



A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE ON
GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT IN A
CHANGING WORLD

ATTACHMENT AND LOSS: FROM PRACTICE TO THEORY AND BACK AGAIN

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Angelina and the Child Diego
Diego Rivera, 1916

A Webinar Presented by
The Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement

July 14, 2020

How did I get here?

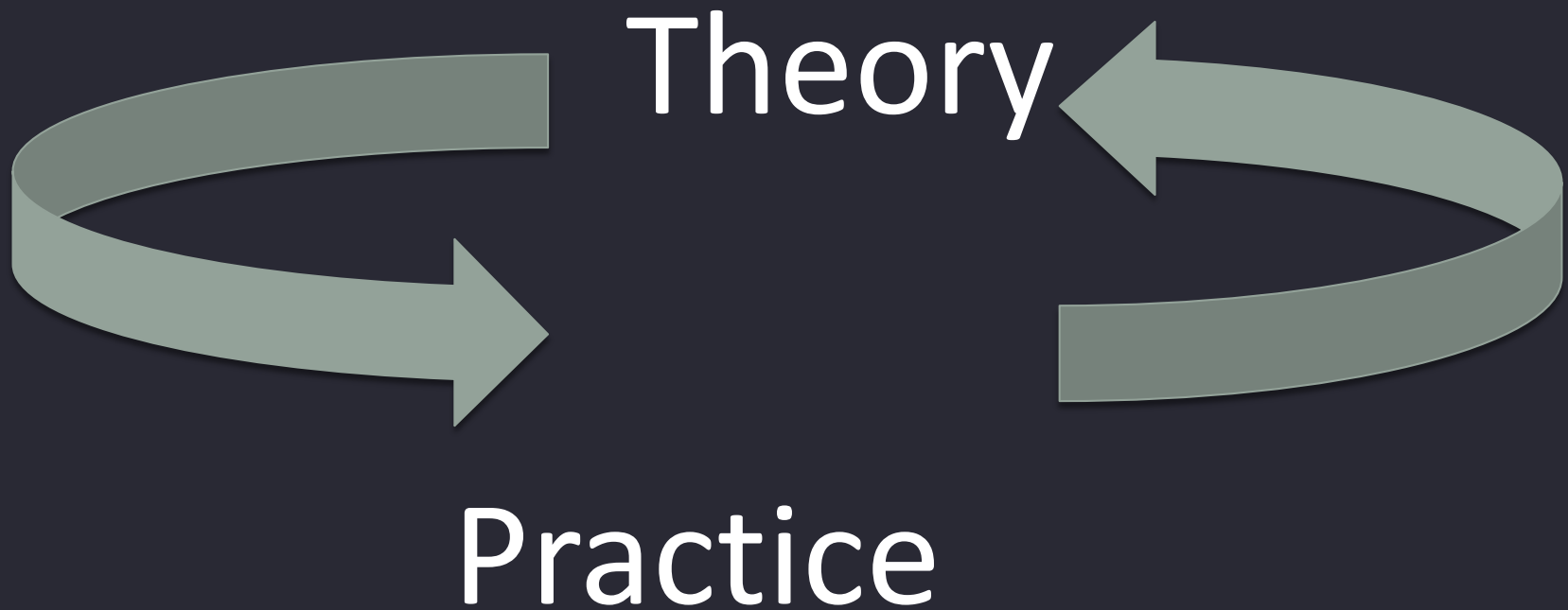
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Attachment Informed Grief Therapy



- Taking account of attachment orientation in how people respond to loss
- Early attachment and brain development
- Integrating principles of attachment theory into treatment approach



Questions

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- How do we know what we know
- How do we share what we know
- What can I tell you about what I know

