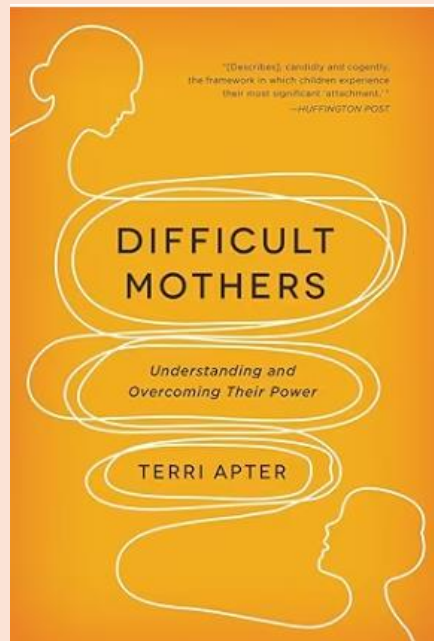




Deep Release Online
Professional Training for Counsellors

When Mothers Wound

With thanks to
Terri Apter





Why are mothers so important?

In most cases, it is the mother who is the key Attachment figure for the child.

She carries you in her womb for 9 months, sustaining your life, providing nourishment, and finally bringing you into the world.

Her arms of love hold you, her voice speaks warmth and tenderness, a way of being that continues through childhood, teenage and adulthood. She carries the message:

I love you. You are safe.

Sometimes...

Why are mothers so important?

Marked Mirroring

- When a baby is distressed, their entire body is overwhelmed
 - The good-enough mother responds with concern, mirroring the baby's facial expression and exaggerating it so the baby can see what she is seeing, and how she is responding
 - And as she senses the baby's mental state, she also ***transforms*** it, by soothing, comforting and attending to her child's needs



As mother and baby interact, their mutual focus is so intricately coordinated that it has been described as an elaborate flowing dance, wherein the participating partners get to know one another and get to know themselves through one another.

Human psychology, as we know it, begins in this primary relationship.

A passionate and absorbing bond with the primary caregiver, who is almost always the mother, is the infant's first experience of loving, and of being one person of a loving pair.

Daniel Stern



Affect Regulation

- The child gradually learns that their internal world can be understood by others who will help them regulate feelings of fear, pain, hunger and other distress
- They are not 'difficult', 'a nuisance', 'bad', 'needy'...
- **A hallmark of secure Attachment: people are there to help you when you need help. This is how life is meant to work.**
 - *Affect Regulation is the primary developmental task of the first two years of life*
 - Dads and other key Attachment figures can do it too!



Developmental Issues

Mother-baby communications enable neural networks to develop, which structure the child's emotional intelligence



Positive eye contact from
parent to infant
(through dilated eyes)
promotes positive arousal
and becomes **the biggest
catalyst in the growth
of the emotionally healthy
brain.**



**Babies can tell the difference
between happiness, sadness
and anger – combination of
face and tone of voice**



**Research has shown even
when they are asleep, babies
register anger as well as more
neutral tones of voice**



The Still Face Experiment

<https://youtu.be/f1Jw0-LExyc>

The Alien Self

- When a parent is persistently frightened or angered by a baby's distress, they don't mirror the baby's feelings, but express their own
- This is what the baby sees in the mother's face
- This is what the baby takes into themselves (*"This is what she saw in me... this is who I am..."*)
- But it is not who they are: the feelings belong to the mother





*I'm
overwhelming...*

*I'm ugly and
hateful...*

*I make her
sad...*

*I make her
angry...*

Hold me...

Accept me...

Love me...

**Be there
for me...**

Touch me...

Fill me...



I'll be ok if...

Hold me...

Accept me...

Love me...

