



Family Therapy with Children and Adolescents

Indications and Techniques



What is Family Therapy?

- Psychotherapy involving the family
- Individuals can be in family therapy
- Focus of examination and intervention



Why Family Therapy?

- Children live in families
- Parents are a strong influence on children
- Parents can engage in therapeutic interactions with their children



Why Family Therapy?

- Naturalistic intervention
- Independence of members and emotional involvement
- Mutual influence



Indications

- Symptomatic picture of behavior has strong family influence
- Child needs parent participation to improve
- Dysfunctional behavior maintained or facilitated by family



Conceptual Framework

- Family therapy is a “lens,” a point of view
- Family is a system with subsystems and individual members
- Intersystemic influences



Conceptual framework

- Systems theory
- Members of system influence each other
- Change in one subsystem generates changes in other subsystems
- System is in “equilibrium” even if dysfunctional



Focus of Family Therapy

- The “patient” is not an individual
- The patient is a system, e.g. a family
- Definition of family is strongly cultural:
Extended, nuclear




Family is a system

- Family is a “whole.”
How it functions or
does not function
- Sub-units:
 - Parent – Child system
 - Marital subsystem
 - Sibling subsystem
 - Other functions



Systemic View of Psychopathology

- Dysfunction or disorder is not solely “within an individual”
- Even if a disorder is in an individual, its manifestation progress and course are strongly influenced by the family

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- Behavior/dysfunction is “maintained” or made possible by other members of the family
 - Response of other members impact symptom manifestations. Severity, frequency, and context.

