

MEETING OUR INNER TEENAGER

A neglected area of counselling?



Katy Bodman



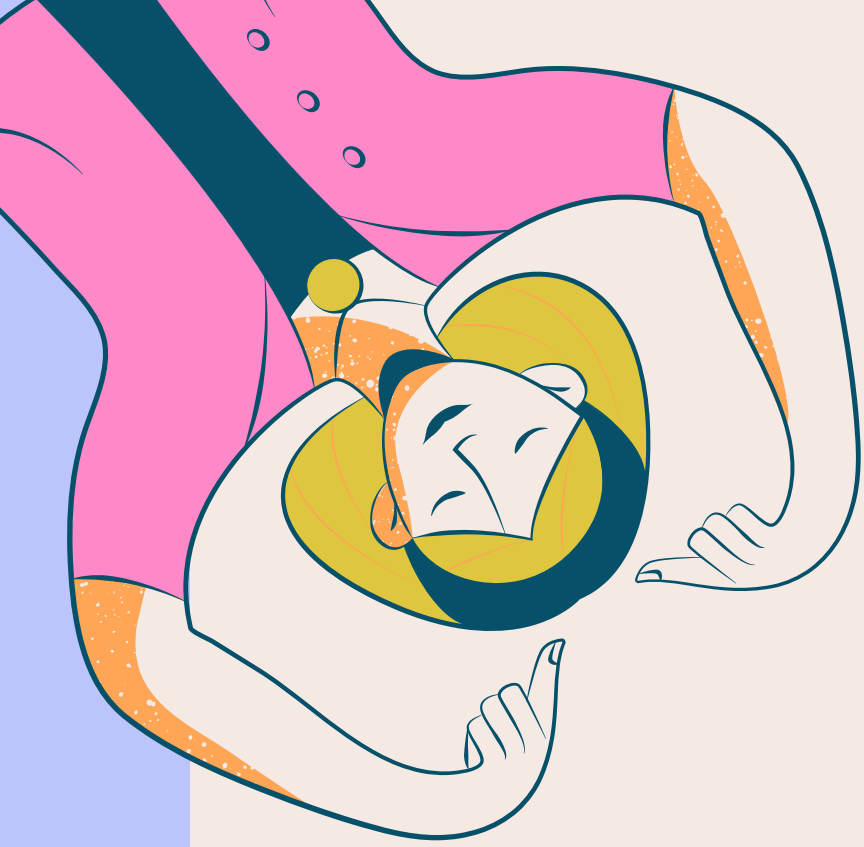
Angie Dulwich





ADOLESCENCE

- Is a (long!) bridge between childhood and adulthood
- Now thought to last from ages 10-24 (brain and social development)
- Our own window of adolescence might be different to someone else's
- Are we (and our clients) still struggling with the legacy of difficult teenage years?



Do we too easily dismiss
our teenage
configurations?



What happens in our teenage years can influence a range of outcomes in later life, including physical and mental health, relationships, academic attainment, employment and more

We may still be affected by experiences of:

- **Shame and/or guilt**
- **Humiliation**
- **Isolation**
- **Emotional overwhelm/disregulation**
- **Trauma** (62% teens experience one incidence, 19% more than three: including violence, sexual violence, domestic abuse)
- **A lack of support**



CLIENTS

We may encounter different teenage parts or configurations:

- Anxious
- Quiet or silent
- Shut down
- Suspicious
- Self-destructive
- Angry or Hostile
- 'Uncooperative'

**We might not like
a client's teenage
parts (or our
own!)**



- Core conditions can offer what is so important for a teenage configuration: empathy, positive regard, acceptance, a genuine, caring relationship, respect for autonomy
- Concepts of Difficult Process and Tenuous Contact can help us to stay with the client

TODAY'S EXERCISE:

**OUR TEENAGE TOUCHSTONES
CAN HELP US MEET
OUR CLIENTS**



CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR TODAY

What object have you brought with you today?

If your teenage self was sitting here now, who would I meet?

When did you feel your most free as a teenager?

How does your teenage self express themselves in the here and now?

Has your teenage self been present at times you've been a client yourself? How did the counsellor meet (or not meet) them?

|How did your parents react to teenage you?

When did your teenage years stop?

Could your teenage self contain hidden 'gold' (traits, passions, purpose etc)?

If you could rewrite your teenage years, would they look different, and if so, how?



