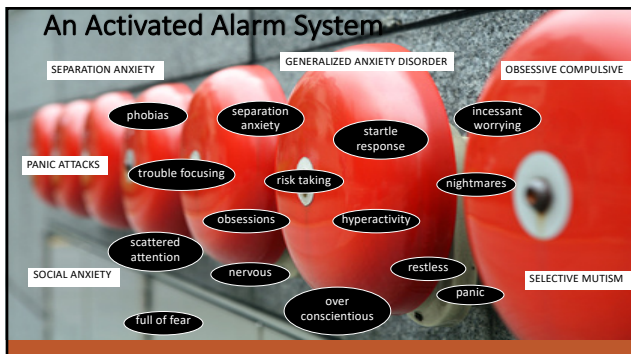


Making Sense of Anxiety and Cultivating Resilience

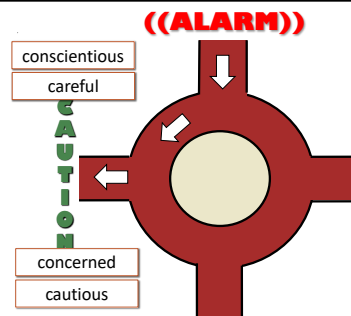
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FACULTY, NEUFELD INSTITUTE
DIRECTOR, KID'S BEST BET COUNSELLING & FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

What is **anxiety** and
where does it come from?

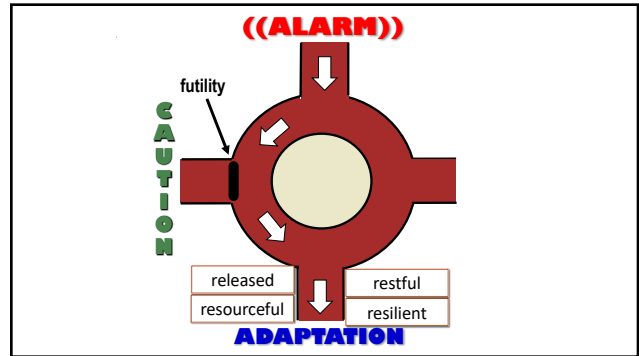


The root emotion that drives **anxiety**
is **ALARM**

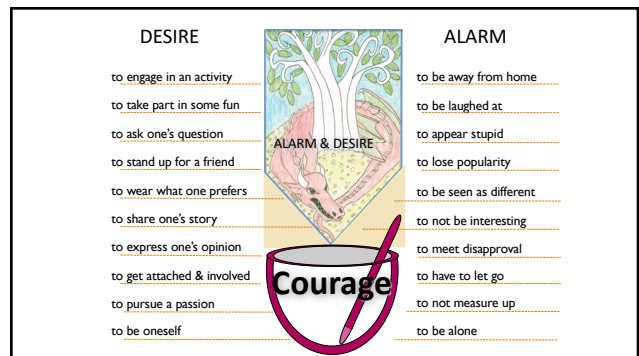
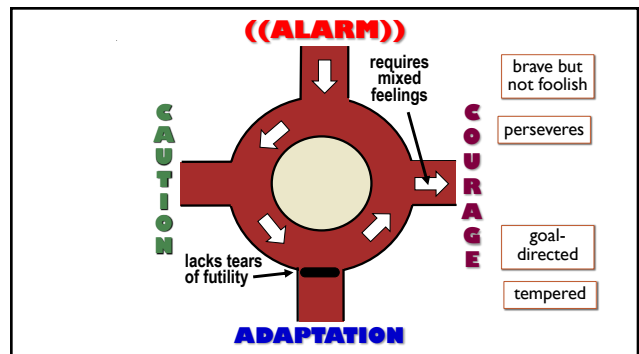
How does the brain process **alarm**?

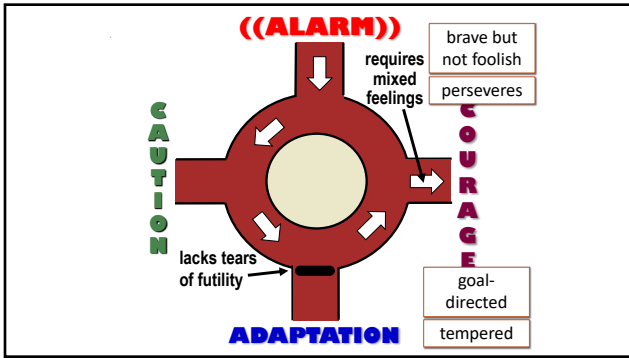


- Some ways we alarm our children
- by raising our voice
 - with warnings & threats (especially of separation)
 - by giving ultimatums
 - by feigning separation
 - by trading on a child's fears
 - with scary stories



