



# Love, Attachment and Intellectual Disability

Meeting Emotional Needs and Developmental Trauma

Weds 5 June, 1pm BST



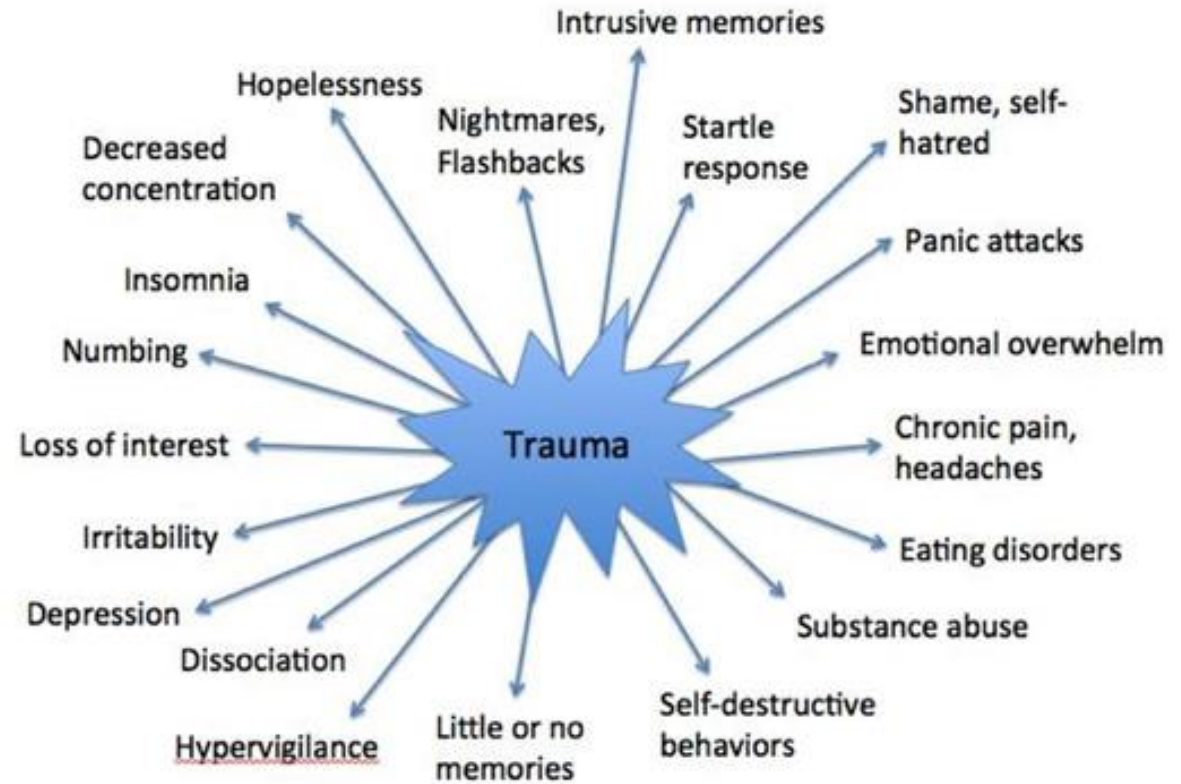
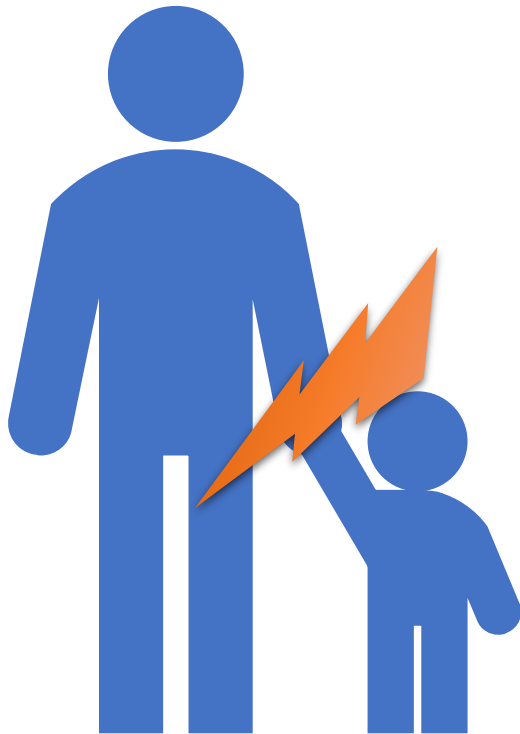
Free  
webinar

