



Attachment and Trauma

How attachment patterns impact the healing of trauma -
and how to work with them

A 2-day workshop in London - September 21-22 2013

From John Bowlby's Attachment Theory we know our patterns of attachment are established early in life and carried with us into adulthood. Of interest is what happens to our relationship to attachment during and after experiencing trauma.

Attachment may be impacted during the traumatic event itself and/or in the way we are met by others afterwards. Patterns of attachment are played out in both *care seeking* and *caregiving* roles with the risk of ending up in personal exchanges impacted by *dominance* and *submission*.

Some questions we may be curious about

Both in a care seeking and a caregiving role, skills are needed to optimize safety and regulate emotions - crucial elements in the regulation of the arousal system after it has been strongly activated.

- How do we offer a "holding environment" without becoming "rescuers"?
- How do we seek help without going one-down or without trying to control the interaction?

The arousal-states released in trauma challenge our capacity for containment.

- How are we met by the outer context and how do we ourselves step into a meeting with others after a traumatic event?
- Which attachment patterns come to the foreground in the meeting?

In powerful trauma states we may experience "falling out of attachment"

We enter inner spaces such as collapse, hopelessness and chaotic acting out, where our attachment to other people, ourselves and the world is changed or lost. How do we "come back again"?

In this workshop, which is experiential and related to theory,

- We will focus on the fact that patterns of both attachment and trauma become woven together, and then explore the possibility of reaching into them to start a process of healing through training psychomotor skills.
- These two professional fields - attachment theory and trauma theory - are not commonly directly related to each other. Strategies will be offered to build a bridge between the two, both theoretically and practically.
- Theory of organized and disorganized attachment styles and affect regulation as an important aspect of attachment will be presented.
- Two different healing strategies, involving two different sets of roles, will also be presented
 - ✚ leaving the high arousal state and finding a way/being helped back into an attachment relationship
 - ✚ normalizing and accepting the experiences from the high arousal states

By sharing them with others these experiences become included as part of the condition of being human. This is a different way of 'being helped'; not to get away from them but to embrace them through mutual exploration and affect regulation.

Both of these healing strategies are, in Merete's experience, an essential part of trauma work and can potentially open new attachment experiences. The skill training in the workshop will be related to both strategies.

What does the body offer us in these processes?

The body oriented skill training in the workshop will focus on

- optimizing safety both in the body and in relationship
- regulating contact - balancing between being held, holding another and holding one's self
- mutual affect regulation

Go to the CABP website to get information about how to sign up: <http://body-psychotherapy.org.uk/>