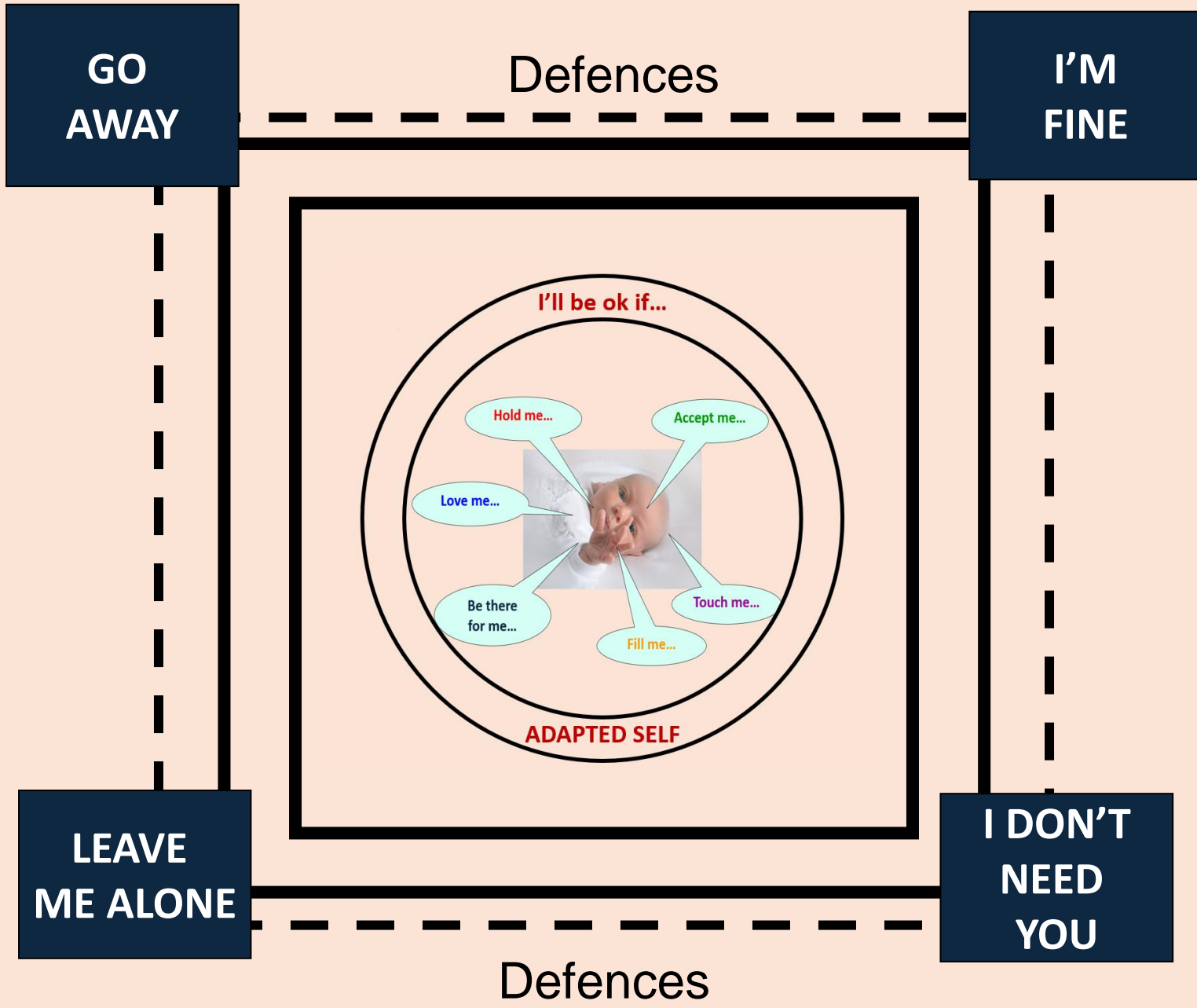
Be there
for me...

Fill me...

Touch me...

ADAPTED SELF





We seldom stop caring about
what our mother thinks of us,
and we yearn for her love

Our sense of self is developed in
relationship with our mother –
*so it's easier to understand, when
she is difficult, we feel we are
losing our mind...*

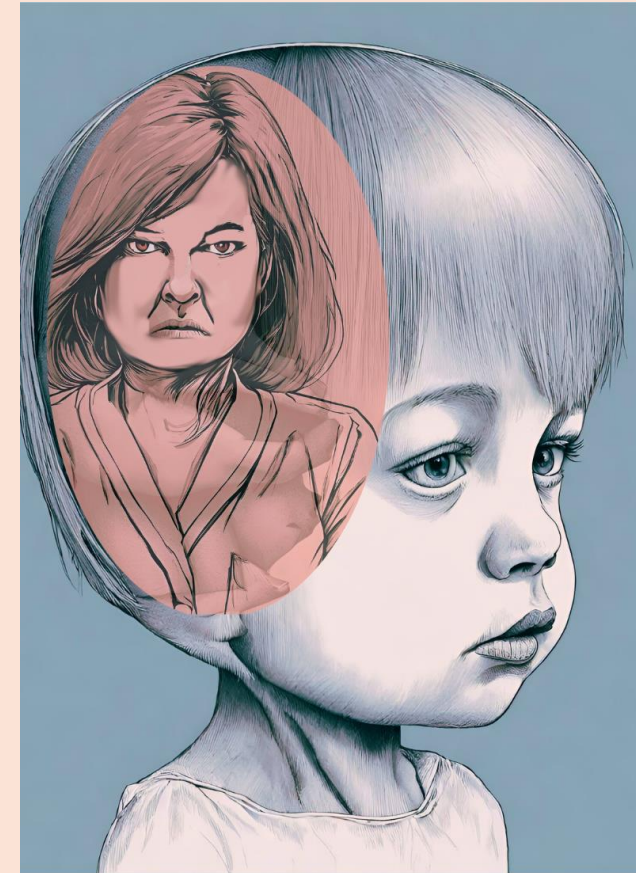
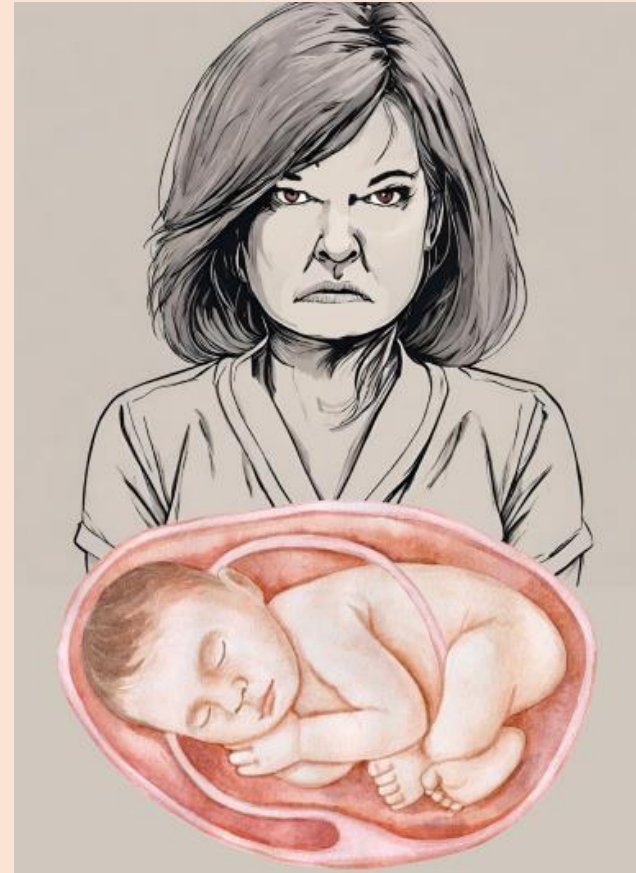
(Terri Apter)