# Rates of childhood maltreatment

Fang et al., 2022

Children with  
disabilities  
31.7%

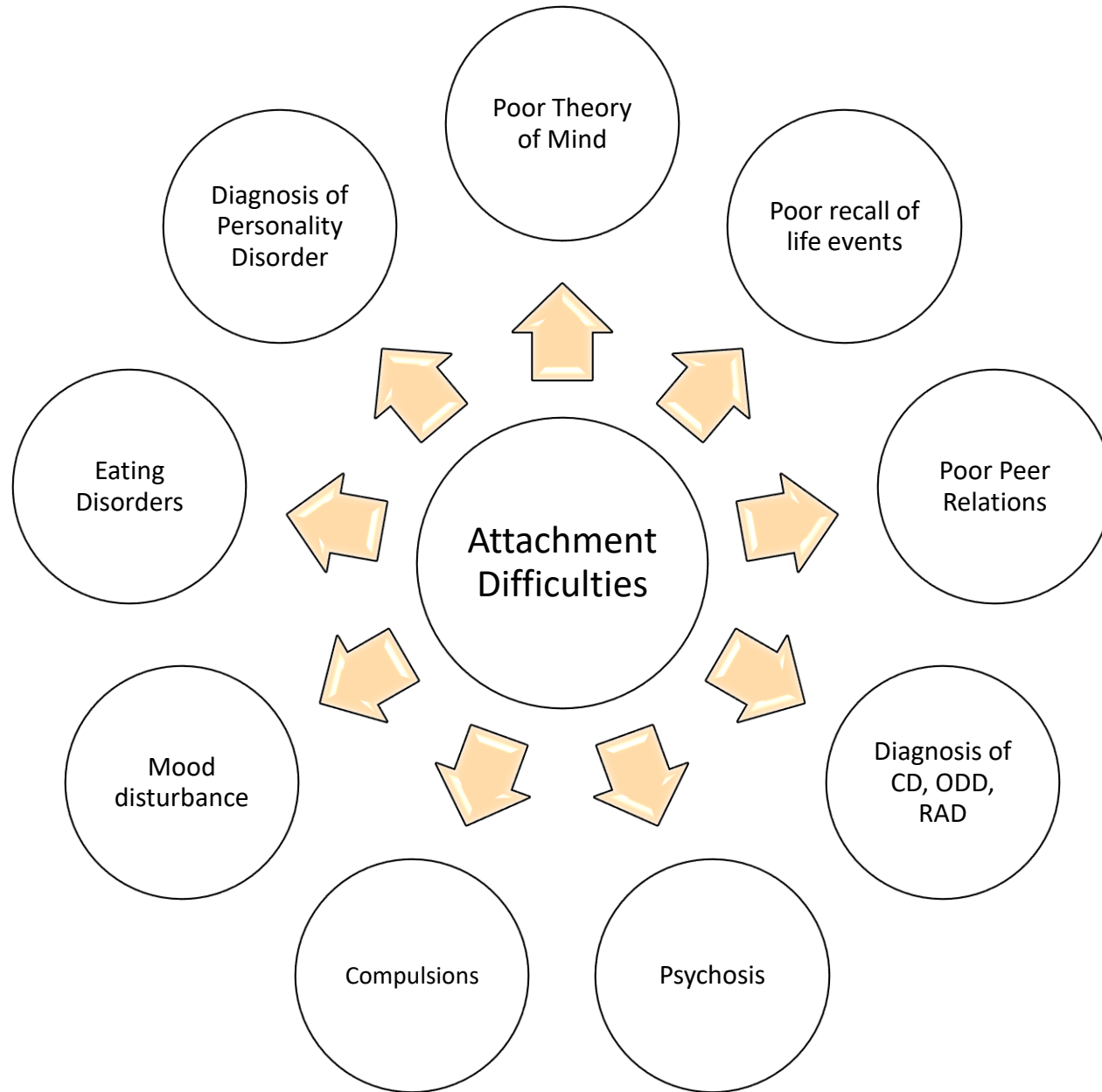
Children  
without  
disabilities 10%



Trauma prevents or breaks attachments that are protective of health

Source: British Psychological Society, 2017

Incorporating Attachment Theory into Practice: BPS / DCP Faculty for ID Clinical Practice Guideline



# Attachment disorders and child protection

Canadian incidence study 2018

Children with  
disabilities in CP  
34.3%

Children without  
disabilities in CP  
10.5%

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)  
 Word Search hit for “Attachment” and “Trauma”

Guideline	Hits for “Attachment”	Hits for “Trauma”
<b>Social work with adults experiencing complex needs (2022)</b>	0	0
<b>Disabled children and young people up to 25 with severe complex needs: integrated service delivery and organisation across health, social care and education (2022)</b>	0	0
<b>Care and support of people growing older with learning disabilities (2018)</b>	0	0
<b>Learning disabilities and behaviour that challenges: service design and delivery (2018)</b>	0	0
<b>Mental health problems in people with learning disabilities: prevention, assessment and management (2014)</b>	0	1
<b>Challenging behaviour and learning disabilities: prevention and interventions for people with learning disabilities whose behaviour challenges (2015)</b>	0	1

# The dangers of lip service

“We are trauma informed...”

We care about relationships...

“we are person-centred...”

“Tell us your views, we really want to hear them...”



“We co-produce all our work...”

② Are there any you would add that you've heard?



# Politics and the English Language

but nothing's come of it.





"If thought  
corrupts language,  
language can also  
corrupt thought"

George Orwell - [www.quoteikon.com](http://www.quoteikon.com)

# The Medical Model Psychiatric Classification Systems' Framework for Challenging Behaviours

- Bipolar disorder?
- Hallucinations?
- Anxiety Disorder?
- Depression?
- Other?

Risperidone?

Quetiapine?

Olanzapine?

Fluoxetine?

Amytriptyline?

Venlafaxine?



# Joan Bicknell and the Mental Handicap Hospitals

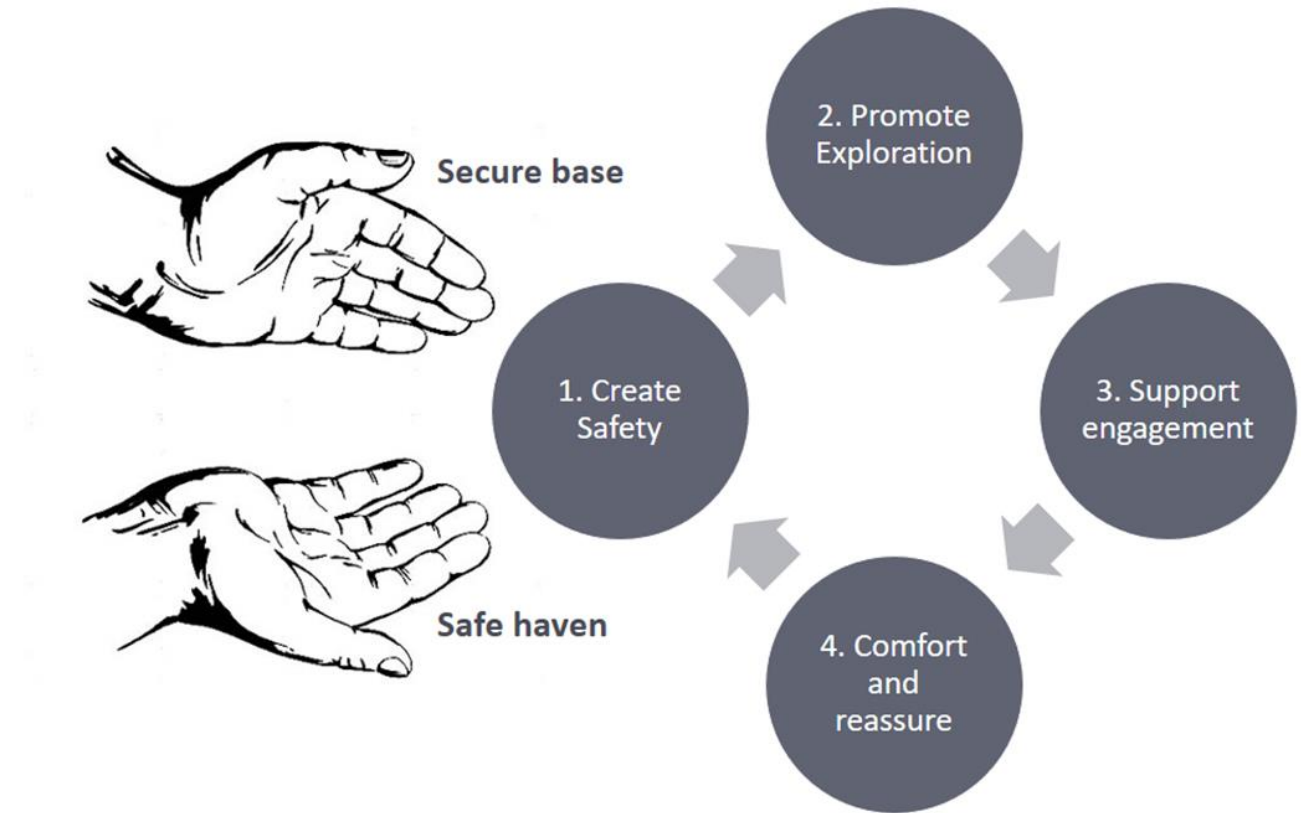
- Opposed forced sterilisation of minors (a normal eugenic practice)
- Opposed institutional care in the first resort
- Exposed appalling care by leading the Committee of Inquiry into Normansfield Hospital
- Pioneered multi-disciplinary teams in place of god-like medical superintendents