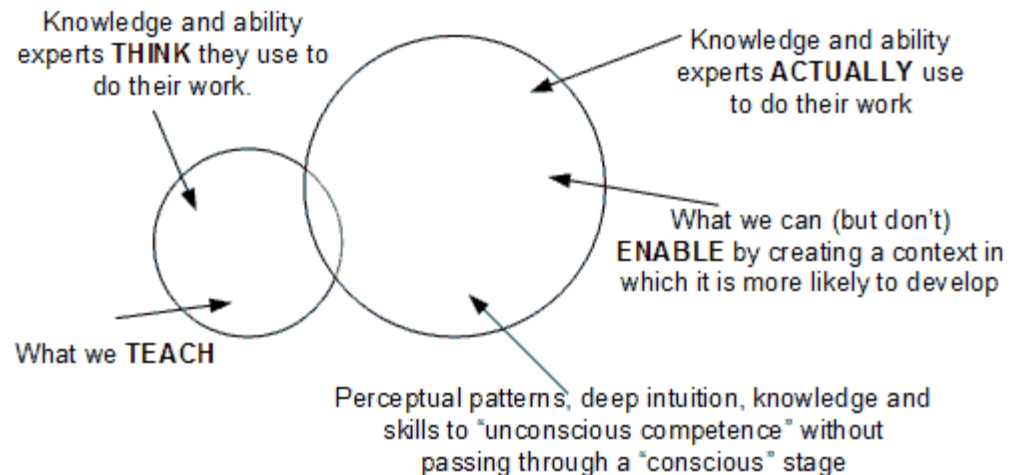
How do we know what we know?

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“The Curse of Expertise”

The Curse of Expertise

It's NOT that experts forgot what it was not to know. It's that they don't actually **know** what they know, but often **think** they do. (Because we push them to “tell” us.)



Downloaded from: <http://test.secrisk.net/post/dunning-kruger-effect-and-i-the-impostor/>

How do we know what we know? (How did I get here?)

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Lucille Schoenfeld Glick and
Phyllis, c. 1952



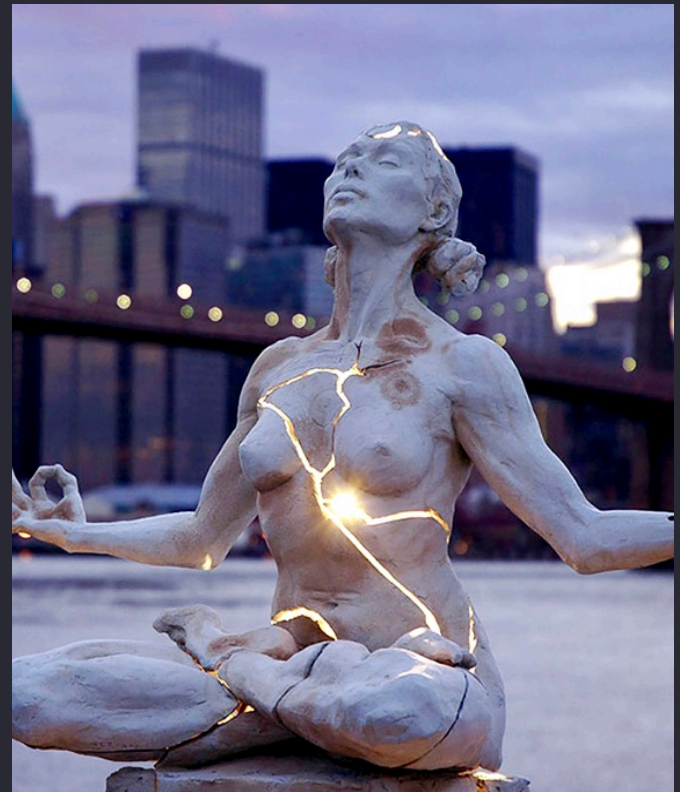
How do I know what I know?*

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(Not in order of importance)

- Theory and practice
- Life experience
- Being with/listening to other people

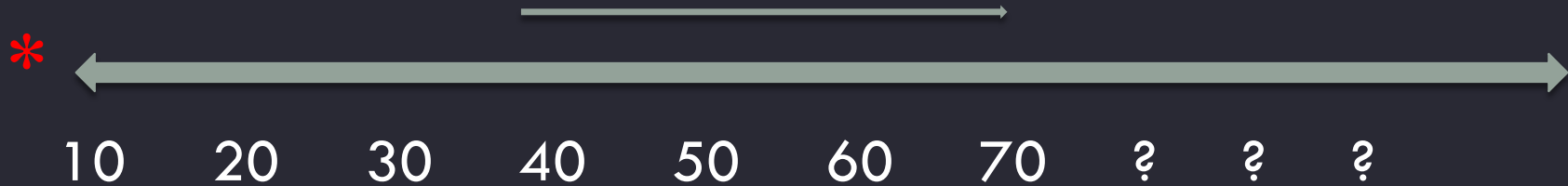
*about grief, about healing from loss, about helping people who are grieving



Expansion
Paige Bradley

How do I know what I know?

