Mentalization and antisocial behavior

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An evolutionary framework

- Interpersonal **aggression** is an important evolutionary **adaptation**.
  - In certain human environments it is likely to **contribute** materially to the **survival** of the individual's genes.
  - In other contexts it is seriously **maladaptive**
    - it **undermines** the possibility of safe **collaboration**
    - the optimization of human capacities for **meaning generation**, communication and creativity.
Figure 3–3. Homicide rates in five Western European regions, 1300–2000

Source: Data from Eisner, 2003, table 1.

Pinker, 2011
Violence as a cultural phenomenon declines

Percentage of deaths of English male aristocrats from violence 1330-1829

Pinker, 2011
Violence as a cultural phenomenon declines

Figure 4-2. Time line for the abolition of judicial torture


Pinker, 2011
Violence: Guns

- The very act of handling a weapon increases aggression:
  - Men have more testosterone and show more aggressive behaviour after handling a real gun

- Youth (US) overestimate the number of their school peers who carry guns
  - That perception is related to the likelihood of carrying a weapon themselves
  - Lack of education about the number of people carrying guns facilitates “emergency” forms of mentalizing about the intent of others

- Youths in the US are not more likely to get into a fight compared to other countries
  - But they are more likely to carry a gun
  - Fights are more likely to end up in homicide
The developmental framework

- Human infants have to be born with the potential to be aggressive and even violent.
- In the majority of cases this potential is not fulfilled.
- Through development, given adequate environmental support, they gradually increasingly desist from physical and relational aggression.
Individual differences in the development of aggression & violence

- Most preschoolers are capable of physical aggression
- The earlier the onset of problem behaviours, the higher the risk for continued aggression and violence
- Only a small proportion of individuals are persistently physically aggressive
- The challenge is to distinguish between the normative patterns of aggressive behaviours and the more atypical pattern that may represent a risk for future difficulties
Trajectories of Physical Aggression in Canadian Accelerated Longitudinal Study N=10,214

17%

52%

31%
What differentiates persistent violent trajectory?

- Across a **number of studies**
  - socio **demographic** risk (e.g., poverty, low maternal education, single parenting)
  - less sensitive and involved **parenting** during the course of childhood
  - have mothers with **low levels of education**.
  - have mothers who started **childbearing early**
  - have mothers who are **depressed**
  - Boys more **fearless**
  - Experienced maternal **rejection**
The mechanism for the development of violence: A failure of inhibition

- **Family processes** conceptualized as promoting aggression may interfere with the socialization of aggression
  
  - low income, low maternal education reflects family environments in which children cannot learn to inhibit physical aggression, as well as difficulty learning alternative strategies to solve problems
  
  - Characterised by disrespect for the child
    - Parenting qualities of disrespect for child
    - Similar qualities in the broader social environment
Aspects of Parenting Associated with Aggression Trajectories in Canadian Study

**Positive Interaction**

- Low: 13.5
- Desister: 13.3
- High stable: 13.7

$p < .03 \times 10^{-47}$
$d = .39$

**Hostile Ineffective Parenting**

- Low: 11.8
- Desister: 11.5
- High stable: 11.9

$p < .02 \times 10^{-99}$
$d = 1.88$

**Consistent Parenting**

- Low: 15.4
- Desister: 15.2
- High stable: 15.8

$p < .01 \times 10^{-64}$
$d = .46$

**Family Functioning**

- Low: 7.5
- Desister: 7.8
- High stable: 8.3

$p < .05 \times 10^{-83}$
$d = .35$
p<.02*10^{-99}\textbf{IS}

p<.0000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000002

OR

The likelihood of five hundred 13-spade bridge hands when getting one hand with all spades would take 20 million bridge players dealing 30 hands a week 20 years to get one all-spade hand.
The Role of the Attachment Relationship

- The developmental trajectory is established early on
  - The choice has to be made because there is an evolutionary cost to following the physical aggression trajectory.

- Evolution uses the attachment relationship as a signaling system to the newborn as to the kind of environment he/she might expect.
  - An environment where adults caring for the child do not have the time or resources to devote attention to him/her is far more likely to necessitate the later use of aggression in order to ensure the survival of the individual in subsequent struggles for limited resources.
(Mega-)Powerful Relationship to Carer

Attachment
John Bowlby
Second Edition
How Attachment Links to Affect Regulation

The forming of an attachment bond
Functions of attachment

- Physical survival
  - Protection of life, then of brain development

- Emotional survival
  - Feeling loveable, interesting → turn to world
  - Stress regulation, being able to tolerate self and others

- Cognitive survival
  - Capacities – attention/focus, social skills and trust, curiosity: exploration and engagement with learning
What does research show us about the importance of this early relationship?