# Positive Behaviour Support

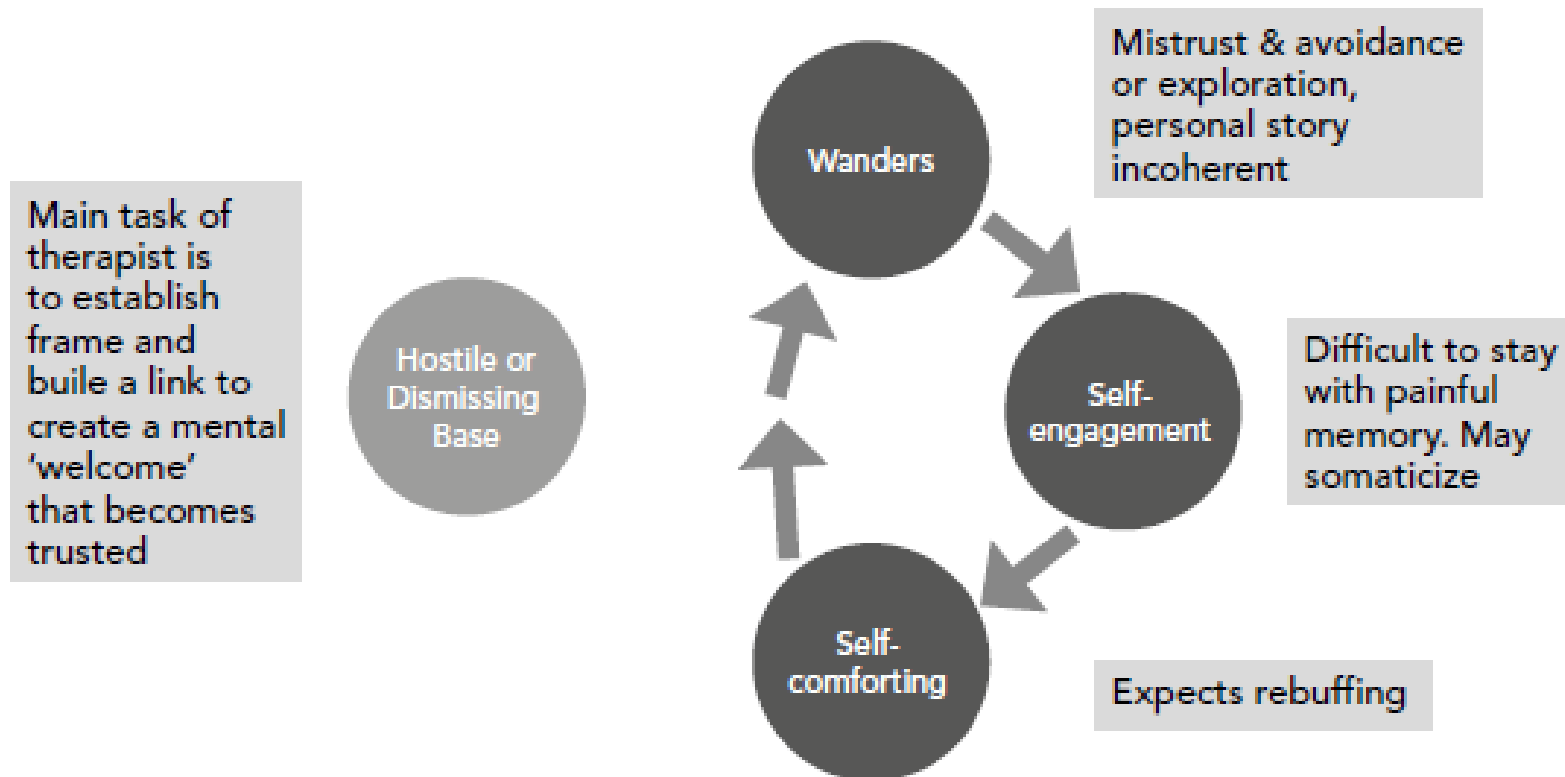
- A combination of the principles of Social Role Valorisation and Applied Behaviour Analysis
- It is 'positive' in eschewing punitive methods of conditioning people
- A narrative that doesn't integrate well with attachment concepts
- A technology that has to be learned
- A failure to understand the inter-subjective
- Unstated hostility to Bowlby, and historical links to HJ Eysenck, BF Skinner & Special Hospitals' Lifelong care

# The four stages of emotionally secure caregiving



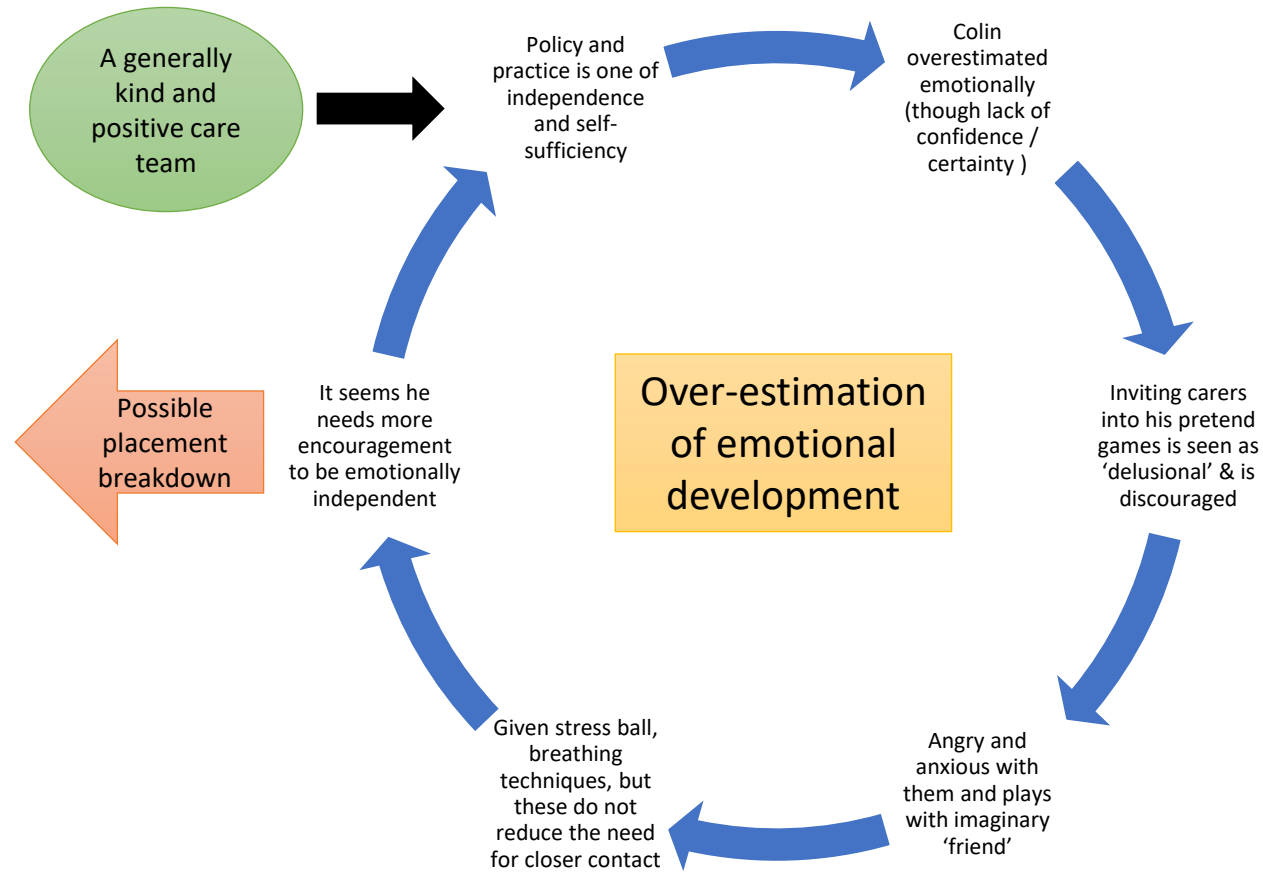
# Lack of emotional attunement and the failure of Empathy: Lesley