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□ Little me*

□ Life Experience 

□ Work Experience 

How do we know what we know?

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Reflective Practice

Theory and
practice

Life
experience

Being
with/listening
to other
people

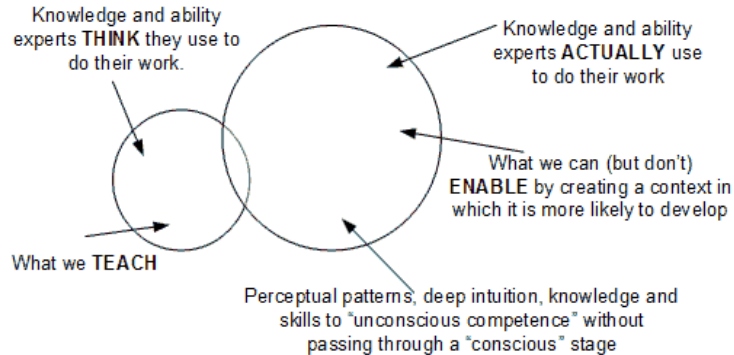
- Life presents us with problems, and in solving them we develop higher order competencies, described by Schon as ‘knowledge in action’ (Schon, 1991).
- Central to this learning is an *interplay between conscious learning and the gradual internalization of procedures*, leading to the development of *unconsciously held skills*. (Dallos and Stedmon, 2008).

How do we know what we know?

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The Curse of Expertise

It's NOT that experts forgot what it was not to know. It's that they don't actually **know** what they know, but often **think** they do. (Because we push them to "tell" us.)

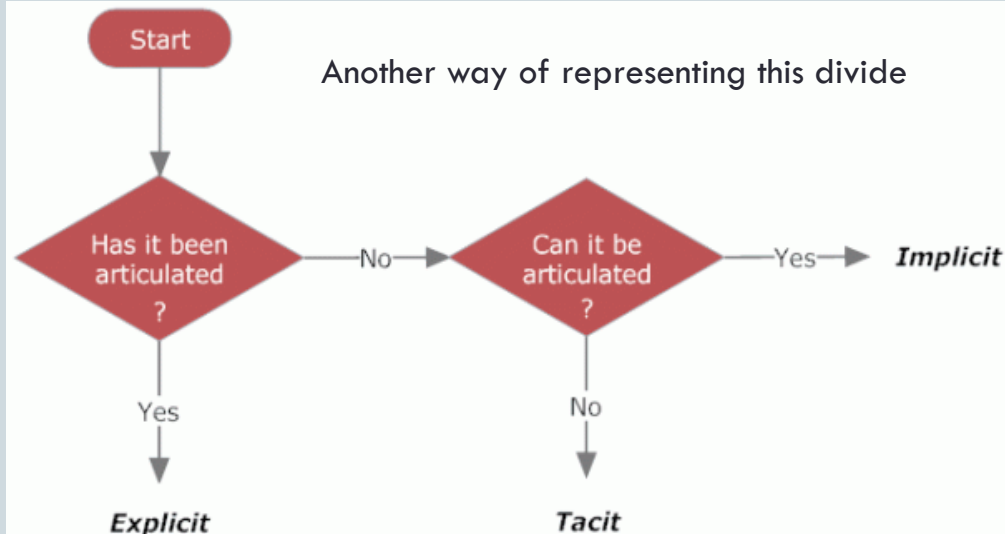


What I think I know what I think I use
What I teach (the communication of (A))
What I actually use

Source: http://www.nickols.us/Knowledge_in_KM.htm

What can I tell you about what I know

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The long and winding road

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Models of Grief

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Kubler-Ross: Stage Model

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

Worden: Task Model

- To accept the reality of the loss
- To work through the pain of grief
- To adjust to life without the deceased
- To maintain a connection to the deceased while moving on with life

Reflective Practice

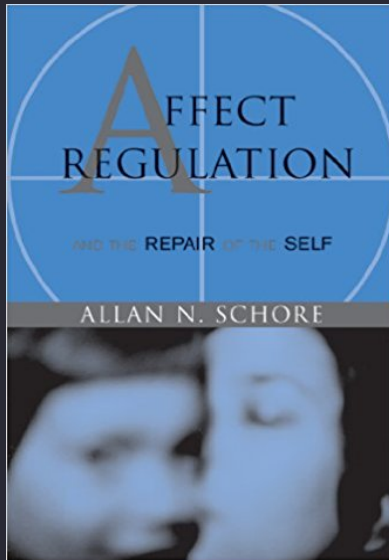
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“The practitioner allows himself to experience *surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique.*” (Schön 1984).