- Regulation of the brain system – emotion regulation
- Sense of security – distress will be met by comforting
- Faster development of cognitive capacities
- Sense of identity – a firmer sense of knowing oneself
Attachment Disorganisation in Maltreatment

The ‘hyperactivation’ of the attachment system
Disorganized Attachment and Institutionalization

Attachment and cognitive functioning: the development of competence in logical reasoning

Source: Jacobson et al
Secure Relationships Calm Children’s Stress Hormone Response

Sensitive Care Calms Children’s Stress Hormone Response in Parent’s Absence

Delayed Intervention Harms Development
Bucharest Early Intervention Program


IQ/DQ (Mean)

Tested at 3 1/2 Years Old
Tested at 4 1/2 Years Old

Age of placement in foster care (months)

"normal" range

0-18 18-24 24-30 30+

Instability Disrupts the Stress Response System — But Relationships Reverse the Effect


![Graph showing the probability of a stable permanent placement over foster care placements.]

Attachment as a Signal of Environmental Stress – What is it that does not happen?

- Where the social context gives insufficient resources to devote attention to the child, signals physical aggression is more likely to be needed to ensure survival.

- This is the mechanism for the transgenerational transmission of aggressive interpersonal strategies.

- The child’s mind and body needs to be prepared for violent competition for resources:
  - Alternative but incompatible strategies for ways of relating to others (intra-species collaboration) are sacrificed.

- What is sacrificed?
  - Namely, the uniquely human capacity to envision mental states in our fellow humans in order to understand their actions.
Brains and social behavior vary across different mammalian species

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Insectivors:</th>
<th>Chimpanzees:</th>
<th>Modern Humans:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regulated maternal behaviors</td>
<td>Societies of a few dozen</td>
<td>Societies of millions of interacting people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Humans exceedingly skilled at large scale **social interaction**

↓

Competition for social skills led to the evolutions of cognitive mechanism for **collaborating with** others

↓

Fuelled evolution of human brain.

↓

*Therefore correlation in mammals between size of social group and volume of neocortex*
The uniqueness of homo sapiens

- No animal, not even the most intelligent of non-human primates, can discern the difference between the act of a conspecific due to serendipity and one rooted in intention, wish, belief or desire.

- The capacity to mentalize has also been argued to account for the other major difference between humans and other apes:
  - **self awareness** and self-consciousness as a path to emulation bringing with it social emotions such as embarrassment, shame and guilt
  - the species specific striving to be more than a ‘beast’, to live **beyond one’s body**, to aspire to a spirit that transcends physical reality and step beyond one’s own existence
  - **social origin** of the self.
Brain areas involved in understanding the actions of other people

Cartoon stimuli in which understanding the joke depends on the ability to attribute mental states to others (left) or does not (right). Contrasting these two kinds of cartoons results in brain activation that reflects engagement of theory-of-mind processes, specifically an activation in medial prefrontal cortex.
Curiosity

I know that I don’t KNOW what you must think, boss, but I can wonder what that is...

How must it feel to be you right now, boss?

Why do I keep getting into trouble over my rabbit habit...?

Is there something about me and rabbits that stems from my childhood, I wonder...?
Awareness of the impact of affect: on self, and others

Too vigorous, and Stuff’ll get spilt
The Opacity of other minds
Perspective-taking
Capacity to Trust
Narrative Continuity
Mentalizing: further definitions and scope for thinking about it

- To see ourselves from the outside and others from the inside
- Understanding misunderstanding
- Having mind in mind
- Being mind minded
- Being mindful (of minds)
- Seeing oneself as an intentional being
- Creating phenomenological coherence about self and others
Expanding the model to Social Systems

- Human beings were **not designed** to be brought up in a nuclear family.
- The human brain was designed to adapt to social environments beyond childhood.
- Current social conditions place intolerable burdens on the nuclear family:
  - Economic pressures to be part of the workforce
  - Inadequate social support for parenting
  - Social isolation of the nuclear family
- A “Perfect Storm” from perspective of human evolution.
Alloparenting (Hrdy, 2000)

