

Self-attachment Intervention¹:

Detailed Protocols for SAT²

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Abstract

We present an updated version of the self-attachment intervention. Self-Attachment Technique (SAT) is a self-help method for nurturing positive emotions and attitudes (such as compassion, cheerfulness and creativity), re-processing negative experiences, and developing positive cognitive, behavioral and interpersonal patterns. These goals are achieved through regular daily practice sessions involving reparenting one's childhood self, reflecting on one's experiences and belief systems, and exercises to develop and reinforce positive attitudes and patterns. The twenty subprotocols of self-attachment are presented in an eight-week course for participants, who commit themselves to practice the weekly subprotocols for 20 minutes twice a day in these eight weeks.

¹ The methods for self-attachment are based on previously published articles in:

<http://humandevlopment.doc.ic.ac.uk/>

² Version 2.0, 23/04/2021

Week One

Rules and regulations for the SAT course

1. Punctuality: Take part in all classes and exercises
2. Regularly write about your experience of the twice-daily exercises
3. Keep your phone off throughout the session
4. Please keep your microphones off
5. Respect other people's privacy
6. Avoid open dialogues and discussions
7. Maximum time for each question: 2 minutes
8. Maximum time for responding to topics: 2 minutes
9. Point out the positive aspects of each person before criticizing them



Intervention through self-attachment

- Self-attachment (SAT) is a holistic approach for increasing positive emotions, which is in line with the concept of the human as an independent, purposeful creature.
- Socrates: An unexamined life is not worth living.
- In the SAT course everyone “re-parents” their childhood self for two months to reach their ideal goal.
- A person’s true inner self that determines what they really want in life is different from their persona, created and influenced by the materialistic society.
- In SAT the individual begins by pondering deeply on what they truly want and determine their real goal in life.



In the beginning



- This goal should be a non-materialistic goal that guides us towards growth and self-development in society; e.g. success in an academic, scientific, literary, philosophical, athletic, spiritual, professional, charitable, manufacturing, or commercial field.
- If we don't have a clear goal at the start of the program, we try to find it as we practice the protocols.
- SAT is to be taken seriously: it is necessary to have some 8 hours of sleep every night, and at least 30 minutes of exercise daily in order to be able to practice the protocols successfully.
- We avoid making important life decisions for a period of at least two months.

The inner world as a safe haven represented by a secure house



- The inner world of individuals suffering from chronic disorders resembles a derelict, shabby old house, not a suitable safe haven and secure base for life.
- The inner world of individuals with secure attachment resembles a robust, beautiful house whose solid pillars provide both a safe haven in the face of harsh conditions and a secure base to address all challenges in life.
- Throughout the SAT intervention we imaginatively repair the ruined and shabby house and in its place construct a grand, robust and beautiful mansion.

The importance of imagination and creating a new house



- Children's early attachment in their first two years is created in the pre- verbal development when their visual experience is their most important tool for interaction.
- House building was one of the first activities of early humans and the instinct for it can be inferred when children start to play by creating little rooms and places.
- The objective in SAT is to empower the individual through their own actions and creativity for building a grand and robust mansion.
- Every stage in building the new house reflects the progress made in repairing the inner world and developing the new orientation in life.

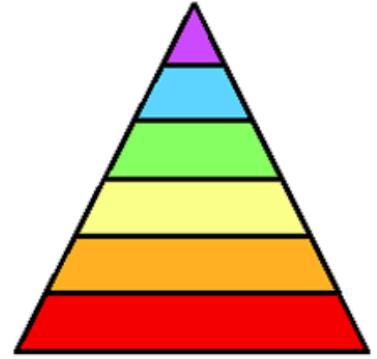
Self-attachment as a comic game

- SAT is a particular type of double role-playing in which the individual plays the role of the child and the adult self simultaneously.
- Donald Winnicott: “The general principle seems to me to be valid that psychotherapy is done in the overlap of the two play areas, that of the patient and that of the therapist. If the therapist cannot play, then he is not suitable for the work. If the patient cannot play, then something needs to be done to enable the patient to become able to play, after which psychotherapy can begin. The reason why playing is essential is that it is in playing that the patient is being creative.”
- Children learn what they learn and become creative through playing and laughing.
- Through comic role-playing, SAT enables the child to become creative.



Four stages of self-attachment

- Secure self-attachment simulates the relationship between a child and a good parent to turn our adult self into a parent that can help the emotional development of our childhood self, simply called our child in these notes:
 - 1- Introduction to attachment theory and SAT
 - 2- Connection with the child
 - 3- Falling in love with the child
 - 4- Developmental training for the child



Stage One: Introduction to SAT

- SAT is a technique to enhance mental health.
- Like any other form of self-improvement method, SAT entails serious effort, patience and perseverance on our behalf.
- SAT protocols simulate the parent-child relationship, which may at first seem strange.
- Therefore, we should make ourselves informed by attachment theory in general and the scientific hypotheses of self-attachment technique.
- We must carefully review the text of the workshops.



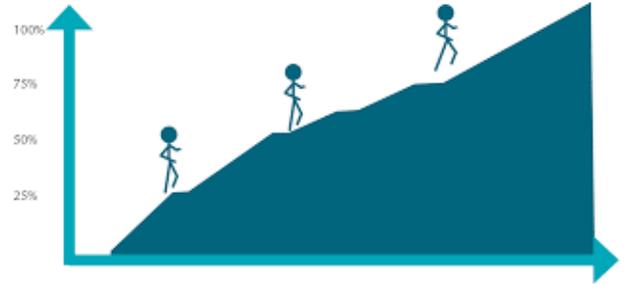
Role-play in SAT

- Our inability to properly manage our emotions is rooted in our childhood development.
- This means that we lack the necessary neural patterns to modulate our excitements, control our emotions, or laugh at times of stress.
- In SAT, the adult learns how a good parent interacts with a child, and through role-playing they become a parent and represent the child.
- Strategy: Collaboration between the adult self and the child for regulating emotions and learning to laugh.
- The adult self helps the child replace the old derelict house with a grand new one with the aim of realizing the child's potentials and higher goals.



