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Talking about Trauma:

A DMM Perspective on Danger, Attachment & Adaptation

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The plan

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- DMM attachment theory as related to trauma
- Empirical findings
- An illustrative case: AAI and rare video
- Treatment implications

Strengths versus Deficit Approach

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Exposure to DANGER is an OPPORTUNITY
to learn essential information about survival.

Danger versus Psychological Trauma

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- Danger is universal.
- It is an event.
- Psychological trauma: a response to danger:
 - Not everyone who is endangered has trauma.
 - Ψ pain signals that there is something to learn.
 - Why do some have trauma and others not?
- The outcomes psychological trauma are:
 - Unnecessary re-endangerment or
 - Excessive anxiety about unlikely endangerment.

Theory of Attachment & Adaptation

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- Dynamic-Maturational Model of attachment & adaptation (DMM).
- DMM: Theory about the effects of danger on self-, partner-, and child-protection.
- Danger is a universal part of life.
- Development enables individuals to learn to manage a wide range of dangers.

Information Processing

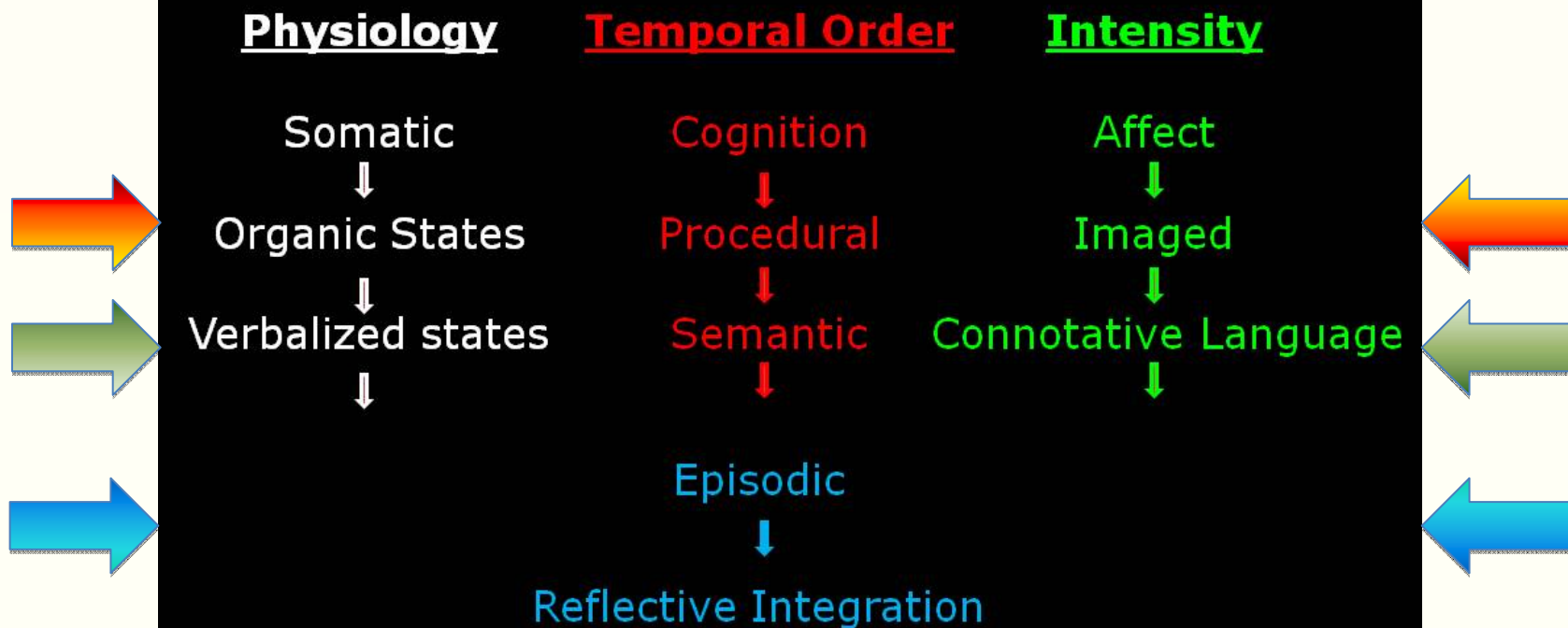
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- The brain is evolved to give preferential attention to danger (Mather & Sutherland)
- Two opposite processing routes:
 - Cerebellar ‘cognitive’ (temporal order, Skinner)
 - Limbic ‘affective’ (arousal, Le Doux, van der Kolk)
- Some information is processed verbally
- Some is integrated episodically and reflectively (Tulving & Schacter)