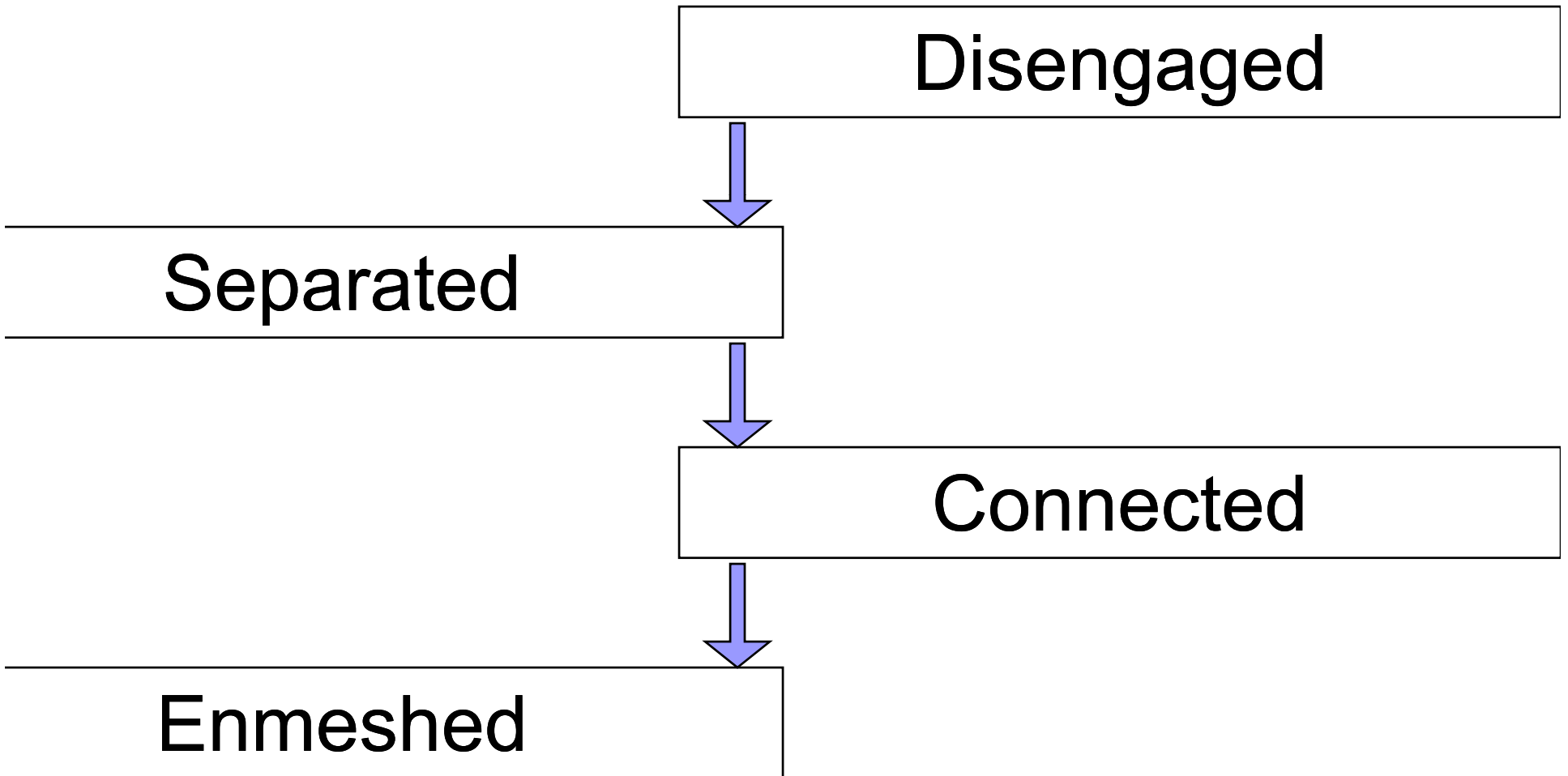


Family Functioning

- Family as a whole
- Can it solve problems?
- Can members belong to it, be a part, and also be an individual?
- Is there room for individuals?



Possibilities of Cohesiveness





Family Functioning	Circumplex Model
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Cohesiveness

 - Togetherness

- Members care about each other
- Members are emotionally involved
- Members feel they belong with each other



Cohesiveness

- Extremes:

- Enmeshed

- Too much consensus
 - Too little independence

- Disengaged

- Members do “their own thing”
 - Limited commitment
 - Limited attachment



Cohesiveness

- Committed relationship
- Emotional closeness
- Loyalty
 - Time together more important than time alone
- Separate
 - Some emotional distance
 - Separateness



Emotional Warmth

- Support toward each other and respect
 - Parents → Children
 - Children → Parents
 - Spouse → Spouse
- Encouragement
- Empathy
- Caring behaviors



Circumplex Model (Olson 1989)

II Flexibility

- Can family adjust to changes?
- Can family cope with stages?
- Amount of change in:
 - Its leadership
 - Role relationships
 - Relationship rules



