

Can Insecurely Attached Mothers Have Securely Attached Children? Video Course

Dr Gwen Adshead & Gerry Byrne

Video Course

CPD hours: 3 / CE credits: 3

Price: £65



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"Behind all your stories is always your mother's story. Because hers is where yours begin."
- Mitch Albom, *For One More Day*

Attachment insecurity with disorganisation is associated with a range of psychological difficulties, including interpersonal dysfunction, increased risk of mental health problems and poor mood and arousal regulation. It stands to reason that **mothers who have endured difficult childhoods** themselves, while keen to ensure their children feel safe and secure with them, **are often concerned that their children will inherit or develop insecure and disorganised attachments.**

Mothers with secure states of mind are noted to respond to their children's needs swiftly, appropriately and sensitively, because these mothers (as opposed to those with insecure states of mind) are believed more likely to value attachment relationships and to be reflective and thoughtful. Such *maternal sensitive responsiveness* displayed by securely attached mothers, to a child's attachment needs, has been assumed to play a central role in the process of transmitting attachment intergenerationally. **Does this imply that insecurely attached mothers will inevitably have insecurely attached children?**

Thankfully, researchers have identified a *transmission gap* - referring to that aspect of the attachment transmission process from parent to offspring which cannot be fully explained by maternal sensitivity.

So, is there a sliver of hope? Can we identify how and when mothers can effectively break the continuing chain of intergenerational insecurity and ensure that their children grow up in secure settings? How can we, as psychotherapists and counsellors, help our clients in this process?

To unpack this extremely important topic with a myriad therapeutic implications, this intellectually stimulating and practical webinar brings together Dr Gwen Adshead and Gerry Byrne. Gwen is a forensic psychiatrist and psychotherapist who has studied attachment security in women who have abused their children; while Gerry is

a consultant child psychotherapist who has studied attachment in families and developed a specific therapeutic intervention based on his work with families where abuse has occurred. Together, they bring perspectives from both mothers and children to reflect on the evidence base for intergenerational transmission of attachment insecurity and disorganisation, the major risk factors and the therapeutic implications for us, as psychotherapists and counsellors.

Building our discussions on a foundation base of attachment theory, at this seminar we specifically discuss:

- How important is *maternal sensitive responsiveness* in the intergenerational transmission process and to what extent is this moderated by factors including:
 - the parent's gender
 - **the dyad's risk states (teenage motherhood, pre-term birth)**
 - the absence of biological link between mother and child (as in the case of adopted children)
- Is there evidence to support additional mediation factors including:
 - genetic mechanisms involved in parenting
 - **the infant's temperamental dispositions**
 - the quality of the couple's relationship and family functioning
- To what extent is intergenerational transmission dictated by temporal factors:
 - in the presence of stable life conditions, **is it safe to expect that the correspondence between a mothers and the child's attachment will increase as the child grows older?**
 - equally, is it possible that such continuity might be lost over time, due to the impact of life events?

Learning Objectives:

- Discuss how important is *maternal sensitive responsiveness* in the intergenerational transmission process and to what extent is this moderated by factors including the parent's gender, **the dyad's risk states (teenage motherhood, pre-term birth)** and the absence of biological link between mother and child (as in the case of adopted children)
- Analyse the evidence to support additional mediation factors including genetic mechanisms involved in parenting, **the infant's temperamental dispositions** and the quality of the couple's relationship and family functioning
- To what extent is intergenerational transmission dictated by temporal factors

About the Speakers:

Dr Gwen Adshead is a Forensic Psychiatrist and Psychotherapist. She trained at St George's Hospital, the Institute of Psychiatry and the Institute of Group Analysis. She is trained as a group therapist and a Mindfulness-based cognitive therapist and has also trained in Mentalisation-based therapy. She worked for nearly twenty years as a Consultant Forensic Psychotherapist at Broadmoor Hospital, running psychotherapeutic groups for offenders and working with staff around relational security and organisational dynamics. Gwen also has a Masters' Degree in Medical Law and Ethics; and has a research interest in moral reasoning, and how this links with 'bad' behaviour.

Gwen has published a number of books and over 100 papers, book chapters and commissioned articles on forensic psychotherapy, ethics in psychiatry, and attachment theory as applied to medicine and forensic psychiatry. She is the co-editor of *Clinical topics in Personality Disorder* (with Dr Jay Sarkar) which was awarded first prize in the psychiatry Section of the BMA book awards 2013; and she also co-edited *Personality Disorder: the Definitive Collection* with Dr Caroline Jacob. She is the co-editor of the *Oxford Handbook of Forensic Psychiatry* (2013) and the *Oxford Handbook of Medical Psychotherapy* (2016). She is also the co-editor of *Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy: Current issues in Assessment, Treatment and Research*. Her latest book, *The Deluded Self: Narcissism and its Disorders* (2020) is out now with *nscience publishing house*.



Gerry Byrne is a consultant child and adolescent psychoanalytic psychotherapist (Tavistock), a consultant nurse, and adult psychotherapist. He is also a mentalization-based treatment (MBT) practitioner, supervisor, and trainer (adult, adolescent and family) for the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families. He trains and supervises MBT programmes and clinicians in the UK and internationally and leads on MBT trainings for the Centre in Ireland.

Gerry spent 35 years as a clinician in specialist NHS mental health services. His primary focus as a clinician and designer of services over the last 32 years, has been the expert assessment and treatment of families in which severe child abuse has taken place. For the last 16 years he was Head of Attachment and Perinatal Services at Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust. He designed and ran four award-winning specialist CAMHS services; the Family Assessment and Safeguarding Services (FASS Oxford & FASS Wiltshire and BATHNES), the Reconnect Service (Buckinghamshire) and the Infant-Parent Perinatal Service (Oxford). In addition, he was Clinical Lead for Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy for Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire and served three years as Associate Clinical Director of CAMHS.

Gerry developed, in collaboration with Nick Midgley, Anthony Bateman and Peter Fonagy at the Anna Freud National Centre, an approach and treatment programme aimed at reducing the risk of maltreatment in high-risk families - *The Lighthouse MBT-Parenting Programme (LLP)*.

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customerservices@nscience.co.uk

US: +18337161044

UK/Europe:
+44(0)2070961722

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+1800861953



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