

Summary of AAMFT Plenary points

October 3rd, 2009.

Making a difference: Couple and Family Therapy in the 21st Century

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Five Key Points - The new science of bonding tells us:

>>Emotional connection = A crucial safety cue

Mediates threat perception. Isolation is traumatizing.

>>Effective dependency strengthens us – makes us resilient and able to learn

>>The core of love is Emotional Presence – Responsiveness

ARE you there for me?

>>Emotional separation cues Panic & Protest in mammals

Connection turns on positive emotion - Oxytocin (the cuddle hormone)

>>And if it is not safe enough to acknowledge need and reach for another?

Demand – force response through protest

Dismiss – refuse to need – shut others out

If habitual, both can cue negative cycles - maintain insecurity – ineffective

dependency and distort attachment signals sent to others.

The attachment map to love and loving offers a guide to significant change in C&FT. It offers:

A language for effective dependency

A logical frame for compelling emotions and how they get expressed

An outline of the deep structure of negative interactional cycles and

positive transforming interactions

A compass in the moment to moment process of change and an end goal for the therapy process.

Summary - The new science of love tells us that to create lasting change we have to recognize, give precedence to and actively shape the primal code of attachment

The fact that we now know how to do this is the beginning of a new era in C&FT.