

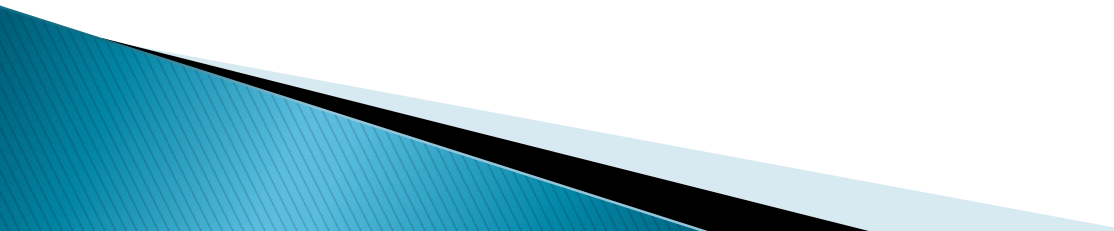
# **Attachment Based Principles for Helping Youth With Trust & Attachment Difficulties**

Presentation for Energia Conference 2022

Presenter: Rand Coleman



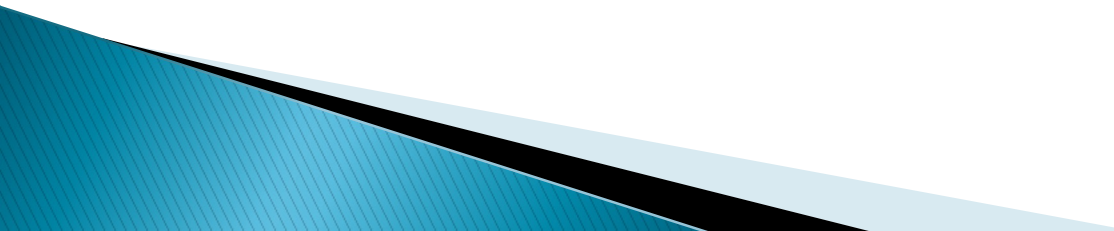
# What Causes Damaged Attachment?

- ▶ Abuse in early childhood
  - ▶ Painful, prolonged illnesses (Colic)
  - ▶ Neglect
  - ▶ Loss of Parent Figure
  - ▶ Unemotional Parenting
  - ▶ Domestic Violence
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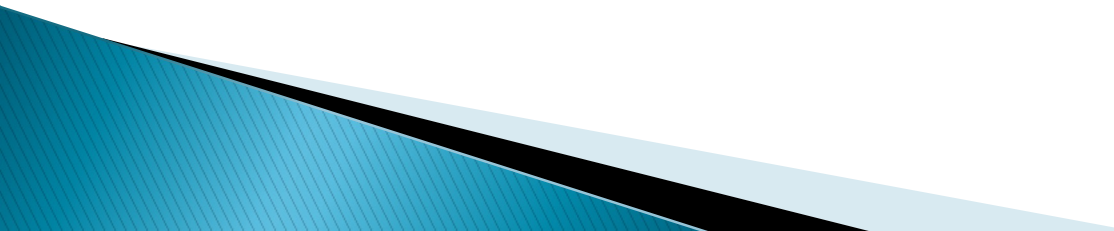
# What are the Psychological Effects?

- ▶ Negative Internal Working Model
- ▶ Low Trust
- ▶ Low Sense of Safety
- ▶ Phobia for Intimacy

# Trust

- ▶ How many losses does it take before you no longer trust that people will be there for you?
  - ▶ How much harm does it take to be convinced that most people are dangerous?
  - ▶ If adults are dangerous, then who should be in control of your life?
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# Inner Working Model

- A mental construction or representation
  - Implicit view of self and others (based on procedural memory—not something taught explicitly)
  - Formed through interactions
  - Laid down as neural pathways
  - Stable but can be changed by new experiences
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# Inner Working Model

- ▶ Positive interactions    Negative interactions

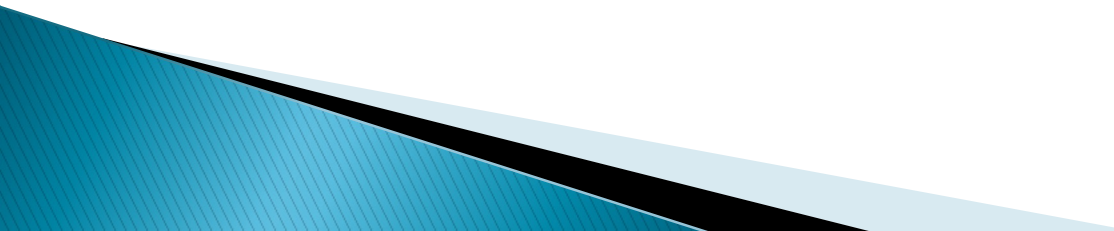


- **Self** as lovable, special, competent
- **Others** as loving, responsive
- **World** as a safe, exciting place



