



# Attachment and Social Development

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Differentiate between Ainsworth's different types of attachment

Describe the four main types of sociometric status (peer relation) in children

Describe how ego-centrism manifests in children and adolescence

Explain how theory of mind (or lack thereof) affects people's behaviour

## Learning Objectives

At the end of the lecture, student should be able to:

- Differentiate between Ainsworth's different types of attachment
- Describe the four main types of sociometric status (peer relation) in children
- Describe how ego-centrism manifests in children and adolescence
- Explain how theory of mind (or lack thereof) affects people's behaviour



# Part 1

## Attachment and a “Strange Situation”



## Introduction

We are born in the physical world, and have physical and physiological needs

However, what makes us human is mostly the social aspects

We started to develop relationships with other people even before we were born



Level 90 Paladin

Erica the Virtuous



- Hope ✓
- Will ✓
- Purpose ✓
- Competency ✓
- Fidelity ✓
- Love ✓
- Care ✓
- Wisdom ✓

## Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development

Trust vs Mistrust: develop close relationship with mother → hope

Autonomy vs Shame & Doubt: make one's own decision → will

Initiative vs Guilt: imagine and try who one will be → purpose

Industry vs Inferiority: learn at school & develop a sense of competence → competency



Level 90 Paladin

Erica the Virtuous



- Hope ✓
- Will ✓
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- Fidelity ✓
- Love ✓
- Care ✓
- Wisdom ✓

## Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development

Identity vs Ego Diffusion:  
search for identity → fidelity

Intimacy vs Isolation: develop  
intimate relationships → love

Generativity vs Stagnation:  
concerns for welfare of next  
generation & society → care

Integrity vs Despair: look back  
at one's life & accept what one  
has achieved → wisdom



## Attachment

Strong affectional tie we feel towards the significant people in our lives

Pleasure & comfort

Bond between infants & caregivers



## Significance of Attachment

Innate ability to keep the caregiver nearby

Evolved response that promotes survival

Future loving and positive relationships with others in adulthood



## John Bowlby

John Bowlby proposed that children form emotional attachment to their caregivers from 6 months

However, if the caregiver is insensitive or unresponsive, attachment cannot be formed, which leads to future problems



With the mother

With the mother  
and a stranger

Alone with the stranger

Completely alone  
for a few minutes

Reunited with the mother

Alone again

With the stranger again

Reunited with the mother

## Mary Ainsworth & Strange Situation

A procedure devised by Mary Ainsworth to observe how a child behave with or without their mother in different situations

A total of 8 situations in fixed order



## Before Watching the Video

1. Imagine a normal, typical child
2. How do you think they would behave if they are put through these eight steps?

Strange Situation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTsewNrHUHU>



# Part 2

## Anxieties & Attachment Styles

# Attachment & Anxiety



Children form attachment with their caregiver (mostly their mother) from a very early age – and might be distressed if separated from them

Children also prefer mother to strangers

However, there are also individual differences between children

A close-up photograph of a baby crying. The baby has dark hair and is wearing a yellow onesie. A hand with red-painted fingernails is holding a white pacifier in the lower-left corner of the frame.

## Separation Anxiety

Distress and accompanying crying and tantrums that occur when children are separated from or anticipate separation from an individual to whom they are attached

Begins at 10 months, peaks at 13-18 months, diminishes after 24 months

A close-up photograph of a baby crying. The baby has dark hair and is wearing a yellow onesie. A person's hand with red-painted fingernails is visible, holding the baby. The baby's mouth is wide open in a cry, and their eyes are closed.