She carries us in her womb



We carry her in our head



Ideas to share in Buddy Groups

- How has the teaching affected you as you think of your own childhood?
- Share what feels safe
- Questions and comments to Morag Barker in Chat, please

15 minutes



Masha's Story

Please stop your video to improve sync



Maternal Transference in the Counselling Room

- I am too much for you
- I am overwhelming
- You didn't sign up for this
- I am too needy
- I'm not moving fast enough
- You'll say I'm not working hard enough
- You will get fed up with me
- You will refer me on
- You will be frustrated with me
- You will be irritated by me
- You will be angry with me
- You will abandon me



We are both restructuring the Attachment system and changing the patterns of a lifetime in our clients

What does it mean – for them and us – for them to trust and lean on us, and grow and heal?

**Go away – don't leave me
I can't live without you
Stay with me - I hate you
I can't stop thinking about you**

**Hold me close - I need you
But don't you dare come near me
Don't care for me – I'm fine alone
Why does no one hear me?**

**I'll be good, I really will
If only you will stay
But deep inside, I know for sure
One day you'll go away**



Emotionally Neglectful Mothers

‘Being there’ emotionally is one of the most important things a mother can do.

This includes being:

- accessible
- interested
- empathic
- moved
- able to focus on us and what we need in the moment
- supportive



Core Needs Cards

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Emotionally Neglectful Mothers

Our adult behaviour can give signs and symptoms that our early needs weren't met.

For example:

- **We find it difficult to explain, experience or regulate our emotions;** we never learnt how to use them and may feel out of control.
- **We are people-pleasers;** we can only relax when we've read the room and made sure everyone is happy. We don't check in with ourselves – what are we feeling?
- **We can feel defensive when questioned;** *I must be doing something wrong, I need to justify what I'm doing.* Triggers the fight/flight response.
- **We feel shame after even the smallest mistake;** we must be perfect.

Kati Morton: 9 signs you experienced Childhood Emotional Neglect

youtu.be/_A62l3kFZnM?si=cyl8zm0ehQKSCzaJ

Emotionally Neglectful Mothers

- **We find it difficult to ask for help;** my needs will overwhelm others, I'm too much. Anything is "too much".
- **We find it hard to tell the truth re how we feel.**
- **We withdraw, isolating ourselves** from close relationships in case they want to know 'how we are'.
- **We find it hard to make decisions** in case we get it wrong or upset someone; we can feel frozen.



Kati Morton: 9 signs you experienced Childhood Emotional Neglect

youtu.be/_A62I3kFZnM?si=cyl8zm0ehQKSCzaJ

Self Abandonment

**Always trying
to make other
people happy**

**Agreeing with
things I don't
agree with**

**Shaming
myself for
making a
mistake**

**Being overly
apologetic**

**Doing things
I'm not ok
with**

**Saying yes
when I want
to say no**

**Letting
people
dishonour my
boundaries**

**Not acting
according to
my values**

Angry Mothers



- 1) Occasional outbursts are normal and ok, if repaired
- 2) Where the anger is repeated, sustained and unpredictable, this generates a stress-filled environment, leaving the child in a state of constant low-level anxiety, long into adulthood

Angry Mothers



- 3) Volatile, unpredictable anger is very stressful for the developing brain
- a. it slows the development of neuropathways for emotional regulation
 - b. it makes the brain less plastic
 - c. it generates a deep primitive panic in the face of a mother's anger
 - d. it evokes the memory of not being able to process it

e. IT IS FELT AS ABANDONMENT



Psychologist Terri Apter had a difficult relationship with her own mother, who was cutting and critical and hard to please.

Through her life she has struggled with low self-esteem, a sensitivity to criticism and feeling it's her role to placate others.

She says her relationship with her own children has been good, and that just having the insight to acknowledge what your mother is like is often enough to break the cycle and can make us a particularly responsive and loving parent.

Angry Mothers



The longer-term effect on us

We may

- appease
- resist
- replicate the anger

Points to Ponder

Are we still inhabiting our childhood response?

Are we still spending more time trying to control her anger, rather than regulating our own responses?

Terri Apter, "Difficult Mothers"

Ideas to share in Buddy Groups

- How do you relate to Emotionally Neglectful or Angry Mothering?
- How did you relate to Masha's story?
- Questions and comments to Morag Barker in Chat, please

15 minutes



Take a Break



See you in 5 minutes!

A word cloud on a dark blue background. The central text reads "ANY QUESTIONS?" in large, bold, white capital letters. Surrounding this central text are various question words in different colors (white, yellow, orange, and light blue) and sizes. The words include "WHEN?", "WHERE?", "WHAT?", "HOW?", "WHO?", "WHY?", and "WHICH?". Some words are repeated multiple times, and they are arranged in a circular pattern around the central text.

