRID

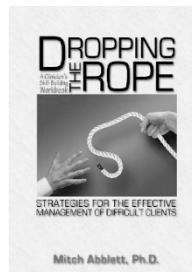


UNDER THE . . . THE “FUTURE”

- ✦ Ripple Effects
 - + “Contagion” in social networks
 - + Emotional/health erosion
- ✦ Maintenance of Relationship Dynamic
 - + Learned helplessness after repeated negative exchanges
 - + Role of mutual “negative” reinforcement . . . “Conflict Cycles”
 - + Need for pattern recognition, interruption and learned *hopefulness* (attunement leading to mindful exploration and change effort)
 - + More than mere “*yes-ing*” our clients @

RELATIONAL INTERVENTION: GOALS OF RELATIONAL “ROPE-DROPPING”

- ✦ Avoiding unhelpful knee-jerk reactions when clients are “difficult” (staying on the right side of the Process Grid)
- ✦ Creating emotional “space” for proactive responding
- ✦ Modeling adaptive emotion/self-management
- ✦ Creating an atmosphere for productive problem-solving and communication
- ✦ Creating shared values
- ✦ “Re-wiring” the relationship
- ✦ Decreasing risk for burn-out
- ✦ Developing **habit** of *turning toward* clients



D.R.O.P.: DEFUSE/DISENTANGLE FROM SCRIPTING AND REACTIVITY

- ✦ Are you willing to create “distance” between yourself and unworkable thoughts, beliefs, and reactions to your client?
- ✦ Am I willing to notice my experience without trying to “make” something happen?
- ✦ Ask yourself: Is my “emotional philosophy,” my attachment “scripting,” helping or hindering right now?
- ✦ What am I feeling “pulled” to do (which side of the Grid?). Is this reaction “workable?” What is the cost?
- ✦ Am I WILLING to “be present, open up and do what matters?” (Harris, 2009)
- ✦ Do I want to be right, or do I want to be helpful?

D.R.O.P.: DEFUSE/DISENTANGLE FROM SCRIPTING AND REACTIVITY



“Defusion”: Separating/distancing from thoughts – not getting “caught” in them, and not allowing thoughts to be a barrier to valued living (Harris, 2009)

- A few quick defusion caveats . . .
- Sample Techniques:
 1. New Perceptual “Frames” (“Thank your Mind”; Get off your ‘buts’; “having the thought that . . .”)
 2. Flexible Experience of Thought Process (words on cards; repeat “stinging” words; “duck voice” your thought)
 3. Metaphor (thought as pop-up ad; as a cloud in the sky; Dr. Mind pontificating again)
- Gone Fusion Fishing: About what are you certain regarding your “difficult client?” . . . Let’s go fishing . . .

D.R.O.P.: DEFUSE/DISENTANGLE FROM SCRIPTING AND REACTIVITY



Possible Fused Helper Thoughts:

- ✘ Substance Users/Addiction:
 - + “This client is resistant to change.”
- ✘ Trauma:
 - + “This person is shattered/broken.”
 - + “I have to save him/her.”
- ✘ Violent/Acting Out:
 - + “This is too much for me to handle.”
- ✘ Personality Disordered:
 - + “He she/is manipulative.”

Possible Defused Alternatives:

- New Frame: _____
- Flexible Experience: _____
- Metaphor: _____
- New Frame: _____
- Flexible Experience: _____
- Metaphor: _____
- New Frame: _____
- Flexible Experience: _____
- Metaphor: _____

D.R.O.P.: REDEFINING EXPECTATIONS AND REACHING OUT TO NOW



- Taking a quick stab at your most difficult client
- *An Ancient Stallion Story . . . “Could be good, could be bad, who knows?”*
- Acceptance is NOT resignation . . . Allowing what IS
- Consulting my clinical “crystal ball” . . .
- Redefining “success” and “failure” in treatment
- Creating a mindfulness/acceptance “rounds” routine
 - Habit of Leaning Toward the “Negative”