Figure 3.2: Avoidant attachment preventing connection





# Over-estimation of emotional development → Morally injured care and abandonment: Colin



# No one loves me, and neither do I: Renata



You are good for nothing  
You made my life hell  
No one likes you  
You're a waste of space  
I'm ill because of you

School:  
There's no point  
teaching you



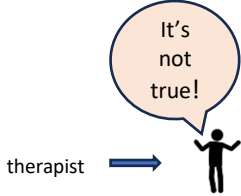
Doctor: It's all  
in your head



Abusive  
partner – you  
failed me

Robbers -  
you're our  
patsy, chump

- Masochism
- Self-sabotage
- Worthlessness
- Hopelessness
- Avoidance of care
- Dependency (legal and illegal)
- Isolation
- Loss of basic trust
- Suicide attempts



# T(he)y don't have feelings: Donald with Leonard

## Assumptions

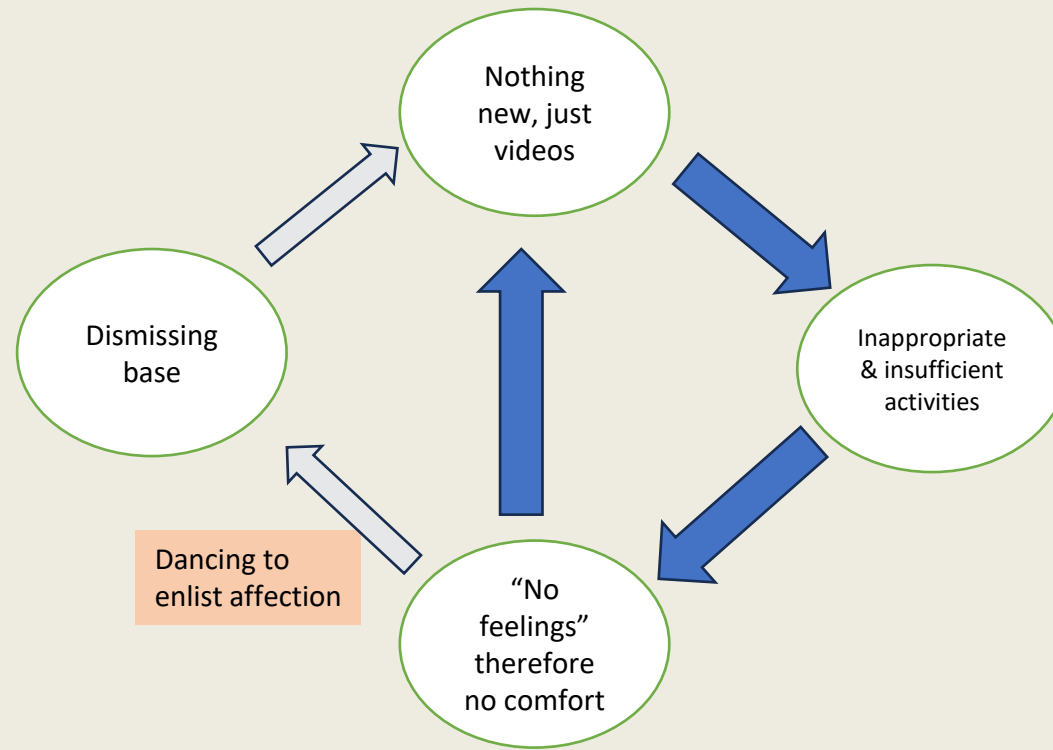
He's non-verbal, so non-communicative

I can leave him to do my paperwork

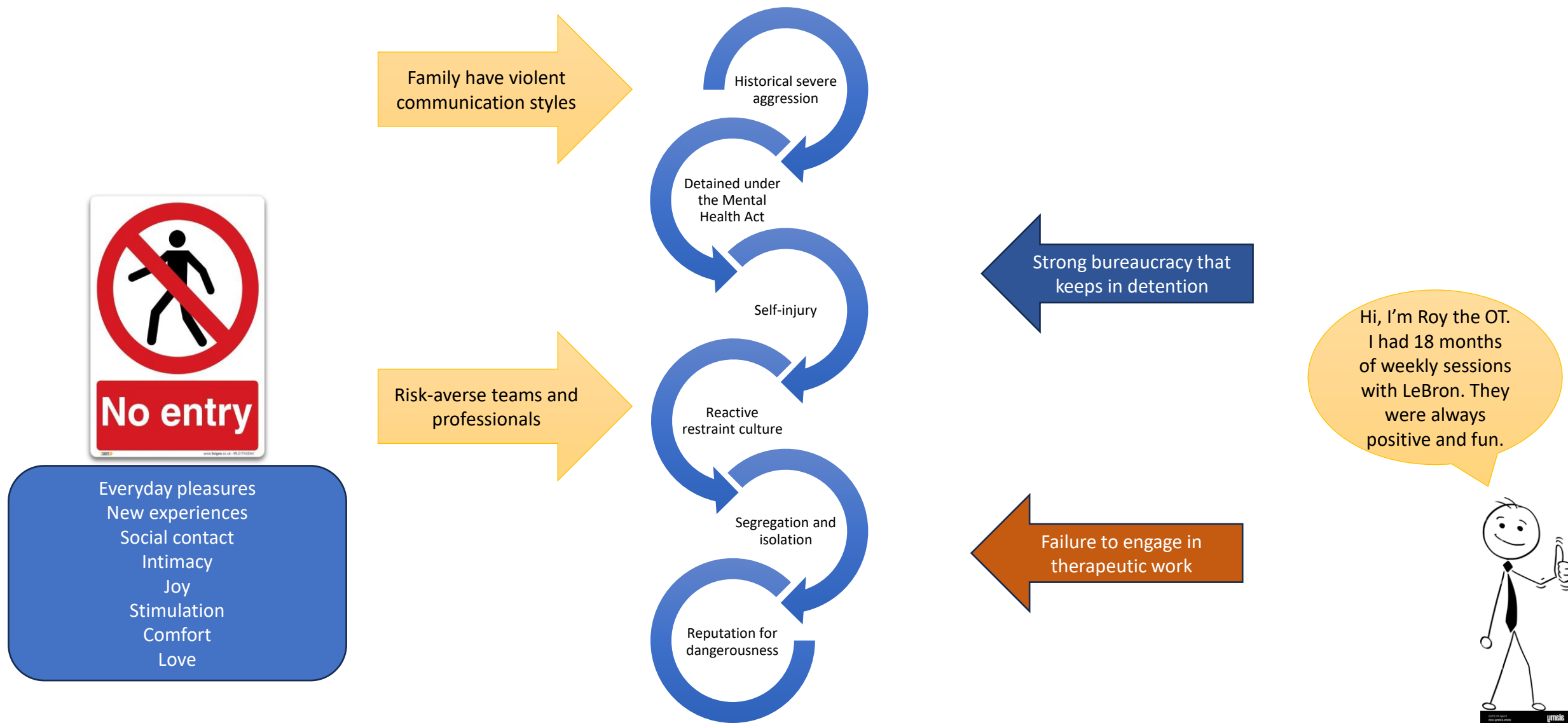
He just watches videos but isn't really watching them