Gradual development and improvement through SAT

- Since SAT takes place through long-term potentiation of optimal neural networks, sustainable improvement will only take place gradually and depends on the consistent and daily repetition of the protocols.
- Non-optimal neural patterns are developed over the course of several years in childhood, and then consolidated by repetition in later years.
- Creation of optimal neural networks against the background of non-optimal networks demands months of consistent daily effort and thus requires patience and perseverance.
- If on medication for psychological conditions, the physician must be informed of the SAT intervention, and medication should not change during the course of SAT and then only be altered based on the physician's recommendation.



Stage Two: Connecting with the child



- We try to distinguish between our adult self (i.e. the cognitive and reasoning capacity that is more dominant when we are calm) and our child (i.e. the emotions and affects that become more dominant under stress and crisis).
- Looking at two contrasting photos/avatars from our childhood can help in making this distinction and is also required for other protocols.
- For convenience we refer to these two photos/avatars as the “happy” photo/avatar and the “unhappy” photo/avatar.
- By looking at these photos/avatars and recalling past events and what we have heard from others about our childhood, we gradually think about our early years to construct a basic psychological portrait of the child and our feelings, affects and emotional problems with our parents and other significant figures in early childhood.

Compassion for the child

- One of the principles of self-attachment is to have a warm and compassionate attitude towards our child and his/her emotional problems. Later this compassion can be extended to other people.
- Among our family, friends, even in the park or on the internet we can find examples of good parents interacting with their children; show affection without spoiling their children, hugging and caressing them at times of stress or even in ordinary circumstances:
- <https://youtu.be/apzXGEbZht0>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6czxW4R9w2g>



Type 1 exercise:

Connecting with the child

- In a quiet place, we try to first imagine our happy photo/avatar and reflect on the relevant positive affects and then imagine our unhappy photo/avatar and reflect on the relevant negative affects.
- We repeat this many times until such imaginings can take place fairly easily and quickly.
- We imagine that the child as we were, in a happy or unhappy state, is near us.
- With closed eyes, we imagine embracing and cuddling the child, in a happy or unhappy state.
- We imagine playing with the child, the same games we used to play as a child.



Learning to laugh as a child

- Children learn from their parents when to laugh and when to cry.
- In optimal settings children learn to laugh without ridicule in every context, without ignoring life's pain and problems.
- They learn to find something positive behind every tragedy.
- Charlie Chaplin: "To truly laugh, you must be able to take your pain, and play with it."
- And, "Life is a tragedy when seen in close-up, but a comedy in long-shot."
- Nietzsche: "That which does not kill us, makes us stronger."



Type 2 exercise:

Laughing at our two childhood pictures



- Now we can teach our child to laugh.
- We will begin with laughing at our two childhood pictures.
- Unlike our cultural belief, this laughter is not a sign of ridicule.
- What are our reasons for laughing at our two childhood pictures?
- We can laugh at these pictures without ridicule for three reasons:
 1. “Life is a tragedy when seen in close-up, but a comedy in long-shot.” (Charlie Chaplin)
 2. The emotional incongruity between the two pictures (Emanuel Kant)
 3. Our sense of superiority today, compared to the past. (Plato)

First Week's Schedule

- Practicing exercise 1 and 2 a minimum of two times a day, each time for 20 minutes.
- Keeping an online record of our experience after each exercise:
- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EnejvRC8Ato1zrS1q77iqJJZgLTq6bFYG3WiiEmxMzQ/edit?usp=sharing>
- Enlarging and making copies of the “happy” childhood photograph and keeping it in our room, wallet, mobile phone, and computer
- Selecting one or more of your favorite happy songs or love songs in English or your mother tongue.



Week 2

Stage Two: Falling in love with the child

- In this stage we establish an imaginative but passionate loving relationship with the child.
- This falling in love will induce dopamine and serotonin secretion and activates the reward system of the brain, which creates the motivation, capacity and energy needed to carry out self-attachment protocols to raise the child to emotional maturity.
- Throughout history human beings have created passionate and warm relationships with animate and inanimate objects and concepts and have assigned immense significance to these relationships in order to use them to regulate their emotions.
- In self-attachment, the theoretical basis of falling in love with the child is primary narcissism, which is hypothesized to exist in the self-centeredness of every child.



Narcissism and falling in love with the child

- With emotional maturity primary narcissism is usually moderated by emotional development, but childhood trauma can cause its perpetuation and even aggravation.
- Self-attachment makes use of the existing primary narcissism in human beings, in other words our intrinsic love of our child.
- The goal is that by falling in love with the child, we become able to have a new emotional birth and growth that will eventually contain our narcissism.
- However, falling in love with the child is quite different from being in love with one's self.
- Our adult self falls in love with our child as good parents are in love with their children, and attends to the child lovingly without surrendering to the anti-social selfishness and unreasonable egoistic expectations of the child.



Type 3 exercise:

Falling in love with the child



- We place the two selected happy and unhappy photos/avatars in different areas at home and at work.
- We always carry the happy picture in our purse, wallet, phone, or laptop.
- We select one or two happy love songs that we have always liked and choose one or two exciting phrases from them.
- While looking at the happy photo, we first quietly, and later loudly, recite the selected happy love songs and imagine that in this way we are establishing a deep emotional bond in our mind with the child.
- While looking at our happy photo, we recite the selected happy love songs with a loud voice, gradually using our entire body (shaking the head, shoulders and hands and moving the eyes and eyebrows), and imagine that in this way, like a parent, we are have a loving dialogue and are dancing with the child.

An example of a song for falling in love with the child

My Heart Will Go On (James Horner)

Every night in my dreams
I see you, I feel you,
That is how I know you go on
Far across the distance
And spaces between us
You have come to show you go on
Near, far, wherever you are
I believe that the heart does go on
Once more you open the door
And you're here in my heart
And my heart will go on and on
Love can touch us one time
And last for a lifetime
And never let go till we're one
Love was when I loved you
One true time I hold to
In my life we'll always go on
Near, far, wherever you are
I believe that the heart does go on
Once more...