Flexibility

Balance

Stability

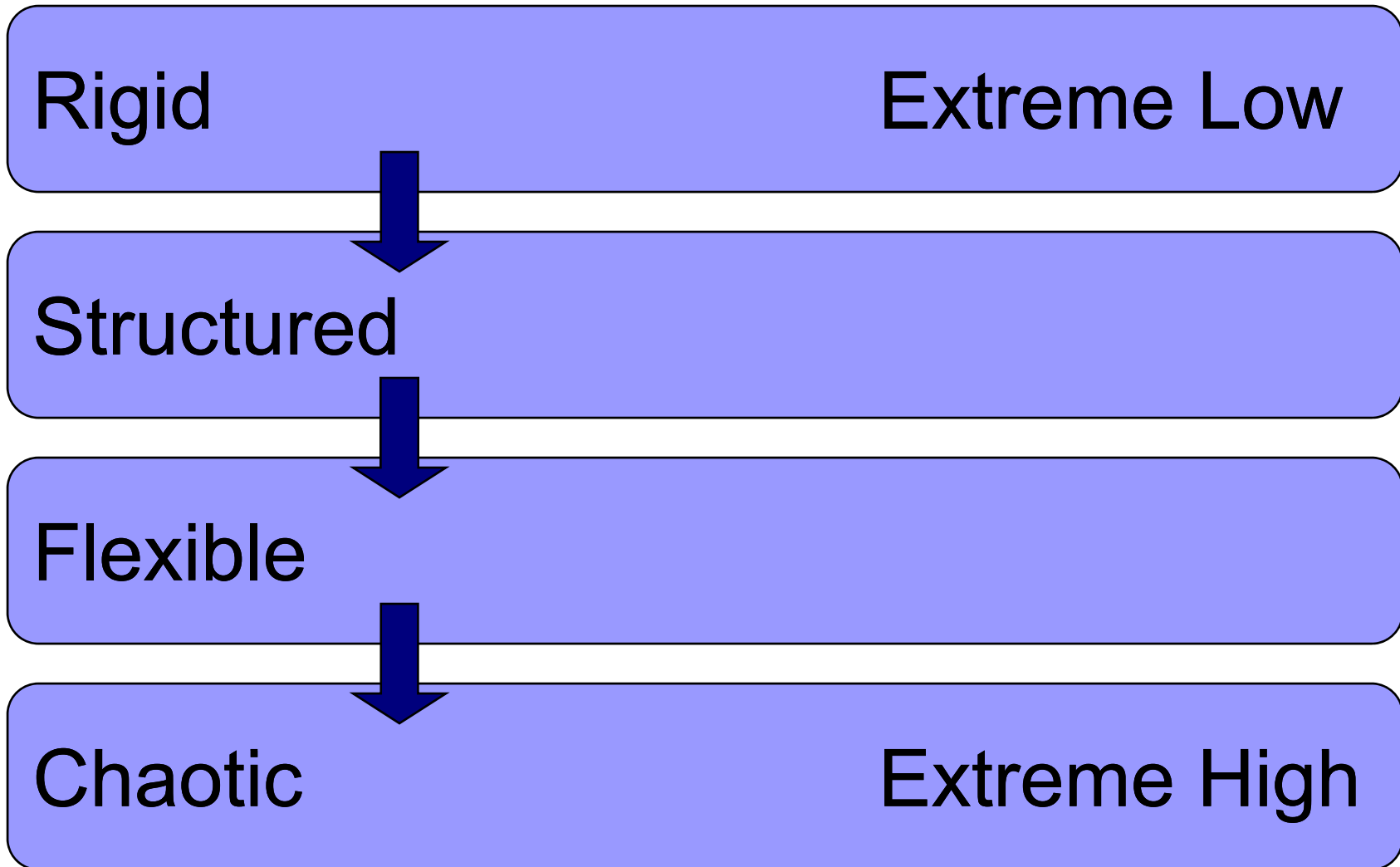
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Change





Flexibility Levels





Flexibility

- Structured – Somewhat democratic leadership. Some negotiations including children.
- Flexible relationship – egalitarian
 - Leadership – democratic
 - Decision making



Circumplex Model

III Communication

- Listening skills
- Speaking skills
- Self-disclosure
- Clarity
- Continuity tracking
- Respect and mutual regard



Communication

- Speaking for oneself (and not others)
- Self disclosure – Sharing feelings about self and relationships
- Tracking – Stay on topic
- Respect and mutual regard: Affective aspects of communication



“Schools” of Family Therapy

- Parent guidance
- Psychoeducational intervention
- “Structural” family therapy (Salvador Minuchin)
- Strategic family therapy (Jay Haley)



“Schools of Family Therapy

- “Paradoxical” family therapy (Mara Palazzoli-Selvini)
- Transgenerational family therapy (Murray Bowen)
- Attachment based family therapy
- Mentalization based family therapy (P. Fonagy et. al.)