D.R.O.P.: ORIENT TOWARD PERSON AND VALUES



- ✘ Listening and Looking before you Leap . . .
- ✘ Getting Real about Your Work . . .
 - + Attending your own retirement party . . .
 - + Your fantasy termination . . .
 - + Your client’s death bed . . .
- ✘ “Clinician, Feel for Yourself”
 - + Importance of “Self-Compassion”
 - + Clinician “Mirror Time”

D.R.O.P.: ORIENT TOWARD PERSON AND VALUES



Assuming a Compassionate Stance:

- ✘ The Art of TOW . . . *Hold your enemies* . . . Move toward their distress (the right side of the grid)
- ✘ True compassion: the intensity and spontaneity of a loving mother caring for her suffering child
- ✘ What must your *client* be feeling? Visualize their experience . . . “Try on” their point of view @
- ✘ Regular practice: meditation/visualization from client’s chair
- ✘ What am I *missing* about the other person? What is he/she really needing?
- ✘ What are your client’s “bottom line” beliefs? About what are *they* certain?

D.R.O.P.: ORIENT TOWARD PERSON AND VALUES



Assuming a Compassionate Stance: “Sending and Taking”

- ✘ Tibetan practice of “Tonglen”
- ✘ More than merely taking “deep breaths” in face of discomfort
- ✘ Crucial role of intention: *choosing* to breathe in another’s pain/discomfort and breathe out an intention of ease/release to the other person
- ✘ Pema Chodron: “on the spot” training
- ✘ Start with someone you feel close to and move toward your “difficult” clients
- ✘ Practice “catching yourself” hardening, and apply it
- ✘ If practiced regularly, it can expand your compassion for others; change your relationship to pain . . .
- ✘ Daniel Siegel: “left shift” in the brain (approach vs. withdrawal)

D.R.O.P.: PROACTIVE RESPONSE



- + Go for attunement on the “right side”: (validation, humor, questions/interest) . . . Engage what’s *unique* in your client.
 - × Attunement isn’t something you do once and check off your list
 - × Praise is *NOT* enough: Make a habit of “prizing” your difficult client
 - × What is their most unique strength? How can you let them know you see it?

D.R.O.P.: PROACTIVE RESPONSE



- **Invite Exploration:** Wonder out loud about how you two often seem to end up in a TOW . . . Ask: Is this pattern “working?” . . .
- **Process Intervention**
 - “P.A.S.S.” to your client: *Planful, Attuned, Strategic Self-disclosure* (maintain boundaries)
 - Dropping “A-Bombs” -- Authenticity: be willing to admit errors/role in the relationship; invite cl. to receive feedback about your experience of them
 - Point up patterns (“I’m noticing . . .”)
 - Hesitant, exploratory attitude in order to minimize reactivity
 - Importance of timing (“Rule of Three”)

D.R.O.P.: PROACTIVE RESPONSE



Limit-Setting (Quad B)

- > What are the behaviors/situations that merit limit-setting in your work?
 - > Physically threatening actions
 - > Treatment-interfering behavior
 - > Boundary violations
 - > Self-defeating interpersonal *patterns*
- > Combining attunement with guidance: Courage + consideration = affirmation of boundaries and creation of growth “space”
- > “Perceived containment” . . . Cl. sense of safety
- > Therapeutic “leadership”

Hollywood Helper . . . What do you think?



RELATIONAL MANAGEMENT: WORKING TO “D.R.O.P.” THE ROPE



- × Counter TOW reactivity by . . .
- × **(D)**efusing from reactive thoughts/images
- × **(R)**eaching out to NOW
- × **(O)**rienting toward client and own values
- × **(P)**roactively responding/“turning toward”



Parting Words . . .

“Explore thyself. Herein are demanded the eye and the nerve.”
-- Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

Thank You!!!