- **Self** as unlovable, incompetent
- **Others** as uncaring, untrustworthy
- **World** as unsafe, full of threats

# Avoid Intimacy–But Get Needs Met In Superficial Ways

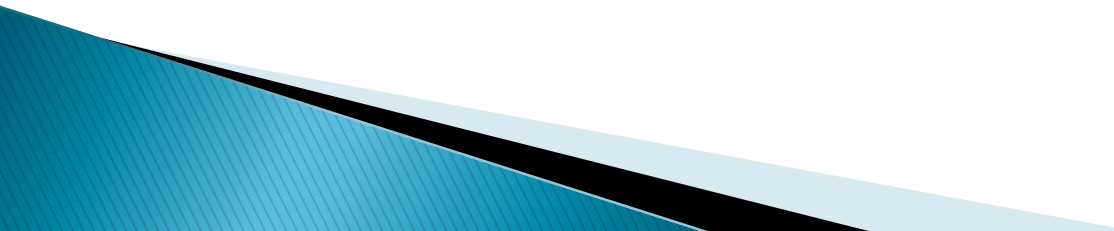
- ▶ We need the support of others
  - ▶ We need touch
  - ▶ We need the services of the world
  
  - ▶ How will you obtain these? Maintain these?  
Yet keep yourself safe?
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# Critical Symptoms to Be Alert For...


- ▶ Superficially engaging & charming
- ▶ Manipulative & splitting parents
- ▶ Obvious, absurd lying
- ▶ Hoarding food
- ▶ Stealing
- ▶ Cruel to animals or people
- ▶ Lack of remorse
- ▶ Poor eye contact
- ▶ Affectionate only on their own terms
- ▶ Affectionate or attention seeking from strangers
- ▶ Extensive Tantrums
- ▶ Encopresis/Enuresis
- ▶ Destructive of property
- ▶ Haggard Parents



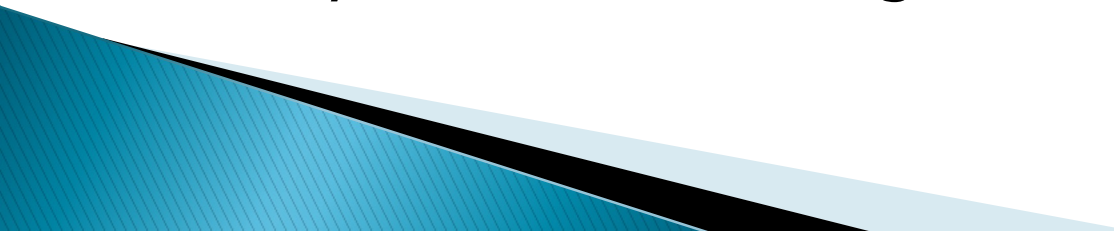
# Isolated–Avoidant

- ▶ Sadness is predominant emotion
  - ▶ Avoid nurturing touch because of aversion to intimacy
  - ▶ Intimacy/nurture is seen as dangerous due to being hurt by caretakers in the past
  - ▶ Prefer a passive–aggressive approach to relating to adults, but avoid open defiance
  - ▶ Tend to be hyper–independent and may have cared for younger siblings at a very early age
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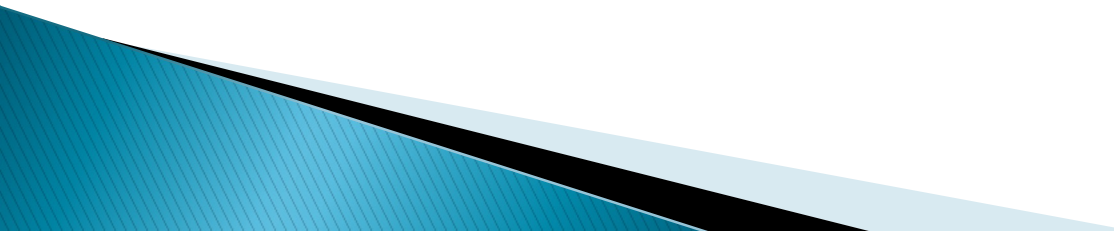
# Evasive–Anxious