We have focused historically on
'trauma' as being only the actual
event in the woods with the 'bears'.
But we are traumatised not by the
bear attack itself, but by not being
able to get back to safety afterwards:
the lack of a supportive tribe, who
tend to our wounds, hear our story,
and take action with us.

CAROLYN SPRING

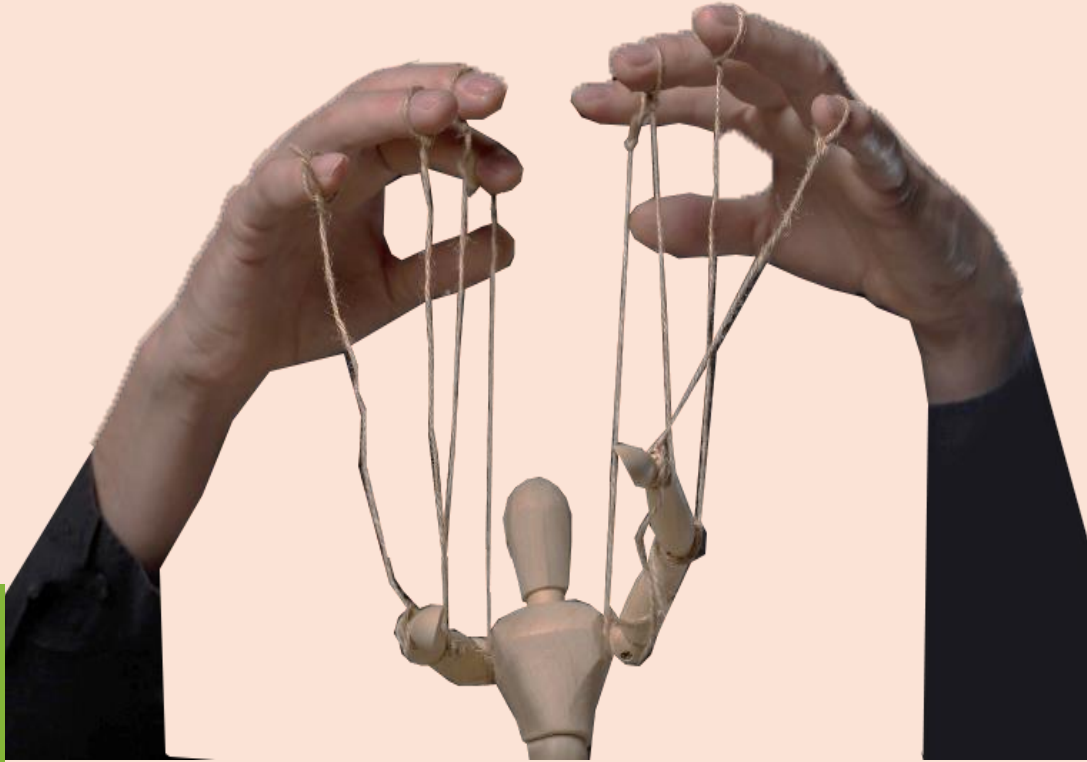


Sue's Story

Please stop your video to
improve sync



Controlling Mothers



1. All children need parents to exert appropriate control, structure and good boundaries
2. Over-control rejects the child's natural impulses and communicates a message that the child cannot trust themselves
3. The child's preferences, thoughts and wishes are deemed to be
 - wilful
 - bad
 - defective
 - dangerous or even
 - evil

Poisonous Pedagogy

This pattern of control lays the groundwork for what psychoanalyst Alice Miller calls “*poisonous pedagogy*” – a method of teaching a child that the child’s own impulses and desires are “bad”, and that a parent is justified in doing anything to control the child.

Alice Miller, “*For Your Own Good*”



Mother Knows Best



<https://youtu.be/-7jWt3JvJto?si=aFEAYBtlrpdfFr7R>

Controlling Mothers

Effect on us

We may

- **internalise the feeling that we really don't know what's best for us**
- **struggle to make decisions**
- **fear 'getting it wrong'**
- **fear the judgement of others**
- **'hear' a voice giving dire warnings**



Controlling Mothers

Suggestions

- Identify how the maternal relationship was difficult and its effects on us
- Develop self-reflection and expression – what do *you* think and want? (Locus of Evaluation)
- Find relationships where people listen to us



Narcissistic Mothers

- Love Bombing
- Narcissistic Supply
- Gaslighting
- Isolating



Narcissistic Mothers



**Look how my
daughter
adores me!**

I hate you

1. There can be many narcissistic process and traits in mothers
2. A young child is keen to reflect the mother and win her approval
3. Confusing message: *You must make me look good, but not outshine me*
4. A teenager may be more willing to take her on, being nearer her size
5. The mother can see this as a betrayal when the teen challenges her

Envious Mothers



1. Betrays the most basic parent-child contract – *I will take pleasure in seeing you thrive*
2. A child's delight, achievement and happiness become bad things - and that is confusing to a child
3. Dormant envy can be activated at certain times in the relationship – for example, is my adolescent with their new skills and knowledge going to find me irrelevant?