Parent Guidance

- Relatively mild problems
- Assistance in parenting
- Promote sensitivity and empathy
- Emotional support for parents
- Suggestions re: Child rearing and child development



Psychoeducational Interventions

- Assistance guided to deal with specific problems
- Parents dealing with child who has schizophrenia
- Parents dealing with child who has attention deficit disorder



Psychoeducational Interventions

- Dealing with borderline personality disorder
- Dealing with explosive and defiant child
- Dealing with child who has an eating disorder



Psychoeducational Interventions

- Provide information about a disorder
- Provide useful suggestions to deal with problem
- Assistance in “problem solving”
- Coaching model



Structural Family Therapy

Proposed by Salvador Minuchin

- Families in poverty with low organization and somewhat chaotic
- Promote organization, structure, and routine



Structural Family Therapy

- Enhance role of the parents
 - Authoritativeness
 - Role definition
 - Children in their space
 - Help parents to maintain reasonable hierarchy



Structural Family Therapy

- “Sculpting technique”
- Seating arrangements
- Practicing skills
- Role play during sessions
- Empower parents



“Strategic” Family Therapy Technique

- Multiple schools
- Understand dynamic and systemic interactions
- Disbalance the system that is in equilibrium



Strategic

- “Create a crisis” in family to promote change
- Change in one member elicits change in other members



Strategic

- Prescription of actions e.g.
 - Homework
 - Measuring
 - Positive reinforcement
 - Deescalation techniques



Strategic

- Focus on marital relationship
- Tensions in marriage may manifest in problem behavior in children



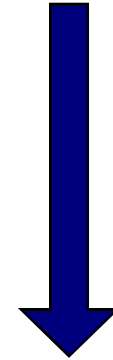
Strategic

- Enhance communication
- Improve cohesiveness and individualization
- Improve emotional involvement or some distance



