

Self-attachment Technique (SAT)¹: Detailed Exercises²

WELCOME to SAT Programme!

Thank you for choosing SAT to help you get control over your life. We greatly value your participation in this intervention which we hope would be fruitful for you. In turn, as always, we also aspire to learn from your experience to improve the SAT exercises.

This programme aims at respecting your boundaries and providing you with an emotionally safe framework with clear and intelligible exercises. It strives to present you with choices in a collaborative effort to empower you in all aspects of your emotional life.

SAT is a newly developed self-help method. It is based on creating an affectional bond with your childhood self, for nurturing positive emotions and attitudes (such as compassion, cheerfulness, creativity and resilience), re-processing negative experiences, and developing positive cognitive, behavioral and interpersonal patterns.

These goals are achieved through regular daily practice sessions involving reparenting your childhood self, reflecting on your experiences and belief systems, and exercises to reduce your negative affects, and develop and reinforce positive attitudes and patterns for yourself.

The exercises of self-attachment are presented weekly in an eight-week course you share with for a group of fellow participants, who like yourself can voluntarily present their exercise experiences in the weekly meetings. We hope you would benefit from the experiences of the other participants as they would from yours.

You first select a favourite and a non-favourite photo of your childhood and, based on a suitable good quality childhood photo, with a neutral facial posture looking straight ahead, your customised childhood avatar is created for you. You then download a virtual reality (VR) environment on your mobile device that is created for this study and is attached to a Google cardboard. The environment includes several buttons that allow you to animate your childhood avatar in any basic emotion (happy, sad, angry, fearful, disgusted, surprised, neutral). To

¹ The methods for self-attachment are based on previously published articles in:
<http://humandevelopment.doc.ic.ac.uk/>

² Version 6
11/05/2022

practice SAT, you can select any basic emotion on your childhood avatar and change the emotion appropriately.

You have the option of using your two photos, or the child avatar or both for practicing the exercises. We will do all we can to provide you with a childhood avatar you can identify within the limitations of the current technological advance in the area.

Intervention through self-attachment

- Socrates: An unexamined life is not worth living.
- Mother nature's evolutionary attachment protocol has been developed for millions of years in mammals, higher primates and refined in human beings with the advent of language.
- Self-attachment (SAT) is a holistic approach for increasing positive emotions, which emulates mother nature's attachment protocol.
- The aim of SAT intervention is for you to take control of your life to achieve self-mastery by creating an internal affectional bond to enhance self-love, compassion, cheerfulness, creativity and strong will.
- In SAT, you create an affectional bond with your childhood self and "re-parent" your childhood self to reach your real potential and heroic dreams.
- Your true inner self that determines what you really want in life is different from your persona, created and influenced by societal and peer pressure
- In SAT you begin by pondering deeply on what you truly want and determine your real goal in life.

In the beginning

- Depending on your orientation, the goal should be a non-materialistic, socially useful ideal that guides you towards growth and self-development to empower you in today's global society.
- The goal could be achievement in an academic, scientific, literary, philosophical, athletic, spiritual, professional, charitable, or a socially progressive manufacturing/commercial/business field.
- If you do not have a clear goal at the start of the program, you try to find it as you practice the exercises.
- In the course of eight weeks of SAT, it helps to have some 8 hours of sleep every night, a healthy diet and at least 30 minutes of physical exercise daily to be able to practice SAT productively.
- Do avoid making important life decisions for a period of at least two months to be able to focus on SAT.

Four stages of self-attachment

- In four stages, self-attachment emulates the relationship between a child and a good parent to turn your adult self, simply called Adult, into a parent that can achieve the emotional development of your childhood self, simply called your Child in these notes:

- 1- Introduction to attachment theory and SAT
- 2- Connecting compassionately with the Child
- 3- Creating an affectional bond with the Child
- 4- Social and emotional learning for the Child

Stage One: Introduction to SAT

- SAT is a technique to enhance your mental health and to empower you to excel yourself.
- Like any other form of self-improvement method, SAT entails serious effort, patience and perseverance on your behalf.
- SAT simulate the parent-child relationship, which may at first seem strange.
- Therefore, you should make yourself informed by attachment theory in general and the scientific hypotheses of self-attachment technique.³

Role-play in SAT

- Problems managing our emotions are usually rooted in our childhood development.
- This means we have not developed the skills to moderate our excitements, regulate our emotions, or to laugh at times of stress.
- In SAT, the Adult learns how a good parent interacts with the Child, and through role-playing they become a parent for the Child.
- As in the real-life situation, the SAT intervention strategy is based on collaboration between the Adult and the Child for regulating emotions and learning to laugh.