Multiple Dispositional Representations

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Representational Systems



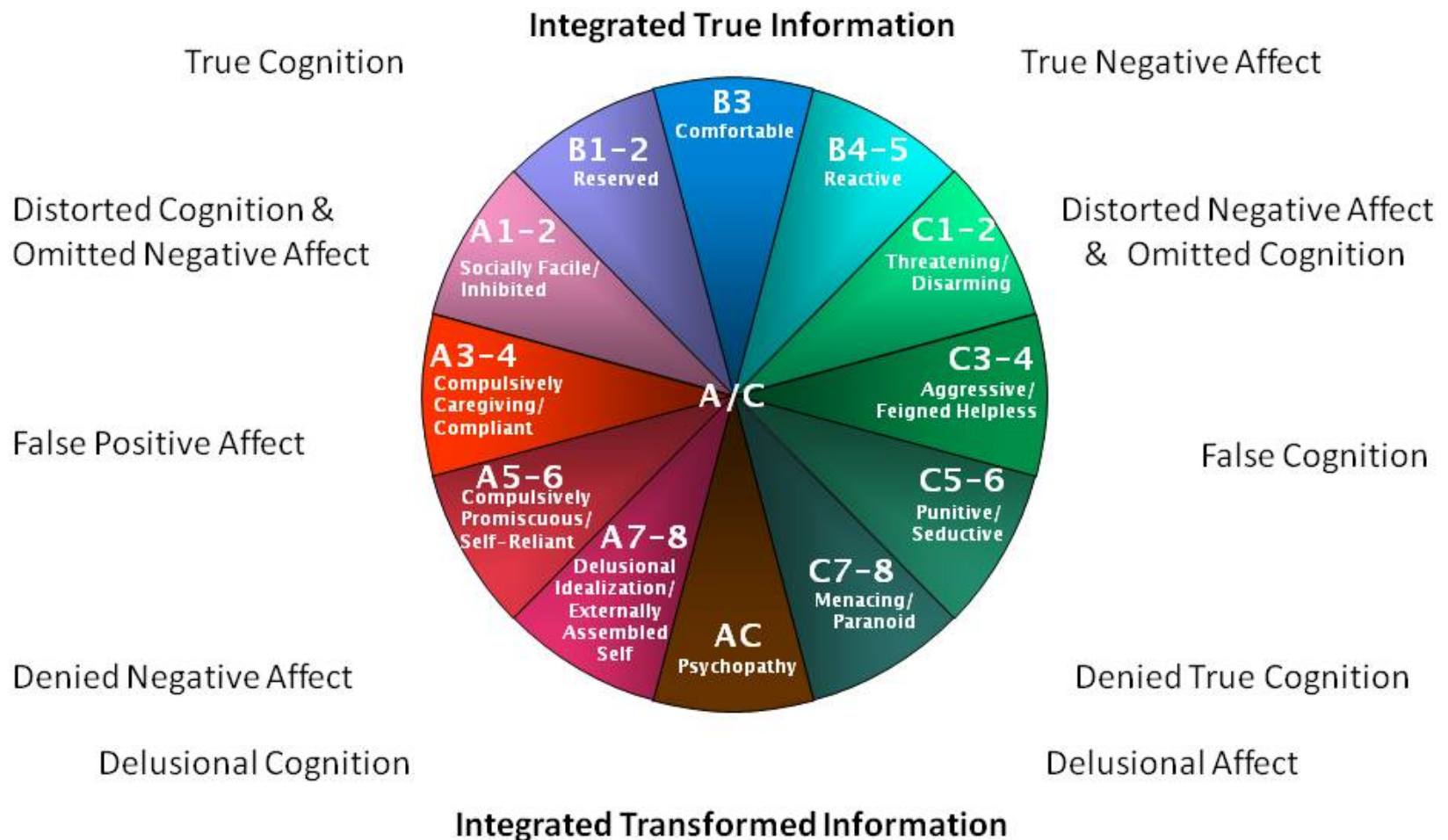
DMM Self-Protective Strategies

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This leads to 3 self-protective attachment strategies:

- Cognitive Type A's: avoid the danger
- Affective Type C's: fight/struggle with the danger
- Balanced/Integrative Type B's: consider & resolve the danger

Attachment Self-Protective Strategies



Attachment Figures (parents)

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- Children cannot manage most dangers.
- Attachment figures protect and comfort children in the child's zone of proximal development (ZPD):
 - They let the child do for himself what he can do;
 - They help him to learn what he is ready to learn;
 - They protect & comfort when the child cannot.

