
Working with emotions in the systemic therapy session

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Emotions

**... My emotions are the
invasion of the other in
me, and of myself in
the other...**

Paul Dumouchel

Emotions

Emotions are relational properties (and carry relational messages) ...

... But the emotions I feel are mine, and cannot be considered as group properties

Emotions

Knowing we are about to punch someone in the mouth is useful, because we can decide not to

Laird & Apostoleris

Emotions are also (can be seen as) ways of knowing

Emotions

**Any emotion has a
source and a recipient
But they may coincide
or not...**

**... And, anyway, the
recipient is universal**

Emotional systems

Attractors

Repellers

Fractals

Emotional systems

Attachment patterns

Mentalisation

Mood

**Emotional attractors and
repellers**

Emotional communication

Attachment patterns

Internal working models not only represent the nature of past attachment experiences and transactions in the family of origin, but they also predict the quality of transactional parent/child experiences, that in turn shape the prototypes for new internalised operational models, along the generations.

Doane & Diamond

AAI / ASS comparisons: results

- ***Autonomous-secure*** parent → *secure* child (75% of cases)
- ***Abandoning-detached*** parent → *avoiding* child (77% of cases)
- ***Preoccupied-trapped*** parent → *ambivalent* child (80% of cases)
- ***Unresolved-disorganised*** parent → *disorganised* child (trend)

Mentalisation

The development of children's understanding of mental states is embedded within the social world of the family, with its network of complex and often intensely emotionally charged relationships, which are, after all, much of what early reflection needs to comprehend.

Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, & Target

Attractors and repellors

Positive emotions

- *Joy / enjoyment*
- *Interest / excitement*
- *Pride*
- *Surprise*
- *Sympathy / empathy*

Negative emotions

- *Anger / rage*
- *Distress / Anguish*
- *Sadness / grief*
- *Shyness / shame*
- *Contempt / disgust*
- *Responsibility / guilt*
- *Distrust / diffidence*

The session

Action:

inside the session
outside the session

Reflection:

inside the session
outside the session

Reflection outside the session

**Hypotheses on clients'
emotions in the
then and there
Hypotheses on contexts
and wider systems
Cultural issues**

Action outside the session

Prescriptions

Rituals

Final reframings

**Other prescriptive
techniques**

Reflection in session

**Hypotheses on client's
emotion in the here and
now**

**Hypotheses on the
therapeutic relationship**

**Hypotheses on nonverbal
observations**

Action in session

Action techniques:

Moving clients

Empty chair

Family sculpture

Hypnotic techniques

Reflection in action

Straight talk
Emotional positioning
Reflecting team
**Other team-centred
techniques**

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