Kat Throne @kitty_kat_girl

<https://creator.nightcafe.studio/creation/WSfDf9WVtkDxAIVzdXc4>

Envious Mothers



4. Parent usually disguises it with
 - a) denigration
 - b) debt collection (after all I've done for you)
 - c) coldness
 - d) medical emergencies, even suicide attempts
 - e) "you think too much of yourself"
 - f) "your hopes are about to be dashed"
 - g) "If you laugh too much today, you'll be crying tomorrow"

Kat Throne @kitty_kat_girl

<https://creator.nightcafe.studio/creation/WSfDf9WVtkDxAIVzdXc4>

Envious Mothers



Kat Throne @kitty_kat_girl

Control Roles
**AFTER ALL I'VE
DONE FOR YOU**



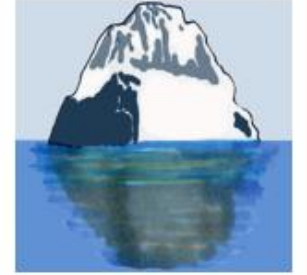
How can you treat me so badly when I've been so good to you?

Control Roles
THE MARTYR



My role is to make you feel guilty because of how much I suffer.

Control Roles
THE ICEBERG



My role is to keep control of you by punishing you with my silence.

Control Roles
FRAGILE



If you challenge or confront me, I'll fall apart.

Control Roles
SULK



I will pull a long face, stay in a bad mood and generally create an atmosphere to get my own way.

Control Roles
HEART ATTACK



I let you know that if you do anything that upsets me, you'll make me ill/be the death of me.

Roles Played in Families cards

pact-resources.co.uk

pact-resources-online.co.uk

Envious Mothers



Kat Throne @kitty_kat_girl

The Effect on us

We may

- find it hard to leave her
- blame ourselves for her dissatisfaction
- charms others to make ourselves acceptable
- encourage others' success while avoiding the limelight ourselves
- be a compulsive achiever but never feel satisfied

Becky's Story

I was my mum's counsellor growing up.

I didn't mind at the time, even relished the role of 'protecting' her from my emotionally and mentally abusive dad, even though it was heavy on my shoulders and inappropriate for a child.



My role as confidante continued into my teenage years and I came to loathe my dad and how he damaged our family with his volcanic outbursts, feeling exceptionally sorry for my mum, his victim.

It was years before I was able to realise the emotional support only flowed from me to her. She was largely unavailable to me and always had been. She didn't ever protect my sisters and me from my dad's rage and shaming words.

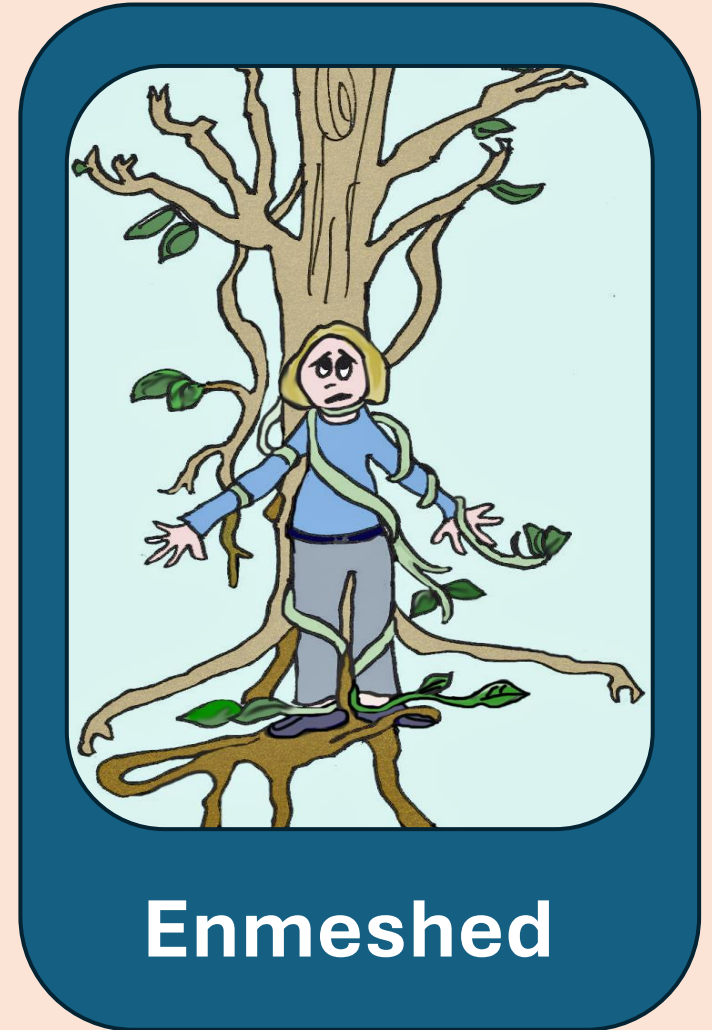
I guess she couldn't defend herself and therefore couldn't help us either.



I was depressed for a lot of my childhood and teenage years, even attempting to take my own life at one point. It was a revelation to hear about the defence of 'retroflexion' talked about in Gestalt therapy (the concept of turning pain back in on ourselves). That helped me to understand self-harm I had used in adolescence to cope with my raging inner world.

I started to realise how enmeshed my Mum and I were.

- She would tell me how upset she would be if we ever moved away.
- My friends (and their flaws) were of special interest to her, and I started realise it was because she was jealous and didn't want me to be too close to anyone else.



Enmeshed

- My allegiance was to be to her and if she couldn't get me on the phone when she wanted to talk, she would hunt me down through other people.
- Under my Dad's rule she had not been allowed to have friends, live a free life or be successful, and here I was with a husband who actively encouraged me to follow my heart, which I think she envied.