When Parents Are Not in the ZPD

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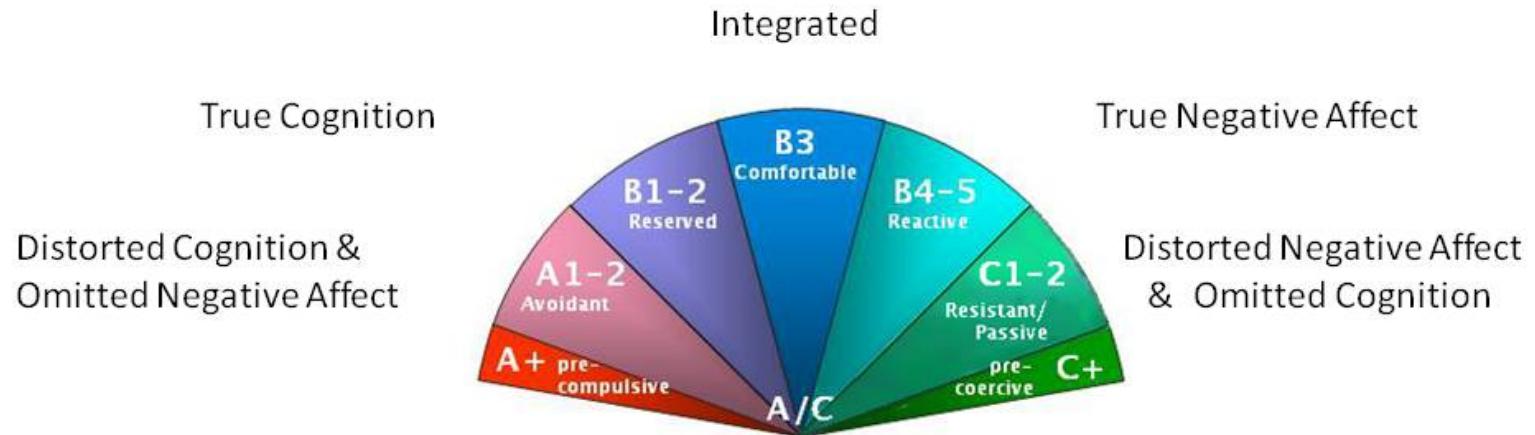
- **Type A child:** Parent expected too much and punished failure & negative feelings
- **Type C child:** Parent has intermittently & unpredictably rewarded 'immature', negative behavior

Danger & Psychological Trauma

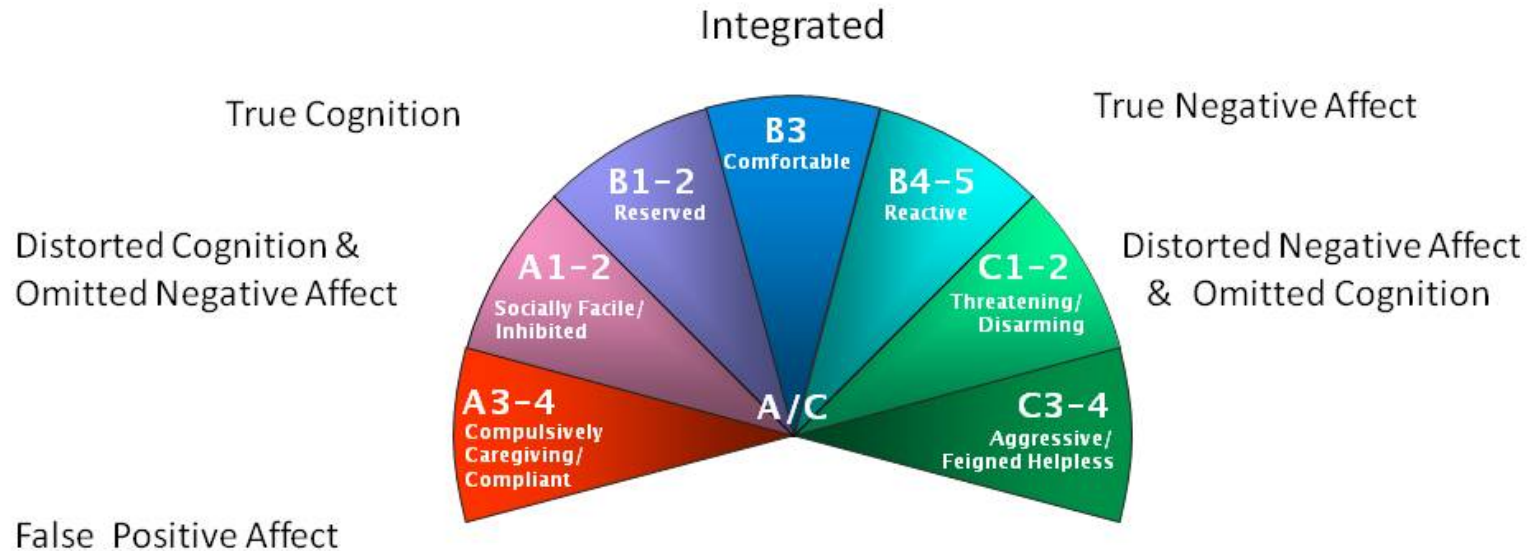
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- Danger creates the opportunity to learn to protect & comfort the self.
- Unprotected and uncomforted children:
 - Use short-cuts that omit incomprehensible information.
 - Tuck too threatening & complex information away where it can be found later.
- Maturation creates the opportunity to reorganize DRs, with attachment figures' help.