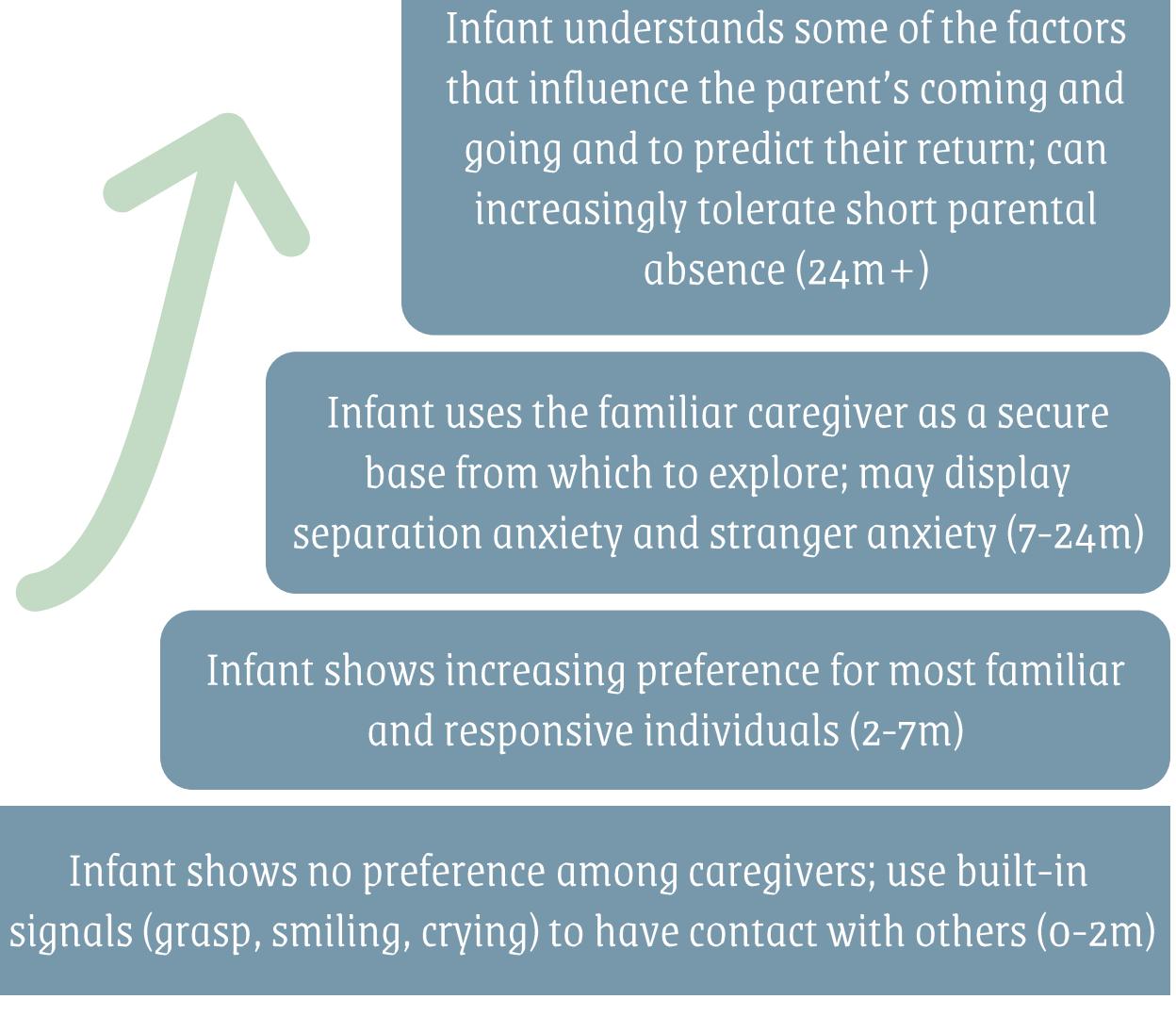
## Stranger Anxiety

Sense of fear of strangers after specific attachment emerges at about the age of 7 months

No fear of strangers before ~7 months



## Development of Attachment



no preference among caregivers (0-2 months)

increasing preference for most familiar and responsive individuals (2-7 months)

uses the familiar caregiver as a secure base from which to explore (7-24 months)

understands some of the factors that influence the parent's coming and going and to predict their return (over 24 months)



## Individual Differences

In the previous video of “Strange Situations”, we observed a common response of a children being put through the 8 steps

However, not every child would behave in the same way

According to how they behave, we can categorise their attachment style (with their mother) into 1 of 4 styles



**Distressed  
if  
separated**

**Seek contact  
when parent  
returns**

## I. Secure Attachment

Use the parent as a secure base, prefers parent to stranger

Distressed (usually cries) if separated

When the parent returns, actively seek contact with the parent; crying is reduced immediately after making contact



## II. Avoidant Attachment

**Not  
distressed  
when  
separated**

**Avoid  
parent  
when parent  
returns**

React to strangers in much the same way as the parent (i.e., do not prefer parent over strangers)