- Grief is individual
- Multiple factors influence the course of grief and can impede adaptation to loss.
- *People who come to us for help are often doing so because of difficulties related to complicating factors.*

How do I know what I know?

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“...mutual gaze and episodes of play trigger evated levels of endogenous opioids and dopamine in both mother and child and appears to be essential to the development of right prefrontal orbital mediated capacities for emotional self regulation.” Schore, A.N. (2003)

EUREKA!!!

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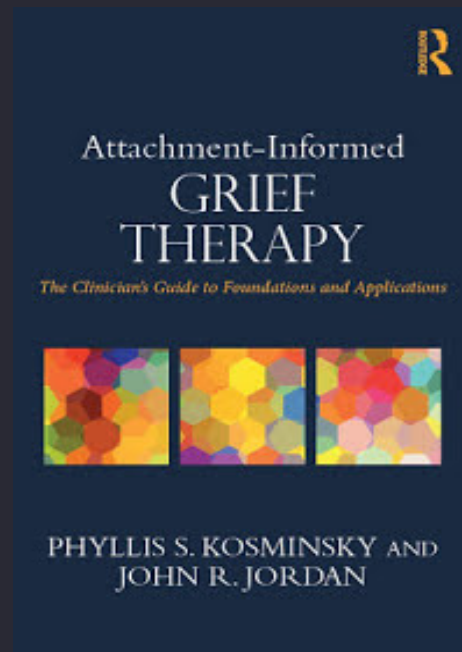
Developmental neuroscience

Attachment Theory

Contemporary Grief
Models

Attachment Informed Grief Therapy

- Understanding grief from an attachment perspective
- Emerging perspectives on neuroscience and attachment
- Foundations and applications of an attachment informed model of grief



Colin Murray Parkes: Love and Loss

Identified personal characteristics that often give rise to difficulty in sustaining intimate relationships.