- ▶ Fear is predominant emotion (especially fear of abandonment)
  - ▶ Seek to be close to adults, but do so in intrusive ways (nonstop chatter, invading personal space, interrupting)
  - ▶ Relationships lack intimacy: They drain emotional resources by clingy/attention seeking behavior and give little back (lack reciprocity)
  - ▶ Prefer a passive–aggressive approach to relating to adults, and alter their presentation to what they perceive will be most accepted (thus “real” feelings are avoided in therapy).
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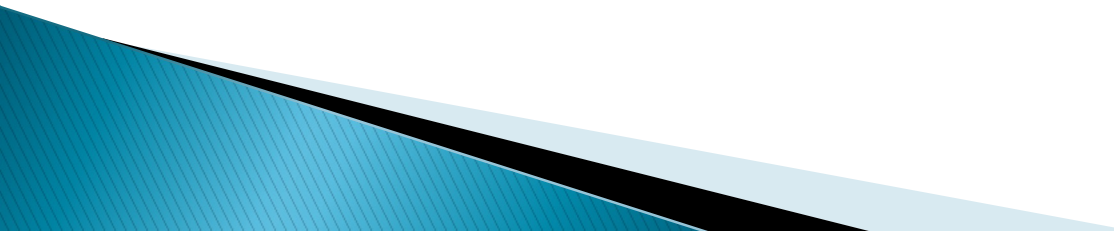
# Defiant–Ambivalent

- ▶ Anger/rage is predominant emotion
  - ▶ Rage is used to avoid feeling other emotions of fear, sadness, loneliness
  - ▶ They are directly defiant and aggressive
  - ▶ The directness of their emotion/behavior makes them disruptive and prone to rejection by foster parents
  - ▶ Easier to work with therapeutically because their emotions and motivations are more clear
  - ▶ Primary thinking error: “There’s not enough for everyone so I need to get mine first”
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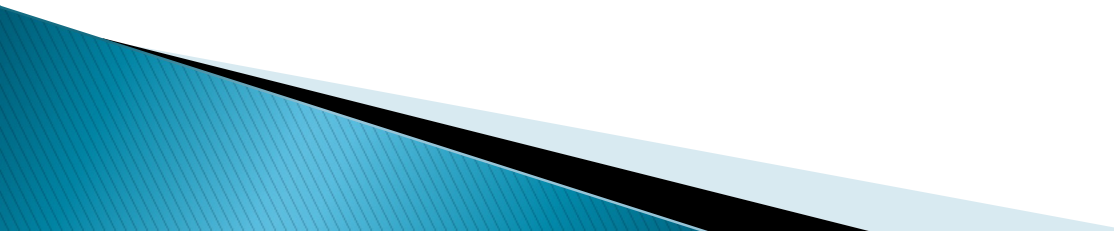
# Bizarre–Disorganized

- ▶ Free-floating anxiety is predominant emotion
  - ▶ At risk for poor reality testing or even psychosis
  - ▶ Tend to be more impaired neurologically (IQ, LD, sensory problems)
  - ▶ Tend to throw prolonged tantrums
  - ▶ Tend to be hyper-independent and may have cared for younger siblings at a very early age
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# Engagement Principles

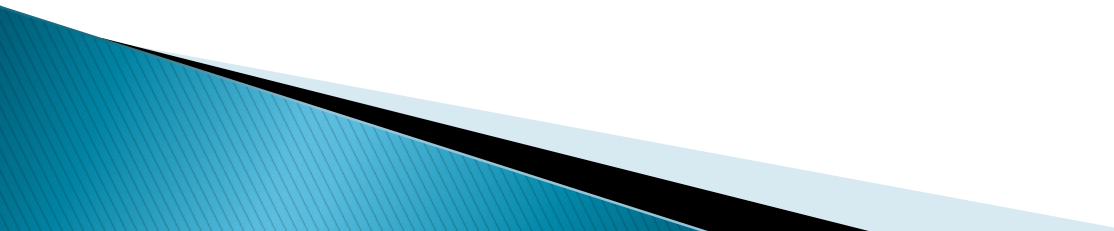
- ▶ Nonverbal message over verbal message
  - ▶ Small repetitions over large cramming sessions
  - ▶ Give it time
  - ▶ Under the Radar Principle
  - ▶ Be There and Be Consistent
  - ▶ Cooperation over Competition
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# Theraplay Principles for Connection