His dancing is just a stereotyped behaviour, doesn't mean anything

He won't miss people who go, "they don't feel that"



# Being known mainly by your “incidents” and prison-like care: LeBron



# Lucy: Too much love

Lucy has the right to make her own choices

Lucy should spend her days with other adults

Lucy should live in her own house like other young folk

I wanted to go into town by myself, but was taken advantage of and hurt

I have to go to a day service where I struggle to share care

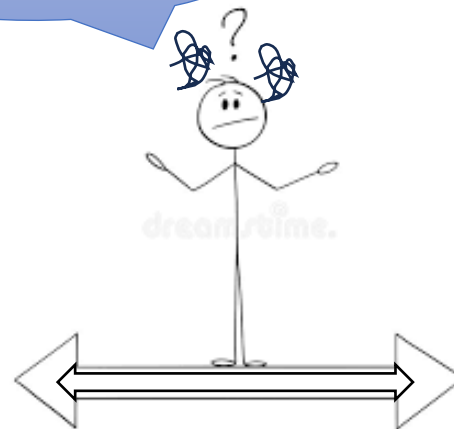
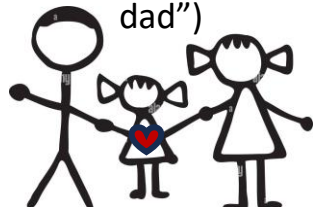
I don't want to leave my family, but they say I must

Lucy puts herself at risk, she doesn't understand

Lucy focusses on her care team and not her peers

Lucy is vulnerable unless she lives with a carer

Rob & Sandra  
(AKA "my mam and dad")



# See me never: Murray



Over-estimated development



Assessed: First individuation stage (18m to 3 years)

Lack of a significant other in his life

Lack of exploration

Compensating fantasy life (self-stimulation)

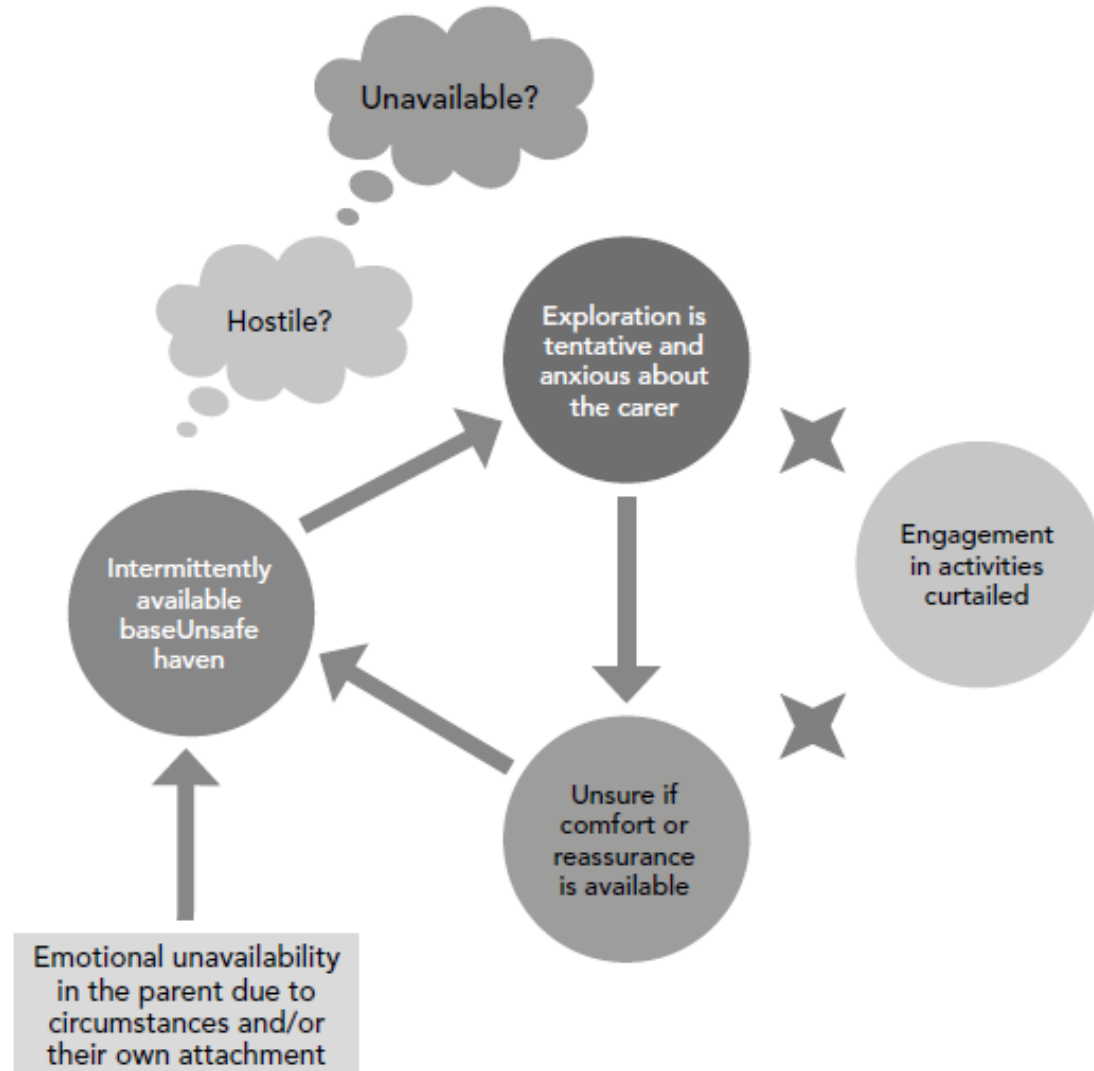
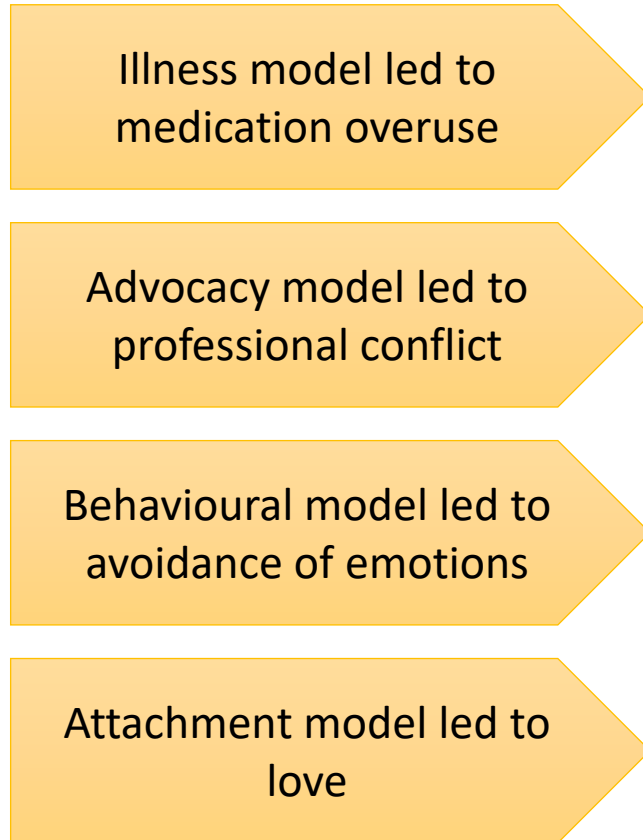
Moral judgement on his aggression

