

NOVEMBER 2010

**SWpda**

**Student Welfare and Personal Development  
Association of NSW (Incorporated)**

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## **NEXT WORKSHOP**

**14th May, 2011**

### **Supporting Students Suffering from Anxiety**

**Where:** PTC—Corner of Marion St and Norton St, Leichhardt

#### **From the president:**

As the number of people attending our workshops and conferences continues to decline the SWPDA committee has been considering ways to boost numbers. In our planning for next year we will be changing the date for our first workshop from March to May. The topic for the workshop has been set tentatively at 'Supporting students with Anxiety'. We are currently making approaches to people working in this area to secure a speaker or speakers.

It appears that schools are changing the way funding is spent on staff development and that priority areas are increasingly aligned to meet the challenges of the national curriculum. As a group we continue to feel that Student Welfare should have a high priority and if this area is neglected the consequences for our students will be dire. We will continue to support teachers and parents by focusing our efforts on providing opportunities for networking and gathering information and expertise in this vital area.

Sincerely

Dr Kerrie Eyding



## ATTACHMENT THEORY

Attachment Theory was developed by John Bowlby and elaborated by Mary Salter Ainsworth. Attachment Theory asserts that:

1. The capacity to form attachments is part of our evolutionary heritage.
2. Attachments develop through the interaction of biological and environmental forces early in life.
3. The first attachment, between infant and caregiver shapes later development and the quality of later relationships.
4. Internal working models of self and other are the mechanism through which early experience affects later development.

Ainsworth devised a method to assess differences in the quality of parent-infant attachments called the **Strange Situation**. From this study, Ainsworth characterised the quality of attachment as one of four types.

1. **Secure attachment** - develops when there is a healthy reciprocal relationship between child and carer. Social interaction is characterised by fun and playfulness and the child's need for comfort when anxious or distressed is met quickly and effectively. The child feels able to explore the world at his/her own pace knowing that the parent or carer is a secure base to return to.

When they become adults, securely attached children are able to enter into reciprocal relationships and have an expectation that their needs will be met and that they will be able to meet the needs of others. They have the capacity to show emotional connection through empathy or 'mind mindedness', are able to talk about their feelings, and are familiar with a wide emotional repertoire in both themselves and others.

Securely attached children have internalised in early childhood the key elements of positive relationship building. This gives them lifelong protection from stress and emotional anxiety and a greater chance of coping with, and surviving, traumatic life events.

2. **Ambivalent attachment** - is experienced when children are never quite sure whether their carers will meet their need for reassurance or comfort. The parent may sometimes respond to distress and anxiety or may sometimes ignore it. There is a lack of predictability in the behaviour of the carer that makes the child feel 'all over the place'. The child often feels distressed but has no confidence that his or her distress will be heard. This form of attachment is particularly prevalent in families where there are mental health problems or issues with alcohol or substance misuse.

Ambivalent attachment in children is often perpetuated by producing adults who are prone to mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and eating disorders. They also find it difficult to recover from traumatic life events and respond badly to stress and challenge.

3. **Avoidant attachment** - develops when parents or carers actively discourage signs of either affection or distress, believing emotions are to be suppressed and feelings should be unexpressed. This means that it is difficult for the child to access a feeling of being loved and nurtured and he or she has to develop alternative coping mechanisms to survive emotionally. Children in this situation can become withdrawn emotionally and learn to internalise painful and difficult feelings.

As adults, avoidant children find it difficult to connect with the emotional repertoire of others and find talking about their feelings a source of anxiety and distress. They find it hard to maintain relationships and mistrust intimacy.

4. **Disorganised attachment** - occurs when children send out attachment signals but these are not received or responded to appropriately by the parent or carer. Sometimes the parent appears



unaware of the child's needs. This attachment style can occur when the parent has many unresolved emotional issues from his or her own past or has no emotional resources to draw on due to mental health problems or a traumatic life event occurring during the first years of the child's life. Alternatively, and much more seriously, disorganised attachment can occur when the parent is a threat to the child through abusive behaviours.

Children with disorganised attachment often fail to thrive and may have developmental delay. Young children will inevitably show signs of emotional and behavioural difficulties from an early age by demonstrating aggressive, disruptive or withdrawn behaviours both at home and in the early years environment.

Disorganised attachment in infancy has been linked by both longitudinal and retrospective studies to a number of mental health problems and personality disorders. In addition, disorganised attachment is a risk factor that hugely increases a child's vulnerability to other harmful influences or events.

In adulthood there is an increased susceptibility to relationship breakdown, substance misuse, self-destructive and self-harming behaviours, eating disorders, suicide, offending behaviour and aggressive, violent and controlling behaviours.