What A Wonderful World (Sam Cooke)

Don't know much about history
Don't know much biology
Don't know much about a science book,
Don't know much about the French I took
But I do know that I love you,
And I know that if you love me, too,
What a wonderful world this would be
Don't know much about geography,
Don't know much trigonometry
Don't know much about algebra,
Don't know what a slide rule is for
But I do know that one and one is two,
And if this one could be with you,
What a wonderful world this would be
Now, I don't claim to be an "A" student,

But I'm tryin' to be
For maybe by being an "A" student, baby,
I can win your love for me
Don't know much about history,
Don't know much biology
Don't know much about a science book,
Don't know much about the French I took
But I do know that I love you,
And I know that if you love me, too,
What a wonderful world this would be

Restoring the derelict house and building a grand new house

- Through imagination or by drawing we begin to restore the derelict house and build a grand, new, stable house in its place.
- Some of the pillars of the new house are intended to provide the safe haven of secure attachment, and others establish a safe base for addressing and tackling life's challenges.
- The new house has bright and sunny rooms and we pretend that the self-attachment exercises are each carried out in one of these rooms, i.e., in a bright and sunny environment.
- For instance, we imagine that we are singing the happy love songs in one of the rooms of this house.
- The storeroom (basement) of the new house represents the derelict house and is still awash with negative affects including fear, rage and despair.
- When we suffer from these negative emotions we imagine that our child is trapped in this storeroom (basement) and he/she gradually learns to use his/her will to open the door of the storeroom (basement), walk out and enter the bright rooms reuniting with the adult self.

Type 4 exercise:

Vow to adopt the child as own child



- After falling in love with the child, our adult self imaginatively adopts the child as our own child.
- In a carefully organized and memorable ceremony, we loudly and solemnly pledge that from now on, like a devoted and loving parent we will consistently and wholeheartedly support the child in every way possible.
- This means that the adult self vows to intervene, to attend to, and to comfort the child, any time and any place, in any depressive or anxious condition and in any crisis.
- This pledge must be as strong and consistent as that which good parents have for their children. They do everything they can for the health and emotional growth of their children.
- This must be a life-long pledge: optimal neural patterns must be constantly strengthened with self-attachment protocols so as to remain effective in the face of non-optimal circuits that are deeply rooted in our childhood.

Speaking out loud to the child

- In the process of adopting the child and afterwards, like any real parent, the adult self must speak out loud to the child.
- Even though we cannot see our child the area of our brain that relates to long-term memories can hear our voice and recognize its kind content.
- If our name is Anne, we call the child, “dear Anne”, and if it is Marc, we call him “dear Marc”.
- The purpose of speaking out loud to the child is to create an emotional bond and help in his/her emotional development, to ultimately replace our current character with a more elevated one.
- It is through speaking out loud that we can develop into a compassionate, creative, happy individual and reach our goals.
- Theory: Through this process a closed loop with positive feedback is created in the brain.



Speaking out loud:

Child and adult



- In childhood speaking to one's self in a loud voice plays an important role in emotional and cognitive development and the establishment of an internal dialogue.
- During school years discipline often leads to the elimination of talking out loud with one's self.
- Often, this is also suppressed at home.
- Research shows that adults who speak out loud with themselves when solving cognitive problems are often more successful.
- Thus, speaking to one's self out loud, whether as a child or an adult, is a sign of emotional and cognitive maturity and not a sign of madness.

A real example of self-attachment:

Nick Yarris

- Suffered sexual abuse and brain trauma at the age of 7, in Pennsylvania, USA
- After finishing only 8 years of school he turned to drugs, alcohol, and stealing cars.
- At age 20 he received a death sentence for a murder he had not committed.
- At Huntingdon Prison he suffered torture and severe beatings.
- He began self-attachment therapy in prison, using a picture from his teenage years.
- He is self-taught and has read thousands of literary, psychological, and philosophical books.
- He remained in prison for 23 years until he was released in 2005 after a DNA test proved he had not committed the crime he was incarcerated for.
- This may be one of the most shocking and educational cases of our era.



Performing self-attachment in prison in Nick Yarris's own words



<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b084bn5n>

BBC radio 4 (interview)

Starts 22min 45 sec finishes 31min 28

(24min 43sec --- 28min 55sec)

<http://www.documentarymania.com/playerf.php?title=The%20Fear%20of%2013>

Fear of 13

1h 27m (documentary)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFsan_5sRzw

2h 15m (interview)

(7min 54sec --- 9min 34sec)

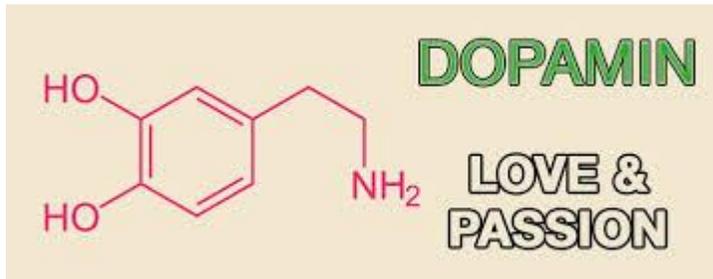
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Alc5XYpRc1M>

1h 44min (interview)

(34min 00 sec--- 35min 52 sec)