Unresponsive to parent's presence; not distressed upon their departure

During reunion, avoid the parent or slow to greet the parent



### III. Resistant Attachment

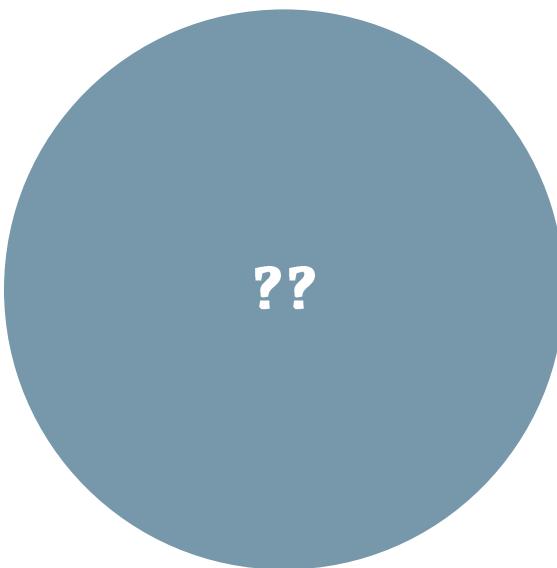
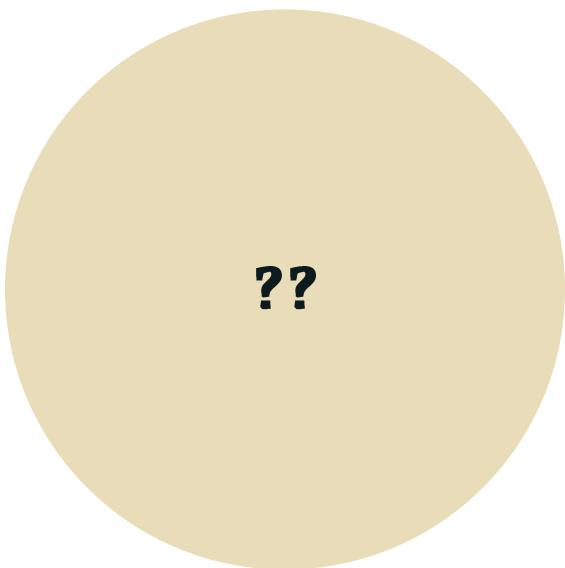
**Distressed  
if  
separated**

**Angry &  
Resistive  
when parent  
returns**

Seek closeness to the parent; sometimes too clingy and do not want to be away from parent

Distressed (usually cries) when the parent leaves

Angry and resistive on the parent's return and continue to cry



## IV. Disorganized Attachment

Confused and contradictory behaviours

For example, look away when being held by parents; flat, depressed emotion towards parents

Less defined than the other 3 types (sometimes anything that cannot be described as the other 3 types are labelled disorganized attachment)

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a light beige short-sleeved shirt, sitting at a white table. She is holding a baby in a yellow wrap against her chest. Her right hand is on the trackpad of a silver laptop, and her left hand is resting on the table. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# Causes of Attachment Styles

In general, mothers who are sensitive to their children's needs (and not overly protective) result in secure attachment

In general, mothers who are insensitive to their children's needs result in avoidant attachment

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a light beige short-sleeved shirt, sitting at a white desk. She is holding a baby in a yellow wrap against her chest. Her right hand is on the trackpad of a silver laptop, and her left hand is resting on the desk. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

## Implications of Attachment Styles

A child's attachment style to their mother might also become their default attachment style to other people even after they grew up

E.g., secure, avoidant, resistant or disorganized attachment to their spouse or loved ones



## Tool 68: Separation Anxiety

A baby's distress might be explained by them being separated by their main carer (usually the mother)

Whether the baby has separation anxiety and what happens when the mother (or main carer) returns depend on the Attachment Style

## Tool 69: Stranger Anxiety

A baby's distress might be explained by them being held by (or close to) a stranger





## Tool 70: Attachment Style

A baby's distress and behaviour when i) they are with their mother; ii) the mother leaves; and iii) the mother returns depends on whether their attachment style is secure, avoidant, resistant, or disorganized

This might also be carried into adulthood – in other words, an adult's distress and behaviour can be explained by their attachment style to their loved ones



## Part 3

### Child with Peers



## Introduction

In the first few years of our lives, we spend the vast majority of our time with our family

But eventually, we need to interact and develop relationship with the wider world – this takes new skills, because we cannot interact with everyone as if we are interacting with our parents (or even siblings)



# Play

Play is an important part of children's life

There are different definitions of play, but it is generally activities that are (i) self-initiated and (ii) for fun

The form of play depends on children's personality, but also abilities (e.g., physical and language)

# Types of Play (Pre-schoolers and beyond)

- Nonsocial play (Unoccupied, onlooker behaviour & solitary play)
- Parallel play (A child plays near other children with similar materials but does not try to influence others)
- Associative play (Children engage in separate activities but exchange toys and comment on each other)
- Cooperative play (Children orient toward a common goal, e.g. Make-believe play, sociodramatic play)





## Peer Groups

Peer groups are collectives with unique values and standards for behaviours and a social structure of leaders and followers

By the end of middle childhood: strong desire for group belongings

A photograph of two young girls lying in a field of tall, green grass under a bright sky. The girl on the left, with blonde hair, is wearing a white cable-knit sweater and is looking down at an open book she is holding. The girl on the right, with long brown hair, is wearing a light blue sweatshirt and is looking up and to the side with a thoughtful expression. Both girls are barefoot and appear to be resting on a white, textured blanket.

# Friendship

Mutually agreed-on relationship in which children:

- i) Like each other's personal qualities
- ii) Respond to each other's needs and desire



## Organization of Peer Groups

Peer groups are usually organized on

- i) Proximity (e.g. neighbourhood, sitting nearby); and
- ii) Similarity (e.g. gender, age, popularity, academic achievement)



## Peer Acceptance

The extent to which a child is viewed by a group of age-mates as a worthy social partner

If you ask members of a group of children (e.g. a class) to rate other children...

