



THE GLENDON
ASSOCIATION

&

PSYCHALIVE

Free Yourself From the Pain of Your Past

Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.

Two Parts to This Webinar:

Part 1:

How our past affects
our present

- Attachment Theory
- Separation Theory

Part 2:

How to break free of
the past to become
our real self

- Coherent Narrative
- Differentiation

Part 1:

How Our Past Affects Our Present

- Attachment Theory
- Separation Theory

Attachment Theory

Humans rely on attachment figures for:

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

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

Attachment Theory

- The attachment behavioral system is an evolved, innate regulator of proximity
 - Safety
 - Safe exploration
- When threats abate, behavioral systems other than attachment (e.g., exploration, caregiving) can be activated, allowing a person to become more competent/autonomous
- The theory applies from “the cradle to the grave” (Bowlby)

Patterns of Attachment in Children

Category of Attachment

- Secure
- Insecure – avoidant
- Insecure- anxious/ambivalent
- Insecure - disorganized

Parental Interactive Pattern

- Emotionally available, perceptive, responsive
- Emotionally unavailable, imperceptive, unresponsive and rejecting
- Inconsistently available, perceptive and responsive and intrusive
- Frightening, frightened, disorienting, alarming



**We have different attachments
to different people.**



Attachment Theory

People tend to repeat or recreate their early attachment patterns throughout their lives.

Attachment Theory and Research

Bowlby contended that internal working models of attachment help to explain:

- Anger
- Emotional distress
- Anxiety
- Personality disturbance
- Depression
- Emotional detachment

"Attachment underlies later capacity to make effectual bonds as well as a whole range of adult dysfunctions," particularly with marital bonds and trouble parenting.

From "Attachment Theory and Research: Implications for Psychodynamic Psychotherapy"
http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-1-60761-792-1_24#page-1

Secure Attachment Promotes:

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

What causes insecure attachment?

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

- Maternal Sensitivity
- Child Temperament
- Social Status
- Culture

Implicit Versus Explicit Memory

- Implicit Memory
- Explicit Memory

How does disorganized attachment pass from generation to generation?

Implicit memory of terrifying experiences may create:

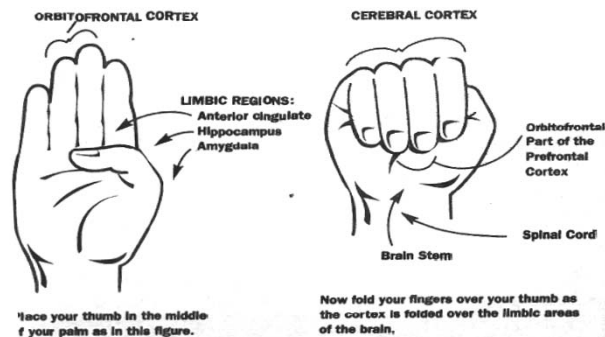
- Impulsive behaviors
- Distorted perceptions
- Rigid thoughts and impaired decision making patterns
- Difficulty tolerating a range of emotions

The Truth About Trauma

- We've all experienced trauma.
- Trauma isn't always what we think of it.
- "Big T" and "little t" trauma.
- Little instances of trauma can affect us in big ways.