“He needs to go”

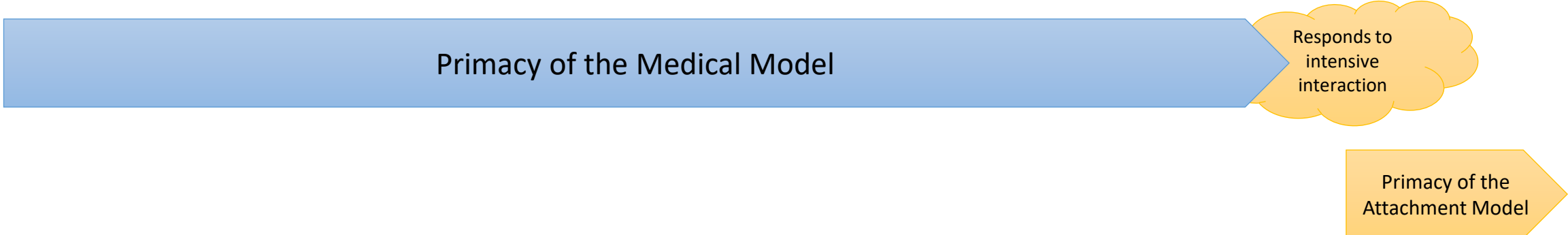
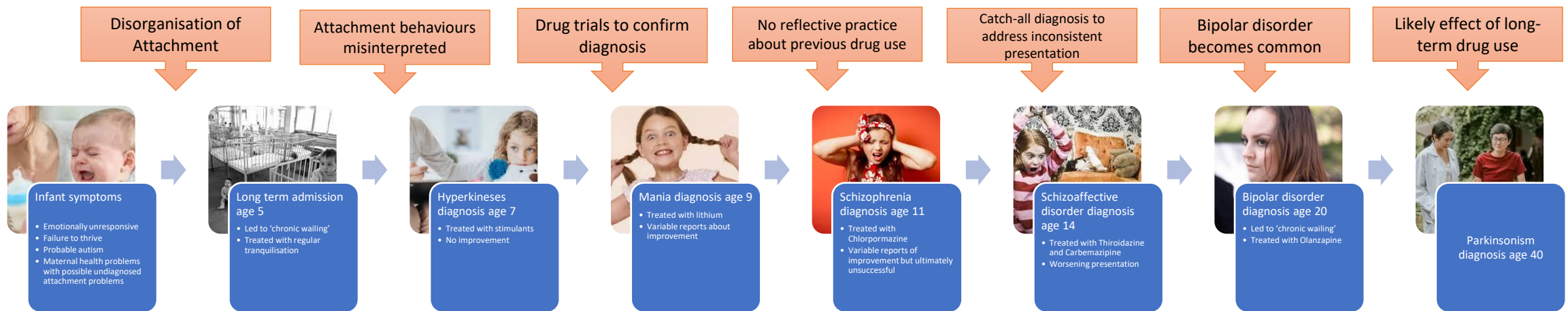


# A new narrative: Jeremiah and Attachment

Figure 13.1: Inhibition in learning and experiencing due to anxious attachment



# Jennifer: Labelled unto death



# “Flagging”: the Team Meeting nobody wanted



# Other cases in the book and the issues they raised

Chapter title	Issue in practice
Hannah: In your own time	Building trust with a woman who was chronically emotionally neglected
Helen: When will I be normal?	Referred for help with anxiety, but really to cure her homosexuality and prevent family conflict
Jonny: Criminal neglect	A man referred for help with anger but who was isolated, repeatedly abused, and denied justice
Constance: No one to let go of	The use of the term “challenging behaviour” as a mask for unacceptable feelings held by her professional team towards her

# Suggested Model of Care



Give the  
context of  
emotional  
development

Manual

# SED-S

Scale of Emotional Development – Short



**Tanja Sappok**  
**Sabine Zepperitz**  
**Filip Morisse**  
**Brian Fergus Barrett**  
**Anton Došen**

An Instrument for the Assessment of Emotional  
Development in Individuals with an Intellectual  
Disability

Updated English edition of Skala der Emotionalen Entwicklung –  
Diagnostik (SEED)