A photograph showing four children of diverse ethnicities hugging each other in a park-like setting. One child in a green shirt is laughing joyfully. They are all wearing casual summer clothing like t-shirts and tank tops. The scene conveys a sense of social connection and acceptance.

## Types of Peer Acceptance

Popular children (widely liked)

Rejected children (actively disliked)

Controversial children (both liked and disliked)

Neglected children (seldom rated by peers)



## Neglected Children

Low rates of interaction and considered shy by classmates

Well-adjusted and socially-skilled as average children

Do not report feeling especially lonely or unhappy

Might still have as many friends as popular children

A photograph showing a young child with light-colored hair, wearing a blue and white striped shirt and dark jeans, sitting alone on a weathered wooden dock. The child is looking down and to the right. Next to the child, a large, fluffy, light-brown teddy bear sits facing the same direction. The background is blurred, showing trees and foliage.

## Rejected Children

Generally few friends, some have none

Severe adjustment difficulties

Decline in classroom participation, feeling of loneliness, lower academic achievement, avoidance of school

A photograph of a young child with light blonde hair, wearing a blue and white striped shirt and dark jeans, sitting on a weathered wooden dock. The child is facing away from the camera, looking down at a large, brown, fluffy teddy bear sitting next to them. The background is blurred, showing green foliage and a white railing.

## Helping Rejected Children

May result from a poor fit of child's temperament and parenting practices → can benefit from training of parenting skills

Training on positive skills, perspective-taking and solving social problems

## Tool 71: Types of Play



A person's style of play can be described as either nonsocial, parallel, associative, or cooperative

The style of play a person engage in depends on circumstances and personality, but also abilities (e.g. language) and social skills

A photograph showing four young children, three boys and one girl, hugging each other in a group. They are outdoors, with green foliage visible in the background. The children are wearing casual clothing: a purple t-shirt, a green tank top, a red tank top, and a grey t-shirt. They appear to be laughing and having fun.

## Tool 72: Peer Acceptance

A child's interaction with their peer group can be described as either popular, rejected, controversial, or neglected

Rejected children are more likely to have severe adjustment difficulties, and might benefit from more training in social skills



# Part 4

## Egocentrism in Children & Adolescents

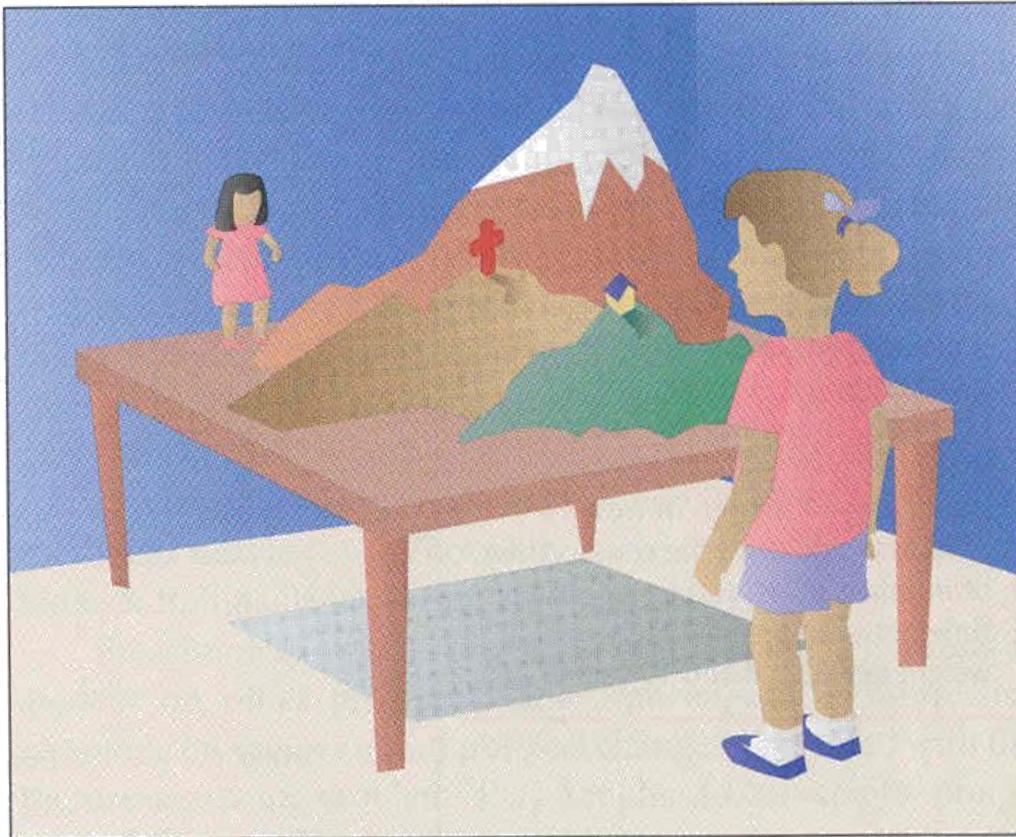


## Ability to Socialize

In order to be able to socialize with other people, it is useful to:

- i) Know that other people exist
- ii) Communicate with them (verbally or otherwise)
- iii) Have a sense of what other people are thinking, feeling, sensing, or doing

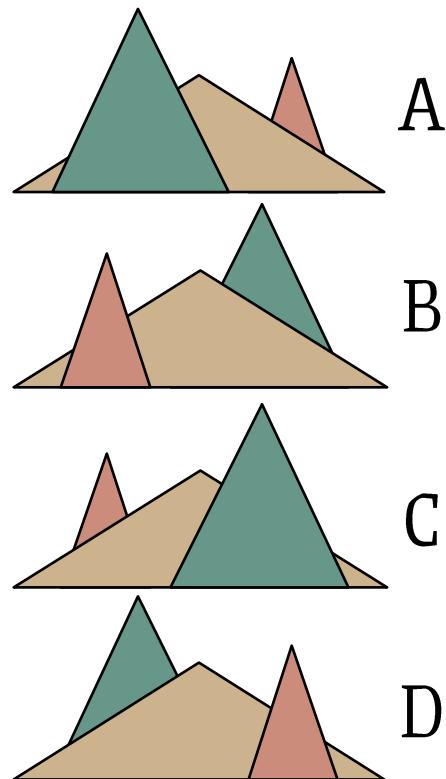
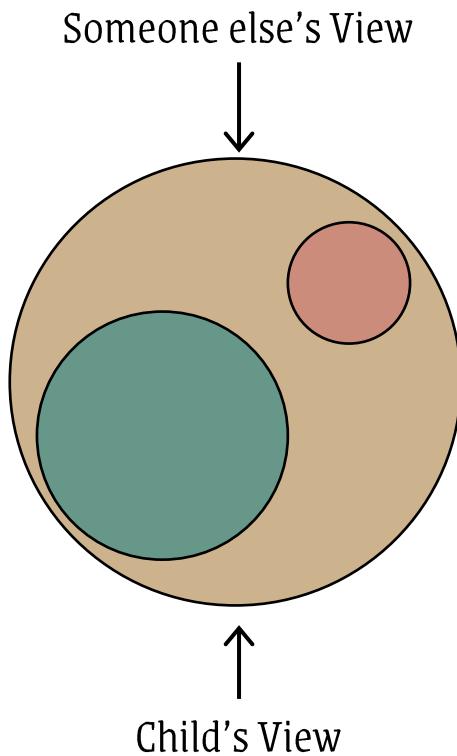
Being self-centred (ego-centric) is a hindrance to socialization



### 3 Mountain Study

Younger preoperational stage child can describe their own view of the mountains, but have trouble imagining what the view of the child opposite them

However, it has been shown that the task becomes easier if the role of the other child is replaced by a toy that the child is familiar with



## 3 Mountain Study

Younger preoperational stage child can describe their own view of the mountains, but have trouble imagining what the view of the child opposite them

However, it has been shown that the task becomes easier if the role of the other child is replaced by a toy that the child is familiar with

A photograph of two young boys sitting cross-legged on a grassy lawn. The boy on the left wears a blue fedora and blue overalls, reading a book. The boy on the right wears an orange fedora and orange overalls, also reading a book. They are surrounded by green bushes and small yellow flowers.

# Egocentrism

“Ego” means oneself, and egocentrism means that a person can only think of themselves, and fails to understand other people’s viewpoint

Assume others perceive, think and feel the same way they do

This is a “problem” for young children in the pre-operational stage (see lecture on Cognitive Development)

A photograph of two young boys sitting cross-legged on a grassy lawn. The boy on the left wears a blue fedora and blue overalls, reading a book. The boy on the right wears an orange bucket hat and denim overalls, also reading a book. They are surrounded by green bushes and small yellow flowers.