Alloparenting is not a new idea!
Gap between what children need and what mothers can supply met by:

Male kin, husbands, lovers

Pre-reproductive helpers

Post-reproductive kin
Humans spent 99% of history living in groups of 35-40 people.
Disappearance of Adult Influence

- Maintenance of adult order a given -- socialization assured
- Humans evolutionarily prepared to bond with number of adults
- Never been a time in the history of humans where child so dependent on single caretaker
- Caregivers themselves increasingly socially isolated

![Ratio of Children to Adults](chart)

- Hunter-gatherers
- Single caregiver

- Adult
- Child
Measuring Mentalization (Baron-Cohen et al., 2001) Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test

Friendly - A

Sad - B

Surprised - C

Worried - D
Measuring Mentalization (Baron-Cohen et al., 2001) Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test

Surprised-A

Sure about something-B

Joking-C

Happy-D
Measuring Mentalization (Baron-Cohen et al., 2001) Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test

Joking-A

Desire-C

Flustered-B

Convinced-D
Mentalizing at the World Cup: How does Robert Green feel after letting in the USA goal?
Shared neural circuits for mentalizing about the self and others (Lombardo et al., 2009; J. Cog. Neurosc.)

- Self mental state
- Other mental state
- Overlapping for Self and Other
Relational Aspects of Mentalization

- Overlap between neural locations of mentalizing self and other may be linked to **intersubjective origin of sense of self**
  - We **find our mind** initially in the minds of our parents and later other attachment figures thinking about us
  - The parent’s capacity to **mirror effectively** her child’s internal state is at the heart of affect regulation
  - Infant is **dependent on contingent response** of caregiver which in turn depends on her capacity to be reflective about her child as a psychological being
The development of mentalization

- Baby smiles at humans not objects
- 12 months point - direct attention of caregiver
- 2.5 years complex social tactics – teasing, lying, saving face
- 5-9 use social tactics flexibly
  - by 5-6 tell ‘white-lies’ to protect other people’s feelings
  - by 6-7 understand self-conscious emotions (guilt, embarrassment, pride)
  - concept of fairness and justice
- 11-17 becomes abstract and reasoned and troubling and troubled
The quality of children’s primary attachment relationship facilitates theory of mind development.

- Association between secure attachment and passing social cognition tasks somewhat easier.
- **Dysfunctions** of attachment ➔ violence
  - Consistently disrupted early attachment
  - Later trauma destroys capacity for mentalization
- We now understand at least one mechanism
  - Attachment hormone (Oxytocin) ➔ improved mind reading
Oxytocin and performance on Mind in the Eves test (Domes et al., 2008)
Gaze duration during oxytocin exposure

Guastella, Mitchell, Dadds, 2008
Gaze duration during oxytocin exposure (Guastella, Mitchell & Dadds, 2008)
**3rd Brain: High Level**
Control: Foresight
Functions and Basic Drives:
- Perception and differentiation of thoughts and emotions
- Discrimination of appropriate behavior
- Self-reflection
- Problem resolution
- Goal satisfaction

**1st Brain: Low Level**
Control: Reflex/Instinct
Functions and Basic Drives:
- Approach/Avoidance
- Hormonal control
- Temperature control
- Hunger/Thirst
- Reproductive drive
- Respiration and heart rate control

**2nd Brain: Mid Level**
Control: Hindsight
Functions and Basic Drives:
- Territoriality
- Fear
- Anger
- Attack
- Maternal Love
- Anxiety
- Hate
- Jealousy
Early Maltreatment Affects Later Behavior

Source: Pollak & Kistler (2002) PNAS, 99, 9072
EEG study of the responses of maltreated and non-maltreated children to viewing an angry face (Cicchetti & Curtis, 2005 Dev. & Psychopath.)

Maltreated group

Comparison group
Functional anomalies of the traumatised brain

Children exposed to family violence

Amygdala hyperactivation

Bilateral anterior insula hyperactivation

McCrory et al., 2011
Functional anomalies of the traumatised brain

Detect threat
Anticipate pain

- Face recognition independent of level of threat or emotionality

Amygdala Hyperactivation

Integrates emotional, sensory and bodily information
- Guides social processing and decision making

Bilateral anterior insula hyperactivation

Children exposed to family violence

McCrory et al., 2011
The anterior insula activates more when violence has been more severe.