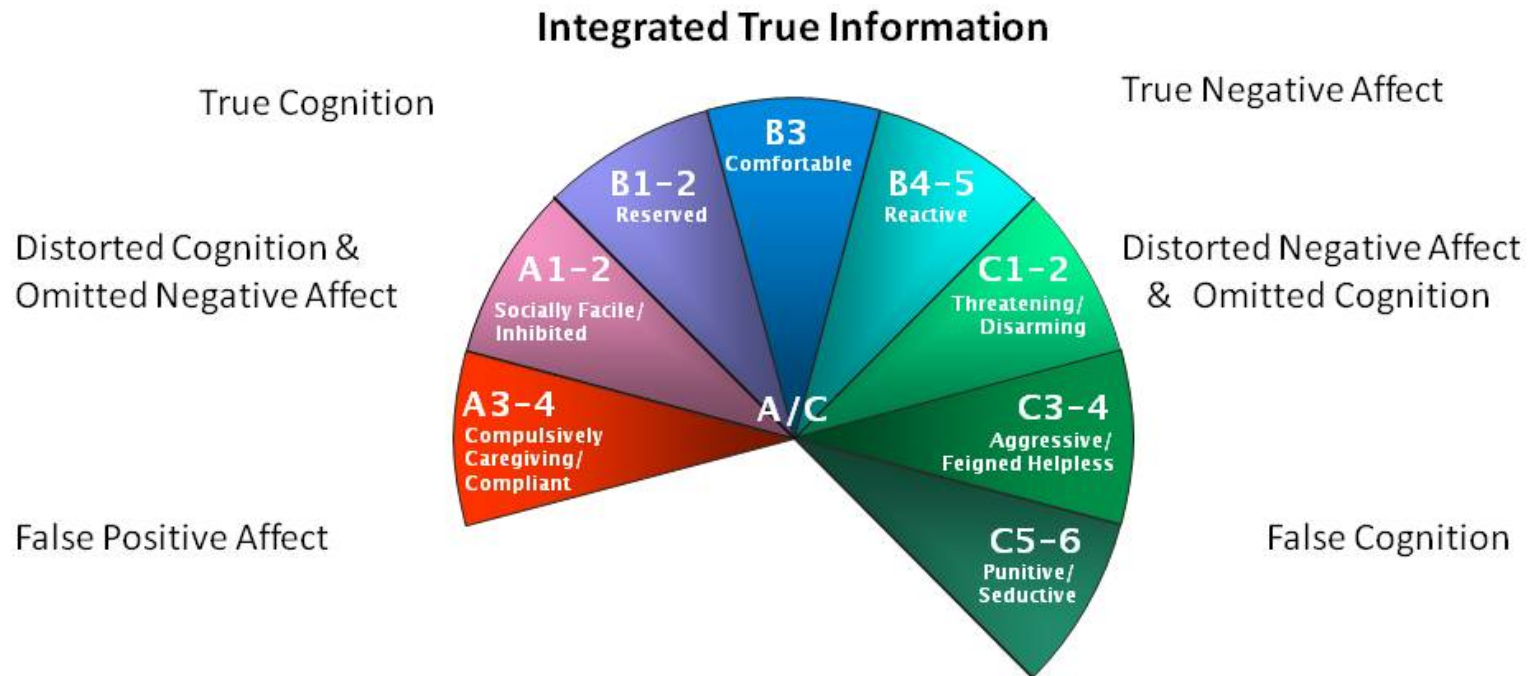
Infancy: Attachment Self-Protective Strategies