Gradual development and improvement through SAT

- Since SAT takes place through acquiring new positive habits, sustainable improvement will only take place gradually and depends on the consistent and daily repetition of the exercises.
- Non-optimal thought and behavioral patterns are developed over the course of many years in our childhood, and then consolidated by later repetition.
- Creation of more optimal thought and behavioral patterns therefore takes weeks and sometime months of consistent daily effort. This requires patience and perseverance.

This finishes introduction to SAT. Good luck with the course.

³ Two basic videos you can watch are [here](#) and [here](#).

Week One

We hope that the above outline of SAT is clear and has given you the incentive to start off the exercises in earnest. Let's now begin with describing the first week exercises.

Connecting compassionately with the Child

- You try to distinguish between your Adult, i.e. your thinking and reasoning capacity that is more dominant when you are calm, and your Child, i.e. your emotions and affects that become more dominant under stress and crisis.
- Looking at the two contrasting childhood photos, referred to for convenience as “happy” and “unhappy” photos, can help you in making this distinction and is also required for other exercises.
- For convenience your Child avatar is referred to as “happy” if animated to happy and as “unhappy” if animated to sad, angry, fearful or disgusted.
- By looking at these two contrasting photos/avatars and recalling past events and what you have heard from others about your childhood, you gradually think about your early years to construct a basic psychological portrait of your feelings, affects and emotional problems with your primary care-givers and other significant figures in early childhood.
- The first principle of self-attachment is to have a warm and compassionate attitude towards your Child and their emotional problems. Later this compassion is extended to other people.

Exercise 1: Recalling significant early memories

In a quiet place, look at your happy and unhappy photos, interact with your avatar in different emotions and recall positive and negative childhood memories and your early relationships in the family.

Exercise 2: Becoming intimate with your Child

- (i) With your eyes closed, first imagine your *happy* photo/avatar, imagining that the Child is near you;
 - (ii) now imagine you are embracing the Child;
 - (iii) now imagine you are playing with the Child, e.g. a game that you played as a Child,
 - (iv) now imagine you are dancing with the Child.
- Reflect on how you feel in each phase.

Next,

- (i) with your eyes closed, imagine your *unhappy* photo/avatar, imagining that the Child is near you;
- (ii) now imagine you are embracing the Child;
- (iii) now imagine you are consoling the Child.

(iv) Open your eyes and put on the Google Cardboard. Set a negative emotion (sad, angry, fearful or disgusted) on your avatar. Then click on “Auto Emotion” and by staring at your Child avatar imagine you are reassuring and comforting your Child which makes them happy and eventually dance.

Reflect on how you feel in each phase.

Schedule

Please set aside a time each day where you can be alone without being interrupted by anyone or any messages.

- Practice Exercise 1 for at least 5 minutes and Exercise 2 for at least 10 minutes: 5 minutes for the happy photo/avatar and 5 minutes for the unhappy photo/avatar. This sequence to be practiced at least twice a day.
- Write down your experience after each session in your diary.
- On the day before the next session, please evaluate this week’s practice in the questionnaire that will be emailed to you.

Week 2

Well done for getting to week 2. In week 1, you practiced creating a compassionate connection with your Child and to console them when distressed and play with them in more happy occasions. This week you will build on the work of previous week to turn the compassion for the Child to an affectional bond.