Children exposed to family violence

McCrorry et al., 2011
These anomalies could confer a short-term advantage:
• Vigilance to threat
• It is found in healthy soldiers exposed to combat

But they constitute a latent neural risk that predisposes to an increased likelihood of maladaptation in safe contexts (e.g. school) and of adult conduct related psychopathology

- Prefrontal capacities
- Posterior cortex and subcortical capacities

Changing switchpoint threshold

Point 1

Point 1a

Performance vs. Arousal
Developmental roots of violence

Violence might be rooted in the disorganisation of the attachment system

- Children who never learnt about mental states in the context of an appropriate attachment relationship
- ...or their attachment experiences were cruelly or consistently disrupted
- ...or their nascent capacity for mentalizing was destroyed by an anxiety-provoking attachment figure

An apparently callous and unemotional child

Could just be a sign of terror and of the strive for a more reliable attachment

We are especially interested in those patients with BPD/ASPD who have had a harsh childhood

They need for interpersonal violence is a means of expression of underlying mental states

The association between childhood maltreatment and externalising problems is mediated by inadequate interpersonal understanding and limited behavioural flexibility in response to environmental demands.

Jaffe et al., 2004; Shonk & Cicchetti, 2001
Mentalization and Human Aggression

- Mentalizing someone makes it hard to hurt them because we feel them from the inside.
- Aggressive acts are only possible if mentalization is temporarily inhibited or decoupled.
- Mentalisation has the potential to advance culture and inhibit violence but is, at least partially, maladaptive in the context of life-and-death struggle.
Common regions of deactivation with maternal and romantic love (Bartels & Zeki, 2008)
Is there a human language which does not recognize love to be blind?

Common regions of deactivation with maternal and romantic love (Bartels & Zeki, 2008)
Traumatic attachment history associated with affect dysregulation crucial in inhibiting mentalization in the face of stress

- **Arousal/stress inhibits controlled** (‘reflective’) mentalization

- This leads to **automatic mentalizing** dominated by reflexive (unreflective) assumptions regarding self and others under stress, which may not be obvious in low stress conditions

- **Reemergence** of non-mentalizing modes

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Dimensions of mentalization: implicit/automatic vs explicit/controlled in Othello

Why, how now, ho! from whence ariseth this? Are we turn’d Turks, and to ourselves do that Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites? For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl:

Controlled

Automatic

Love Spurned/
Arousal
Dimensions of mentalization: implicit/automatic vs explicit/controlled in Othello
Dimensions of mentalization: implicit/automatic vs explicit/controlled

Psychological understanding drops and is rapidly replaced by confusion about mental states under high arousal
Psychotherapist’s demand to explore issues that trigger intense emotional reactions involving conscious reflection and explicit mentalization are inconsistent with the patient’s ability to perform these tasks when arousal is high.
Schematic Representation of INTENSE Attachment Related Brain Activation

Attachment System

System A
- Retrieval of negative affect laden memories and cognitions

System B
- Social trustworthiness, paranoid thoughts and mentalizing failure
Prementalizing Modes

• Psychic Equivalence:
  • Concreteness of thought
  • Mental experience is no longer an “as if”
  • No alternative perspectives are possible

• Pretend Mode:
  • Thoughts and feelings are dissociated to meaninglessness
  • Lack of grounding of mental experience in the concrete world

• Teleological Mode:
  • Primacy of physical experience
  • Mental activity is effective only when apparent

Bateman & Fonagy, 2008
Self-development

(Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist & Target, 2002)

Psychological Self: 2nd Order representations

Symbolic binding of internal state

Emotional state in true self

Physical Self: Primary representations

Expression

Reflection

Resonance

INFANT

CAREGIVER

mirroring display

expression of metabolised affect

signal

non-verbal expression
Integration: mentalisation and birth of the psychological self

Infant internalises caregiver’s representation to form psychological self. Safe, playful interaction with the caregiver leads to the integration of primitive modes of experiencing internal reality ⇒ mentalisation
The “Alien Self”
Caregiver fails to discover the child’s intentionality

Attachment figure in state of temporary dissociation

Absence of a representation of infant’s mental state

Internalisation

Failed projection

Infant

Absent other internalised as part of the Self

The child, unable to “find” himself as an intentional being internalises a representation of the other into the self
Recovering self-coherence through dissociation and projection

