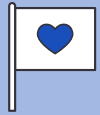


A quick guide to supporting a child with an insecure

# DISORGANISED ATTACHMENT PATTERN



## Child's Internal Working Model\*

"I'm NOT okay/You're NOT okay"

## Main Aim



Survival; no organised strategy for getting needs met



## Caregiver Relationship\*\*

Caregiver responds to child in unpredictable, frightening or frightened ways, or behaves erratically, or in an unresponsive way.

## Child's Presentation

Limited strategies for coping; erratic, aggressive behaviour; push/pull - I need you but I am afraid of you or of relationships; controlling and/or coercive; fearful; feels unsafe; disoriented; hyper alert; defiant; chastising

## Supporting a child with disorganised attachment in your work

A child with an insecure disorganised attachment pattern feels and interacts as if the world, and the adults around them are unsafe. They resort to controlling their environment through a range of strategies that we must seek to understand. It is important to look beyond the behaviour, to identify unexpressed needs or defenses being used to avoid shame.

Supporting a child with disorganised attachment takes persistence, curiosity and deep empathy for what they have experienced.

**REFLECTIVE PRACTICE:** Do you often feel like you are walking on eggshells, inflexible, rigid and punitive with this child, or alternatively feel a deep sense of hopelessness or sadness?

This may be a result of entering into an attachment dance that repeats the child's experience of their primary caregiver or taps into their unexpressed needs and feelings.

Engaging in reflective practice is essential when supporting children with attachment difficulties.

\* A child's internal working model is a complex interplay of mental representations of self, others and the world and therefore this description is simplistic, aiming only to provide practitioners with a sense of the child's overall attempt to maintain a cohesive narrative. For further reading, see seminal works of Bowlby, Ainsworth, Main, and contemporary research & theories of Crittenden, Schore, Hughes & Golding, amongst others.

Developments in neuroscience research (ie. Perry, Siegel) and polyvagal theory (Porges) can further inform our understanding of children.

\*\* It is important to maintain a non-blaming stance in recognition of the likelihood of caregivers own experiences of trauma, adversity and attachment difficulties. The nesting doll icon acknowledges the intergenerational patterns often present in relationships.