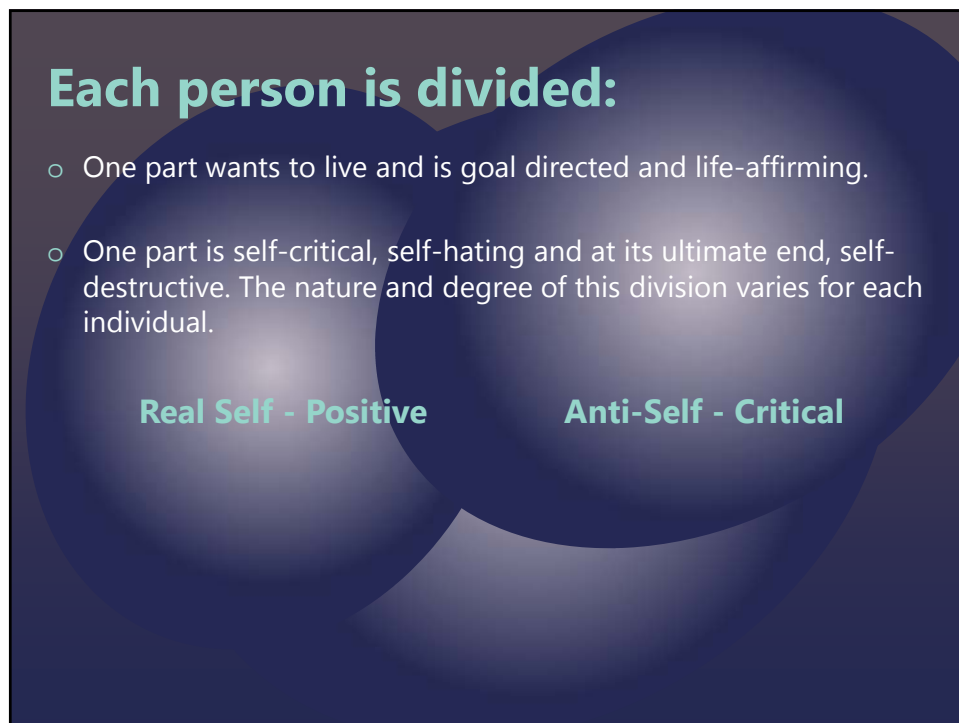
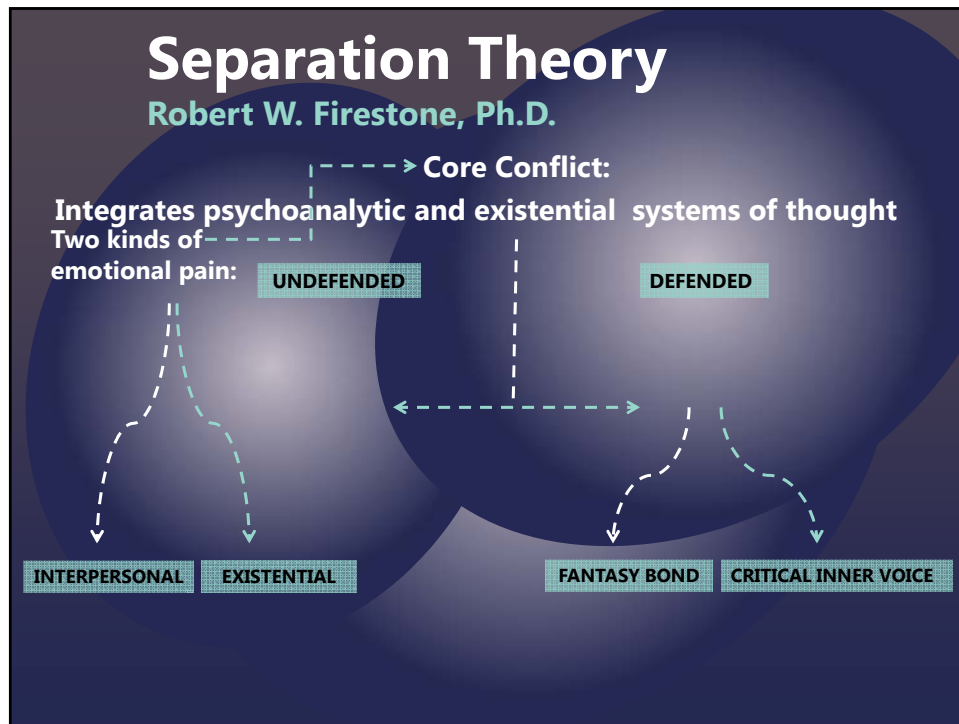
The Brain in the Palm of Your Hand

Daniel Siegel, M.D. – Interpersonal Neurobiology



9 Important Functions of the Pre-Frontal Cortex

1. Body Regulation
2. Attunement
3. Emotional Balance
4. Response Flexibility
5. Empathy
6. Self-Knowing Awareness (Insight)
7. Fear Modulation
8. Intuition
9. Morality



Part 2:

How to Break Free of the Past to Become Your Real Self

- Coherent Narrative
- Differentiation

“The fantastic news is that if you can make sense of your childhood experiences—especially your relationships with your parents—you can transform your attachment models toward security. The reason this is important is that relationships— with friends, with romantic partners, with present or possible future offspring—will be profoundly enhanced. ”
And you’ll feel better with yourself, too!