Improve resolution of marital
conflict

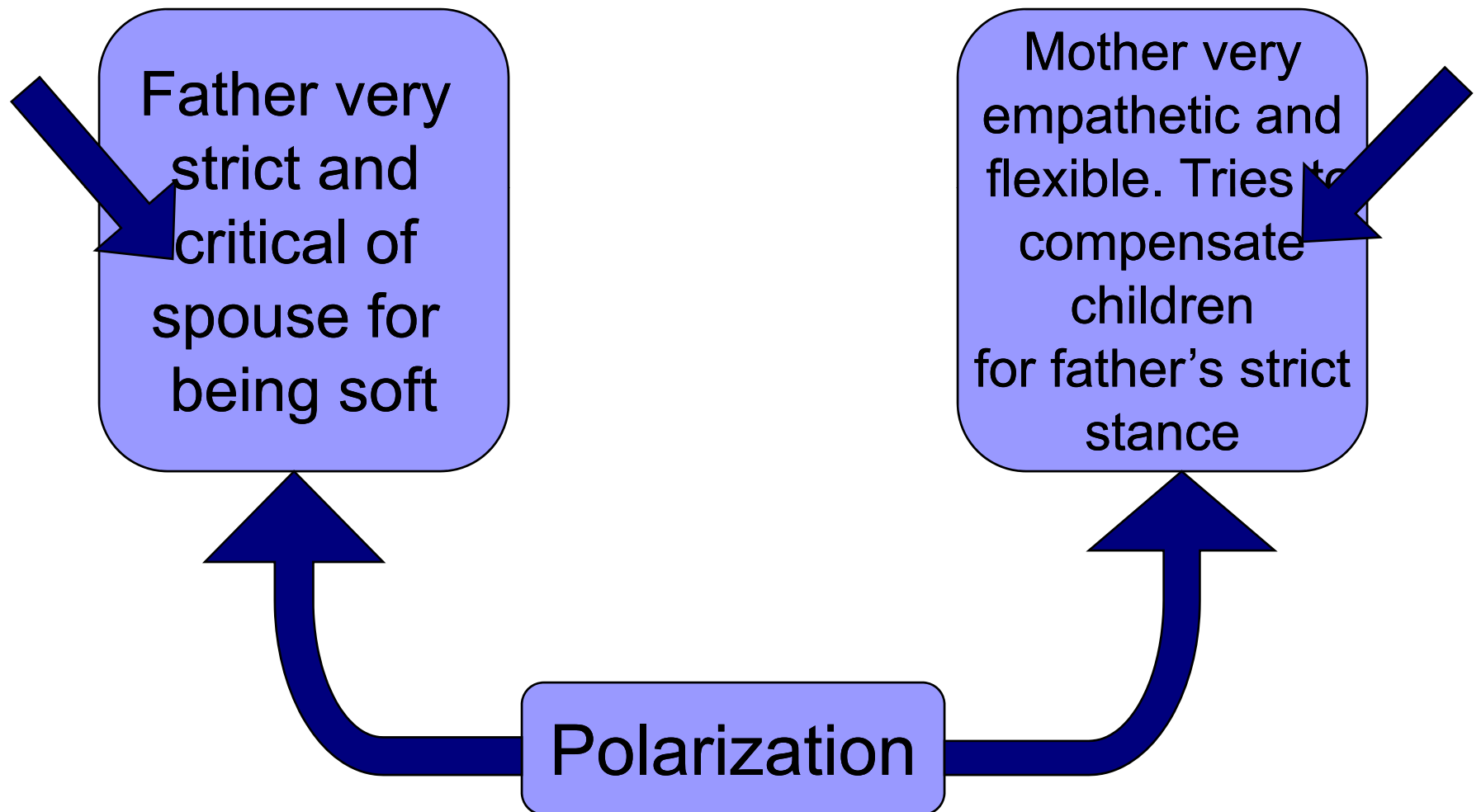
Example



Reducing fighting and rivalry
between children

More negotiation and
agreements

Example





Transgenerational Family Therapy

Murray Bowen – Washington D.C.

Original work

- Whole family was hospitalized
- Observation of patterns of interaction – reaction – thought
- Role performance



Techniques

- Build genogram of current family
- Build genogram of family of origin of each parent
- Several generations past if possible
- Search for patterns



Techniques

- Interest in birth order
- Role of first child. Youngest child.
- Role of women
- History of losses
- Repetition: anniversaries
- Death, trauma, separations



Transgenerational Family Therapy

- Narrative of family histories
- Role of family traditions and histories
- How to change transgenerational mandates
- Change repetition patterns



Paradoxical Family Therapy

- Focus on the role that symptoms may have in family e.g. focus attention on child and deviate attention from parental conflict



Paradoxical Family Therapy

- A family member is instructed on the importance of exacerbating or maintaining the symptoms



Mentalization Based Family Therapy

- Promote mentalization of parents vis à vis child
- Promote mentalization of children vis à vis parents
- Increase self reflection and reflection about others

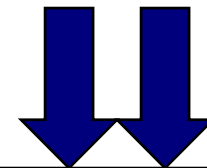
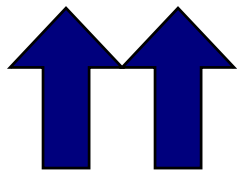
Mentalization Based