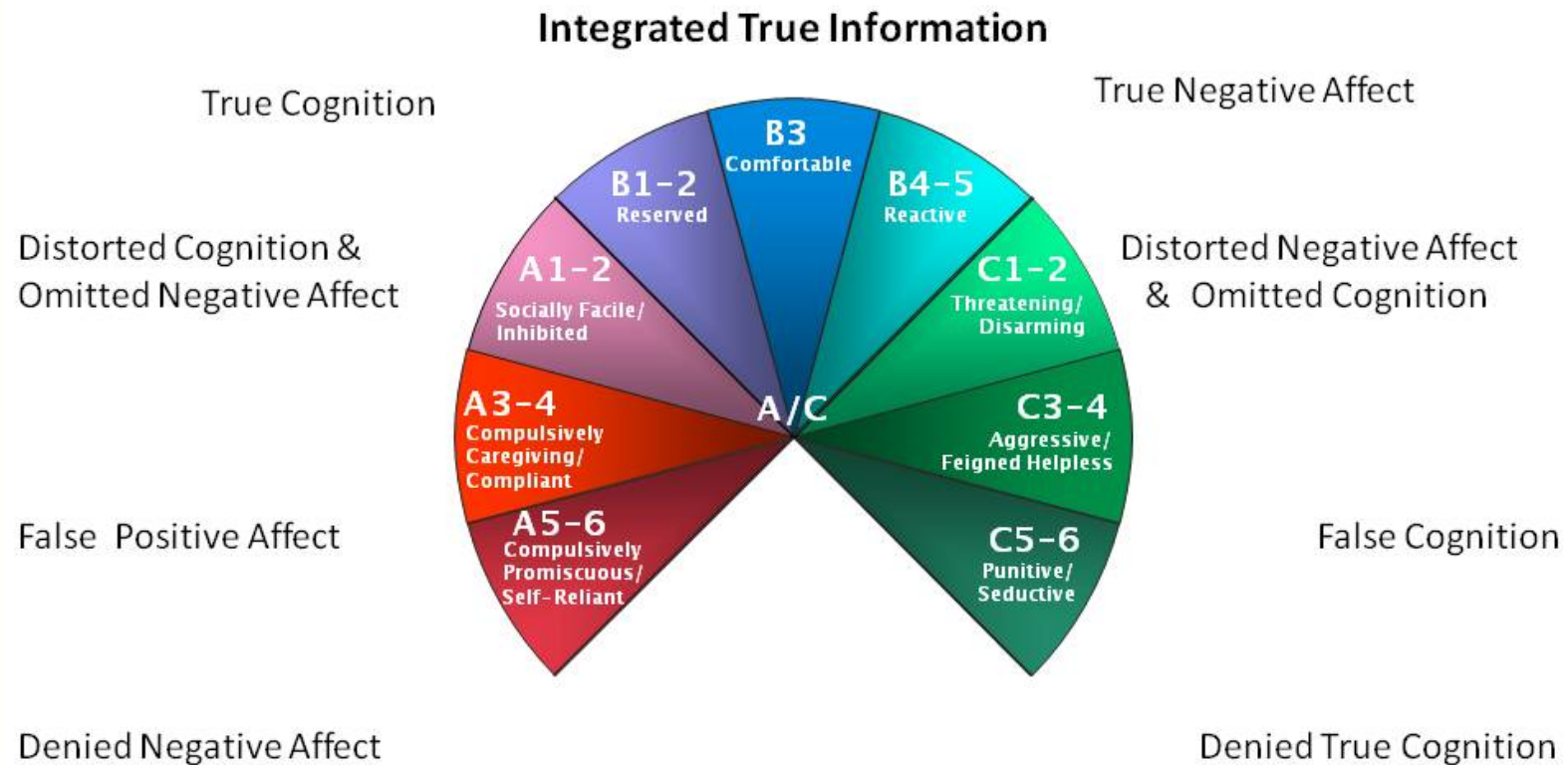
Preschool: Attachment Self-Protective Strategies



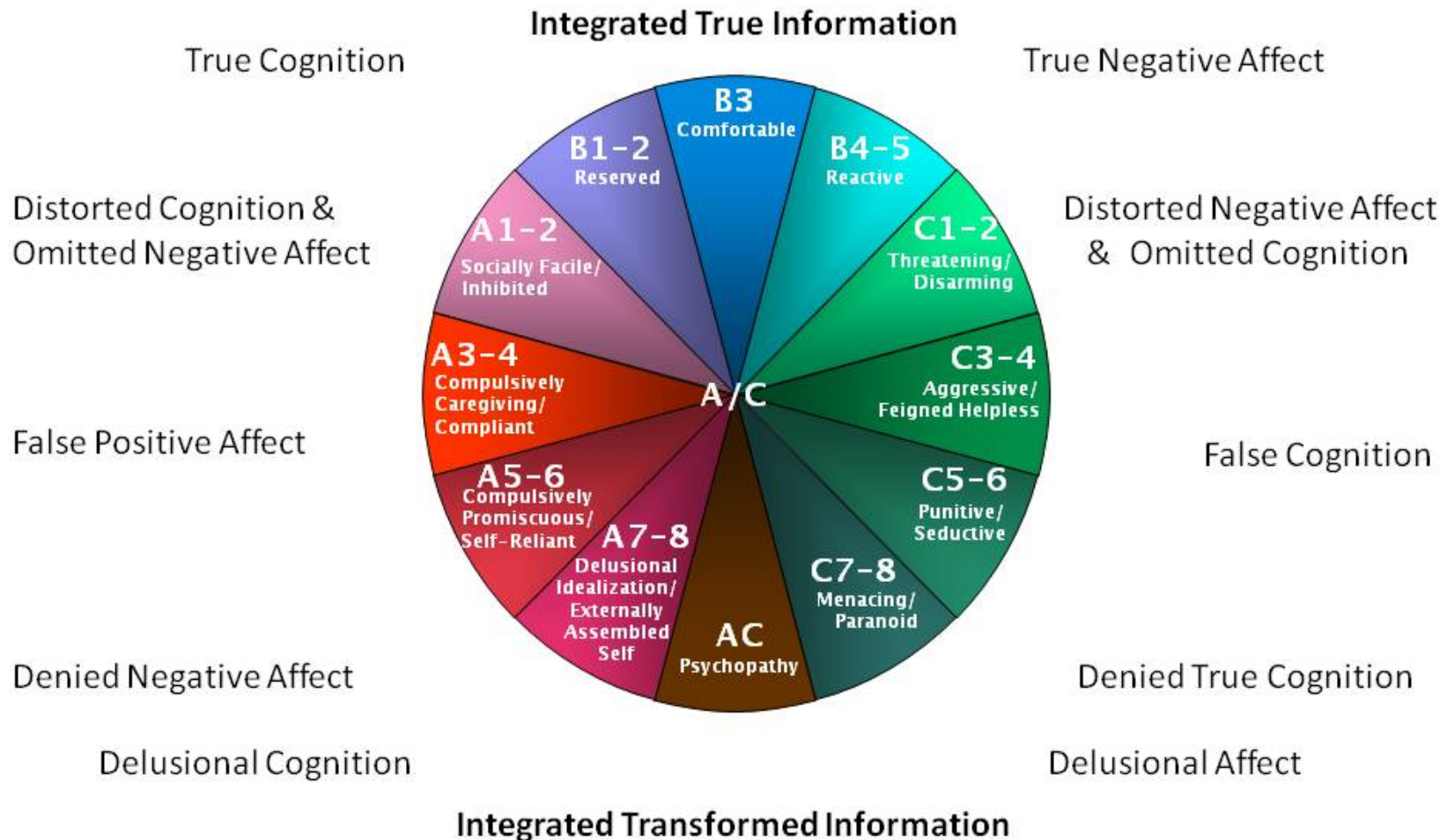
School-age: Attachment Self-Protective Strategies



