

# Changing minds in therapy

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# Mind is the central phenomenon

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- ‘that which experiences and is experienced, embedded and shaped by its interactions in its physical, relational and intrapsychic networks’  
Zabriskie
- ‘the wonder...that mere wet stuff can make this bright inward cinema of thought of sight and sound and touch...’ McEwan

# Patterns in the mind

- How do we understand and touch the deep structures of the mind which are formed of implicit and embodied memory and which have formed patterns in the mind from early infancy but are unavailable to conscious memory especially in patients with early relational trauma?

# Restructuring mind through relationship

- What relational dynamics do we need to consider, such as affective attunement and empathy, in relation to the restructuring of the connections of mind?

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# Cognitive, interpretational and affective, relational connections

- it is on issues around attachment and affect regulation that a person's capacity to experience a sense of self that is "simultaneously fluid and robust" depends

Bromberg 2006  7

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# The early making of mind: the primacy of the right hemisphere

Earliest relationships may shape the very circuits that enable memory to be processed and self-regulation to be achieved

Siegel 2003:14

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The mother's mind enables the infant's mind, her right orbito-frontal cortex standing proxy for her infant's until it is ready to come on line

Carvalho 2002: 159

# Attunement: the therapeutic alliance

- Critical factors operate at implicit levels of the therapeutic alliance, beneath the exchanges of language and explicit cognitions Schore and Schore 2008
- Experience-dependent plasticity makes change possible through affective engagement with another

# Mirror neurons and intentionality

- discovery of mirror neurons within the premotor cortex provides a potential neural mechanism that mediates how we understand other people's actions and intentions, thus providing a neurological basis for intentionality

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# Mirror neurons and emotions

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- a common neural representation for the perception of actions and feelings in others and their experience in self [and] basis for a neuroscientific account of intersubjectivity

Harrison et al 13

# Direct access to the inner world of others

- during our social exchanges we ‘seldom engage in explicit interpretative acts’ rather our understanding of the other is ‘immediate, automatic and almost reflex-like’  
Gallese 2007, p. 659
- Implicit knowings governing intimate interactions are not language-based and are not routinely translated into semantic form  
Lyons-Ruth 1998

# Empathy: grounded in mirroring via an experiential mechanism

- action representation information relayed by the insula to the limbic areas that process emotional content
- right lateralized activation of the amygdala during imitation of facial, emotional expression
- the empathic resonance that is brought about by imitation does not require explicit representational content such as would involve the left amygdala Carr et al 2003

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# Unconscious imagination

- effective communication of emotional feelings engages visceral autonomic reactions underlying feeling states

Harrison et al. 2007, p. 726

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generating of neural experiencing at an unconscious level of similar activities and processes in oneself'

Decety & Chaminade 2003, p. 582

# The empathic analyst

- that is the ability to receive communications concerning underlying feeling states, via what might well be described as a 'gut reaction'
  - the ability to capture fleeting emotions in others
  - a capacity for unconscious imagination, that is an experiencing at an unconscious level in oneself the feelings experienced by the other
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# Evolving symbolisations: novelty creativity imagery

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Emotional experience is not processed through language and logic; the right hemisphere speaks a language of images, sensations and impressions... therapeutic discourse must be conducted in a language that the right hemisphere speaks

Fosha 2003 19

# The right hemisphere is the master

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affective experience, meaning-making and emergent sense of self that are the hallmarks of coherent narrative: all arise in the right hemisphere and draw upon the linguistic capabilities of the left to produce the story

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# Metaphor and earliest bodily experience

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- ‘Abstract notions are tied to our bodies through metaphor, thus connecting our minds to the world through the experience of our bodies’
- ‘our ubiquitous use of physical metaphors to describe our inner experience may also betray the sensory–motor core of both our subjective experience and abstract thought’  
Cozolino 2006
- ‘By containing within them sensory, imagistic, emotional and verbal elements, metaphors are believed to activate multiple brain centres simultaneously’ Pally 2000 4

# Meaning-making in therapy

- Grasping the emotions underlying patients' narrations 'in such a way that they feel it is understood and shared' Ferro 2005 *This slide is copyrighted please do not copy*
- 'what fundamentally constitutes our consciousness is the understanding of self and world in story' Young and Saver 2001

# Proto-metaphor

- The mother's face as 'the most potent visual stimulus in the child's world'

Schore 2002: 18

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- Co-activation of the face and the future language network sustains the facilitative efforts of social interactions, such as looking at the mother's face, on language development'

Tzourio-Mazoyer et al 2002: 460

# Patterns in the Mind

- generated out of the relation to the mother *This slide is copyrighted please do not copy*
- lays down the patterns of being in the world that give rise to ways of being and behaving in it in relation to others
- Such patterns of being and behaving manifest themselves afresh in the therapy room, reflecting the unconscious meaning that the patient has made of self in relation to the other

# Emergent narrative

- Meaning-making through narrative emerges at a very young age
- earliest narrative emerges initially out of the proto-conversation that occurs between mother and child *This slide is copyrighted please do not copy*
- proto-emotions and proto-sense impressions are transformed into visual pictograms which carry the emotional qualities of primitive feelings. Such elements then 'undergo further operations on order to attain the status of thought and narrative image' *Ferro 2005*

# The retrieval of memories

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- ‘not the simple act of accessing a storehouse of ready-made photos in a stable neural album’ Young and Saver 2001
- retrieval requires a complex putting together of the constituent elements stored at various cortical sites
- Disassembled after use and stored again at original sites

# Meaning- making

- Defining element of therapeutic action...appears to be that of transforming symbolically and putting into words the early implicit structures of the patient's mind.

Mancia 2005 *This slide is copyrighted please do not copy*

- Feelings and words together encourage healthy and integrated functioning of the mind-brain.

# Attunement

- overcomes isolation.
- provides a route to greater awareness of earlier painful states.
- leads to containment of difficult early feelings.
- leads to greater attunement to changing inner self states.
- enables maturational processes.

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# Conclusion

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- explicit content, verbal interpretations, and the mere act of recovering memories are insufficient venues for curative shifts
- what is needed to change minds is the transformational power embedded in unconscious affective interactions

Ginot 2007