Week Three

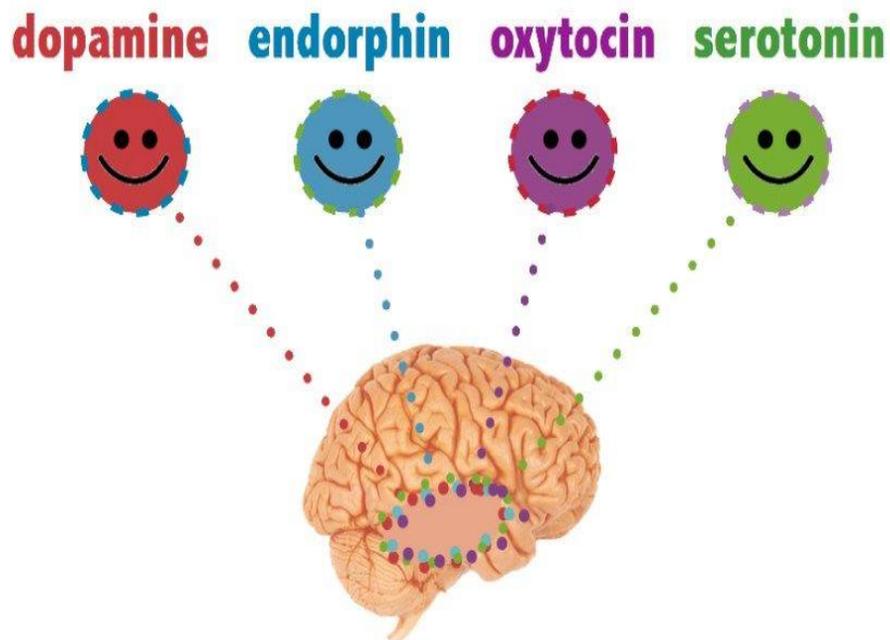
Remembering a loving relationship with fMRI



- The foundation for developing secure attachment is a parent's unconditional and consistent love.
- As we saw in the previous workshops three different experiments have had similar results:
- A number of mothers and a number of adults in love, as well as faithful Christians look at pictures of their children and their loved ones, or pray respectively, while their brain activity is measured by fMRI.
- The area of the brain that becomes active in all three groups is in the caudate nucleus, which is the reward center of the neural network.
- In all three groups the area of the brain that is NOT activated is in the frontal cortex, which is related to negative affects and social judgment.
- In all these cases love and emotional relations activated the reward center of the neural system, and led to the secretion of dopamine, resulting in hope, motivation, and energy for interacting with the loved one.

Love and affection

- Along with the secretion of a considerable amount of dopamine, neurotransmitters and hormones that result in joy, affection, and care are also produced.
- Emotional connection is created through “love” and maintained through “affection”.
- Parental love and love between adults both include eye gazing, hand holding, caressing, smiling, etc.
- Hormones and neurotransmitters like serotonin, oxytocin, vasopressin, and natural internal tranquilizers strengthen parental behavior and emotional connections between parents and children.
- Oxytocin reduces anger and fear that is produced in the amygdala, and therefore leads to positive affects.



The theory of falling in love with the child

- Self-attachment theory: The process of falling in love with the child through singing him/her happy love songs while looking at childhood pictures leads to the secretion of dopamine in the brain's reward center, which in turn leads to hope and motivation for carrying out the other self-attachment protocols.
- The secretion of dopamine also leads to the secretion of serotonin, oxytocin, and vasopressin, which prepare us for loving and taking care of the child.



Stage Four: developmental exercises

Type 5 exercise:

Maintaining a loving relationship with the child



- We must always remember our vow for an emotional bond between the adult self and the child.
- We choose a short phrase such as “You are my beloved”.
- We repeatedly utter it loudly while we look at the two happy and unhappy photos/avatars; the aim is to become habituated to uttering this phrase.
- We recite one or two examples of the happy love songs we selected in Stage Three.
- We loudly repeat these songs using our whole body.
- The goal is that by memorizing these songs, we will get used to reciting them, and as a result always keep the relationship with the child in mind.

Stage Four: Developmental exercises

Maintaining a loving relationship with the child



- Habituation to singing the selected happy love songs is so strengthened in this way that we develop a tendency to spontaneously, unintentionally and effortlessly engage in reciting these songs in all kinds of circumstances.
- As we become more habituated to singing these songs, we will be able to engage in reciting them even when we are depressed or anxious.
- This will help reduce our pain and remind us of the loving relationship with the child.
- These exercises help keep the secretion of serotonin, dopamine, and other mood enhancing neurotransmitters at a high level.
- This will lead to a greater degree of hope, motivation, and energy, and will have a controlling effect on depression and anxiety.

Type 6 developmental exercises

An exercise to process the painful childhood events



- With closed eyes, we recall a painful scene from childhood - such as emotional or physical abuse - with all the details we can remember; associating the face of the child we were in the past with the selected unhappy photo.
- After recalling the associated emotions such as terror, helplessness, humiliation and rage, with closed eyes we imagine our adult self approach the child like any good parent who sees their child in distress.
- The adult approaches the child quickly and embraces, cuddles, reassures and supports the child.

Type 6 Developmental exercises

An exercise to process the painful past

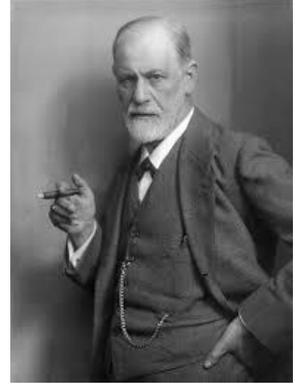
- With closed eyes we imagine supporting, reassuring and cuddling the child. We support the child with a loud voice: “Why are you hitting my child?” And continue reassuring him/her in a loud voice: “My darling, I will not let them hurt you any more.” We massage our own face while doing so, which is interpreted as cuddling the child.
- These exercise sessions revisit neural circuits of past traumas, and it is hypothesized that by inducing oxytocin and vasopressin secretion, they build new neural circuits as opposed to the old ones.
- These sessions are repeated for different types of traumatic patterns and scenes until they are effectively processed emotionally, and new neural patterns are experienced in relation to them.



Week Four

Repeating negative childhood schemas

- Childhood trauma can produce strong, negative mental, emotional and behavioral schemas.
- Sigmund Freud was the first person to discover this, and he labeled it “repetition compulsion” – repeating a traumatic event to gain control over it.
- Exercise 6 reenacts childhood trauma over and over again, challenging the roots of these negative schemas and replacing them with positive schemas.
- In self-attachment one gains the necessary energy and motivation to reenact childhood trauma through exercises that increase joy and positive excitements.