Adolescence: Attachment Self-Protective Strategies



Adulthood: Attachment Self-Protective Strategies



Psychological Trauma in Childhood

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- Unprotected & uncomforted danger in childhood
- Combined with lack of reorganization during development
- Creates psychological trauma in childhood.
- This predisposes adults to PTSD from danger occurring in adulthood.

Three Empirical Findings

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1. Adults with chronic PTSD had **unresolved childhood traumas.**
2. Most of the traumas were in a **dismissed** form:
 - dismissed effects
 - displaced feelings
 - blocked & denied events
 - delusional repairs.
3. Adult traumas were **tied to childhood trauma** the mind connected related information.

(Crittenden & Newman; Crittenden & Heller)

12 Types of Unresolved Traumas in AAls

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Type A

Dismissed

Displaced

Vicarious

Blocked/denied

Delusional repair

Type C

Preoccupied

Imagined

Suggested

Hinted

Delusional revenge

Depressed

Disorganized

Discourse Analysis of the AAI

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- Adult Attachment Interview
 - 1-hour, semi-structured interview
 - About childhood danger, protection, & comfort.
- Discourse analysis
 - Yields self-protective ABC attachment strategy
 - Unresolved traumas & type of distortion.

Cecilia Excerpt 1: Relationship with mother

When I say distant – it's like – she had this boyfriend, Big Bob, who was lovely – and he used to go – he had kids with another woman. And he used to go and see them every single Sunday. And the way I say – mean by distant is – that particular – one particular Sunday, she decide...my mum decided not to come back, so Big Bob couldn't go to and see his kids – cause he wouldn't leave us – and he hadn't been with mm my mum that long and my mum decided not to come back, so I sort of mean that by distant, was the fact that sometimes she just wasn't there.

Continued:

And I don't remember it personally in a way – it's from what I have been told by Big Bob cause he ca...he err is friends with my uncle and he came round and he was like, '*Yeah well, I wouldn't have left your mum, but she didn't come back until the Fr...Thursday – err no Tuesday,*' I went '*Right*' – she goes – '*and she had left – left you for like three nights or whatever?*' Cause she went out on the Friday, came back on the Tuesday – err, I was like '*Right*' – she goes- he knew – '*she knew I was meant to be seeing my kids on the Sunday and she never came back when she promised she would*' – err and she had left him apparently with no money and there was hardly any food in the house – so.

Cecilia's AAI with discourse analysis

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Cecilia Excerpt 1:

When I say distant – it's like – she had this boyfriend **dst**, Big Bob, who was lovely **ideal** – and he used to go **dysf** – he had kids with another woman. And he used to go and see them every single **emphasis** Sunday. And the way I say – mean by distant is – **dysf** that particular – one particular Sunday she decide...**dysf**my mum decided not to come back, so **dpl effect** Big Bob couldn't go to and see his kids – cause he wouldn't leave us **dst** – and he hadn't been with mm my mum **dysf** that long and my mum decided not to come back//, so I sort of mean that **vague** by distant, was the fact **dst** that sometimes **min** she just wasn't **there [for me]**.

Continued:

And I don't remember it personally in a way **dst & vague** – it's from what I have been told by Big Bob cause he ca...he err **v dysf** is friends with my uncle and he came round and he was like, *'Yeah, well, I wouldn't have left your mum, but she didn't come back until the Fr...Thursday – err no Tuesday v, v, dysf, I went 'Right' Speech* – she goes **present tense** – *'and she had left – left you for like three nights or whatever dsm?* Cause she went out on the Friday, came back on the Tuesday **repeat** – err, I was like *'Right'* – she goes- he knew **confusion of time & person** – *'She knew I was meant to be seeing my kids on the Sunday and she never came back when she promised she would' speech, present tense* – err and she had left him **dpl!!** apparently with no money and there was hardly any food in the house – so. **[So I was abandoned to a strange man and had no one else to take care of me!!!]**

Utr(dpl, ds) abandonment

Excerpt 2:

Like my mom and my step dad would argue and fight – and we had a dog who was gorgeous and she was very nervous around loud noises – and they would start fighting and she would be shaking behind the sofa and I would go ‘*Mum, you are scaring the dog*’ and they would go ‘*Get her the fuck out of here then!*’ So I would end up having to take the dog for like a 2-hour walk or whatever because they were arguing.