Forming a passionate loving relationship with the Child

Theory

- In this stage you establish an imaginative but passionate, loving and affectionate relationship with your Child.
- This activates your brain's reward system, creating the motivation, capacity and energy needed to carry out the self-attachment exercises.
- Self-attachment makes use of your ability to 'self-love'.
- The goal is that by forming a loving relationship with your childhood self, you create an emotional connection mirroring that which a good parent has for their Children.
- Parental love also includes eye gazing, hand holding, caressing, singing, playing, smiling and laughing

Exercise 3: Singing a song of affection

- Print several copies of the happy photo to display in different areas at home, at work, and in your wallet.
- Consider setting its digital image as your background on your phone and laptop.
- Select a song with lyrics that you like that invokes feelings of warmth, affection or love.
- Learn the song by heart and sing it as often as you can each day.
- While looking at the happy photo/avatar, sing or recite part or all the selected song, as a way to establish a deep emotional bond with your Child in your mind.
- Start quietly; then, over time, allow your voice to become louder over time while using more of your body (e.g. shaking your shoulders and hands, and lifting your eyebrows up and down).
- Imagine that in this way, like a parent, you are have a loving, passionate dialogue and are joyfully dancing and playing with the Child.

Communicating with your Child

Speaking out loud

- In the process of caring for the Child, it is important to communicate by speaking out loud, to create an emotional bond with them and help them towards higher levels of emotional maturity.
- Even though we cannot see our Child, the area of our brain that relates to long-term memories can hear our voice and recognize its kind content.
- In childhood, speaking to one's self in a loud voice plays an important role in emotional and cognitive development and the establishment of an internal dialogue. During school years, discipline often leads to the elimination of talking out loud with one's self. Often, this is also suppressed at home. Research shows that adults who speak out loud with themselves when solving cognitive problems are often more successful. Thus, speaking to one's self out loud, whether as a Child or an adult, is a sign of emotional and cognitive maturity and not a sign of madness.

Exercise 4: Expressing love and care for the Child

While genuinely smiling at the happy photo/avatar, loudly say to your Child:

"I passionately love you and deeply care for you."

Vowing to care for the Child as our own Child

Humans share with all mammals an innate and fundamental capacity to care for a Child.⁴

Exercise 5: Pledging to care and support our Child

- In this exercise, you start to care for your Child as our own real Child.
- You attribute and project your own emotions to the Child using the photos or the avatar.
- As your adult self, you begin with a pledge you make at an especial time and place that you plan. After reading the pledge silently, you confidently pledge out loud the following:

"From now on, during this therapy, I will seek to act as a devoted and loving parent to this Child, consistently and wholeheartedly care for them in every way possible. I will do everything I can to support the health and emotional growth of this Child"

⁴ [Capacity to Care for a Child](#)

Week Three

Congratulations for practicing SAT for two weeks. Last week, you tried to create an affectional bond with your Child, sing love songs to your Child and pledge to look after them whenever they are distressed and need your support. This week you will start to imaginatively create a new safe and bright home for your Child. You will also undertake exercises to maintain your affectional bond with your Child and also establish an attachment to Nature.

Artistic re-creation of our emotional world

- . House building is a key activity of humans and a fundamental game for Children. Building a dream house is a symbol of building a self.⁵

Exercise 6: Restoring our emotional world after our pledge

- Through imagination or by drawing, you now consider your emotional world, which is the emotional state of the Child, as a home with some derelict parts that you will fully renovate.
- Some of the rooms of the new home are intended to provide a safe haven at times of distress for your Child; others establish a safe base for your Child from which to understand and tackle life's challenges.
- The new home and its garden is bright and sunny; you imagine carrying out these self-attachment exercises in this environment.
- The unrestored basement of the new house is the remnant of the derelict house and contains your negative emotions including fear, anger and despair. When you suffer from these negative emotions, you imagine that your Child is trapped in this basement and he/she can gradually learn to open the door of the basement, walk out and enter the bright rooms, reuniting with your Adult.

⁵ [You and Your Dream House](#)

Joyful love for our Child

Exercise 7a: Maintaining a loving relationship with your Child

- Choose a short phrase such as “You are my beautiful Child”.
- Say it slowly, out loud at least 5 times as you look at the happy photo/avatar.
- Then sing your favourite chosen song, or your favourite line from it, at least 5 times. As previously, increase your volume and begin to use your whole body.

Exercise 7b: Creating zest for life

- While looking in a mirror, imagine your image to be that of the Child emotionally, then begin to loudly sing your previously chosen song. As previously, increase your volume and begin to use your whole body.
- Do this twice now and then as many times as possible in different circumstances during the day, such as while on the way to work or while cooking dinner, to integrate them into your new life.
- When singing your favorite song becomes a habit of yours, it becomes an effective tool for enhancing positive affects and managing emotions.