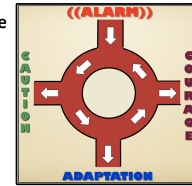
- What is resilience?
- the ability to handle stress and adversity without loss of healthy functioning or hindrance to growth and development
 - the ability to bounce back from stressful or wounding experiences, recover from hurts and injury, to heal from wounds, return to healthy functioning, be restored in energy and function
 - the ability to transcend deficits and dysfunction, to compensate for disabilities and handicaps, to find a work around for problems
 - the ability to adapt to lacks and losses, to be changed for the better by adversity, to be transformed by encounters with futility
 - the ability to be resourceful when it is required
 - the ability to handle not getting one's way





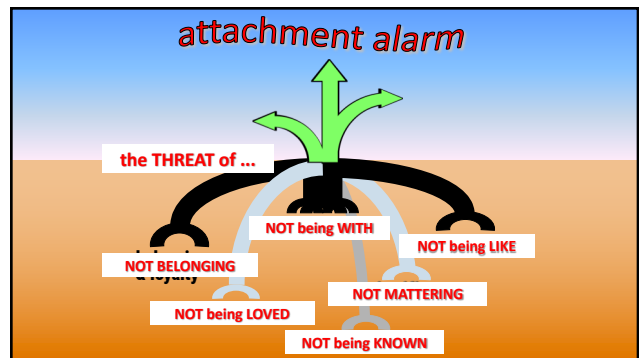
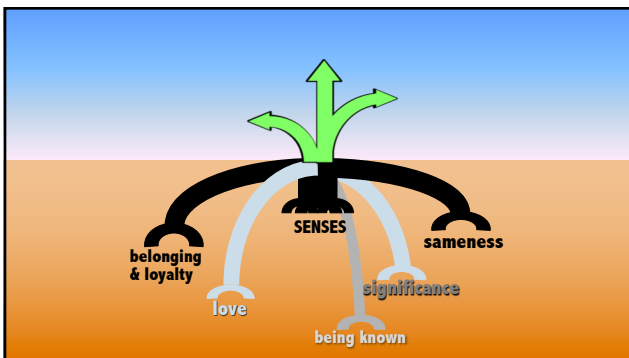
Feeling ALARMED should move us ...

- ... to CAUTION is that is possible
- ... to CRY if that is futile
- ... to take COURAGE if what alarms in our way.



What is it that **alarms** us so?

Attachment is our greatest need, therefore **SEPARATION** from what we are **ATTACHED TO** is the greatest threat and source of **alarm**.



TEN Sources of SEPARATION for Kids

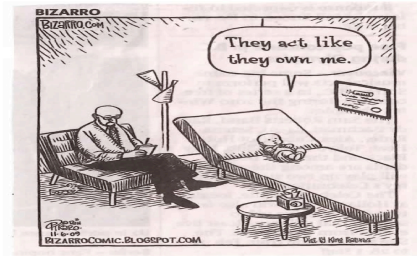
- physical and/or emotional separation from an attachment figure
- life events that involve transition, birth of a child, move, daycare, going to school, parents divorce
- a lack of belonging, loyalty, significance, being loved and cared for, and having to keep secrets
- separation based discipline such as time outs, 123 magic, consequences
- peer orientation – preferring friends over adults

What is peer orientation?

- to use one's peers to get one's bearings
- to take the cues from one's peers as to what matters as well as how to act, talk and dress
- to prefer the company of one's peers over that of the adults in one's life

TEN Sources of SEPARATION for Kids

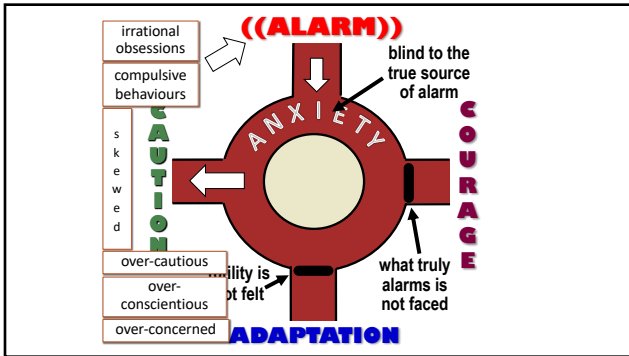
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- peer orientation – preferring friends over adults
- dominance problems
- normal development, e.g., teen years
- sensitive temperament and feeling like one is too much to handle
- success, especially if someone takes credit for it
- facing death or the realization that bad things can happen to those you are attached to

Why is it so hard to see the SEPARATION
in our lives?