Developmental Exercises

Type 7 exercise

Protocols for creating zest for life

- Looking into a mirror, we imagine our image to be that of the child and in this condition loudly recite the selected happy love songs using our entire body, i.e., shaking our head and shoulders and moving our eyes, eyebrows, hands and arms.
- We repeat the songs and poems as many times as possible in different circumstances, such as while walking on the street and doing house work, so as to integrate them in our new life.



Type 8 exercise

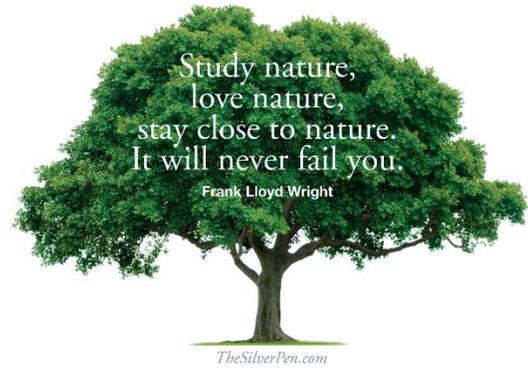
Loosening facial and body muscles

- Just as negative patterns can cause rigidity in our mind and behavior, they can also lead to rigidity in facial and body muscles, and thus prevent the emotional development of our child.
- It is therefore vital to loosen up facial and body muscles as we sing our selected songs in order to simulate and encourage the spontaneity of the child.
- Loosening the body and mind at least twice a day we systematically engage in playing, dancing, laughing and having fun with the child as parents do with their children.



Type 9 exercise

Protocols for attachment and love of nature

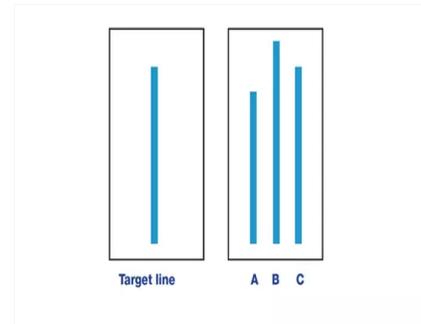


- Attachment to nature is an effective way to increase joy and reduce negative emotions.
- But creating an attachment to nature is only possible through falling in love with nature.
- Now, we should keep in mind poems about love of nature (Ex. from Armstrong)
- On a day when we have enough time, we head to a park or forest and spend some time admiring a beautiful, glorious tree. It is as if we are seeing the glory of its branches and leaves for the first time, and lovingly admiring it.
- We repeat this process continuously and with different trees, until we feel like we have developed an attachment to nature that can help us modulate our emotions and excitements. This will make us want to spend a certain amount of time in nature every day.

Week Five

Psychology of conformity

- “Man is born free but everywhere he is in chains.”
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract
- Asch Experiment (1951): 75% of participants vote with the majority even when it is clearly wrong.
- In people who insist on their position despite the wrong vote of the majority, the amygdala in the limbic system becomes active as a sign of anxiety and fear of the majority.
- Rumi: Die, die in this love
- Nietzsche: Herd mentality
- Current standards of “majority” for controlling society



Stage Four Developmental exercises

Learning belly laughter

- A true belly laughter or a Duchenne laughter increases positive affects, and is spontaneous, involuntary, and a reaction to a “harmless incongruity”.
- The Duchenne laughter is known as the best medicine for many problems.
- People laugh 30% more in groups than they do alone.
- Only 10-15% of group laughter is due to a comic content. Most often group laughter occurs in response to mundane sentences like: “Where were you?” or “Marc’s here!”
- With the previous exercises we have become aware of our emotions and gained some control over our excitements to some extent. We have come to experience joy and learned to accept ourselves more.
- Now we can learn not to take life as seriously as we did before.



Stage Four Developmental exercises

The comic game of life

- With the various role-playing exercises we have already done, which have allowed us to control our emotions and excitements to a great degree, we are now at a stage where we can play the main game, the comic game of life.
- In this comic game we allow ourselves to interpret life as a comedic screenplay, where we can begin to laugh without hostility or mockery at things that until now we have taken very seriously.
- Laughing at things that we have taken seriously is a test, and is in no way a sign of disrespect or ridicule of ourselves or things we have done or said in the past.
- Our laughter takes place with compassion for the child.
- The goal is that we can come to believe that unlike the past, in this game we can see our problems and issues in a positive light and with a sense of joy.

**Life is a
comedy for
those who
think, but a
tragedy for
those who feel.**

Type 10 exercises

Laughing at, and with one's self



- Every long journey begins with a small step (a Chinese proverb).
- The first laughter in this game is laughing with ourselves for being successful in accomplishing something, however unimportant and trivial.
- This success can be in sports or in doing housework, such as cooking a meal, cleaning the house, or shopping.
- In people with physical disabilities, the accomplishment can be succeeding to walk, or simply breath.
- With every small accomplishment we smile victoriously, and gradually turn this smile into laughter, and over time make our laughter last longer and longer.
- The motivation for this laughter: 1. The silliness of the exercise itself, and 2. Our present superiority compared to our past.
- After becoming skillful in this game we will be ready to smile, and eventually laugh without any sense of ridicule at some of the things we have done or said in the past and their contradictions, while at the same time maintaining our compassion for the child.
- Laughing with one's self, and especially at one's self is a sign of emotional maturity, and it is euphoric.

Type 11 exercise

Processing current negative emotions



- These exercises are meant to contain current negative emotions – such as anger, rage, fear, anxiety or depression – in relation to family, friends, work, or society.
- With closed eyes we imagine the unhappy photo/avatar and project our negative emotions to the unhappy photo/avatar representing the child.
- By projecting our negative emotions onto the child in this way, we make contact with our adult self who is now responsible to attend to the problems of the child, supporting the child and modulating the child’s negative emotions.