Creating a bond with Nature

- Children's early attachment to Nature plays a fundamental role in their physical and mental health and in their pro-environmental outlook in life⁶.

Exercise 8: Enjoying nature

- Creating an attachment to nature for your Child is an effective way to increase joy and reduce negative emotions. On one day this week, go to a local park, wood or forest. Spend at least 5 minutes admiring a tree, attempting to appreciate its real beauty as you have never previously experienced.
- Repeat this process, including with other aspects of nature (e.g. sky, stars, plants, birds, rivers, sea), until you feel you have developed an attachment to nature that helps regulate your emotions. Achieving this will help you want to spend more time in nature after this course of therapy ends.

⁶ [Attachment to Nature in Children's Development](#)

Week Four

Well done for reaching week 4. Last week, you practiced maintaining your passionate love with your Child and tried to create an attachment with mother Nature. This week your Adult learns how to comfort your Child when distressed either by a current situation and problem or by some event or patterns of events in your childhood.

Processing current negative emotions

Introduction

- These exercises are meant to contain your current negative emotions – such as anger, rage, fear, sadness, loss and anxiety– in relation to partners, family, friends, work, or society.
- By projecting your negative emotions onto your Child, you connect to your Adult self, who, given the pledge already made, now attends to the problems of your Child supporting your Child and reducing your Child's negative emotions.
- The reassuring and self-massage part of the exercise helps you to contain the negative emotions by releasing hormones called serotonin, oxytocin and vasopressin, which help to reduce negative emotions.

Exercise 9: Overcoming your current negative emotions

- With closed eyes, imagine the unhappy photo/avatar and project your negative emotions to the unhappy photo/avatar representing the Child.
- While doing this:
 - (i) loudly reassure your Child, and
 - (ii) give your face/neck/head a self-massage (by removing the Google cardboard if necessary);
- Repeat these steps until you are calmed and comforted.

Reprocessing painful childhood events

Introduction

- Childhood trauma can lead to strong patterns of emotional and behavioural problems.
- At this stage of self-attachment therapy, you can reprocess your traumas, starting with less severe scenarios, challenging negative episodes and replacing them with positive patterns.
- In self-attachment, you initially gain the skills to enhance your positive emotions before tackling childhood traumas through revisiting and reprocessing them.
- These sessions are repeated for different types of traumatic patterns and scenes, from the less severe to more severe cases, until they are effectively processed emotionally, and new neural patterns are experienced in relation to them.

Exercise 10: Overcoming past pain

- With closed eyes, you recall a painful episode from your childhood - such as emotional or physical abuse, or loss, with all the details you still remember; associating the face of the Child you were in the past with the selected unhappy photo/avatar.
- As soon as recalling the associated emotions such as helplessness, humiliation and rage, with closed eyes you imagine your Adult intervening in the episode by:
 - (i) approaching your Child quickly as any good parent with their Child in distress,
 - (ii) loudly reassuring the Child that you have now come to save them, by standing up with a loud voice to the perpetrator, for example: "Why are you hitting my Child?", and, by supporting the Child with a loud voice, for example: "My darling, I will not let them hurt you anymore."
 - (iii) imaginatively cuddling your Child, by a face/neck/head self-massage, and
 - (iv) repeating (i), (ii) and (iii) until you feel comforted and soothed.

WEEK FIVE

Congratulations for getting to mid-course! Four weeks covered, four more weeks to go.

Well done also for practicing the exercises to reduce your current negative affects and for trying to reprocess your past pains last week. This week your Child will learn to smile and laugh.