Irrational Obsessions (false idea of what is wrong)	Related Compulsions (to avoid alarm & reduce anxiety)
Someone or something is out to hurt me or to get me.	work at avoiding the monsters and scary creatures, avoid getting conned, uncover people's plots
Something is wrong with my health or my functioning or is going to make me sick.	work at keeping things clean, at not getting sick, at avoiding germs, at avoiding contamination
Something is out of order or out of place.	work at putting things in order and preserving order
Something is wrong with my body or with how I look.	work at improving one's appearance or at changing one's shape
Some places or situations are dangerous or unsafe.	work at avoiding the things and situations that make one feel unsafe
Something has been left undone.	work at remembering to complete one's tasks
I might not measure up.	work at getting things perfect, doing things right, improving oneself

Defendedness & Dysfunction

Anxiety-Based Problems

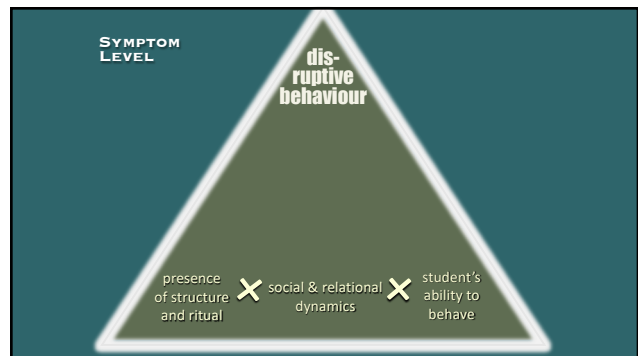
- signs include not feeling safe, anxiety reducing behaviour, phobias, nightmares, obsessions, compulsions, panic attacks

Agitation-Based Problems

- signs include not talking about feeling scared or nervous, hyperness or tension, restlessness, recklessness, can't stay out of harm's way, doesn't see trouble coming, impulsiveness, scattered attention

Adrenalin-Based Problems

- devoid of feelings of alarm, attracted to what alarms, lacks attachment conscience, engages in alarming behaviour



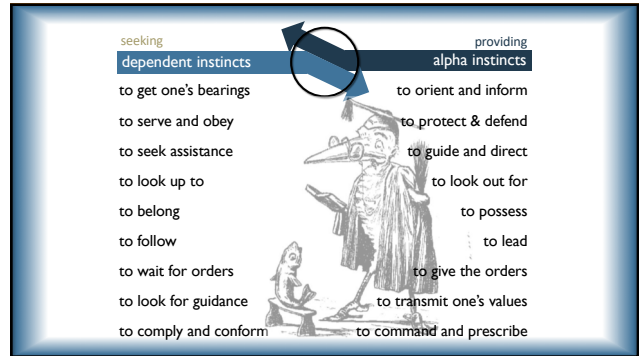
What can we do about reducing **alarm** and **fostering resilience** in kids within a school setting?

Create a Culture of Connection

Social & Relational Dynamics

- in the classroom-

- do the students listen to the teacher? who is commanding their attention? are they using you as a compass point? are they trying to be good for you? do they orbit around you or each other? whose approval are they looking for? who commands their loyalty? who do they want to be like? who do they want to matter to?



Attachment Facilitates Dependence

What attachment does ... provides the power to...

- 1) Arranges hierarchically → Take charge of them, take care of them and act with natural authority
- 2) Renders endearing & tolerant → Like them and endure them
- 3) Creates a sense of home → Provide comfort, rest and a place of retreat

Attachment Facilitates Dependence

What attachment does ... provides the power to...

4. Creates a compass point → Command their attention, guide & direct them and transmit our culture
5. Activates proximity instincts → Keep them close and command their loyalty
6. Evokes the desire to be good for those attached to → Act with natural power & authority

Desire to be good as a function of attachment

- look up to
 - defer to
 - attend to
 - listen to
 - take cues from
 - model after
 - conform to
 - avoid alienating
- 
- be loyal to
 - make things work for
 - take the side of
 - find favour with
 - measure up to
 - seek to please
 - assume the values of
 - share secrets with

Three Attachment Rituals that Cultivate a Context of Connection

- Collecting
- Bridging
- Matchmaking



Collecting a Child

- When the eyes are not accessible or unavailable, collect the ears instead.
- Collect rather than demand attention.
- Create rituals and structures for collecting.
- Always engage the attachment instincts before attempting to work with a child.