Reference: <http://www.teachingexpertise.com/articles/attachment-supporting-young-childrens-emotional-wellbeing-2358>

## CONFLICT MAPPING

Conflict mapping allows us to get a bird's eye view of a conflict we may have. It's a way of graphically representing a problem, showing everyone's perspectives on it, identifying the resources we need to resolve a problem and getting sufficient distance to see issues and ideas that go unnoticed. We can map conflict by ourselves, with another or in a group, Conflict maps help us focus on everyone's needs and can guide us towards solutions.

### STEPS OF MAPPING

#### 1. Define the issue.

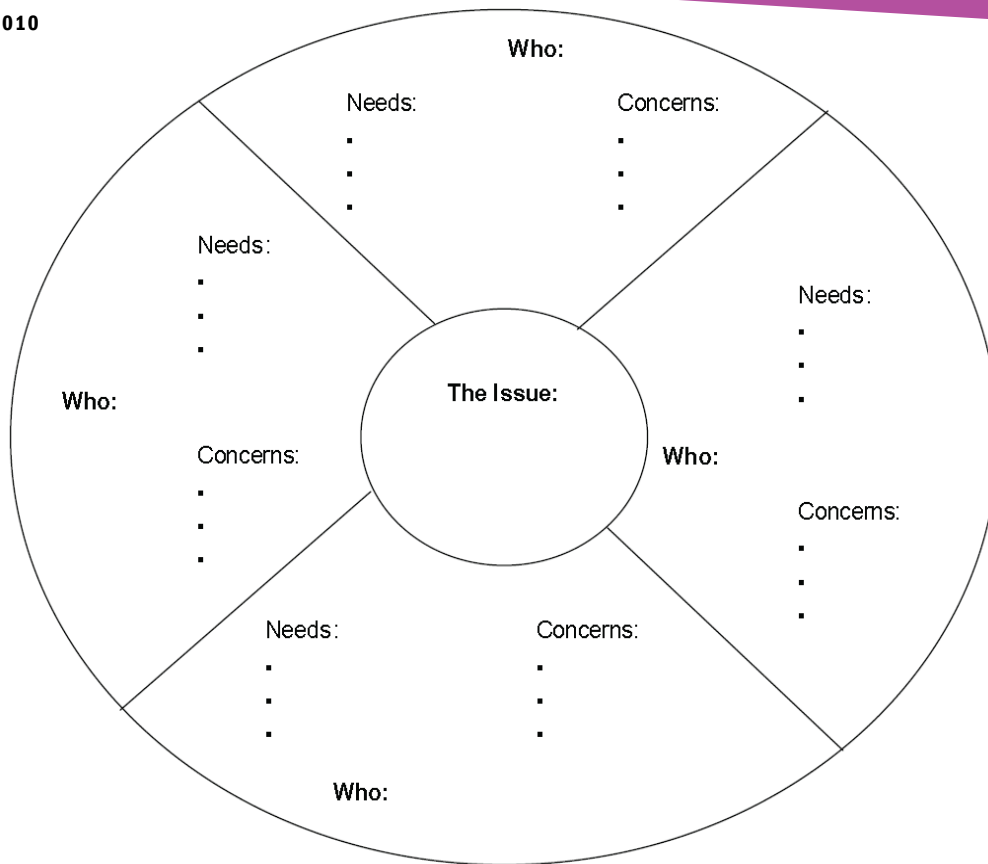
Draw a circle in the middle of the page and in broad, general terms define the issue (don't identify a person as the problem). For example, evening chores.

#### 2. Identify who is involved

Decide the major parties involved. They can be individuals or a group who are directly or indirectly involved. Draw segments out from the circle to identify these groups or individuals.

#### 3. List the major needs and concerns of each party

*Needs* can be wants, interests or things you care about. *Concerns* include fears, worries and anxieties. They may be tangible or intangible.



## READING CONFLICT MAPS

### LOOK FOR:

**Common ground**

**New perspectives and insights**

**Hidden needs, concerns and payoffs**

**Special concerns**

**Leads**

**Highlight the major needs of each participant and then develop options which incorporate as many of these as possible.**

### CONSIDER:

Which needs and concerns are held by every one?

What hasn't been seen before?

What now seems clearer?

What stated needs might be masking

- deeper needs and concerns; or
- unstated intentions or payoffs.

What are particularly difficult areas that need attention?

What have you noticed that's worth following through or finding more information?

If you would like to recommend a speaker or contribute to the newsletter please contact Kerrie on [keyding@ozemail.com.au](mailto:keyding@ozemail.com.au)