Through coercive, controlling behaviour, the individual with disorganised attachment history achieves certain coherence within the self representation. The object needs to be under CONTROL, to recover the lost SELF-CERTAINTY.
Comorbidity is the rule rather than the exception

- Personality disorders commonly have comorbidities
  
The mixture of BPD and ASPD complicates the treatment
- Violence is a continuous risk:
  - Self-harm
  - Harming others

- BPD patients fluctuate rapidly between mentalizing and nonmentalizing modes

- Prementalizing models of the world are common in ASPD

Bateman & Fonagy, 2008
The therapeutic challenge

The stabilisation of mental processes on ASPD+BPD depends on **rigid** the externalization of the *alien self*

Threats to this externalisation cause arousal of the attachment system

Inhability to control internal states

Mentalization failure *Guilt, love, fear*

But… isn’t therapy a continual effort to challenge rigid modes of functioning?
Cultural Evolution (Wilson & Wilson, 2007)

- New form of evolution (late Pleistocene) based on learning and the transmission of cultural knowledge as opposed to Darwinian evolution based on genetic transmission passed on from one generation to the next.
  - Co-evolution of gene and learning-based forms of natural selection
- Human cultures are primarily adaptive at the group level will enable human cultural diversity to be studied in the same way as biological diversity (Wilson, 1976)
- Enormous social complexity ➔ multifaceted nature of selection in our species
  - Genes
  - Individuals
  - Between group selection
  - Evolution of cultures
- Infants begin to engage in collaborative and sharing exchanges with caregivers as early as 14 month old infants
  - Chimpanzees are adapted to compete with each other based on dominance hierarchies
The need for EPISTEMIC VIGILANCE

We can accept a culturally transmitted belief for two reasons (Sperber, 1997, 2001, Sperber et al., 2010)

- its content
- the authority of its source

To accept because of content

- grasp its deductive relations to the contents of other beliefs
- inductive relations to the evidence, in accordance with the principles of theoretical rationality.

To accept on account of the authority (‘deferentially’ transmitted, Recanati, 1997)

- its source is known, remembered and judged to be reliable (or trustworthy)
- taken to be shared common knowledge among members of one’s community
Natural Pedagogy theory  
(Csibra & Gergely, 2006; 2009, in press)

- A human-specific, cue-driven social cognitive adaptation of mutual design dedicated to ensure efficient **transfer of** relevant **cultural knowledge**
- Humans are predisposed to ’teach’ and ’learn’ new and relevant cultural information from each other
- Human **communication** is specifically adapted to allow the transmission of
  - a) cognitively **opaque** cultural knowledge
  - b) kind-**generalizable** generic knowledge
  - c) **shared** cultural knowledge
The Pedagogical Stance is triggered by Ostensive-Communicative cues

- Examples of **ostensive communication cues**
  - eye-contact
  - turn-taking **contingent reactivity**
  - special **tone** (motherese)

- Ostensive cues function:
  - to signal that the other has a **Communicative Intention** addressed to the infant/child
  - to **Manifest New and Relevant** information about a referent
  - Establish adult has infant’s **subjective experience in mind** → has **concern** for and about the infant
Experimental illustration of ostensive cues
Gergely, Egyed et al. (in press)

Subjects: 4 groups of 18-month-olds
Stimuli: Two unfamiliar objects
1: Baseline – control group
No object-directed attitude demonstration

Simple Object Request by Experimenter A

Subjects: n= 20 Age: 18-month-olds
Ostensive Communicative Demonstration
Requester: OTHER person (Condition 1)
Learning from Attitude Expressions

18-month-olds

Ostensive Expression - Generalization
Non-Ostensive (Non-Communicative) Demonstration
Requester: OTHER person (Condition 2)
Learning from Attitude Expressions

18-month-olds

Ostensive Expression - Generalization

Non-Ostensive Expression - No Generalization

Percent Giving Positive Object

71

40
Condition 4: Non-Ostensive (Non-Communicative) Demonstration Requester: SAME person
Learning from Attitude Expressions

18-month-olds

Ostensive Expression - Generalization

Non-Ostensive Expression - No Generalization

Non-Ostensive Expression - Person-Specific Attribution

Egyed et al., in prep.
Young Children’s Trust in Their Mother’s Claims
(Corriveau, Harris, Meins et al., 2009)