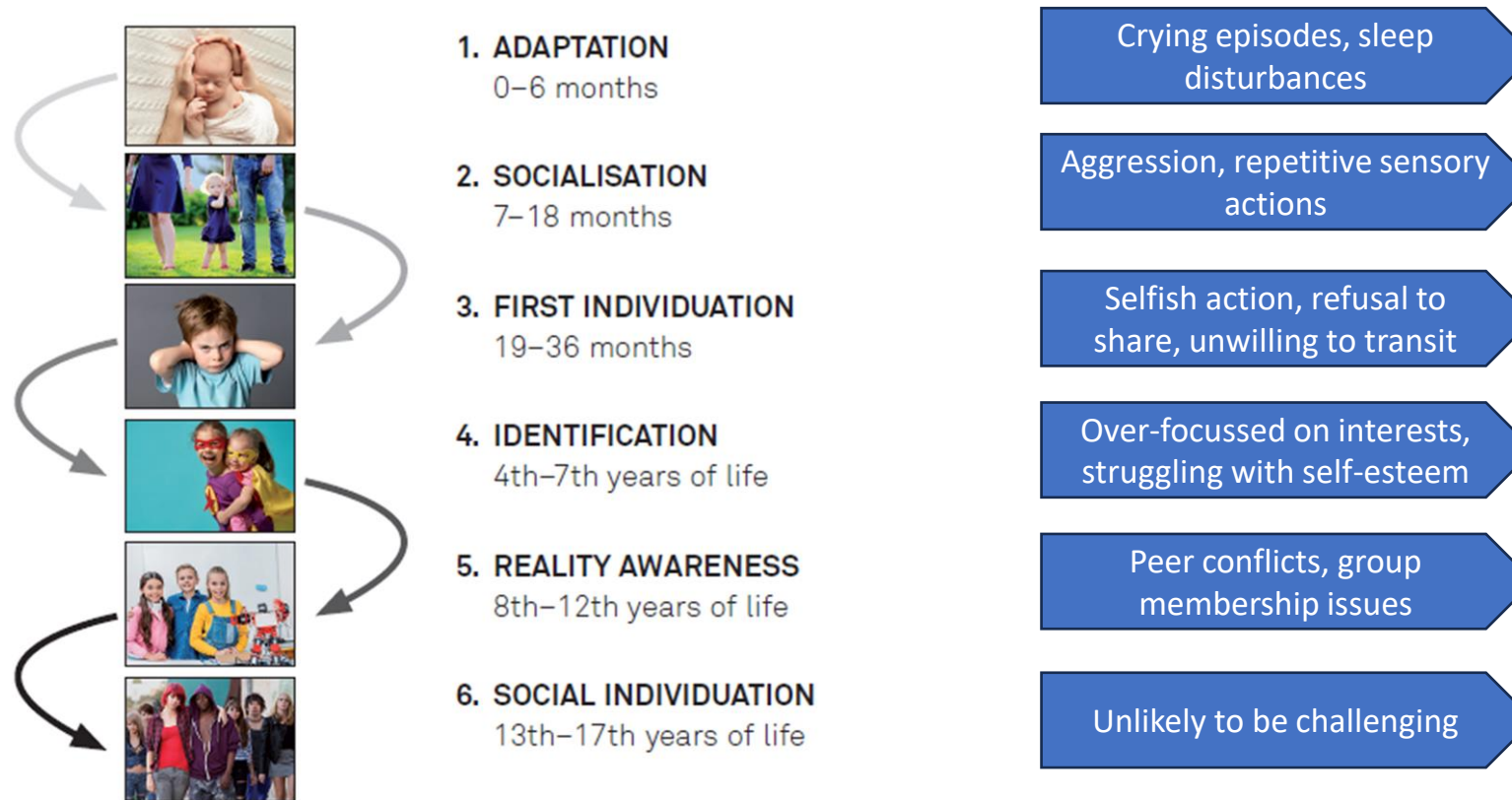
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1. Ensure a small number of consistently available carers who remain for a long time, similar to family life

- LeBron had 60 different carers of whom he interacted with up to 30 in one day
- Lucy, Lesley, LeBron, Colin and Renata were struggling with recent & significant loss of people she loved and relied upon to be present, supportive and comforting
- Several of Renata's relatives had died
- Murray was left alone for long periods in the day where he performed 'plays' with no audience. The occasional interactions with changeable carers were fleeting and mainly prompts to eat or engage in personal care.
- Colin had never wanted to leave his family, but benefitted from a small, stable care team.

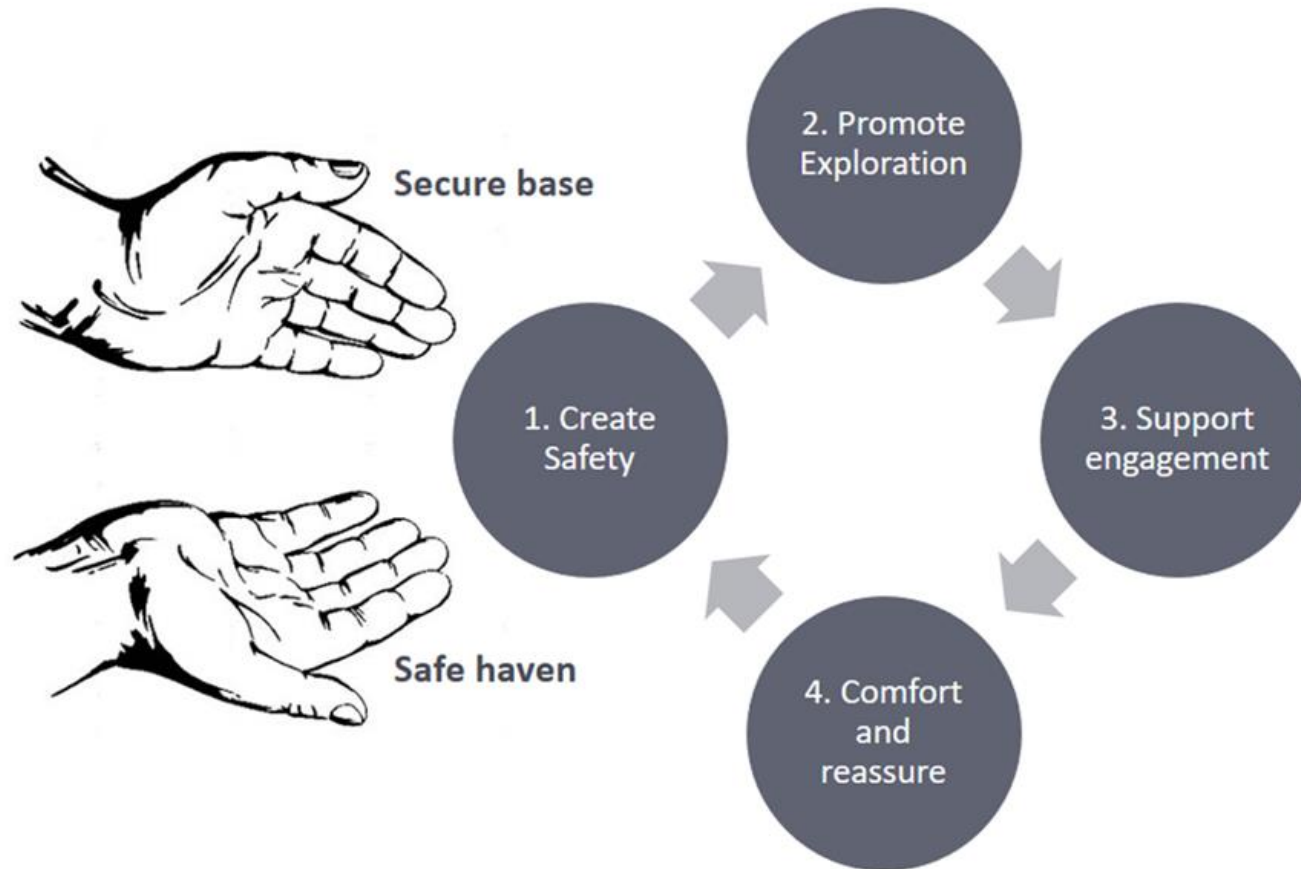
## 2. Reframe “challenging behaviour” where it is developmentally appropriate with examples