Type 11 exercise

Processing current negative emotions



- While projecting our negative emotions to the unhappy photo/avatar and the child, with eyes closed we loudly reassure the child and give our own face a massage.
- The reassuring and cuddling continues until we contain the negative emotions and can switch from imagining the unhappy photo/avatar to focusing on the happy photo.
- These exercises help secrete oxytocin and vasopressin that act as natural tranquilizers and help reduce negative emotions.

Week Six

Developmental exercises

Mental Exercise - Learning to laugh

- Physical exercise is necessary for a healthy body and mental exercise is necessary for a healthy mind.
- Reading, playing mental games, learning new things, and meditation can all be considered mental exercises.
- But the most important mental exercise for a healthy mind and soul is one that makes us happy.
- William James: We are happy because we laugh, we don't laugh because we are happy.
- Therefore an important mental exercise for a healthy mind is learning to laugh.
- We walk, swim, and run, not simply to get from one place to another, but because these exercises keep us healthy.
- In the same way we need to learn to laugh for laughter's sake and not any other reason.



Developmental Exercises:

Type 12 exercise

Continuous laughter

- In self-attachment continuous laughter allows us to continue the comic game of life using the least amount of energy.
- At a time when we are alone we open our mouth slightly, loosen our face muscles, form a Duchenne smile, and slowly and continuously repeat one of the following tones:
 - eh, eh, eh, eh; or ah, ah, ah, ah; or oh, oh, oh, oh; or uh, uh, uh, uh; or ye, ye, ye, ye
 - If you need a subject to laugh at, you can laugh at the silliness of the exercise!
 - Continuous laughter can be the best antidote to stress, leading to a constant secretion of euphoric neurotransmitters (dopamine, serotonin, etc.)



Type 13 exercise

Changing our perspective for getting over negative emotions

- When we get deeply stuck in the storeroom of negative emotions we become stuck in the gravitational field of powerful negative patterns.
- This is like looking at the Gestalt vase in the figure above, which is full of dark and negative emotions. The more we stare at it the more we get drowned in its darkness and negativity.
- It is like seeing a glass half-empty instead of half-full.
- Stare at the black vase, and when you manage to see the white faces, laugh out loud.



Type 13 exercise

Changing our perspective for getting over negative emotions



- When negative emotions take us over it is like we have drowned in the black vase.
- However, having created a positive powerful pattern of love with the child through the previous exercises, we can now depart from the strong gravitational field of negative patterns by spontaneously singing our happy love song. In this way we can enter the gravitational field of love for the child instead.
- This is like changing our interpretation of the above image and instead of seeing a black vase of negative emotions discovering two white faces, interpreted as that of the child and the adult self who are now looking at each other.
- In other words we can also see the glass as half-full.

Type 14 exercise

Protocols for socializing the child

- By consistent repetition of protocols 1-13 we are gradually able to reduce negative emotions and increase positive affects.
- We will gradually be able to carry out the protocols with eyes open rather than closed, and can integrate most of them into our daily life.
- The adult self is now gradually able to extend the compassion he/she had for the child to other people too.
- The adult self slowly becomes aware of the narcissistic tendencies and anti-social feelings of the child, feelings like envy, jealousy, greed, hatred, mistrust, malevolence, controlling behavior and revengefulness.



Type 14 exercise

Protocols for socializing the child

- The adult can behave like a good parent here:
- We contain and discourage these anti-social feelings and attitudes of the child by expressing affection to the child and simulating cuddles by giving ourselves

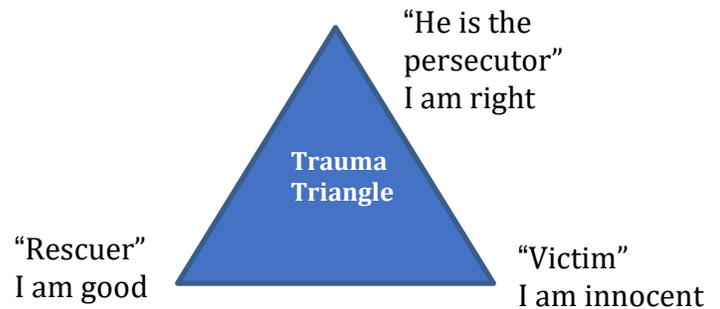


- a face massage.
- The adult self tries to direct the child's anger and negative energy (shown through his excitements, and antisocial feelings), toward play, creativity, and development instead.
- As the child's positive affects increase and his/her negative affects decrease, by expressing positive emotions he/she can attract more positive reactions from others, and in turn gain a more positive outlook toward others.

Week Seven

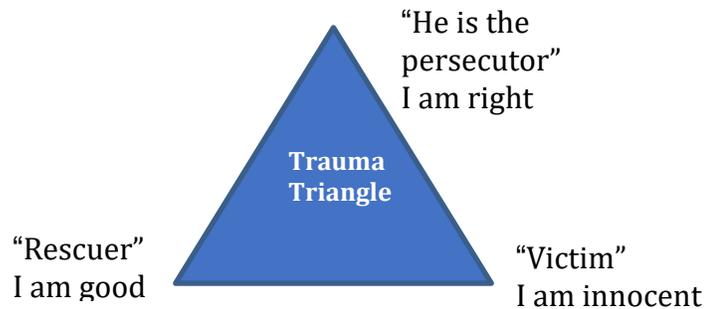
Internal persecutor

- The experience of violence in childhood can lead to the development of the trauma triangle.
- We subconsciously develop an inner pattern of the aggressor.
(Sándor Ferenczi, Anna Freud)
- Following the pattern of the aggressor, we subconsciously develop an internal persecutor.
- With the experience of extreme violence in childhood the pattern of “victim”, “rescuer”, and “internal persecutor” takes shape in us and in turn leads to narcissism and the suppression of creativity.