Learning to laugh

Theory

- With the previous exercises you have become more aware of your emotions and have become able to increase your positive affect and reduce your negative emotions and pains. Now you can learn to laugh more as another way to increase positive affect and overcome negative emotions.
- We learn from our family and cultural experiences when to laugh and when to refrain from laughter.
- While a negative emotion is a natural reaction to an upset, you can always learn to see it in a different light.
- You can laugh as a way of being playful, and over time can come to see your problems and challenges in a positive light and with a sense of humour and joy.
- You can learn to laugh as a mental exercise, without a funny stimulus being present.
- Laughter is an effective antidote to anxiety and depression, by causing secretion of the euphoric neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin.
- Belly laughter or Duchenne laughter is spontaneous and involuntary in which muscles around eyes as well as mouth are contracted.
- Genuine (belly) laughter is non-hostile. If in your laughter you sense any contempt against yourselves or others, you need to practice neutralising the contempt and converting it into surprise or simple amusement and thus to non-hostile laughter.

Exercise 11: Muscle relaxation and playful face

- Just as negative patterns can cause rigidity in your mind and behavior, they can also lead to rigidity in the muscles of your face and body, which can limit the emotional development of your Child and the ability to laugh.

- It is therefore vital to loosen up facial and body muscles as you sing your selected songs to simulate and encourage the spontaneity of your Child with a playful face.
- Loosening the body and mind at least twice a day you systematically engage in playing, dancing, laughing and having fun with your Child as parents do with their Children.

Exercise 12: Laughing on your own

- Think of something you have accomplished recently, e.g. doing household chores, having a conversation with a neighbour, or reading an article.
- Begin by smiling at the thought of this as an achievement, then once you are comfortable, begin to laugh for at least 10 seconds, even though at first this may make you feel self-conscious.

Exercise 13: Laughing with your childhood self

- Looking at your happy photo/avatar, smile and then begin to laugh for at least 10 seconds. Repeat this process at least three times.

Exercise 14: Creating your own brand of laughter

- At a time when you are alone, open your mouth slightly, loosen your face muscles, raise your eyebrows, then slowly and continuously repeat one of the following tones, each of which uses a minimum amount of energy:
eh, eh, eh, eh; or ah, ah, ah, ah; or oh, oh, oh, oh; or uh, uh, uh, uh; or ye, ye, ye, ye
- If you need a subject to laugh at, you can laugh at the silliness of the exercise!
- Once this continuous laughter becomes a habit, you would be able to shape it according to your personality and style to create your own brand of laughter.

WEEK SIX

Hope you enjoyed the previous week's exercises for learning to laugh. This week you will learn more skills to overcome negative emotions replacing them with positive affects.



Perspective change for getting over negative emotions

Theory

- When you get deeply stuck in patterns of negative emotion, it is like staring at the vase in the figure above, which is full of dark and negative emotions. The more you stare at it, the more you get drowned in its negativity. It is like seeing a glass half-empty instead of half-full.
- However, having acquired some mental flexibility in the previous exercises, your attention can now be switched away from seeing the black vase to the two white faces.

Exercise 15: Learning to change your perspective

- (i) Stare at the black vase above and laugh for one minute the moment your perception changes and you see two white faces looking at each other.
 - (ii) Stare at the two white faces and laugh for one minute the moment your perception changes and you see the black vase.
- Repeat (i) and (ii) at least twice.

Laughing at your upsets and unpleasant events

Introduction:

- The philosopher Immanuel Kant believed that 'harmless incongruities can be the foundation of our laughter' (this is now called the incongruity theory of humour).
- Here, you gradually learn to laugh at challenges that are caused by unpleasant events in your lives.
- Not only have you survived these events, they may have even been useful for you. Perhaps they placed you on a creative path, or taught you lessons that made you wiser.
- Yet you continue to perceive these events as "painful" because you have become habituated to considering yourself victims of these events.
- Discovering this harmless incongruity can be a motivator for you to laugh.

- Three other theories of humour also support the option of laughing at your upsets:
 1. “Life is a tragedy when seen in close-up, but a comedy in long-shot.” (Charlie Chaplin)
 “To truly laugh, you must be able to take your pain, and play with it!” (Charlie Chaplin)
 2. Your superiority today, when you laugh at these events, compared to the past.
 (Plato’s superiority theory of laughter: We laugh to express our superiority to another.)
 3. Our playfulness. (Evolutionary theory of laughter: laughter developed as a play signal)
- The bottom line is that laughing at an unpleasant upset is against your expectation, your learned norms and values, but you can think of this itself as a harmless incongruity that helps you laugh.
- After you practice laughing at a past painful event, you can begin to laugh with greater ease at present and future painful events, and become more comfortable with them in doing so.