## Adolescent Egocentrism (David Elkind)

Adolescents don't have the same problem, but they also show some very specific kind of ego-centrism – more about interpersonal relationship than physical characteristics

Unable to differentiate between “how they imagine other people think of them” and “how other people actually think of them”

# Personal Fable & Imaginary Audience



## Personal Fable:

- Mentally construct an autobiography for themselves
- Complex of belief in the uniqueness of their feelings and their immortality

## Imaginary Audience:

- Belief that they are the focus of everyone else's attention and concern and anticipate the reactions of other people to themselves

# Personal Fable & Imaginary Audience



## Implications:

- Feelings of uniqueness and immortality lead to a lack of risk evaluation → excessive risk taking
- Imagining always having an audience → extremely self-conscious about own behaviours, weaknesses, errors, and limitations
- Possibly result in oversensitivity (to criticism, pseudo-criticism, or possible criticism) and low self-esteem

## Tool 73: Adolescent Egocentrism



A person's behaviour might be explained by their belief that other people are as obsessed with their behaviour and appearance as they are themselves, and over-concerned of what others think of them

A person's behaviour might also be explained by the fact that they consider themselves unique (and maybe immortal) and therefore do not consider the risk associated with their own behaviour



# Part 5

## Sally—Anne Task

(Developed by  
Baron-Cohen,  
Leslie & Frith,  
1985)

This is Sally.



Sally has a basket.

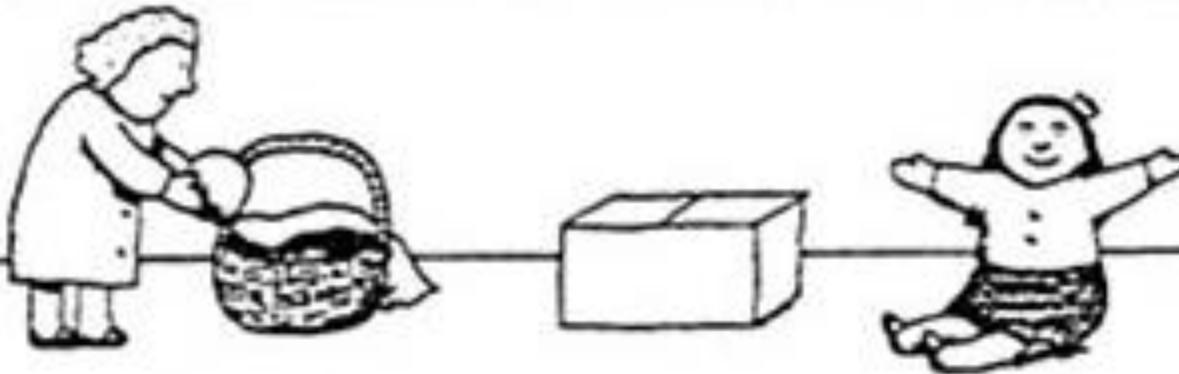


This is Anne.



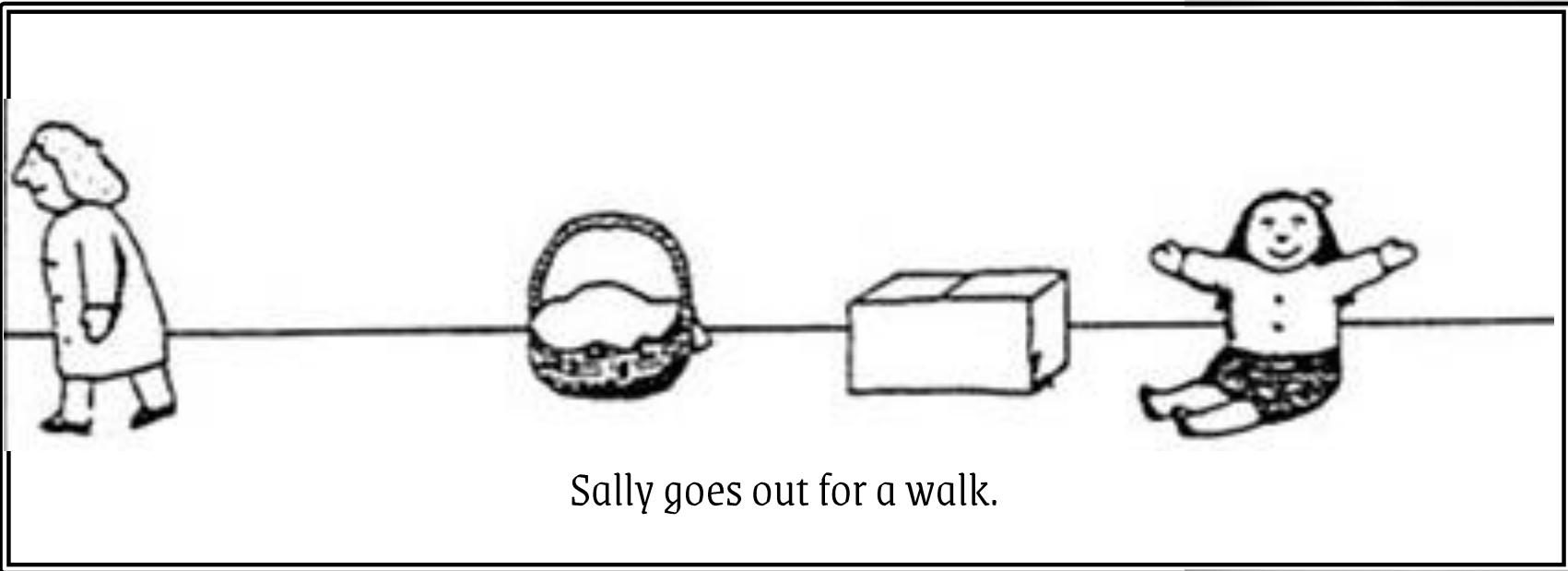
Anne has a box.