Excerpt 2:

Like my mom and my step dad would argue and fight – and we had a dog who was gorgeous **Shift to dog!** and she was very nervous around loud noises **dpl distress to dog** – and they would start fighting **present participle** and she would be shaking **present participle & displaced to dog** behind the sofa and I would go ‘*Mum, you are scaring the dog*’ **speech & dpl caregiving to dog** and they would go ‘*Get her the fuck out of here then!*’ **Violent and scatological speech** So I would end up having to take the dog for like a 2-hour walk or whatever **dsm** because they were arguing. **Dog functions as means of escape from an almost present tense danger.**

Utr(dpl)_{marital fights}

Cecilia's DMM Attachment Strategy

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Utr(dpl, ds)_{abandonment} Utr(dpl)_{marital fights} A++

Unresolved trauma regarding abandonment
and marital fighting in an affect-denying
compulsive Type A cognitive strategy

Cecilia's play video with her son

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A video was shown in which Cecilia played with her 6 month old son quite normally. She sat beside and slightly behind him. When he raised an arm quickly in the direction of her chin (behind him), she grabbed her chin as if hit, then paused, then kissed her son. He was completely unaware of anything having happened.

Although she acted as if hit, she could not have been hurt by her baby son.

Questions

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- Did the baby hit Cecilia aggressively? **no**
- Did he hurt her? **no**
- Did Cecilia perceive pain? **yes**
- Did she expect to be hit? **Yes, by males**
- This is a delusion!
- What consequence did she give her son?

Utr(dl-repair)_{males hitting women}

Cecilia's history

- Sibling died of shaken baby syndrome
- 7 hospitalizations in 1st year of life
- 29 hospitalizations by age 18 years
- Multiple abandonments
- Mother's boyfriends took care of her
- They also sexually abused her
- Baby's father in prison for partner violence

Risk to Cecilia's son

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- Rewarded for unintended 'aggression'
- Learns aggression is approved of & elicits love
- Relationships with children in school?
- Relationships with girls & women?
- Is Cecilia's delusional repair of trauma creating a bully or violent husband or both?

Using Cecilia's trauma productively

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- What does Cecilia need to know?
 - Intimacy with males was important for her survival in childhood.
 - Her context with her son is not like that with Big Bob or her boyfriend.
 - Her son needs a different response from her.
- How can we help her to discover and use this information?

6 Implications for treatment

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1. Safe context for reassembly of information & attribution of new meanings
2. Protective & comforting transitional attachment figure working in client's ZPD
3. Focus on adaptation to past & current danger
4. Opposite ABC strategies need opposite treatments
5. Choosing techniques:
 - Functional formulation of the symptoms.
 - Treatment techniques suited to ABC type of information (1st do no harm).
 - Person-specific treatment plans.
6. Consider any children.