Internal persecutor opposes creativity

- The trauma triangle does four things against creativity:
 1. It subconsciously draws us to situations similar to our initial trauma (repetition of trauma).
 2. In times of stress the internal persecutor internalizes negative thoughts and emotions and awakens our sense of being a “victim” (i.e. in chronic depression, anxiety, perfectionism, nail biting, etc.).
 3. When faced with a crisis in a personal/social relationship, we project our internal persecutor on to the other person and like a victimized child, we see him as a new aggressor. With a sense of narcissism and righteousness we try to control this other person and other people
 4. We project our internal persecutor on to political and social figures and with a black and white point of view we blame them for all our problems.



Type 15 exercise

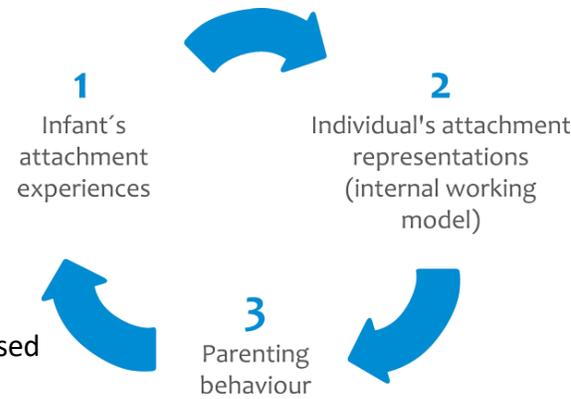
Recognizing and controlling narcissism and the internal persecutor



- The adult self becomes aware of the facets of the trauma triangle: internal persecutor, victim, and rescuer.
- The adult self examines the effects of this triangle (narcissism and lack of creativity) in daily life and previous experiences.
- The adult self reviews an important life experience and his social and political point of view as an adult, with awareness about of how the internal persecutor operates.
- The adult self creates a list of examples from his own experiences for the four different ways the internal persecutor operates.
- The adult self carefully analyzes life experiences for examples of being drawn to trauma, being traumatized by the internal persecutor, and projecting the internal persecutor.
- Based on the above the adult self reevaluates his experiences, controls the internal persecutor and narcissism, and allows for the development of creativity.

A more optimal internal working model

- With negative emotions reduced, positive emotions increased, with a reduction of anti-social feelings and awareness of the internal persecutor and tendency to control others, the child gradually feels, based on their emotional development, that they need not consider themselves a prisoner of their early family environment and its consequent emotions.
- Guided by the adult self, the inner child learns that narcissism and projecting the internal persecutor on to others blocks their creativity and does not serve them.
- The child feels that through secure attachment to the adult self they can develop a more optimal internal working model to interpret and maintain relations with others so as to enjoy a sense of inner calm with themselves and with others.

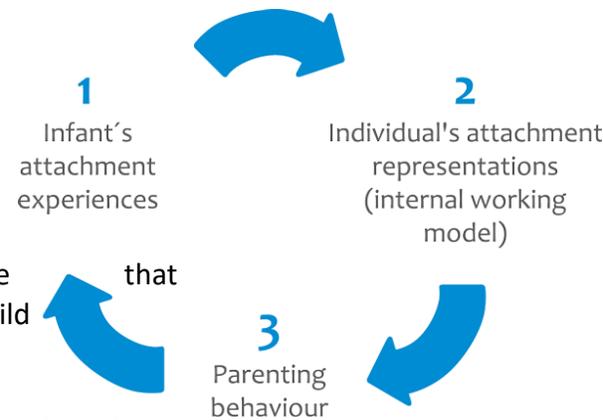


Type 16 exercise

Creating an optimal inner model

With negative emotions and anti-social feelings reduced and awareness of the internal persecutor, we will gradually recognize some of the emotions and negative schema of the child have been directly learned from our parents or through interactions with them.

- We ought to change some of our old patterns in interacting with others and characteristics like perfectionism, narcissism, and righteousness to more optimal models
- With the guidance of the adult self who is able to transfer compassion and love for the child to others, the child will learn to avoid projecting the internal persecutor and taking on the role of victim and rescuer.
- With the help of the adult self the child will be able to adapt a more mature way of interpreting social relations and interactions with others that is more based on reality.



Crisis in personal relationships

- In secular societies individuals face personal relationship crises (with parents, spouses, friends, coworkers, etc.) without the help of an internal dialogue with God.
- In these situations negative affects such as humiliation, pain, and indignity, along with a great feeling of hatred and a desire for revenge, overcomes the child, who in turn, takes over the adult self.
- In these circumstances the adult self is so influenced by the negative affects of the child that they are unable to find a solution to the crisis.
- In such a crisis, we start by consistently practicing the protocols for modulating current negative affects and inducing laughter to modulate the childhood's negative affects and arousal level.
- As a result, we avoid behaving and saying things in a reactive manner that can worsen the crisis.
- Practicing the protocols for modulating negative affects we learn patience and self-control.



Type 17 exercise

Solving personal crisis



- After the child's arousal level is reduced and as we continue to practice the protocol for modulating negative affects, and the protocol for laughter, we ask our child the following:
 - How can you see the crisis as a way of becoming stronger? (ha ha ha)
 - How can you interpret the crisis as a way of reaching your high goal? (ha ha ha)
 - Has the internal persecutor been projecting onto others again?
 - The adult self asks the following questions:
 - What is the similarity between this crisis and ones I have faced before? How is it similar to the family crisis I experienced as a child? Aren't the other person's positive attributes greater than his/her negative ones? How would a mature person interpret the crisis in comparison to my child? Can I see it from the perspective of someone else? Can I put myself in their place and understand their affects? Given my new inner working model can I find a way to calm the people involved in the crisis so we can find a better solution for it?
 - If not, can I respectfully maintain my distance and end the argument?

Week Eight

The mother of all laughter: laughing at tragedies

- We gradually learn to laugh at challenges that are caused by unpleasant events in our lives.
- Harmless incongruities can be the foundation of our laughter (Kant).
- Not only have we survived these events, they may have even been useful for us. Perhaps they have placed us on a creative path, or taught us lessons that have made us wiser and more mature.
- Yet we continue to perceive these events as “painful” because we have become habituated to considering ourselves victims of these events.
- Discovering this harmless incongruity can be a motivator for us to laugh; just as we learned to look at a black vase differently and see it filled with whiteness.