Facing the feelings of being used and abandoned have been hard. Even writing this piece generated a dream that I was biting my mum out of sheer frustration!



Frustrated

Today our relationship is not overly close, but it is functional, and even sometimes warm.

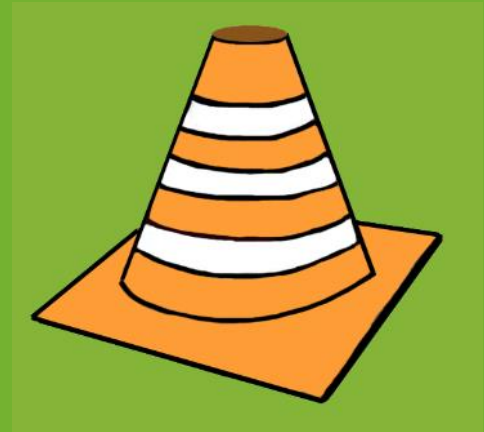
There are boundaries and I have learnt to 'care less' about what she thinks of me.

I have some amazing older women in my life who offer me 'mum stuff', and being attuned to my own children has been surprisingly healing for me.

I do have compassion for my mum; she is as she is for a reason, but I have compassion for me too and could not continue to allow myself to be hurt and swallowed up in this relationship.

ASSERTIVENESS

options card



options card

**I will set boundaries
as to how others
may treat me**

FIND MY VOICE

options card



options card

I will be heard –
it is ok to disagree

COURAGE

options card



options card

I will face my fears
and risk
confrontation

SELF-WORTH

options card



options card

I will stop telling
myself everything is
my fault

SELF PROTECTION

options card



options card

I will step away
from abusive
relationships

IDENTIFY THE HURT

options card



options card

My anger tells me I
have been wounded

COMMITMENT



I will not walk away
and reject

SELF- FORGIVENESS

options card



options card

I will show
compassion and
understanding
towards myself

Roles Played in Anger cards

pact-resources.co.uk

pact-resources-online.co.uk

Ideas to share in Buddy Groups

- How did you respond to Controlling, Narcissistic and Envious mothers?
- How did you relate to Sue's and Becky's Stories
- Questions and comments to Morag Barker in Chat, please

15 minutes



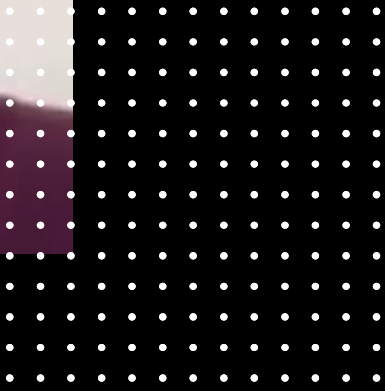
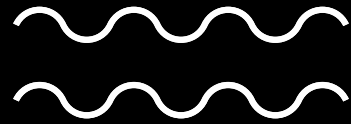
Take a Break



See you in 5 minutes!

Vicky's Story

Please stop your video
to improve sync




A word cloud on a dark blue background. The central text reads "ANY QUESTIONS?" in large, bold, white capital letters. Surrounding this central text are various question words in different colors (white, yellow, orange, and light blue) and sizes. The words include "WHEN?", "WHERE?", "WHAT?", "HOW?", "WHO?", "WHY?", and "WHEN?". Some words are repeated multiple times, and they are arranged in a circular pattern around the central text.

“Don’t compare yourself with other people who have horrific trauma... low level trauma over a prolonged period of time is so insidious, and so impactful... yet we don’t even notice it.”

We cannot be truly ourselves, we can’t own all our feelings, we can’t identify our needs, it will affect our relationships: it’s not a little thing...



A silhouette of a person in a red dress is captured in a dynamic, mid-air pose, possibly jumping or dancing. The person's arms are raised, and their legs are spread wide. The background is a dramatic sky at sunset or sunrise, with warm orange and yellow hues near the horizon transitioning into cooler blues and greys higher up. Several birds are seen in flight, scattered across the sky. The overall mood is one of freedom and movement.

...It's worth doing the work on healing that, to find who we were meant to be. If we had had ideal parenting, an ideal environment, an ideal society to nurture our beauty, our intelligence and our warm hearts, we'd be fully ourselves." (Masha Bennett)



Further reading

- **Difficult Mothers: Understanding and Overcoming Their Power- Terri Apter**
- **The Emotionally Absent Mother: How to recognize and cope with the Invisible Effects of Childhood Emotional Neglect – Jasim Lee Cori**
- **Why Love Matters – Sue Gerhardt**
- **Affect Regulation, Mentalization and the Development of the Self - Peter Fonagy et al**
- **The Drama of Being a Child – Alice Miller**
- **The First Relationship: Infant and Mother: Infant and Mother – Daniel Stern**