- ▶ Structure
  - ▶ Engagement
  - ▶ Nurture
  - ▶ Challenge
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# Structure

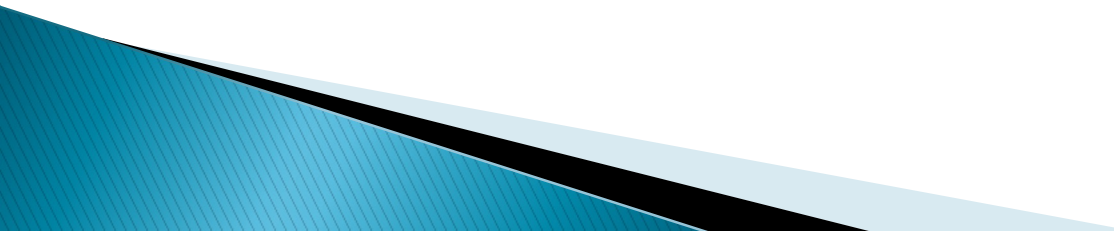
- ▶ Have clear boundaries
  - ▶ Have clear values
    - Be Safe
    - Stick Together
    - Have Fun
  - ▶ Do safe, non-competitive, clearly defined activities
    - Special handshake
    - Mirror game
- 



# Engagement

- ▶ Fun and Laughter create engagement & connection
- ▶ Games that promote this:
  - Silly faces
  - Pterodactyl


# Nurture

- ▶ Affirming eye contact
  - ▶ Food
  - ▶ Caring touch when socially appropriate
  - ▶ Games
    - How fast can you slurp up a licorice string
    - How many bites before the donut falls off the straw
    - Check up—Just noticing the other person
- 

# Challenge

- ▶ Our relationships help us grow and develop
- ▶ Our role is to help a youth learn in the proximal zone of development
- ▶ Youth need to develop confidence, but this can be through fun activities
  - Cotton ball soccer
  - Feather or bubble keep up

# Termination

- ▶ Use Structure
    - Be clear about your role
    - Be clear about boundaries
    - Be clear about long term expectations
  - ▶ The primary secure base should be the parent, so facilitate this as much as possible
  - ▶ Facilitate other secondary supports
  - ▶ Fade back
  - ▶ Have a termination/commencement party
  - ▶ The child can handle it
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# Helping Parents Understand

- ▶ Get their perspective
- ▶ Listen with empathy first

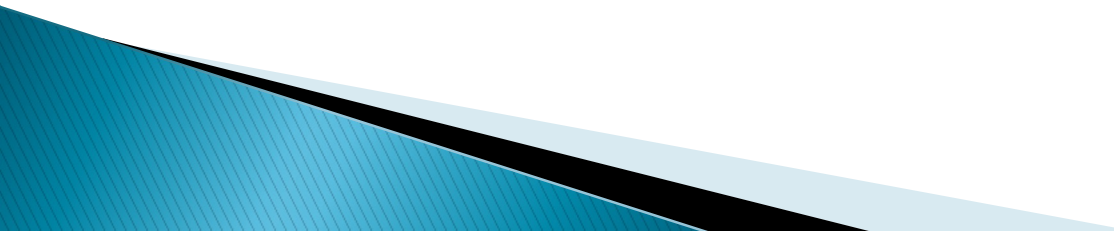
# Critical Symptoms Parents Complain Of

- ▶ Superficially engaging & charming
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# Trauma Education

- ▶ Looking through the lens of trauma is sometimes easier for parents
- ▶ Provide education on trauma effects
  - Hypervigilance
  - Poor sleep and nightmares
  - Insecurity
  - Heightened sense of shame

# Provide Neurological Explanation

- ▶ Trauma conditions the brain
  - ▶ Trauma conditions the whole nervous system
  - ▶ When trauma is related to early childhood experiences it creates relationship insecurity at nervous system conditioned level.
  - ▶ Sometimes this helps put things in perspective, making more understandable—not a moral problem
- 



# When All Explanations Fail...

- ▶ Don't worry about it...
  - ▶ Continue on with the program
  - ▶ Meet the family and child where they are at
  - ▶ Meet the needs you can
  - ▶ Give it time
  - ▶ Experience and behavior is more important than insight or knowledge
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