Sally has a basket.  
Anne has a box.



Sally has a marble. She puts the marble into her basket.

Sally has a marble.  
She puts the marble into her  
basket.



Sally goes out for a walk.

Sally goes out for a walk.



Anne takes the marble out of the basket and puts it into the box.

Anne takes the marble out of  
the basket and puts it into the  
box.

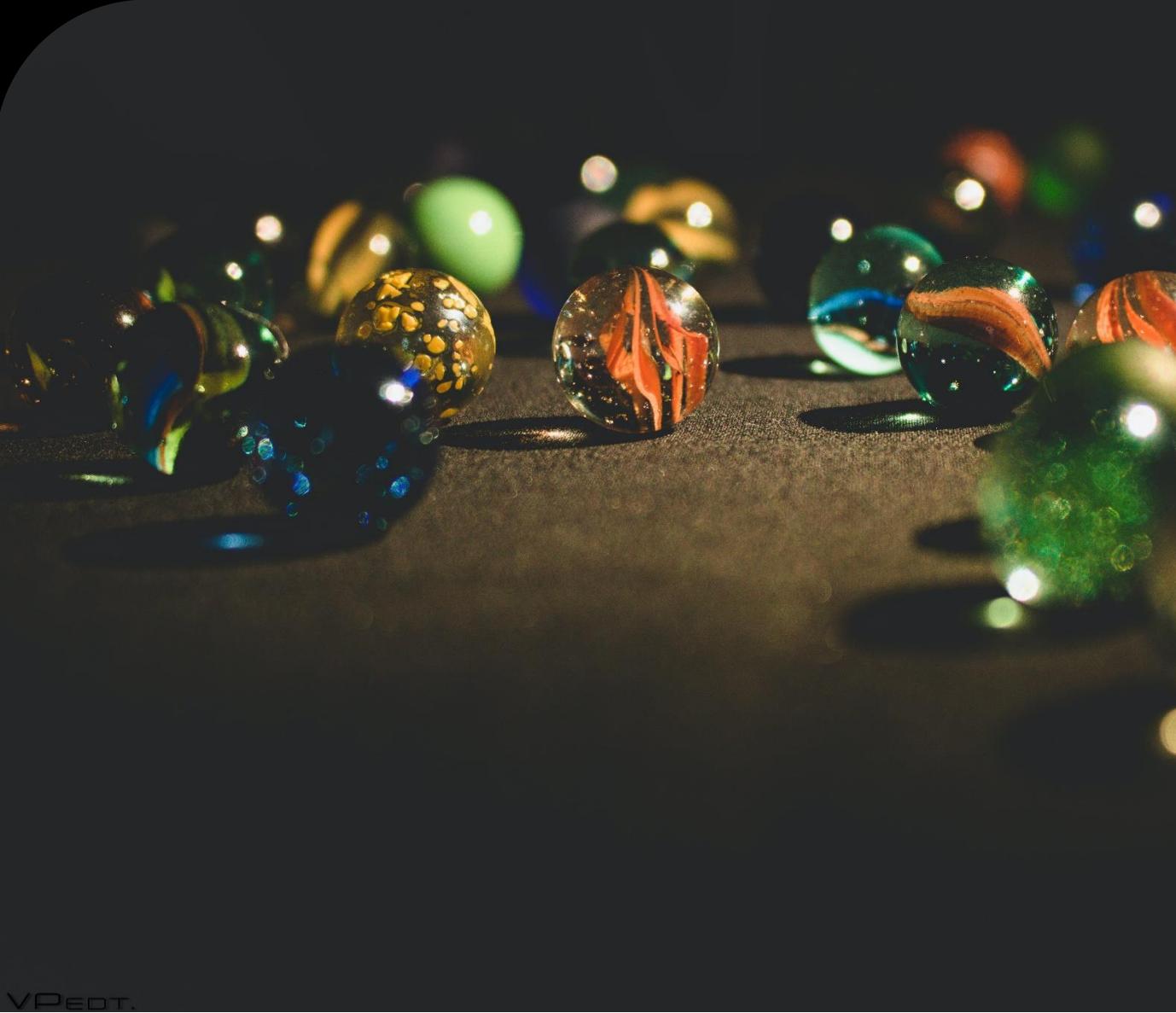
Now Sally comes back.

She wants to play with her marble.



Where will Sally look for the marble?

Now Sally comes back. She wants to play with her marble. Where will Sally look for the marble?