Ideas to share in Buddy Groups

- Time to say goodbye to your Buddies
- Exchange details if you wish to

5 minutes





Resources

PACT-RESOURCES.CO.UK

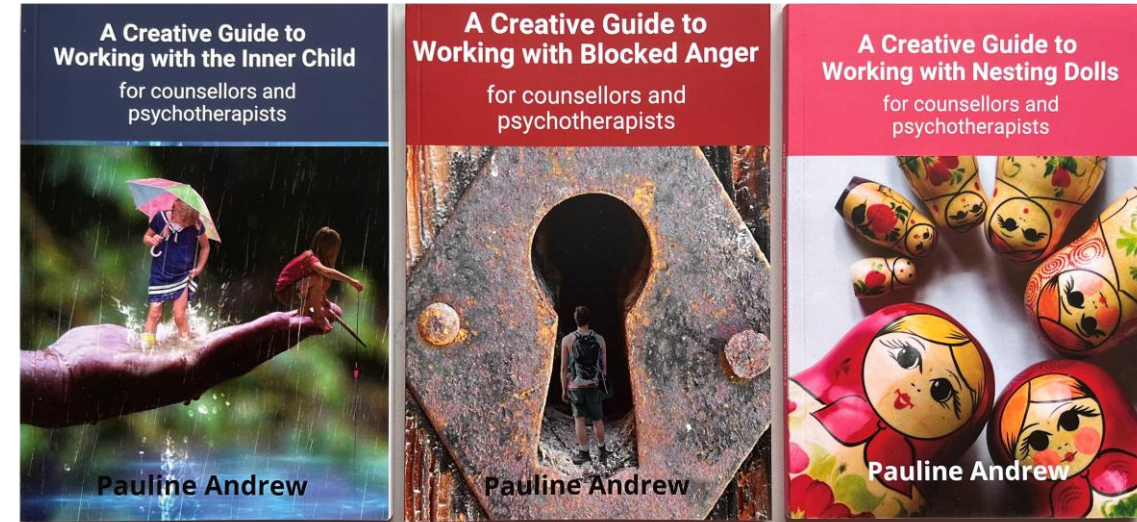
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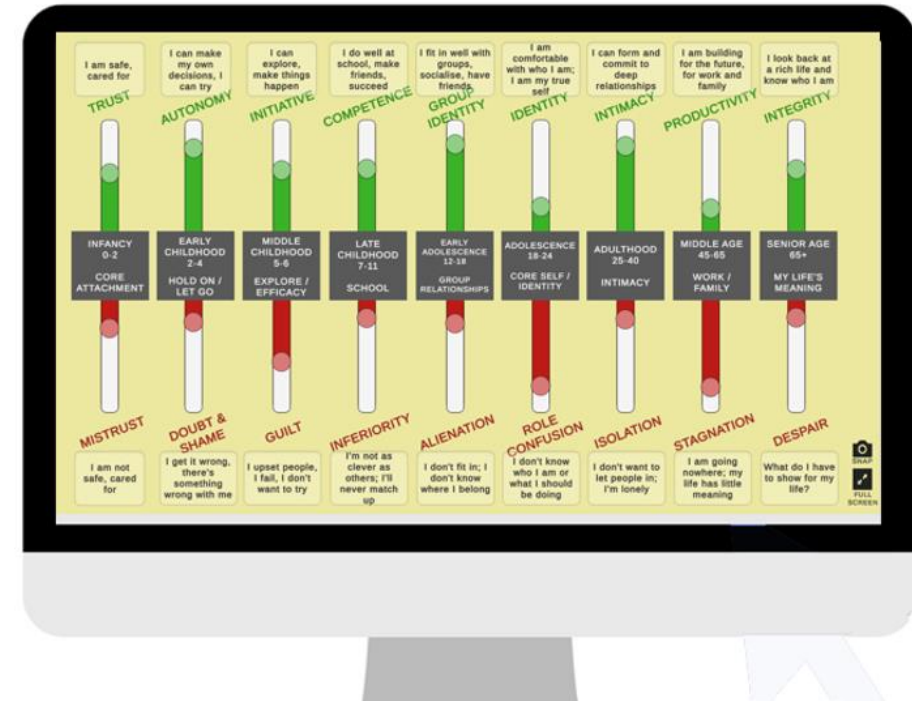
3 for £32 (save £2.50)