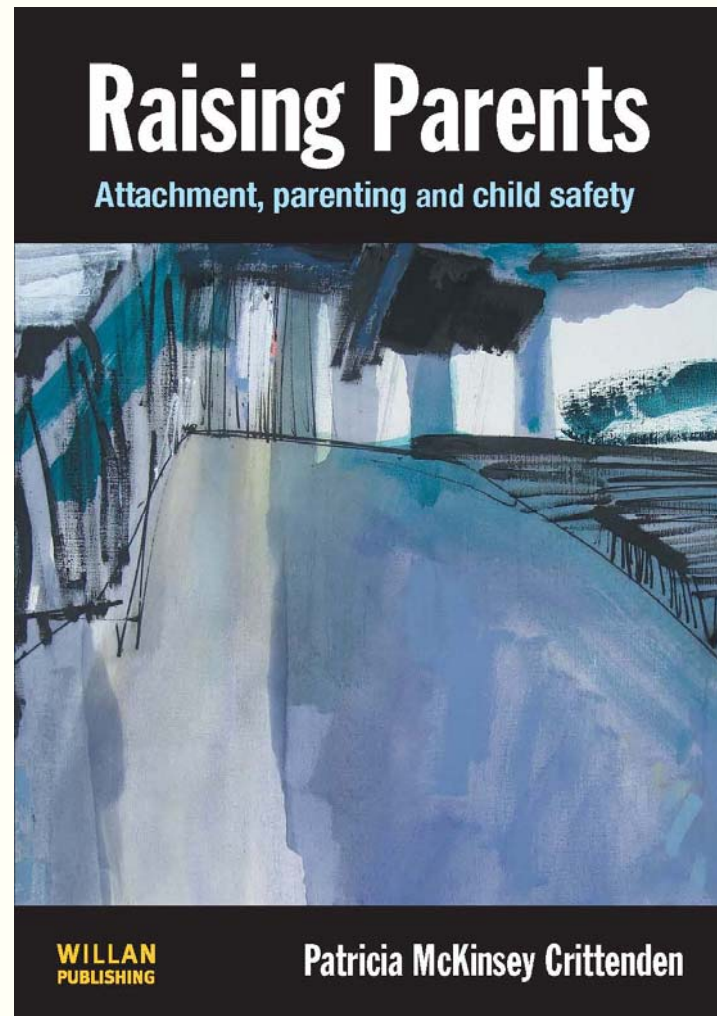
Conclusions

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- The mind has an amazing capacity to retain information relevant to danger and comfort.
- To protect the self, the mind:
 - Dis-associates bits of information & tucks them away
 - Over-associates other bits to retain vigilance
 - Frames information in evocative & metaphorical terms that ensure emotional meaning is retained, without explicit awareness.
- Development, reflection, and treatment offer ways forward, especially with the help of a protective attachment figure.

DMM Attachment Theory

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CCPP Special DMM Issue

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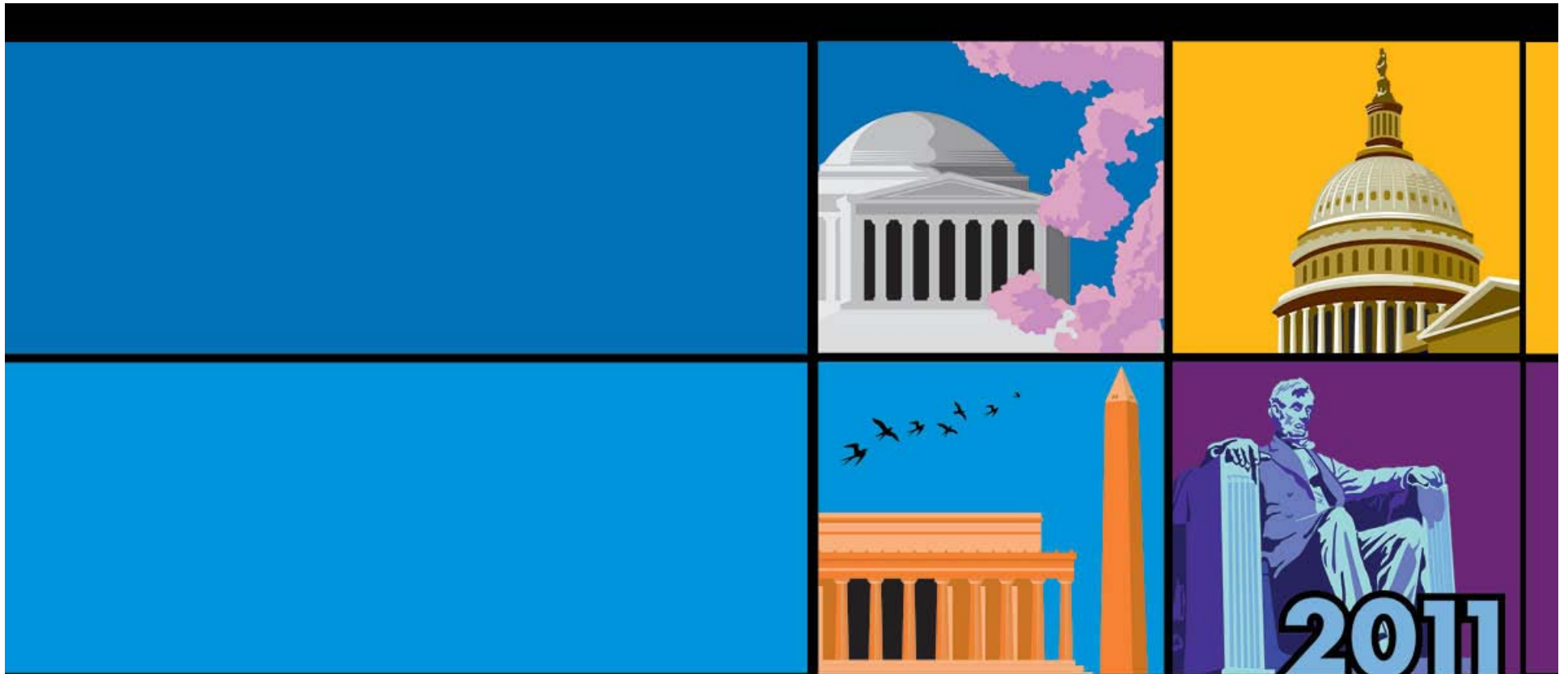
Tell all the truth

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Tell all the truth but tell it slant
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth's superb Surprise

As Lightening to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind –

Emily Dickinson



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