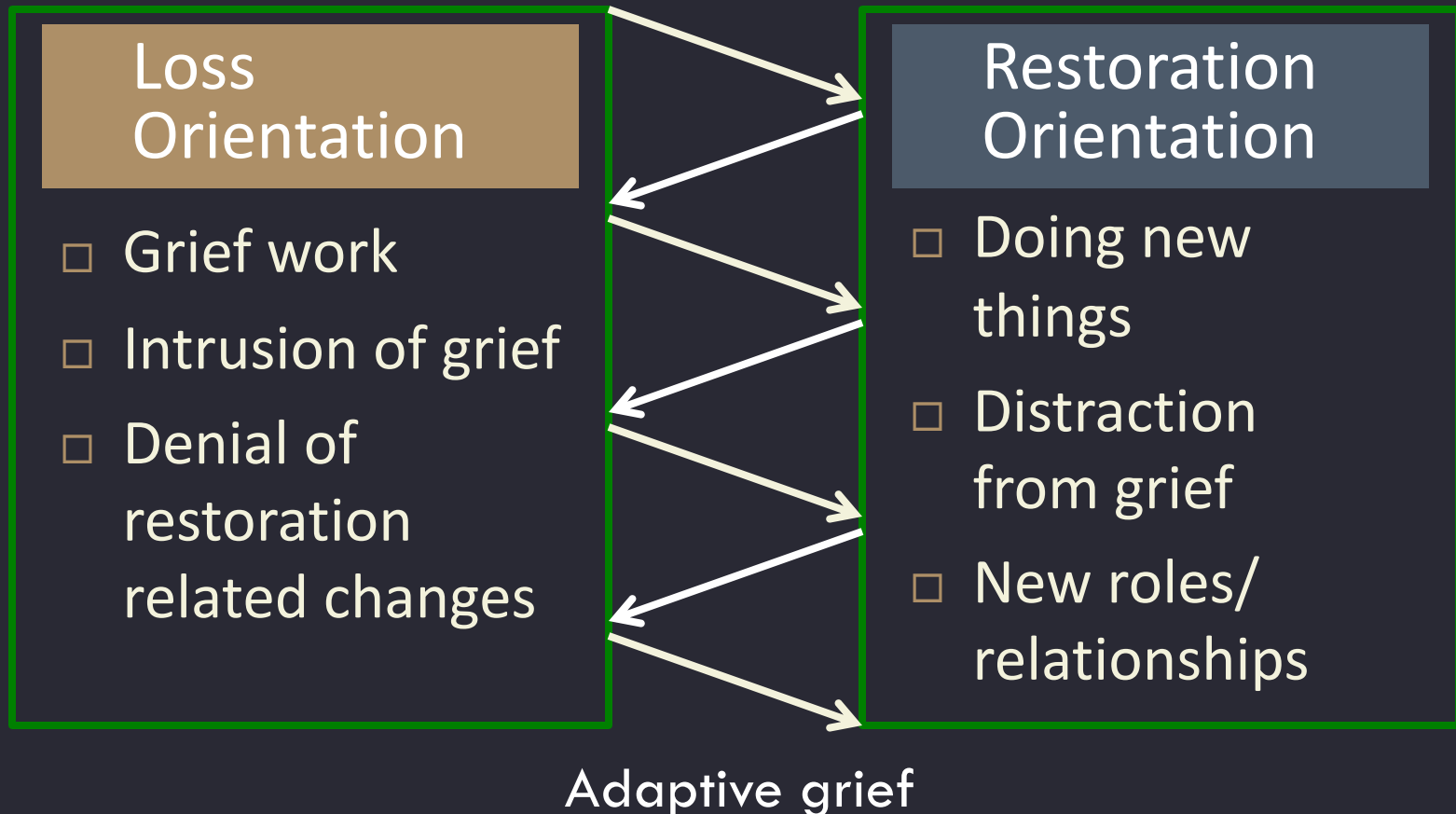




- Differences in degree of trust
- Differences in degree of emotional expressiveness
- Differences in the capacity to manage emotion

Dual Process Model: Flexible attention

Adapted from Stroebe and Schut (1999)



Adaptive grief is a two-pronged process of moving toward and away from grief

Attachment and Grief

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- “The ability to experience emotion and to re-regulate in the wake of emotional upset is a capacity that is important, if not essential, to adaptive grieving (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2013; Mikulincer et al., 2013). *What brings many of our clients into treatment is the breakdown, or underdeveloped nature, of these capacities.*”

Kosminsky and Jordan (2016)

An attachment perspective on disordered grief

Mikulincer and Shaver



Insecure attachment and difficulty in regulating emotion are features that we often see in people who present with problematic grief.

What gets in the way of healing: An attachment perspective on bereavement

Observed:

Attachment style/variations in attachment security → **Adaptation to loss**

Mediated by:

Early bonds → **Neurological development:
optimal / suboptimal**

↓
Self regulatory capacity/emotion tolerance

↓
Uncomplicated vs. Complicated grief



Kevin

ACES: Three Types of Adverse Childhood Experience

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ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



Mental Illness



Incarcerated Relative



Mother treated violently



Substance Abuse



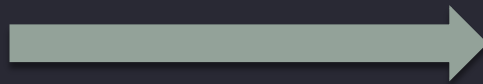
Divorce

Adverse Childhood Experiences: Impact on Adult Bereavement

Crunk and Burke (in press)

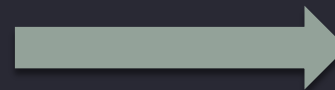
High ACES*

*Neglect,
trauma or loss



High emotional dysregulation OR
Extreme difficulty
accessing/expressing emotions

High ACES + traumatic death



Need for specialized
interventions

- Based on everything we've learned about neurological and psychosocial development we would expect to see a connection between adverse early experience and problematic grief – and we do.
- Inadvisability of exposure-based treatments

Trauma-informed Bereavement Care Clinical Considerations

Extreme discomfort with intense emotions:

- Emotional modulation
 - Noticing and reporting feelings w/o attaching meaning to them
- Shift from emotional intensity to physical sensations
 - "Where am I feeling this in my body?"
 - "What is this emotion trying to tell me?"