“To truly laugh, you must be able to take your pain, and play with it.”

Type 18(i) exercise

Laughing at the harmless contradiction of deep-rooted beliefs



- “To those human beings who are of any concern to me I wish suffering, desolation, sickness, ill-treatment, indignities—I wish that they should not remain unfamiliar with profound self-contempt, the torture of self-mistrust, the wretchedness of the vanquished: I have no pity for them, because I wish them the only thing that can prove today whether one is worth anything or not—that one endures.”
- This is meaningful with, “What doesn’t kill me makes me stronger.”
- Nietzsche’s wish is funny and a harmless contradiction of our deep-rooted beliefs.
- As we read the quote above, we remember our past sufferings and begin to laugh out loud when we get to “...I wish suffering...”

Type 18(i) exercise

Laughing at trauma



1. First we visualize a painful event that took place in the distant past that we have struggled with for a long time, and despite its painfulness we try to see a positive impact it has had.
2. We have to start with a painful event that happened in the distant past, so that by now we have been able to adjust our negative affects toward it.
3. After repeated daily exercises, once we have experienced the forceful effectiveness of laughing at distant problems, we can gradually begin to laugh at more recent painful memories.
4. Laughing exercises are a bit long and may take a few minutes. These exercises have two parts.

Type 18(ii) exercise

Laughing at trauma



- The first part includes ordinary instructions often suggested by friends or specialists.
- The second part is a light incongruity that is funny and intended to make us laugh whole-heartedly for a few minutes.
- In expectation of hearing a funny joke we loosen our facial muscles, slightly open our mouths, and to grasp the incongruity in the joke we move our eyebrows up as a sign of surprise.
- As we repeat the sentences in these exercises out loud, we slowly begin to laugh in the first part of the exercise as we wait for the second part. And once we get to the first sentence of the second part, which is in complete contrast to our beliefs, we laugh out loud.

Type 18(ii) exercise

Laughing at trauma



- Not only should you: bear it, accept it, try to deal with it, tolerate its memory, try harder to endure its memory, adapt yourself to its memory, analyze and understand it and by doing so modulate your negative emotions and learn lessons for the future, try to soften your thoughts, depressive emotions, and anxieties, try to ...
- But also: Like Nietzsche's wish consider it a cherished treasure (ha ha ha...), treasure it with great love (ha ha ha...), welcome its challenges with all your heart (ha ha ha...), consider it a good omen with all your heart (ha ha ha...), consider its challenges a great fortune (ha ha ha...), celebrate its memory (ha ha ha...), celebrate its memory with great joy (ha ha ha...), consider it a true love (ha ha ha...), consider it a true love with great passion and intimacy (ha ha ha...) ...

Type 18(ii) exercise

Laughing at trauma



- The laughter that results from these exercises is a Duchenne smile and non-malicious. What leads to laughter is the incongruity between the first part and the second part, which is inconsistent with our beliefs.
- Laughing exercises are like an antidote for depression, because it turns the topic of depression into a cause for whole-hearted laughter, which ultimately leads to the secretion of euphoric neurotransmitters.
- After repeated practice of the laughing exercises we can begin to apply it to things that worry us in the present and the future.
- The repetition of laughing exercises 18(ii) transforms the way we look at the world and is the foundation of creativity.

Self-attachment and creativity

- The capacity for remaining alone in the parent's presence is present in children with secure attachment and is the source of creativity, independence, and spontaneity.
- Self-attachment also creates this capacity by reviving the child and creating secure attachment between the child and the adult self.
- The revival of the child creates a context where we can be creative.
- When they are three or four-years-old, children can quickly learn to pretend (imagination), do associative thinking (relationship between phenomena), as well as analogical reasoning (similarities and differences between phenomena), which are the basis of creativity.
- Spontaneous children don't have any preconceived rigid framework in understanding events. But with outside pressure spontaneity can gradually be replaced by schema and mental coherence.



Type 19 exercise

Changing ideological frameworks for creativity



- We challenge our usual ideological framework in order to weaken one-sided patterns and encourage spontaneity and the examination of issues from multiple perspectives.
- We practice with subjects that we have deep-rooted beliefs and are excited about:
- This may include anything from political/social issues to ideas on marriage and sexuality.
- For instance, we examine the topic of racism and consider whether we have any latent racism, and we consider this subject in the dual role of proponent and opponent.
- We do the same thing with the topics of marriage and sexual orientation, where we may have stronger views.
- If we are politically in the center, we consider the subject both from a leftist and rightist point of view and try to understand both sides of the issue and challenge our dominant ideological framework in order to see the subject from three perspectives.

Strengthening the parent to improve the child's growth and development of creativity

- For our adult self to play the role of a new parent he/she requires the necessary strength and capability in different areas.
- If we have had any weaknesses in our relationship with our parents in childhood, we may not have the necessary tools for playing the role of parent.
- To help the child's emotional development and creative progress the adult self needs to be patient and show perseverance in dealing with problems and challenges, and to not lose hope in response to these challenges.
- How can we develop a strong, persistent parent that can ultimately help the child develop these same qualities?



Type 20 exercise

Affirmations

- Put together a list of instructive sayings by different important figures.
- Choose ones that have an impact on you from the start and can provide you with strength in the long path for reaching your ultimate goal.
- Read them out loud.
- A few examples:
 - “My formula for greatness in a human being is Amor Fati: that one wants nothing to be other than it is, not in the future, not in the past, not in all eternity.” (Nietzsche)
 - “I assess the power of a will by how much resistance, pain, torture it endures and knows how to turn it to its advantage.” (Nietzsche)
 - Life is not easy. At times we inevitably suffer from hopelessness and paranoia unless if we have an ideal goal that helps us surpass suffering, weakness, and betrayals.” (Bronstein)