Exercise 16: Learning to be playful about your past pains

- (i) On days 1-3, in the week ahead, visualize a painful event that took place in the distant past that you have struggled with for a long time, and despite its painfulness, try to see a positive impact it has had.
- (ii) Use any of the four rationales for humour to try to laugh at the event.
- (iii) On days 4-7, apply the same process to a recent memory (less than one year ago).

Week seven

You now well deserve lots of praise for reaching the final two weeks of SAT. Last week, you learned new tools to turn a negative perspective to a more positive one and to laugh at problems and even upsets. This week your Child will learn not to act out their anti-social tendencies and feelings and turn them into productive work.

Socializing your Child

Theory

- *You will gradually be able to carry out the exercises with eyes open rather than closed, and can integrate most of them into your daily life.*
- *Your Adult is now gradually able to extend the compassion they had for the Child to other people too.*
- *Your Adult slowly becomes aware of some narcissistic tendencies and your Child acting out anti-social feelings like envy, jealousy, greed, hatred, mistrust, malevolence, controlling behavior and revengefulness.*
- Acting out these negative emotions wastes a great deal of time and energy which is non-conducive to your creative work.

Exercise 17: Identifying our personal resentments and acting them out

- Try to identify any pattern of narcissistic and anti-social feelings that your Child has acted out in your current or past relationships or any long-term resentment borne against someone. Try to recognize how much of your time and energy is consumed in such acting out and bearing resentment.

Exercise 18: Planning more constructive actions

- Work out a new way to handle, in future, what you have identified as acting out anti-social feelings or bearing personal resentment in your life.
 - (i) Without denying these feelings, try to reflect and contain them and avoid acting them out and. Try to let go of the personal resentment. This may be hard and challenging but it is necessary for emotional growth. Here, you are taking a critical but constructive stance towards your Child and exercising foresighted compassion.
 - (ii) Find a positive way of re-channeling the aggressive energy invoked by these feelings to productive work (e.g., going for some exercise, talking to a friend, etc.).

WEEK EIGHT

Congratulations for reaching the final week. Last week, your Child practiced not to act out anti-social tendencies and instead turn them into positive energy for productive work. In this last week, you learn how to enhance your creativity.

Enhancing your creativity

Introduction

- The capacity to reflect and think independently on their own develops in Children with secure attachment and enables these Children to find their **true self**, which is their source of creativity, independence, and spontaneity⁷.
- Otherwise, the Child will develop a **false self** in reaction to their environment.
- When they are three or four-years-old, Children can quickly learn to pretend (imagination) and to recognize associations between phenomena, which are the basis of creativity.
- Spontaneous children do not have any preconceived rigid framework in understanding events. But with outside pressure, spontaneity can gradually be replaced by rigidity and mental coherence.
- Self-attachment creates the capacity for secure attachment of the Child with the Adult, and the revival of the Child creates a context where we can be creative.

Exercise 19: Updating our beliefs to enhance creativity

- Here, you challenge your usual ideological framework to weaken any one-sided patterns and encourage spontaneity and the examination of issues from multiple perspectives.

⁷ [The Capacity to be Alone](#)

- Practice this with subjects or themes that you have deep-rooted beliefs about and are interested in. This may include any social, political, or ethical issue, such as marriage, sexual orientation or racism. For example, whatever your political viewpoint on a specific subject is, consider the subject both from a liberal and conservative or from a left-wing and right-wing point of view and try to understand both sides of the issue and challenge your dominant ideological framework. This does not mean that you would change your viewpoint but it allows you to see the subject from different perspectives and to be able to put yourself in other people's shoes.

Consider a different question or issue daily for at least 5 minutes.

Role models and affirmations

Introduction

- Role models and inspirational quotes play a key part in social and emotional growth of Children and adults⁸. Affirmations by your role models can help you to be patient and show perseverance in dealing with problems and challenges, and not to lose hope in response to setbacks in pursuit of your goal.

Exercise 20: Practicing Affirmations

- Put together a list of inspirational affirmations by figures you admire.
- Choose the three that inspire you most.
- Read them out and repeat slowly for at least 3 minutes.

⁸ [Role Models and Children](#)