# Part 6

## Theory of Mind



## Solving the Sally—Anne Task

In order to answer the question (i.e., interpret the situation) correctly, one needs to try to understand other people's mental state

Quintessentially, we need to understand that other people's mental state is not always the same as (i) the truth, and (ii) our own mental state

# Theory of Mind & False-Belief



Theory of mind refers to one's capacity for empathy and understanding of others (i.e., one's ability to form theories of other people's mental state)

False-belief is the understanding that other people can believe things which are not true – most 4yo should be able to do this



## Different Levels of Theory of Mind

Freya likes ice-cream, and she cannot imagine there are people who do not like it

Sally thinks the marble is in the basket – the truth is that the marble is in the box, but Sally would not know that

I think you noticed that I played rock the previous 3 times, and therefore would play paper this time – so I'll play scissors



## Theory of Mind as a Social Tool

Theory of Mind is very important for: lying, instructing, cooperating, communicating, etc.;

But also for interacting with other people appropriately

There are people who are particularly weak at theory of mind (e.g., some people on the Autistic Spectrum), and might need some help to understand others' mental state



## Learning Theory of Mind ... and Empathy

Some people are naturally empathic; other people learned to read other people's feelings & thoughts instinctively

Some people learned to understand others through intellectual processes, using logic and reasoning

Some people might just need to be told about others' mental states



## Tool 74: Theory of Mind

A person's behaviour might be explained by their understanding (or lack thereof) of what other people are thinking

Young children assume others perceive, think and feel the same way they do

Most adults understand that other people can have different viewpoints and beliefs, but some people are much better at this

A photograph of two young men sitting at a table in a bright, airy cafe. One man, seen from behind, wears a light-colored t-shirt. The other man, facing the camera, has short dark hair and is wearing a dark t-shirt. They appear to be engaged in a conversation. The background shows large windows looking out onto greenery.

# Part 7

## Explaining and Suggesting Behaviours

## Scenario 1

Freida, 2, was brought to an MCHC clinic by her mother. During weighing, the mother walked out of the room to take an emergency phone call.

How would you expect Freida to behave when (i) the mother stepped out, and (ii) the mother returned?

What if Freida (a) was securely attached to the mother, (b) had avoidant attachment with mother, or (c) had resistant attachment with mother?

## Scenario 2

Patrick, 5, was bought to your clinic by his mother, Mrs. Pang. He had a fight with his sister (Patricia) because his sister ate the last piece of chocolate biscuit at home.

“Chocolate biscuits are my favourite!” Patrick says. “Everybody knows it, so Patricia should leave those to me. I hate her. Piggy (his toy) also hates her.”

Patrick’s mother tried to explain to him that Patricia was hungry and also did not know that chocolate biscuits are his favourites, but he would not listen.



# Part 8

## Behavioural Change

# Health Talk

Target:  
Secondary School Students

Topic:  
Healthy living

Sub-topics:  
Balanced diet, regular physical exercise,  
avoidance of tobacco and alcohol

## Case 14

Following your success with last week's health talk (about healthy lifestyle, aimed at primary school children), your boss asks you to hold a similar talk with secondary school students.

Knowing that most of them having already reached formal operational stage, might be focusing on academic achievement, and definitely have adolescent egocentrism... you plan accordingly.

## Case 14 Focus

Erikson's psychosocial stage  
(conflict, task, virtues)

Piaget's cognitive development stage  
(cognitive ability, understanding)

Adolescence egocentrism  
Personal fable, imaginary audience

Which stage (in both Erikson's and Piaget's theory) are most of your audience most likely to be in? How can your message fit in with their developmental task?

Which stages have your audience passed through already? What virtues do you expect them to have? Given that some of them might not have achieved to virtue, what should you do? What kind of concepts can they understand?



## Part 8

### Conclusion



Attachment: strong affectual tie

Aspects of a child (or an adult's) social life

Play

Peer acceptance

Friendship

(Affected by personality & abilities)

Egocentrism in children & adolescents

Theory of mind

## Conclusion

Attachment is the strong affectual tie we feel towards the significant people in our lives; there are different attachment styles between child & mother

When we grow older, we develop relationship with friends and peers through play and other social interactions; but these are also affected by our ability to understand others

A photograph of a library aisle. On both sides, there are tall metal bookshelves filled with books. The books are arranged in rows, their spines visible. Above the bookshelves, several glowing incandescent lightbulbs hang from the ceiling by wires, casting a warm glow. The lighting is low, creating a quiet and scholarly atmosphere.

## Reading / References

Boyd, DR & Bee, H (2019). Lifespan development (8th ed.). Chapter 6.2 Attach; chapter 6.3 Factors influencing attachment; chapter 10.4 Family and Peer Relationships in Middle Childhood. Boston, MA: Pearson.



~ End of Lecture ~