MAXIMIZE ATTACHMENT - Attachment Behaviours

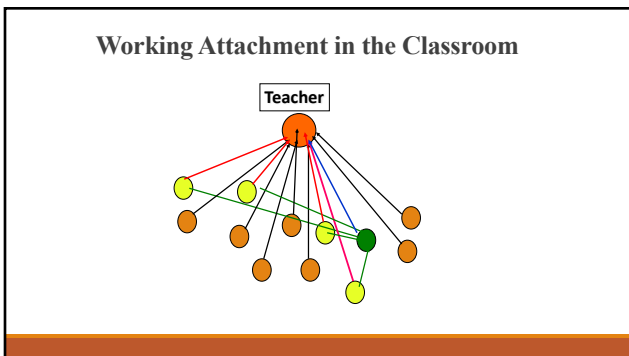
- Using a person's name
- Greet at the door
- Remembering what's important to the person
- Caring for in unexpected ways
- Feeding
- Looking at with fondness/twinkle in the eye
- "Help me understand"
- Listening with full attention even if only for a moment
- Circulate to collect students
- Learn and chat about student's interests

Use Attachment to Maximize your Impact

If limited by time **focus on a few**

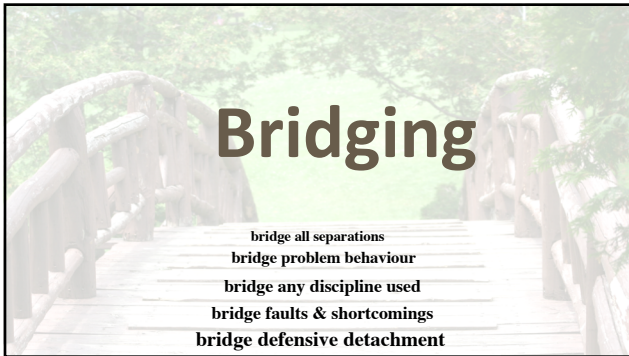
Work attachments explicitly with:

- Class leader
- The challenging student before they become a challenge
- Find a way to become attached to the least attachable



Cultivating a Context of Connection

- Collecting
- Bridging
- Matchmaking



Problems with using consequences to teach a lesson

- narrow range of effectiveness -

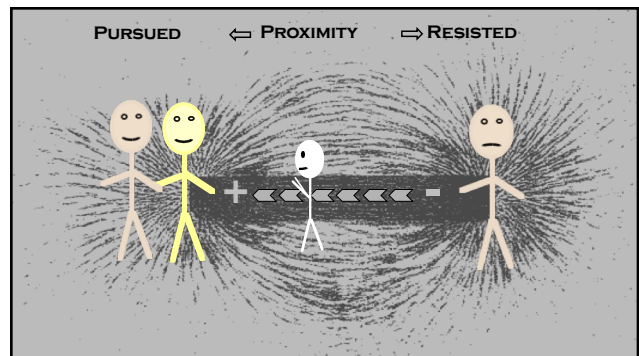
1. **Only works with instrumental behaviour.** Problem behaviour rooted in stuckness is NOT responsive to consequences and stuckness itself cannot be resolved through discipline.
2. **Only works if attached to the outcomes.** The emotional defendedness of stuck kids renders them prone to detaching from what they care about when it is used against them.
3. **Only works if futility sinks in.** Consequences are confrontations with futility. Stuck kids don't get futility as access to sadness is blocked.
4. **Only works if capable of thinking twice.** Stuck kids often lack the required integrative functioning to consider the tempering element when it most needs to be attended to.

Core strategies for Individual Intervention

- A Mete out punishment if necessary**
 - to prevent revenge, to underscore values, to preserve alpha, to preserve justice, to comply with school rules
 - make sure to depersonalize the discipline and personalize the relationship
- B Work on the relationship with us**
 - through collecting, bridging, nurturing, defusing competing attachments
- C Solicit good intentions**
 - get them aiming in the right direction
 - internalizes your values
 - primes agency, responsibility & integrative functioning

Cultivating a Context of Connection

- Collecting
- Bridging
- Matchmaking



Some Examples of Matchmaking

- ✘ arranging introductions
- ✘ acting friendly or facilitating proximity with a protected attachment to open up the child to being collected
- ✘ priming dependent or alpha instincts to facilitate care-taking
- ✘ endearing children to their parents or students to their teachers, and vice versa

Minimize the Influence of Peers

Find ways for the **Immature** to spend time with the **Mature** or More Mature:

- Cross Age Mentoring
- Lunch time activities with adult supervision
- Home Base Room for lunch & breaks
- Avoiding time in the hallways

It's not so much
what we do,
but rather
WHO WE ARE to them
that matters most.