- **Longitudinal** study of attachment,
- 147 children assessed for attachment in infancy
- Tested twice for epistemic trust aged 50 and 61 months
- Mother and a stranger make conflicting claims
  - Task 1: name a novel object
  - Task 2: name a hybrid animal made up 50% each of two animals
  - Task 3: name a hybrid animal made up of 75% one animal and 25% of another

- Question:
  - Who does the child spontaneously turn to?
  - Who does the child believe?
Corriveau & Harris’ Studies of Epistemic Trust

- “Mummy said it’s a **snegg** and Joan (stanger) said it’s a **yoon**. What do you think it’s called, a snegg or a yoon?”

- “Mummy said it’s a **yiff** and Joan said it’s a **zazz**. What do you think it’s called, a yiff or a zazz?”

- “Mummy said it’s a **crut** and Joan said it’s a **larp**. What do you think it’s called, a crut or a larp?”
A 50:50 animal from Corriveau et al.

50% pig : 50% bear

If Mother names hybrid as pig then stranger always names it bear.
A 50:50 animal from Corriveau et al.

50% cow : 50% horse

If Mother names hybrid as horse then stranger always names it cow
A 75:25 animal from Corriveau et al.

75% rabbit : 25% squirrel

*Mother* always names hybrid as *squirrel* and *stranger* always names it *rabbit*
A 75:25 animal from Corriveau et al.

75% bird : 25% fish

Mother always names hybrid as fish and stranger always names it as bird
Proportion of Trials on Which Children Chose Their Mother for Information by Attachment Group and by task

N=146

Corriveau, Harris, Meins et al., Child Dev., 80, 750-761.
Epistemic hypervigilance and the nature of psychopathology

- Social adversity (most deeply trauma) is the destruction of trust in social knowledge of all kinds → rigidity, being hard to reach
- Cannot change because cannot accept new information as relevant (to generalize) to other social contexts on the basis of their own experience or communication from attachment figures or others
- Personality disorder is not disorder of personality (except by old definition of being enduring) but inaccessibility to cultural communication from Partner, Therapist, Teacher

Epistemic Mistrust
Implications: The nature of psychopathology

- **Epistemic mistrust which can follow** experiences of *maltreatment* or abuse leads to **epistemic hunger** combined with **mistrust**
  - Therapists ignore this knowledge at their peril

- **Personality disorder is a** **failure of communication**
  - It is not a failure of the individual but a **failure of a relationship**
  - It is associated with an **unbearable sense of isolation** in the patient generated by epistemic mistrust
  - Our inability to communicate with patient causes **frustration in us** and a tendency to **blame the victim**
  - We feel they are not listening but actually it is that they find it **hard to trust** the truth of what they hear
Secure attachment is isomorphic with inducing in the infant/child a sense of epistemic trust that the information relayed by the teacher may be trusted (i.e. learnt from).

Evidence

- Cognitive advantage of secure attachment
- Contingent responsiveness to the infant’s own (at first, automatic) expressive displays in secure attachment
- During “mirroring” interactions, the other will “mark” her referential emotion displays in a ‘manifestative’ manner to instruct the infant
Humans as part of a wider ecosystem
Some features of a successfully mentalizing social system

- Is relaxed and flexible, not “stuck” in one point of view
- Can be playful, with humour that engages rather than hurting or distancing
- Can solve problems by give-and-take between own and others’ perspectives
- Advocates describing one’s own experience, rather than defining other people’s experience or intentions
- Conveys individual “ownership” of behaviour rather than a sense that it “happens” to them
- Is curious about other people’s perspectives, and expect to have their own views extended by others’
Some components of a successfully mentalizing social system

1. Relational strengths
   - curiosity
   - safe uncertainty
   - contemplation and reflection
   - perspective taking
   - forgiveness
   - impact awareness
   - non-paranoid attitude

2. General values and attitudes
   - tentativeness
   - humility (moderation)
   - playfulness and humour
   - flexibility
   - ‘give and take’
   - responsibility and accountability
Mentalizing and Non-Mentalizing Social Systems

- Mentalization develops and is **sustained by the social system** we live in.

- Social systems that are **compassionate** (care about us) have physical (oxytocin) and psychological (feel held in mind) effects which enhance accurate self-awareness and awareness of the mental state of others.