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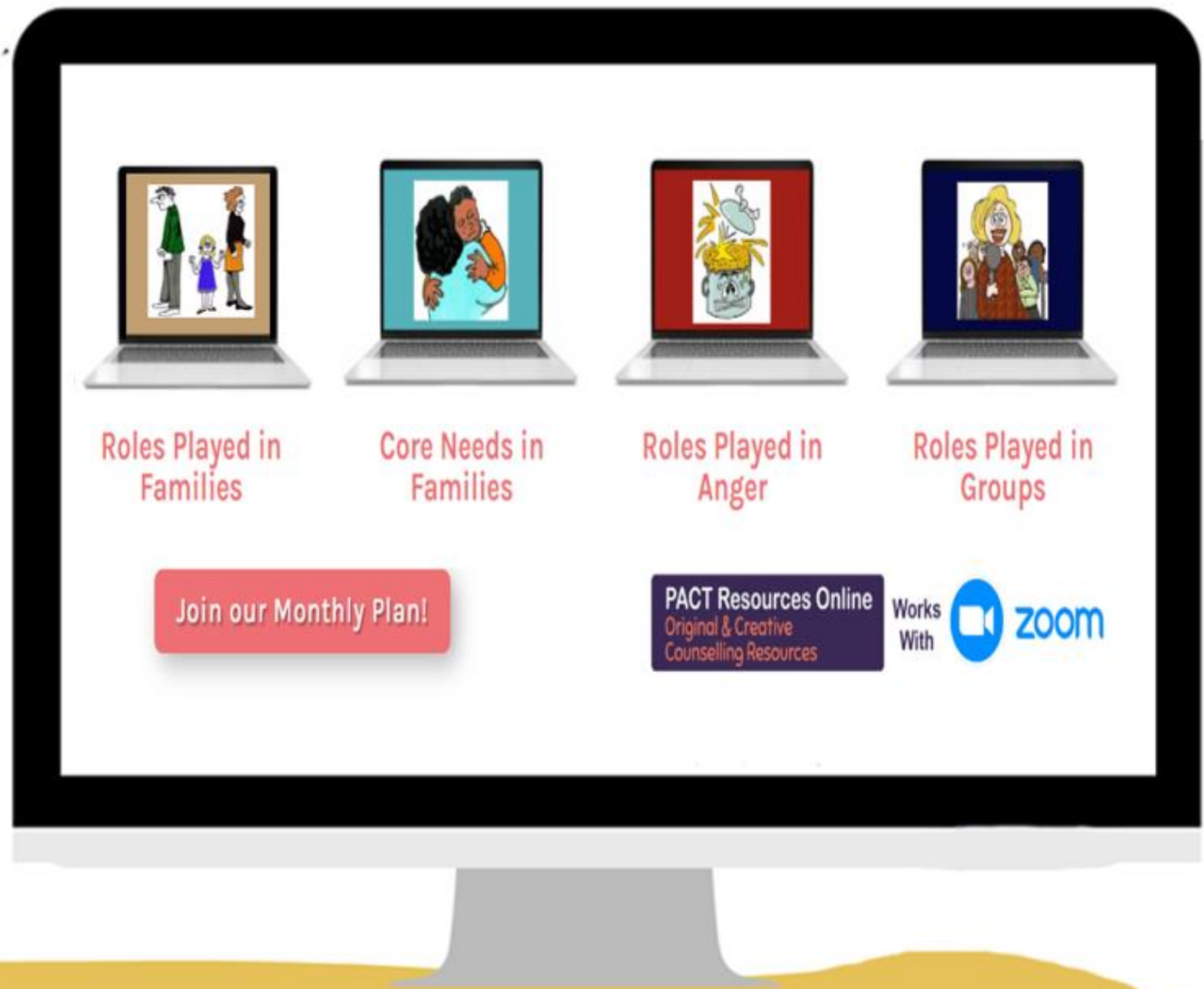
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The Wheel of Life and Erikson's Life Stages

FREE Web Apps!



**The 4 sets of cards
are available as
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subscription.
Other apps to
follow!**

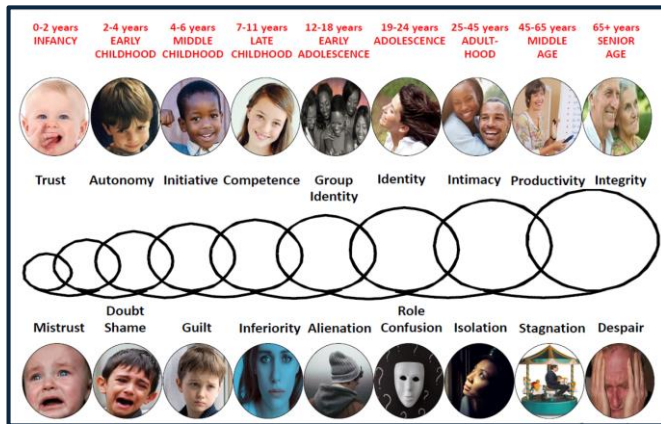


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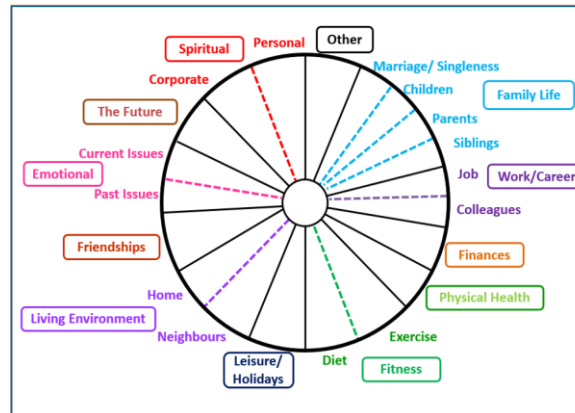
e-Resources



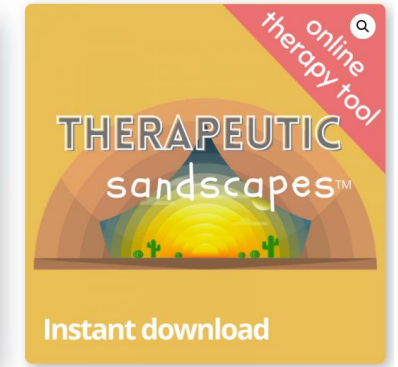
Erikson's Life Stages
£3.50



Wheel of Life
£3.50 – £5.00



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10
APR




Online Event

**Unlocking Group Dynamics –
Wed Apr 10**

Price Starts from: £10.00

 April 10, 2024
9:30 am - 1:00 pm

17
APR



Online Event

**Working with Loss and Grief –
Wed Apr 17**

Price Starts from: £10.00

 April 17, 2024
9:30 am - 1:00 pm



26

APR

**Working Creatively with the Inner Child
in Counselling Weekend**
Fri Apr 26 – Sun Apr 28, 2024
Moor Hall Conference Centre, Cookham

27-29
sept

**Moor Hall,
Berkshire**

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Thank you