~ Dr. Dan Siegel

Developing a Secure Attachment

- **Feel the full pain of your childhood and make sense of it.**
- **Grow toward security by developing integration from non-integrated brain functioning.**
- **Because our attachment ability is broken in a relationship, it can be fixed in a relationship. This can be with a romantic partner, a close friend or a good therapist. It takes time to develop an Earned Secure Attachment in a relationship. Stick with it!**

Writing a Coherent Narrative

- **"It's never too late to bring both hemispheres [of your brain] into development and activity." ~Dr. Dan Siegel**
- **Writing a coherent narrative integrates your brain by drawing upon the right side of your brain for autobiographical memories and deep emotions, as well as the left side of your brain for language, logic and linear storytelling.**
- **Make sense of the nonsense.**

Questions for Self-Reflection

*The following questions are designed for self-reflection, guiding you to think about your early life experiences. These questions were adapted from Dr. Dan Siegel's book *Brainstorm*. In your journal, write responses to each of the following questions. Your responses can be as long or as short as you like.*

* Family Background

Who was in your family? Include significant adults, siblings, etc.
What was it like growing up in your family?
What was your parents' philosophy about raising children?

*Family Relationships and Attachment

Was there anyone in your life other than your parents who served as a parental figure or to whom you felt attached? Please state a few words to reflect your relationship with those individuals as well.
What were the major conflicts in your family? Did you have conflict with anyone?
Was there anyone you could turn to or any place you could go to help you feel comforted during difficult times?

*Childhood Experiences

Did you ever experience a long separation from your parents in childhood? What was that like for you?
How were you disciplined as a child?
Have you ever felt threatened by your parents?
Have you ever felt rejected by your parents?

Identifying Traumas

List some emotional or physical traumas or traumatic events that have happened in your life. These do not have to be "Big T" traumas. A trauma can be any significant, distressing event or incident that shaped you as a child—things that made you feel bad, scared, ashamed, etc.

1. *Being ridiculed in front of my 4th Grade class by a teacher.*
2. *Being left for a week with my grandparents who were strangers to me.*
3. *When my dad lost it and wouldn't stop yelling when I broke his clock.*
4. *The time my mom locked herself in her room and wouldn't respond.*
5. *The day I found out I failed Latin.*
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Tips for Writing a Coherent Narrative

- ✓ Write as an adult.
- ✓ Write rationally
- ✓ Write autobiographically.
- ✓ Write intuitively.
- ✓ Write with feeling.
- ✓ Write about how the past influences your present.
- ✓ Write with balance.
- ✓ Write with self-compassion.

Differentiation refers to the struggle that all people face in striving to develop a sense of themselves as independent individuals.

Are you living your life based on your own priorities, values, and sense of meaning?

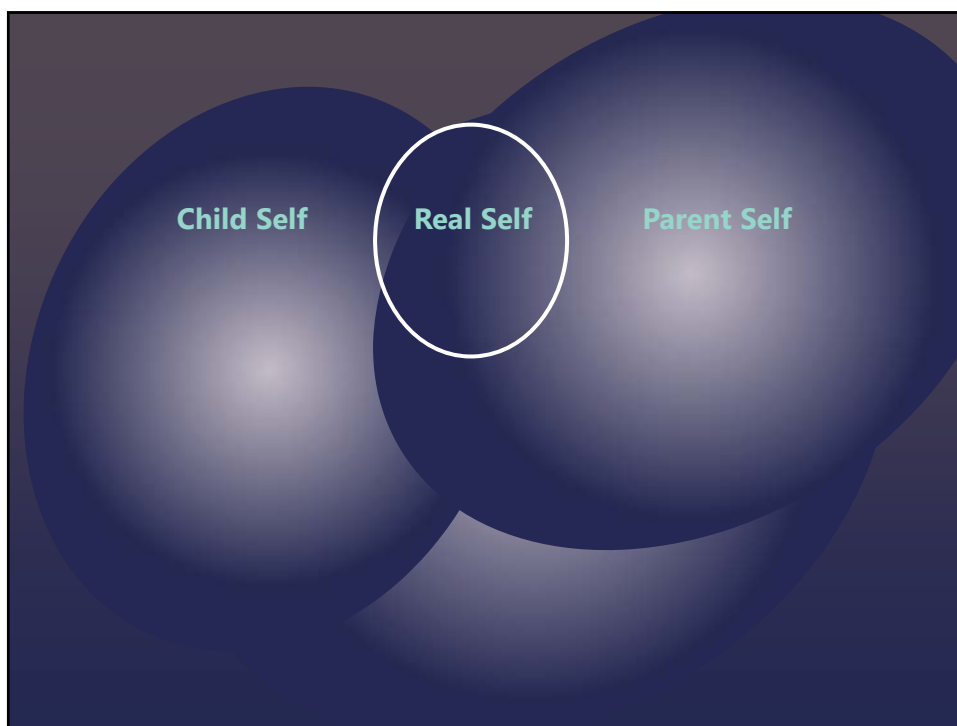
OR

Are you living your life based on the expectations of those around you and prescriptions you acquired in your past?