(Rosenzweig & Jordan, 2016)

Margaret

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“That feeling is still so deep in my gut, that I’m going to get hurt. My sister says it’s like he’s still hurting us from the grave.”



Marilyn

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"I don't want to be around people. The only place I feel safe is alone, in my house.

I just want to be able to walk into a room and not be afraid that I'm going to start crying."



Thinking about feelings

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“Thinking about our feelings while we are feeling them is essential to regulating and controlling our emotional states effectively, *rather than acting impulsively or doing something to shut off the emotions...* This is a tall order, and these are skills we develop and refine over a lifetime – not without help.”

Thinking about feelings

- By responding to the child's distress sensitively and appropriately, the caregiver helps the child regain a sense of emotional equilibrium. The child feels seen, heard and understood.
- *The net result of attuned caregiving is the development of the child's own capacity to understand their emotions, reflect on what they are feeling, and reregulate from a state of distress.*

Holding space

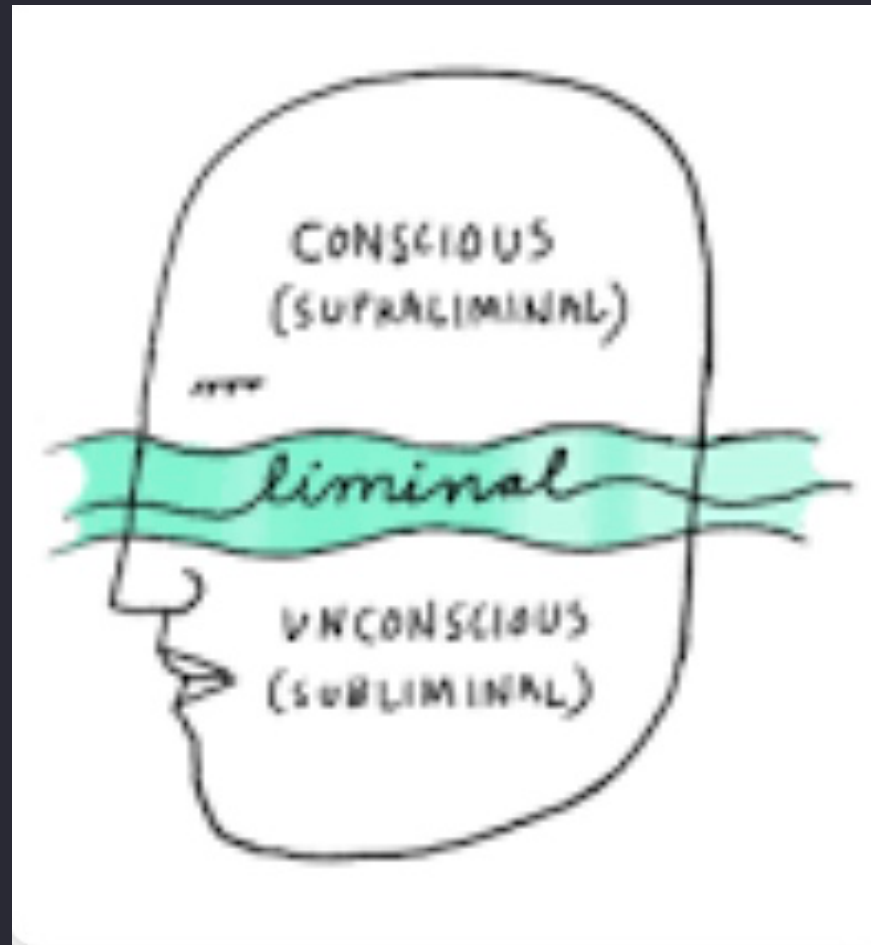
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Kevin tuning into feelings

Liminal space

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When your eyes are tired
The world is tired also.
When your vision has gone
no part of the world can find you.
Time to go into the dark
where the night has eyes
to recognize its own.
There you can be sure
you are not beyond love.
The dark will be your womb tonight.
The night will give you a horizon
further than you can see.
You must learn one thing
The world was made to be free in
Give up all the other worlds
except the one to which you belong.
Sometimes it takes darkness and the sweet
confinement of your aloneness to learn
anything or anyone that does not bring you alive
is too small for you.
"Sweet Darkness" , David Whyte; House of Belonging

...and back again

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“What you encounter, recognize or discover depends to a large degree on the quality of your approach...”

- John O'Donohue



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