Increase “levels” of mentalization
Recognize failures in mentalization

Emotional
reactivation

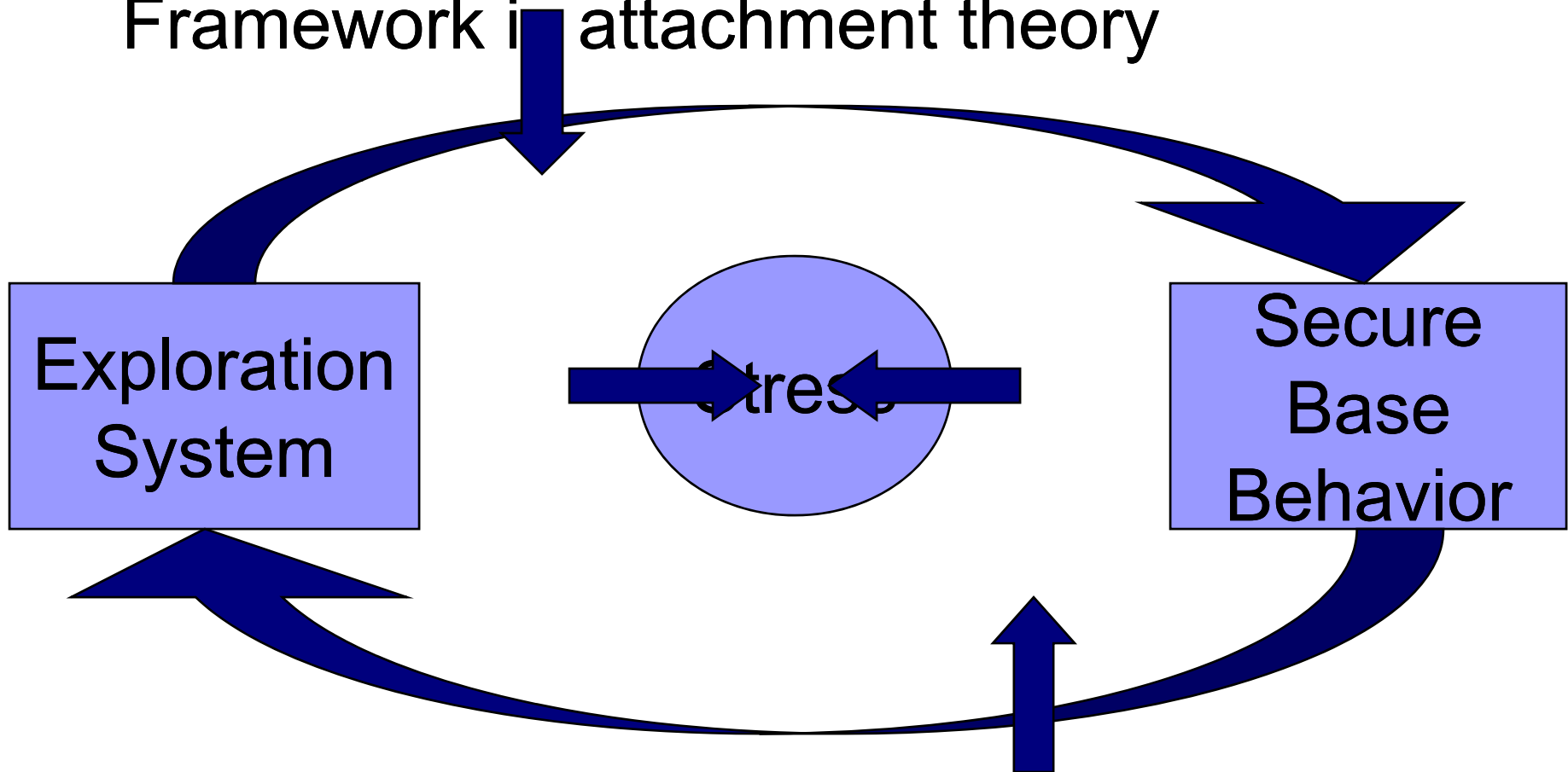


Lower Levels
Of
Mentalization



Mentalization Based

Framework is attachment theory





Steps to Enhance Mentalization

Attention

To specific
behavior

Elicit
curiosity

Openness to
learning from
the others



Mentalization of the Child's Mind

- Mind is opaque
- Open to possibilities
- Empathy
- Response to stress
- Security-seeking behaviors
- Not close mind




Self-Mentalization by Parents

- What does one feel and think when child shows distressing behavior?
- Self reflection
- Recognize internal states



Regulation Strategies by Parents

- Strategies to reduce stress and promote calm reassurance and regulation

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- No aggressive techniques
 - No distancing techniques
 - No ostracism
 - No rejection
 - No yelling as parent is in non-mentalizing mode



Suggested Regulation

- Proximity
- Reassurance
- Validation
- “Accompanying” child
- Inquiring
- Empathy