

DAN BROWN WORKSHOP: TREATING ATTACHMENT PATHOLOGY

—Reported By Myron Walters, LMFT



Last year I attended two workshops in the Boston area put on by Dan Brown, Ph.D.: *Treating Attachment Pathology -- Basic Level* (http://www.ecowraps.info/Attachment_Basic_2011_2.pdf) and *Advanced Level* (http://www.ecowraps.info/Attachment_Advanced_2011_2.pdf). The primary focus was on treating attachment pathology in dissociative and personality disordered clients.

I first heard Dan speak in April 2010 when I listened to a 4 hour workshop from the 2009 annual conference of the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis on the same subject. What I heard on tape resonated with me so much, that I began to immediately use his approach with my dissociative clients, and within 6 months two of them had begun to have initial signs of spontaneous integration occurring. This thoroughly convinced me of the validity of Dan's approach. I wanted to hear more and jumped at my first opportunity, this past June, to get the rest of the story.

Dan has taken the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) training, and is certified in scoring the AAI – no small endeavor. During the workshops with us Dan gave us a mini-version of the AAI training to help us to become more sensitized to picking up clues about a client's particular attachment style and to then tailor the treatment to the person (or part's) particular attachment style). I left this portion of the workshop realizing that taking the 2-week Adult Attachment Interview training would truly benefit me in my work with clients who have insecure attachment styles (dismissing, anxious preoccupied, and disorganized), typical of clients with childhood trauma histories.

The heart of the course was hearing Dan describe how he uses hypnosis (Dan is a master clinical hypnotherapist – see <http://wms26.streamhoster.com/ewillmarth/Brown.wmv>) to move a client from an insecure attachment style into an earned secure attachment style, by 1) having the client under trance imagine a new mom and/or new dad who is perfectly attuned to them, and 2) working on the client's metacognitive skills.

The metacognitive skills foster reflective capacity, coherence of mind, and cooperativeness. Much of this work is taken from Fonagy (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, & Target, 2001) and Liotti (Liotti, 2004). Dan explained how he repeats this process over and over again, including having the client practice at home, until this new mom and/or new dad becomes an internal working model for the client and the client begins to move into a more coherent and self-observational state of mind. With a dissociative client, this work is done with every alter getting each into an earned secure attachment. This generally requires 6 months to 2 years or more.

Once every alter of a Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) client gets into an earned secure attachment, Dan has observed that

spontaneous integration starts to occur. The client will still have separate alters, but the lack of co-conscious starts to significantly diminish and a sense of a cohesive self starts to appear. Dan also made the observation that getting the client into this earned secure attachment initially results in less therapy time being required to deal with the client's trauma history, because they are now so well resourced that the possibility of re-traumatization is greatly reduced, if not eliminated.

Dan hypothesizes that we humans must be hardwired for secure attachment because once secure attachment is achieved across a client's system, a number of other developments, along the line of increased coherence of mind and a unified sense of self, seem to spontaneously occur in individuals where they did not previously exist.

Dan's approach to working with attachment pathology has changed the way I work with all my clients – not just my severely dissociated clients – and, for the most part, my clients have responded quite positively. I can highly recommend this workshop to those interested.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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About the Author

Myron Walters, MA CMT, LMFT, has private practice offices in Mill Valley and Cotati. Myron works somatically, being both trauma and attachment informed. Myron's specialty is working with adults who have experienced severe childhood trauma, complex PTSD and dissociative disorders. Myron has training in trauma resolution (Somatic Experiencing), hypnosis (SCEH & ASCH), and in DID psychotherapy (ISSTD). Myron is currently moderator for the Marin CAMFT listservs, and previously served as the Marin CAMFT Student-Intern co-chair and PreLicensed DAL. Myron can be reached at (415) 686-3445 and his website can be viewed at <http://myronwalters.com/>.