3. Challenge the use of powerful drugs to control developmentally appropriate behaviour



# 4. Establish the four conditions of secure caregiving



# Pan- theoretical model of overcoming trauma

Form a connection I can Trust



Help me to safety



Help me achieve stability in my home and relationships



Provide me with unconditional positive regard



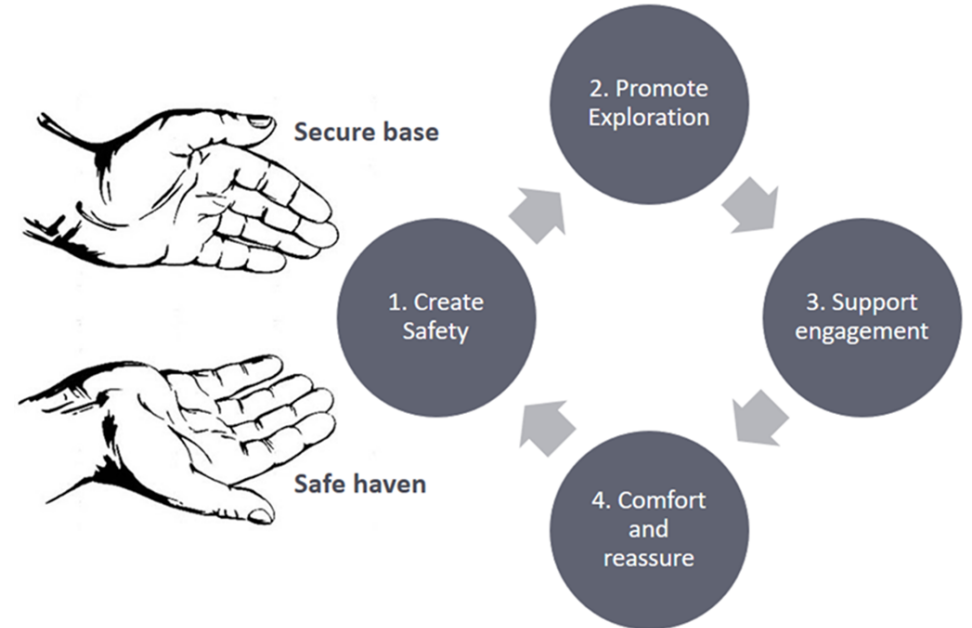
I need a role model for calming and learning new skills



Validate my feelings & help me use them



Let me OWN my story



# The absence of attachment concepts in Learning Disability Services – why?



History – it undermined the special hospitals



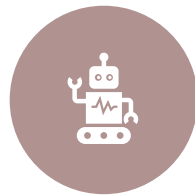
Theory 1 – Bowlby was a psychoanalyst and derided by behaviourists



Theory 2 – Emotional Development has not been used in English speaking countries



Narratives – Behavioural concepts dominate in adult services when thinking about challenges

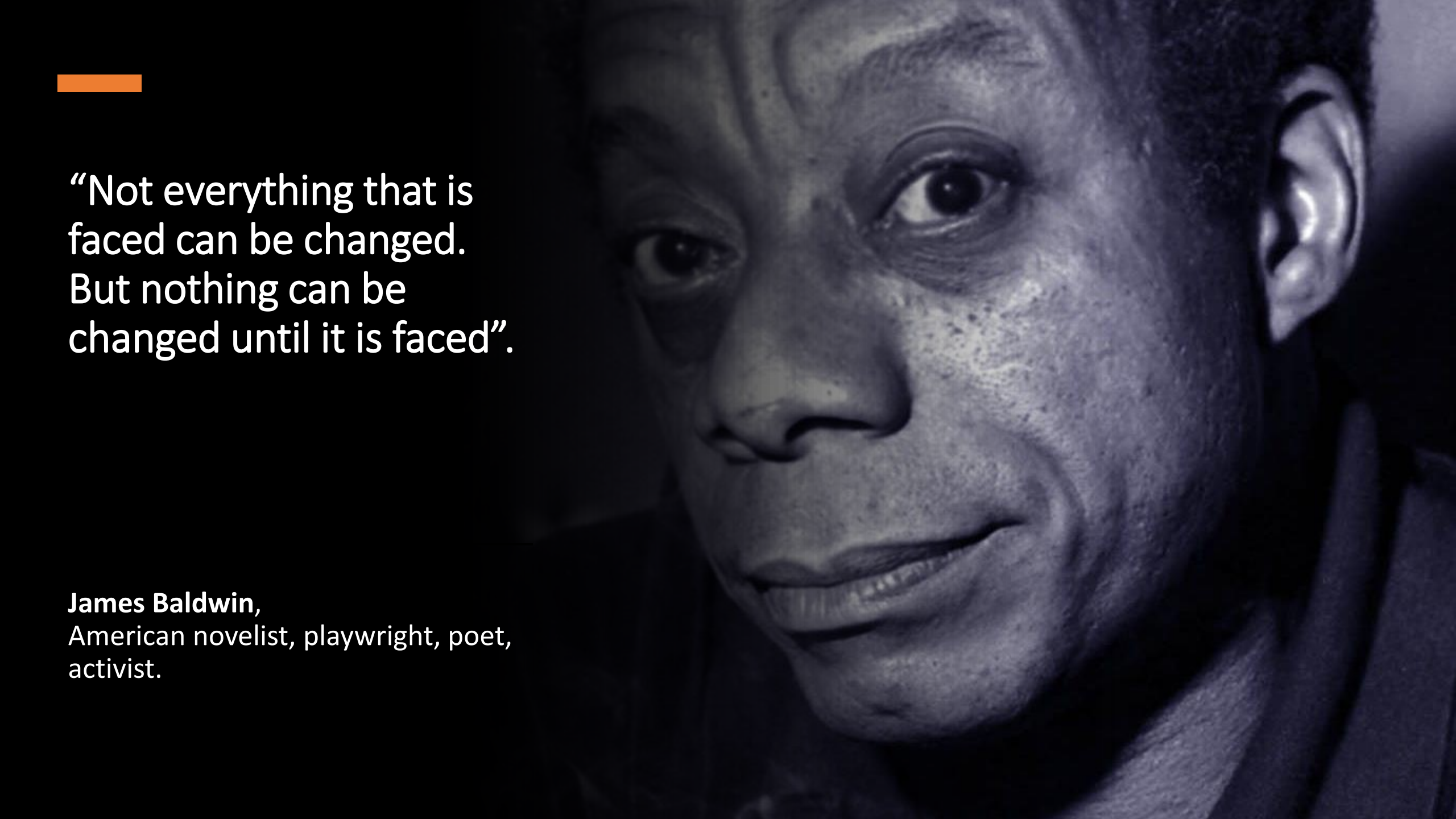


Philosophy – equality and independence are the basis of care services, not an evidence base about what clients want



Evidence – Secure attachment is (a) the antidote for ACEs, (b) not considered as a risk factor, & (c) not considered as the OUTCOME





“Not everything that is  
faced can be changed.  
But nothing can be  
changed until it is faced”.

**James Baldwin,**  
American novelist, playwright, poet,  
activist.

# Love, Attachment and Intellectual Disability

Meeting  
Emotional Needs  
and Developmental  
Trauma

Victoria Shimmens  
and Allan Skelly



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