- Social systems that disrespect human subjectivity (how a person is likely to feel) recreate the evolutionary environment that encodes for self-sufficiency (dismissing of subjectivity) ➔ create environment for bullying.
Non-Mentalizing Disorganized Social Systems: Pretend systems

- Ideas form no bridge between inner and outer reality; mental world decoupled from external reality

- Attitudes to ideas and feelings
  - People think and feel but this can have no consequence leading to an empty and meaninglessness social existence
  - There is selfishness and extreme egocentrism emerging out of the unreality of anything other than one’s own thoughts and feelings
  - Lack of reality of internal experience permits interpersonal aggression and deliberate harm because other minds are not felt to exist and the mind is no longer felt as contingent on continued existence of the physical self
  - Frequently there is endless ‘communication’ and searching but it is destined to yield no change
Non-Mentalizing Disorganized Social Systems

- Social systems that create fear and hyperactivate attachment can destroy 3rd brain thinking capacity and force the system back to pre-mentalistic modes of social thinking.
- Such social systems can be self-reinforcing and therefore highly stable in their instability.
- They undermine the very social mechanism that could alter their character: human collaboration (negotiation and creativity).
Vicious cycles of inhibition of mentalizing within a disorganized social system

- Powerful emotion
- Frightening, undermining, frustrating, distressing or coercive interactions
- Poor mentalising
- Inability to understand or even pay attention to feelings of others
- Loss of certainty that thoughts are not real
- Others seem incomprehensible
- Try to control or change others
Vicious Cycles of Non-Mentalizing Within a Dysfunctional Social System

- Powerful emotion
  - Frightening, undermining, frustrating, distressing or coercive interactions
  - Try to control or change others or oneself
  - Others seem incomprehensible

- Person 1
  - Poor mentalising
  - Inability to understand or even pay attention to feelings of others

- Person 2
  - Poor mentalising
  - Inability to understand or even pay attention to feelings of others
  - Others seem incomprehensible
  - Try to control or change others or oneself
Non-Mentalizing Disorganized Social Systems: Psychic Equivalence Systems

- Mind-world isomorphism; mental reality = outer reality; internal has power of external

- Attitudes to ideas and feelings
  - Thoughts are real and therefore they have to be controlled
  - There are singular solutions to social reality, there are no alternative ways of seeing things, there is intolerance to perspectives
  - Models of minds are simple (black and white), schematic and rigidly held ➔ acts of prejudice
  - Negative ideas (threats) become terrifying
Non-Mentalizing Disorganized Social Systems: Teleological Systems

- Expectations concerning the agency of the other are present but these are formulated uniquely in terms restricted to the physical world
  - Only what is material can be meaningful

- Attitudes to ideas and feelings
  - A focus on understanding actions in terms of their physical as opposed to mental outcomes
  - Only a modification in the realm of the physical is regarded as a true index of the intentions of the other.
  - Only action that has physical impact is felt as potentially capable of altering mental state in both self and other
    - Physical acts of harm ➔ aggression is seen as legitimate
    - Demand for physical acts of demonstration of intent by others ➔ payment, acts of subservience, retributive justice
Assumptions, Aims and Adjuncts

- Communities contribute to aggression related dysfunction.

- Peaceful collaboration with others requires prioritizing their subjective states, thus placing limits upon the urge to physically control the behaviour of less powerful members of the group.

- Secure social environments aim to focus on the mental states of all those involved in power dynamics of interpersonal violence.
So how to create a mentalizing community?

- Activate attachment by creating an attitude of caring and compassion
- Enhance the curiosity which members of the community have about each others’ thoughts and feelings
- Be careful to identify when mentalization has turned into pseudomentalization (pretending to know)
- Focuses on misunderstanding (mentalization is the understanding of misunderstanding)
- Curiosity coupled with respectful not knowing
Review of Restorative Justice
(Sherman & Strang, 2007)

- Confronting the offender with the victim as a mental entity (face-to-face conferences, victim-offender mediation, restitution, reparation payment)

- In many tests, offenders who receive restorative justice commit fewer repeat crimes than offenders who do not (11%-37%).

- RJ reduces repeat offending more consistently with violent crimes than with less serious crimes.

- Diversion from prosecution to RJ substantially increases the odds of an offender being brought to justice.