Lack of Differentiation

We may respond to early influences by:

- Internalizing negative attitudes
- Repeating destructive actions or attitudes
- Reacting against hurtful influences
- Recreating familiar dynamics in our adult lives



Becoming Differentiated

"To lead a free life, a person must separate him/herself from negative imprinting and remain open and vulnerable... As children, people not only identify with the defenses of their parents but also tend to incorporate into themselves the critical or hostile attitudes that were directed toward them. These destructive personal attacks become part of the child's developing personality, forming an alien system, the anti-self, distinguishable from the self system, which interferes with and opposes the ongoing manifestation of the true personality of the individual."

Robert Firestone, Ph.D.

Steps of Differentiation

Step 1: Break with internalized thought processes, i.e., critical, hostile attitudes toward self and others

Step 2: Separate from negative personality traits assimilated from one's parents

Step 3: Relinquish patterns of defense formed as an adaptation to painful events in one's childhood

Step 4: Develop one's own values, ideals, and beliefs rather than automatically accepting those one has grown up with

Step 1:

"We have to separate from the destructive attitudes that were directed toward us."

Separate From Destructive Attitudes

- Self-critical
- Self-soothing
- Hostile and suspicious
- Self-aggrandizing

Step 2:

“We have to separate or differentiate ourselves from the negative traits of our parents, and their defensive posture toward life.”

For Example:

The way you are in your relationship...

The way you are as a parent...

Step 3:

"We want to separate from the defenses we use to cope with elements of our childhood—we want to break with these defenses as well. And being ourselves, we have to move away from the defensive posture that we adopted realistically as children, but that are no longer necessary or functional."

Step 4:

"We have to develop our own values, our adult value system, and approach to life, to really fulfill our destiny as a human being, our potential as a unique individual."

Self and Identity

"...thinking about self and identity. In my conceptualization, the self system, in contrast to the anti-self system, is composed of the unique wants, desires, goals and values that hold special meaning for the individual as well as the specific manner and means that he/she utilizes to fulfill these goals."

- Dr. Robert Firestone, *The Self Under Siege*

Become Your Real Self

- Take power over your life.
- Challenge childish tendencies.
- Feel the feelings, but do the right thing.
- Don't play the blame game.
- Try not to be defensive; seek feedback.
- Develop goals, both personal and transcendent.
- Notice and challenge your defenses.
- Cope with existential fears.

Interpersonal Neurobiology

Curious

Open

Accepting

Loving

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MAKING SENSE OF YOUR LIFE

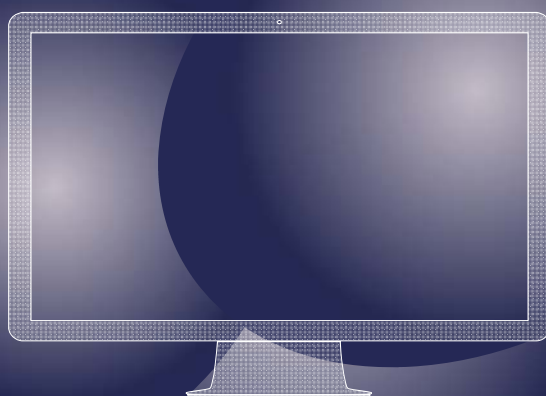
Understanding Your Past
— to Liberate Your Present —
and Empower Your Future



An eCourse with
Drs. Dan Siegel
& Lisa Firestone

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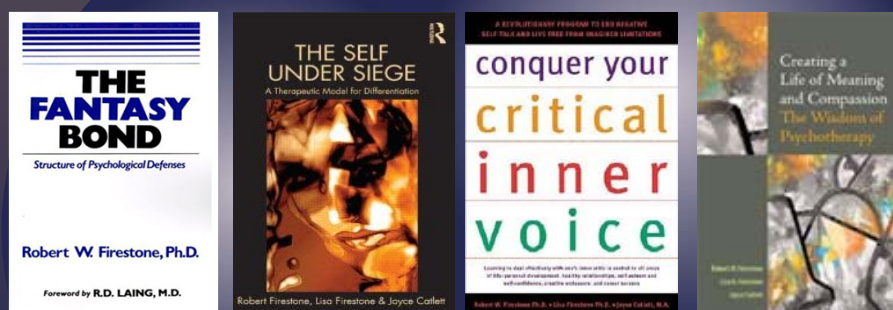
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