REFERENCES & FURTHER READING

The new window of adolescence:

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/extended-adolescence-when-25-is-the-new-181/>

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642\(18\)30022-1/abstract](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642(18)30022-1/abstract)

Impact of teenage years on adulthood:

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20180608-how-our-teenage-years-shape-our-personalities>

<https://news.virginia.edu/content/teens-who-struggle-relationships-suffer-premature-aging-adulthood>

Trauma and stress in teenage years:

<https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/883560>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6215522/>

Working with a client's inner teenager: tenuous contact?

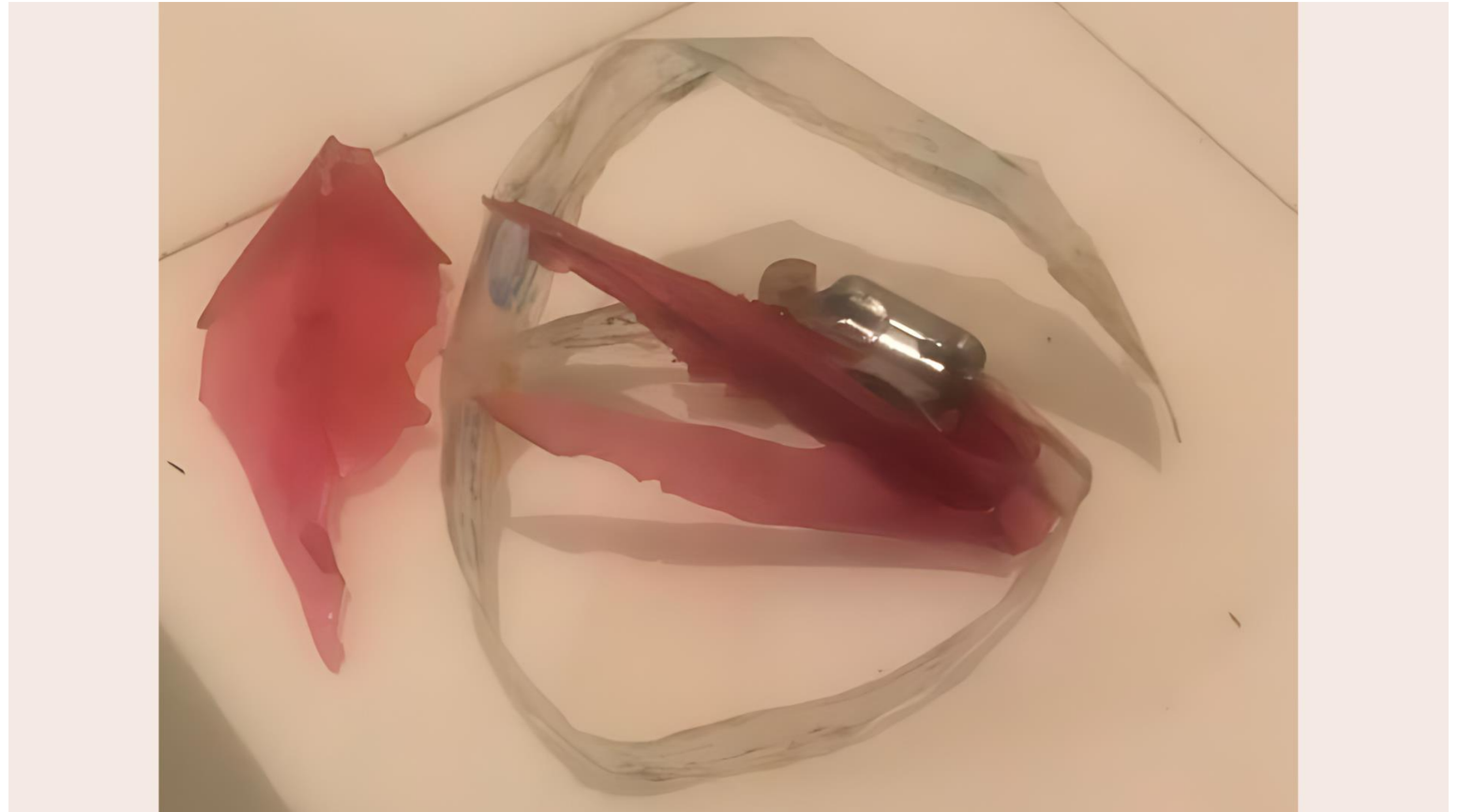
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265122780_Tenuous_Contact_New_Theory_about_Adolescent_Process

Books:

- Working at Relational Depth in Counselling and Psychotherapy, Mearns, D, Cooper, M. SAGE Publications – good for existential touchstones
- Person-Centred Practice at the Difficult Edge: Peter Pearce and Lisbeth Sommerbeck. PCCS Books – more on Tenuous Contact



READING



Katy's wristband!